

An analysis of policy development within the Centre for Adult Education at the University of Natal (1971 - 1991)

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The purpose, design and context of the study

1:1 Introduction – purposes, nature and limitations of the study

Effective policy development builds on practice and processed understanding of that practice. Policy development also occurs within particular contexts. Visionary blueprints provide general frames but the detail evolves from current and historical practice. In the area of adult education there is very little by way of theoretical understanding of practice on which to draw. The NEPI report on adult education makes virtually no reference to the history of adult education in South Africa presumably because it is so patchy and largely inaccessible. In relation to policy the following comment is made:

It is difficult to argue that there is any adult education policy in South Africa, if by policy it is meant a plan or course of action in directing adult education chosen by the government, a political party or movement or some large scale aggregation of business or non governmental interests. The only obvious adult education policy is a non-policy, in itself evidence of decades of persistent neglect of adult education.¹

The construction of macro level policy is made more difficult by the absence of a reservoir of analytical accounts which raise issues which policy at that level must address. This study is concerned with the development of policy within a very specific context and as such it is a modest and limited contribution to the development of that reservoir of theorised practice of adult education in South Africa. In this it is both a documentary record of the development of adult education at the University of Natal and an exploration of the dynamics of the policies which were evolved to direct that development.

The study is thus a descriptive and analytical account of the work of the Centre for Adult Education at the University of Natal over the 20 year period from 1971 to 1991 set against the context of the broad development of adult education in South Africa in general and developments in university based adult education development in particular.

Its first purpose is to capture part of the history of the period through examining the more particular history of one of the university agencies which contributed to the overall development. In this purpose, like any other history, the study records, analyses and interprets the chronology of events, seeking relationships in an attempt to identify pervading themes. Although South African adult education is yet a very new and developing field, there have been many isolated initiatives in the past.

¹ NEPI Adult Education Report, first draft, page 23.

Unfortunately, the record is patchy and many attempts from which we might have learnt have been lost. This history ensures that a small part of that record will be accessible to the future.

In its second purpose the study isolates policy as the key determinant of the historical development. Policy has many facets both large and small, from decisions to initiate new programmes involving major changes of direction to fees charged for courses. In this study curriculum in the broadest sense is understood as the primary policy marker. It is in each instance the curriculum shifts which make manifest the guiding policy frame. For this reason the terms “policy” and “curriculum” may sometimes be used interchangeably. But curriculum is not the only indicator of policy nor the only interest in this study. The organisational development of the Centre runs through the study as an ever-present sub-theme. Whereas curriculum is understood as the manifestation of policy, organisational development is understood as both a consequence of and causal to policy development. In a situation where the continued existence of a component part of a larger institution is of less than central concern to that institution - as was the case with the Centre for Adult Education - organisational development and even organisational survival become themselves key determinants of policy.

The third purpose of this study was, originally, to provide the basis for the future development of the Centre at a critical moment in its history. This assumed that policy development cannot be ahistorical and that an understanding of history is necessary to formulate informed policy options. This purpose was always subsidiary to the primary focus of the study and with the passage of time, the future direction of the Centre may already be cast before it can be fully informed by this work. The study nevertheless will provide a basis for understanding the future development of the Centre.

The nature of the study

At its simplest, the study comprises the construction of an historical account (itself an interpretation) primarily on the basis of documentary evidence, and a re-interpretation of the account thus created. In this it is analogous to a case study but the study does not fall easily into any generally recognised category of research format or research paradigm. The essence of a case study is successive interpretations of the same event from different perspectives in a manner which breaks down initial and superficial readings to allow reconstruction of a more profound understanding of the real transactions and meanings. A case study understood in this way is obviously rooted in an interpretative research paradigm which seeks explanations through social meaning rather than looking to an external objective reality.

This study is at the same time both more and less than a case study of this kind. It is more in the sense that it moves more certainly to a position of closure than a case study pursued in this strictest sense would allow. This position of closure (as demonstrated by the final chapter) is not understood as definitive; it remains open to

further analysis and re-interpretation but only outside the confines of this study. It is also more in the sense that it attempts to offer a full account of the development of the Centre for Adult Education over a specific period of time in a manner which privileges the formal historical record.

It is less than a classical case study for essentially the same two interrelated reasons. The intention of the study to provide a comprehensive account of the development of the Centre for Adult Education – *to construct a case* – is in tension with the purpose of *studying the case*. The analysis which is achieved and which certainly deepens understanding, is inescapably bound by the dual role of the researcher as author of the study and author of the case. Any attempt to interrogate the study from a radically different perspective must be flawed by this duality; the critical analysis which is developed in the study remains within the perspective of the key role player. The strength of the study must therefore be sought not in its capacity to construct a multilayered narrative from an alternative perspective but in the depth of understanding which the intimate association between writer and role player makes possible. Despite the critical insights which it offers, the study remains a particular version of a history as seen from the perspective of someone who played a significant role in the history itself. In this it attempts to provide the best interpretation possible and invites a better interpretation. It is perhaps best understood as an illuminative study of the development of the Centre for Adult Education from a policy perspective which attempts to understand, explain and explore the rationale and implications of the policy choices which directed the development of the Centre for Adult Education.

Assumptions and limitations

From the above it is clear that the primary assumption of the study is that the researcher as a primary actor in the subject of the research can provide an account which deepens understanding of the history of policy and curriculum development within the Centre for Adult Education. The argument developed above is that what is possible and what is being attempted is a version of that history as seen by a primary actor. No claim is made for absolute truth; rather the study invites the engagement of other interpretations with itself. The strength and weakness of the study derive from the privileged position held by the writer as both researcher and as actor. Its strength is the immediacy which direct participation makes possible. Conversely, its weakness is the embeddedness of a personal and role perspective.

The history is in many respects autobiographical and for this reason it seems necessary to make explicit my relationship to the study and to reveal in brief outline my own biography as it concerns the study.

I was appointed as the Organiser of the Extension Lecture Programme in December of 1972. This was a part-time post but inasmuch as I had full responsibility for the design and implementation of the programme in all its aspects, I was, in effect, what

became the Centre for Adult Education.² I continued in the same position which was elevated by degrees to permanent full-time lecturer status until April of 1976 when I resigned for personal reasons. I returned at the beginning of 1978 as the leave substitute for Mr Tony Morphet who had been appointed as Director on my earlier resignation. On Morphet's return in July 1979 I was appointed Deputy Director with responsibility for developing a Pietermaritzburg office, and in 1980 when Mr Morphet resigned, I took over as Director and remained in that post for the rest of the period of this study.

The formal terms of this biographical sketch point to a further limitation in the study. The impact of the personal biographies of individual staff members on the Centre for Adult education has been considerable. Because of the peculiar circumstances of the time and the unusual opportunity which the Centre presented to address - however peripherally - aspects of educational and social injustice, the Centre drew to itself staff who demonstrated a commitment which went far beyond that which might otherwise be expected. At times this approached a missionary zeal.³ The richness of these contributions are absent from this account and this is a significant omission even though, within the limitations of the study, it is unavoidable. All that is evident are the consequences of the interventions and interaction of staff members as they manifest themselves in policy debate and decisions.

A further limitation relates to the contextual account which is developed as part of the study. There exists no comprehensive history which portrays the university specific, adult education context within which the focus of this study - the Centre for Adult Education - is set. Partial accounts from various other perspectives offer limited insights into the specific context which is the concern of this study but the study has had to construct its own particular contextual account. This account is instrumental to the primary focus of the study and should not be confused with it nor understood as a rigorous analysis of contextual developments. That would be a study in its own right. The purpose of the contextual account within this study is more limited and directed towards illuminating understanding of the case itself. This purpose is met by a more impressionistic depiction of contextual factors than would be acceptable were the context itself the focus of the study. Further discussion of the role and purpose of the contextual sections of this study will be found in section three of this chapter under "*The Context of this study*" - (see 1.3 below)

² I worked under the supervision of the Academic Planning Officer who in respect of the Extension Programme, worked under the direction of the Academic Planning Committee, but this was an additional brief to his primary function.

³ See for example *Gnosis, Ritual and Faith* Aitchison, 1987 in *Breaking the Formal Frame*.

1:2 The structure, process and data of the study

Structure

The study takes as its starting point the historical record of the development of the Centre for Adult Education and breaks this down into three distinct time periods which form the basis of chapters two, three and four. This is partly a matter of convenience but some claim is made for a more intrinsic basis for the choice of these periods. In determining them consideration was given to a number of different frames of reference.

First of these were the identifiable stages in the organisational development of the Centre particularly as marked by formal changes in name and institutional status and location, reflecting shifts in scale, function and curriculum. These include the metamorphosis of the initial pilot programme first to the *Extra Mural and Extension Unit* and subsequently to the *Centre for Adult Education*; the development of the Pietermaritzburg office, the entry of the Centre into the Education Faculty and the acquisition of departmental status; and, finally, the separation of the Centre on a Durban Pietermaritzburg basis and the effective suspension of its constitution.

Secondly, reference was made more directly to changes in the curriculum provided by the Centre. Here the changes are marked by shifts of emphasis and incremental additions rather than by the replacement of earlier curriculum directions although a few initiatives can be seen to be abandoned. These changes include the initial extension courses, the development of a consultancy role, the initiation of pre-university courses, the introduction of a course for adult educators, the development of a community education programme and an adult basic education programme.

Thirdly, consideration was given to external events which had a major impact at the broad social, political and educational levels and which played some part in influencing the development of policy within the Centre however indirect this may have been. The significant markers here were the 1976 Soweto uprising which had its immediate origin in dissatisfaction with the school curriculum, the states of emergency in the mid 1980s which brought the focus of the struggle for liberation to educational institutions and the unbanning, in February 1990, of the ANC and the release of political forces into a more open interchange heralding fundamental social, political and ultimately educational change.

There are other frames of reference which could be consulted and which may have had some influence in determining the division of this study. Particularly important amongst them would be the personal biographies of the staff, who because of the small size of the Centre and because of the unusually significant and different commitments which they brought to the Centre, undoubtedly influenced the development of the Centre at different points.

Taking all these multiple frames of reference into consideration in varying degrees and attempting to reconcile them as far as possible, the following framework was chosen:

1970 - 1976	The Extension Programme : Establishment of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit
1976 - 1983	The Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit: Finding a role
1984 - 1991	The Centre for Adult Education: Towards a department of adult education

The process

Within each time period and therefore each chapter an overview is first constructed of the broad contextual elements which are considered in varying degrees to have had some impact on the work or policy development of the Centre. The influence is rarely direct or readily detectable. To some extent I rely on my own memory of the impact of various developments but in places there is documentary evidence - in records of staff meetings for example - of consideration of these contextual factors.

At the second stage within each period (and chapter), the study turns to construct a factual, descriptive account of the salient features drawing primarily on the documentary record. The intention has been that this should read as a continuous historical narrative, unfolding the events as they occurred, albeit with a bias toward the implications which they held for policy development. Although the account in each of the three chapters is punctuated with paragraph headings, these have been used to guide the reader through an involved and lengthy history with the intention of marking significant developments, rather than segmenting the account. For this reason they are italicised and have no numerical denotation.

The conceptual and methodological limitations which qualify this study and the accuracy of the account which it provides were discussed earlier in this chapter. These limitations notwithstanding, the purpose in the three historical sections is to provide information which can be verified by reference to the record. Although each part of the history is understood as an interpretation of the historical record and not as definitive and absolute truth, accuracy in the sense intended here is the correlation of the account produced against the evidence available. Although a different interpretation may be possible, the accuracy of this account relies on the existence of evidence which is available to support this interpretation. The study is built on the condition that the evidence in each instance must support the interpretation offered.

In the third and final section of each chapter the study moves to identify and analyse the key policy developments and to interpret them through consideration of the twin contexts of the University itself and of the wider context of the field. The historical record at this stage is treated both as a factual account and as a first interpretation and through this analysis section a second but still provisional interpretation is constructed.

Inevitably there is a degree of slippage between these stages. In places the broad contextual picture developed at the first stage in each case, compels the introduction of some facet of historical detail of the case study itself. In the second section the historical narrative sometimes moves towards an analytical mode, while the analytical sections sometimes require the late introduction of historical detail not included in the earlier historical narrative. These moments of slippage are few and have been judged to be acceptable in the interest of sustaining coherence and avoiding unnatural disjunctures which would have resulted from a more rigorous observance of the boundaries between the various stages. This qualification notwithstanding, the broad distinction between the three stages is, in each case, maintained.

In the final chapter, dealing with the period as a whole, an attempt is made to draw together the strands identified in the earlier chapters and to develop an understanding of the most recent policy changes.

The structure and process thus described invite an understanding of the study as a series of three case studies each complete in itself but together comprising and set within a larger case study which is the study as a whole. The validity of this interpretation depends to some extent on the degree to which each section of the chosen framework is inherent to the history rather than conveniently constructed for the purposes of this study. One indication must be that the study was not conceived in this way but rather that it became apparent in the writing that each of the three periods could to some extent be regarded independently of each other.

The data

The study relies for its sources on countless memoranda, minutes reports and letters. Much of this material was previously compiled by myself into various collections and published (for use within the Centre). In particular this included a collection of policy memoranda on the establishment of the Centre (1975); a volume of agendas and minutes 1976 -1980 (1981); a series of annual "record books" from 1981 to 1985; and a three volume collection of documents relating to the development of the Centre covering the entire period from 1971 - 1991 (1992). Details are provided in the bibliography.

Given my own intimate participation, the study also relies on my own recollection. Insofar as most of the documents were written by myself it has been sometimes difficult for me to distinguish the primary source particularly where, with the wisdom of hindsight, my later interpretation may not be in accord with my judgment of the time.

Terminology

The Centre for Adult Education was originally known as the Extension Lecture Programme or more simply the Extension Programme. In 1975 it was constituted as

the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit and in 1984 it changed its name to the Centre for Adult Education. In this study as far as possible, the terminology appropriate to the period has been used. Thus in the period up to 1975 the term Extension Lecture Programme or its abbreviation has been used; in the period between 1976 and 1984, the name *Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit* has been applied and after 1984 the name *Centre for Adult Education* has been used. In addition the name *Centre for Adult Education* has been used for generic reference where the historical period is not significant. In the interests of accessibility and clarity the use of abbreviations and acronyms has been avoided as far as possible. Where they do occur they are explained in the immediate text.

1:3 The context of this study

The dynamic between text and context is central to this study. The context stands apart from the text but is deeply pertinent to it. The essence of the study is the story of the attempts to reconcile the text and context in each period of this study.

Text here refers to the history of the inner life and workings of the Centre for Adult Education – the account of its sense of its own purpose and direction and of the logic of its own development. By context is meant – at the most general level – the broader imperatives and constraints of the world beyond the confines of the Centre. More specifically the context is understood as multilayered and mediated to the Centre through these successive layers. The immediate context is the University of Natal and it is this context which influences most directly the development of the Centre. That context is situated within a broader university-wide context which has elements which are general to university education and other elements which relate specifically to university-based adult education. The university adult education context in turn is situated partially within and partly parallel to the world of adult education practice which is itself multi-dimensional by virtue of its divergent forms and sites of practice. This context and the general university context lie within a broader national context of education and training which, at a very general level, is situated within the national social, economic and political context. In addition other contexts impinge on this crude typology. The international context of adult education impacts on the study - most obviously through the mobilisation of literacy initiatives; the world of national and international donor funding also impresses itself on the Centre; and the context of development underlies much of the Centre's interaction with NGOs.

The context as a whole is thus constituted of a complex intermeshing of more specific contexts comprising, *inter alia*, university policy, developments in the emerging field of adult education and the status and dynamics of more general political, social and educational actions. It is clearly beyond the scope of this study to undertake an analysis of each of these contexts or to construct a definitive account of the context as a whole. What is attempted in each period is a broad description of the contextual factors which are judged to have had some influence on the development of the policy within the Centre. This description is primarily concerned with the immediate context in which the Centre was situated – that is its institutional setting within the

University of Natal. The larger contextual picture is sketched in very general outline to identify the salient features which presented themselves to the actors in the Centre as the background against which policy was developed. In this, in a sense, the study attempts to render an account of the interpretation which was made of the context of the time. This implies a present interpretation of an historical interpretation and this claim requires qualification.

Insofar as the perspective is a present one, the reading of an historical interpretation of what was then a present context, is inevitably clouded by the advantage of hindsight. There is a fragmentary record of how the context was read at the time as evidenced in public documents such as annual reports and informal records of staff meetings. But while this record has been consulted the account also relies to a considerable extent on my own recollection and there is no rigorous attempt to disentangle the historical reading from the one which can be made at this present time. What can be asserted is that the actors in the Centre were deliberately conscious of the context and attempted to read it as best they could in formulating policy for the Centre. Furthermore where in the account of context a historical reading is claimed, it is based either on direct evidence or on personal recollection.

The nature of the link between context and text now requires some exploration. There is rarely – if ever – a direct causal relationship visible between contextual factors and policy development within the Centre. For one thing there is an inevitable time delay between any contextual event or the emergence of a contextual trend and the recognition and response to these factors by the Centre. Furthermore the remoteness of these factors from the immediate work and concerns of the Centre suggests a more indirect relationship. This indirect relationship is usually implicit and sometimes quite subtle but it is nevertheless possible to point with some confidence to contextual factors in relation to policy development within the Centre, to recognise the influence of these factors and to draw inferences therefrom. This is more certain the closer the specific aspect of the context. Thus in relation to the immediate institutional context – that of the University of Natal – the influences can be seen to be strongest and, as already noted, the study is most concerned with and places the greatest reliance on this first level of context. Finally it must be acknowledged that the essentially superficial depiction of the context could not support assessments of the relationship between contextual factors and developments within the Centre, which asserted a direct correlation. All that is sought for the purposes of this study is the identification of general influences.

There is an additional argument for the inclusion of the sketch of the broader context despite the qualifications made above. It is judged to be significant in the light of the substantial changes which occur in the context over the course of this history. In more even and less dramatic times the broader national aspects could be expected to exert less influence over an endeavour as small as the Centre for Adult Education and over a period as relatively short as that of this history. But the national events of this period were of such magnitude that they inevitably made an impression on the development of policy within the Centre for Adult Education and while it is beyond the scope of this study to analyse the contextual factors closely, it would be

impossible to portray the subject of the study faithfully without reference to these factors. Moreover references to the broader context should serve as cues to the reader to exercise an independent assessment of that context and thereby of the relationship drawn to the development of policy within the Centre.

The location of the study within a broad historical perspective which is itself relatively uncharted, is a further rationale for the inclusion of the contextual sketch and the remaining purpose of this section is to provide a broad overview of that context. The more specific contexts relating to each period of the study comprise the initial section of each of the succeeding three chapters.

The broad context of this study

Adult education in South Africa has had a chequered history of sporadic initiatives which for various reasons - largely political - have so far failed to evolve into any organised system. There is also no comprehensive history of these isolated beginnings but only fragmentary accounts of particular endeavours. Notable among these accounts⁴ are those of Malherbe (1977) and Bird (1984).

Malherbe⁵ records in broad outline significant adult education initiatives beginning with lectures provided for the general public of Cape Town by professors of the SA College in 1889. He mentions the beginnings of Workers' Education Associations in Johannesburg in 1915 and Durban in 1917, and, the involvement of the National Council of Women and particularly the South African Woman's Agricultural Union. Malherbe's main interest however lies with the development of adult education for the armed forces during the second world war - a programme in which he played a key role. What emerges from his account is a well organised, well taught and well supported (participation was voluntary) liberal arts programme in the tradition of university extension programmes directed towards white adults. What is particularly interesting is the claim he makes for post war developments which owe their origins to the armed forces programme. The Institute of Citizenship in Cape Town is an example. More important was the formation of a National Advisory Council for Adult Education in 1948 drawing on work begun in 1943. It would seem significant, not because of its subsequent record or limited vision, but because of what it might have been. It marks the end of one of several beginnings in adult education in South Africa. The momentum which led to this point, was contained and subverted by the incoming Nationalist government and the Council was finally abolished in 1970.

⁴ A further account is provided by Morphet (1984) which although it draws on Bird and covers much common ground, is more comprehensive from the perspective of the development of adult worker education. It also draws a sharper distinction between the frameworks and consequences of the radical and liberal movements described by Bird. Walker's (1984) history of the development of the University of Cape Town's Extra Mural Studies Department is another source of information of the early history of adult education which is referred to later in this chapter.

⁵ Malherbe, E.G., *Education in South Africa* Vol 2, pp. 402-415.

Bird's account⁶ focuses attention on the emergence of adult night school movements for blacks on the Witwatersrand. Her use of the plural "movements", is significant because it indicates multiple beginnings all of which are ultimately stifled. Starting with the work begun by the Communist Party in the 1920s which she identifies as "initiating the first effective night school movement", she points to the radical intention behind this early work. By the early 'thirties this initiative has lost momentum and virtually disappears from view. Although Bird sees some continuity in the work taken up by subsequent Liberal involvement, she recognises the transition to a liberal approach embodied in the African College and Mayibuye night schools. These schools developed and spread and together with the work done through the South African Institute of Race Relations can be seen by the mid 'fifties to constitute an embryonic system of adult education provision. This point marks the end of another potential beginning. Although it took a further decade to close this system down, it was systematically destroyed so that by the end of the 1960s it had ceased to exist. Ironically it was replaced in 1977 by a government system of adult education centres which were intended to provide alternative schooling for adults. It can be understood to be another point of origin and another false start.

By the end of the 1960s the State had severely circumscribed all sites of independent adult education practice except those provided by the "liberal" universities which through their defence of their academic freedom still held the potential for limited adult education work. Between 1970 and 1990 four universities in particular, the University of Cape Town, the University of Natal, the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of the Western Cape each developed dynamic, innovative "departments" of adult education which in various but broadly similar ways were the universities' early expression of community outreach and which later took on responsibility for teaching adult educators.

The University of Cape Town's activity in this area considerably pre-dates that of the other three universities. Douglas Walker⁷ traces the origins of the University of Cape Town's involvement to the middle of the 19th century but although the University through successive committees mounted a sporadic programme of liberal studies through the first half of this century, it really only assumed an organisational dimension with the establish of a department of Extra Mural Studies in the 1940s and the move beyond a liberal studies vision begins only in the late 1960s. Nevertheless, the University of Cape Town's pioneering work has served as a model and a bench mark for the other Universities. In 1979 it established the first chair of adult education at a South African university and in 1980 the department offered the first university level programme for professional adult educators. It later developed an adult education option within the B.Ed curriculum and introduced a taught masters programme in 1987. It also developed a community adult programme which offered a

⁶ Bird, Adrienne, *Black Adult Night School Movements on the Witwatersrand, 1920-1980* in Kallaway, P., (Ed.) *Apartheid and Education*. Ravan Press, Johannesburg,

⁷ Walker, D, *Extra-mural Programmes and Adult Education at the University of Cape Town: An analysis of policy*, M.Ed dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1984.

certificate level course for adult educators and an adult basic education programme which successively took a number of different forms. Throughout it maintained a strong liberal studies extra mural programme which included an annual summer school and which was unparalleled by other universities in the country.

The University of Natal can also claim an involvement earlier than that evidenced by the subject of this study, through the work of Mabel Palmer in the 1930s and various extension courses run at the initiative of the Principal, Dr Malherbe, in the 1960s. But there is discontinuity in the record and the development which began in 1971 and which is the subject of this study can be reasonably understood as the first organisationally sustained commitment to university extension and adult education at the University of Natal.

The University of the Witwatersrand entered the field in a quite different way from the other universities through an association beginning in 1971 with the Institute for Adult Studies⁸. In 1973 the Institute was reconstituted within the University as the *Institute for Adult Education and External Studies* and by 1979 had developed a programme which included 12 education development projects and a structure which covered a wide area and included continuing professional education in medicine and engineering. This structure became the *Centre for Continuing Education*. A Chair was established in 1982 together with a Division of Adult Education within the Faculty of Education. This Division and the Centre for Continuing Education were held together through the common office of Professor of Adult Education and Director of the Centre for Continuing Education. This stands in contrast to the position at the Universities of Cape Town and Natal which held the extra mural extension work and the academic adult education work together in a more integrated organisational whole. A diploma course for adult educators was introduced in 1982. A master's programme followed. Certificate level community adult educator courses were also offered and adult basic education was most prominent through the attachment of the Zenex Adult Basic Education Unit to the Centre for Continuing Education in the late 1980s.

The University of the Western-Cape (UWC) came to the field rather later than the other three universities, in 1985 and partly for this reason its starting point was again different. Whereas the other three Universities each had their origins in some form of extension lecture programmes, by the time the University of the Western Cape initiated work in this area the focus in the other universities had moved on to developing community orientated and adult educator training programmes and the University of the Western Cape took this new direction as its starting point. More significantly it began working only after a systematic study which sought an appropriate role for the university of the Western Cape in adult education. In rejecting the extension work model as inappropriate for the UWC context, it chose instead a

⁸ The Institute itself had a long history stretching back to the workers' education movements of the 1920s and more particularly to the Transvaal Workers' Educational Association.

“developmental, change role”⁹. Moreover the University demonstrated the importance which it attached to this work by creating a Chair at the same time as it established the *Centre for Adult and Continuing Education (CACE)*. The initial work was directed towards developing the capacity of community organisations through an extensive networking and resource building function. The teaching programme for adult educators was first introduced at the certificate level using a distance teaching model. A later development was an adult education course within the B.Ed curriculum. A post-graduate diploma course was introduced later.

Other South African Universities also began to develop interests in adult education in the 1970s although the understanding of this work was different. In 1973 the University of Cape Town hosted the first South African conference on university adult education. Growing university interest in the area is further evidenced by the establishment, in 1975, of a sub-committee on continuing education by the Committee of University Principals (CUP). Although this committee’s quest for government funding was ultimately unsuccessful, it did provide a forum in which attention was focussed on university policy with regard to adult education. However the very different understanding of the universities’ role in this area limited the debate. In 1980 a second conference hosted by the University of Cape Town again indicated the increasing interest in university based adult education. By this time the University of Port Elizabeth had developed an extensive programme of continuing and part-time adult education and the Rand Afrikaans University had developed a curriculum with a focus on industrial training. The University of Western Cape entered the field as already outlined in 1985 and in 1986 the University of the Transkei opened a department of Adult education. The divergent discourses evident at the various conferences and in the meetings of the CUP sub-committee on continuing education and the common ground understood by the four university departments described earlier, drew these four departments closer together. Informal contacts which were established and maintained between these departments through the 1980s began to assume a degree of formality towards the end of this history through a series of co-operative projects.

Neither were the universities alone in the field. Although in certain respects in the 1970s universities became the last refuge of adult education of the liberal / radical tradition, other forms of practice particularly in the areas of training and worker education continued to develop. Major literacy projects amongst them the Molteno Project and Using Spoken and Written English (USWE), also came into being in this period; the de Lange Commission provided an opportunity to present policy options for adult and non formal education, the Urban Foundation was established and initiated policy research into adult education; a national literacy co-operative was established; myriad non governmental and community based organisations emerged in the mid 1980s in response to political repression and a groundswell of support for non formal and adult education; and, right at the end of the period of the study the

⁹ Walters, S., *The Role of the University in the Western Cape in Adult Education*, 1982, p 80.

NECC¹⁰ initiated a major education policy study in which policy options were identified for adult education and adult basic education.

This twenty year period between 1970 and 1990 was undoubtedly a crucial formative period in the history of the development of Adult Education in South Africa and more particularly in the development of university engagement in and contribution to this field. It contains a rich history of organisational, policy and curriculum development which, except as a few isolated papers on specific issues, is yet to be told. This study is a small part of that history.

The study in the context of the international development of adult education

The strength of this study is its specificity with regard to the core history and its immediate context, and the interaction between these two components. The impact of the more remote levels of the context, including the international context, has already been acknowledged and the point made that it has been considered beyond the scope of this study to construct a comprehensive account of the outer layers of this context (pages 8 and 9). But insofar as the international context includes the developing field of adult education theory and practice, some consideration must now be given to the location of this study within the field.

The study, although obviously a unique case history, inevitably demonstrates aspects which have parallels in other experience and characteristics which are noted, discussed and generalised in the literature. The identification and analysis of these points of coincidence, and the corresponding points of divergence, from the mainstream of adult education development, especially in relation to a university context, would make possible the location of the particular experience of this study within the field as a whole. But the South African experience is, by virtue of its extraordinary circumstances, significantly removed from the mainstream of adult education development. Ten years before the point at which this history commences, South Africa had already withdrawn from the Commonwealth and was consequently distanced from the considerable developments in adult education in the countries which shared their experience as a result of their mutual membership of the Commonwealth. Nearer to home, South Africa's domestic policies isolated it from the rest of Africa where it might, for example, have otherwise been influenced (and contributed to) the experience of Tanzania. More significantly the academic boycott of South Africa which in the second half of this history was more or less complete, placed further distance between South Africa and the mainstream of adult education development. The policies of the South African Government also had a more direct isolating influence as evident, for example, in the banning of the works of Paulo Freire. Freire's impact on adult education practice in South Africa was significant but it was brought to South Africa in the early 1970s in clandestine fashion and permeated theory and practice in a manner which was often obscure to those who followed his ideas.

¹⁰ Initially the National Education Crisis Committee and changed later to the National Education Co-ordinating Committee.

This is not to suggest that the South African experience is by nature *sui generis* but rather that its relationship to mainstream development is dislocated in several significant ways including time and the social impulses which have driven mainstream development. Nor does the fact of the historical isolation of the study from mainstream development imply that it cannot be re-contextualised but it does serve as a caution against an oversimple analysis which does not sufficiently recognise the essentially decontextualised reality of the time in relation to the mainstream of adult education theory and practice.

The general point can be illustrated by consideration of selected aspects of the case in relation to the general development of university based adult education in the United Kingdom.

The programme of extension lectures introduced at the University of Natal in 1971 clearly drew on the tradition of university extension which has its origins in nineteenth century England and was, in certain respects (particularly in form), more closely related to these early origins than in-step with the development which had succeeded them. The social goals which drove the original movement – the attempts to contribute to democracy and to help adult students make better sense of their lives – are present in the Natal experience though they do not, in the initial phase, drive the initiative with the same force. Similarly although the Extension Programme at the University of Natal demonstrates early on a capacity for curriculum innovation, the establishment of the programme is not an expression of this need as it was in Britain in traditional universities in the mid-nineteenth century.

The general social and political circumstances were also vastly different. There was no equivalent of the collaboration between the Workers Education Association the University Extension Movement which was a powerful formative factor in the development of Adult Education in the Britain in the first half of this century. In South Africa by contrast the trade unions were jealously possessive of their education programmes, regarding this work as integral to the broader development of workers' rights.

More generally, in contrast to the broadly supportive establishment position in the United Kingdom, evidenced, for example, by the 1919 Report of the Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction¹¹, the encouragement and support of Winston Churchill as Prime Minister in 1954¹², and the Report of the Russell

¹¹ Wiltshire (Ed.) *The 1919 Report: The Final and Interim Reports of the Adult Education Committee of Reconstruction 1918-19*, Nottingham Studies in the Theory and Practice of the Education of Adults, University of Nottingham, Department of Adult education, 1980.

¹² Winston Churchill, letter to the TUC, 1953. The letter is quoted in many sources; an extract can be found in McIllroy and Spencer, *University Adult Education in Crisis*, Leeds Studies in Adult and Continuing Education, 1988.

Committee on Adult Education in 1973¹³, the South African position was markedly different. Apart from the brief interest shown by the United Party Government in the immediate post-war period, as evidenced in the ill-fated Eybers Committee Report¹⁴, the subsequent Nationalist government maintained an actively hostile position to all adult education initiatives as the previous section has shown. This effectively delayed the evolution of adult education in South Africa. Throughout this history there was in South Africa no real adult education system. What little did exist was very limited, fragmented and government controlled. The National Advisory Council for Adult Education was never brought into play¹⁵. In contrast to the various adult education associations which emerged in Britain and elsewhere particularly after 1945, the first adult education associations in South Africa emerged only at the end of this history and were then propelled into existence somewhat precipitously by political necessity.

This points to what is, perhaps, one of the most significant differences. Whereas in other parts of the world national adult education systems emerged in pursuit of goals which strove generally towards social development as part of a broader search for greater social justice, in South Africa this aspect has a far more definite formative influence. It is not an exaggeration to suggest that adult education in South Africa was essentially forged in quasi-revolutionary circumstances as part of the liberation struggle. This is most evident in the latter part of this history when education becomes a key site of the struggle. In earlier years it can be seen to be linked to a more diffuse expression of the search for liberation. This inevitably introduced a strong political component to the development of adult education in South Africa. Although this political dimension can be observed elsewhere, including the United Kingdom, the extent of this factor in South Africa marks it as different. University adult education in South Africa did not escape the consequences of the politicisation of the field, as this history relates.

The crisis faced by university adult education in Britain in the 1980s, although superficially similar to the difficulties explored in this case insofar as they relate to funding, is in reality substantially different. The search for recognition and status for adult education within the University of Natal mirrors the debates in England of the 'twenties and 'thirties in their attempts to establish a department of adult education. In Britain fully fledged university departments of adult education emerged in the

¹³ *Adult Education: A plan for development*, Report of a Committee under the Chairmanship of Sir Lionel Russell, HMSO, 1973.

¹⁴ Report of the Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr G W Eybers, 1945.

¹⁵ A recommendation for the establishment of a National Advisory Council for Adult Education was one of the recommendations of the Eybers Committee. See page 14, supra.

1940s and 1950s¹⁶. In South Africa the first adult education department¹⁷ was only established at the beginning of the 1980s (half way through the period of this study) and the subject of the study does not manage to achieve this status unequivocally until after this study ends in 1991. The crisis in Britain during the period of this study was essentially a challenge to an already established status quo. What was in question was the purposes understood for adult education and the pressure, under threat of funding cuts, was to divert university adult education from a century's tradition which regarded individual development and social goals as primary objectives. Instead economic value was presented as a more appropriate rationale for the provision of adult education by a government which set greater store in market forces than in social engineering. While this debate did not entirely pass by South African university adult education (the definition which the Committee of University Principals sub-committee on adult education managed to negotiate with the department of National Education, strongly reflected the notion of vocationally orientated courses), it was not a significant factor primarily because the State did not enjoy the same leverage. The concurrent debate in South Africa was not about the level of funding but about securing any funding at all.

Despite these differences there are clear points of similarity. The marginality of adult education discussed by Jepson¹⁸ and the middle class bias explored by Westwood¹⁹ are examples of two such instances which are obvious in this study. Similarly the tension between the social purposes understood for adult education and a more liberal understanding evident in the relationship between the WEA and the University Extension Movement in the first decades of this century in England²⁰, finds expression in the case and is present in the discourse identified. These discourses are themselves a more interactive version of the fundamental philosophies identified by Elias and Merriam²¹.

The local specificity of the study is further compounded by a reluctance to ground it in a recognised field. The integrity and authenticity of the study relies in large measure on the completeness of its interwoven complexity. It locates itself, broadly speaking, at the intersection of institutional development, national policy and curriculum policy. While to have located the study more definitely within one of the

¹⁶ Mellroy, John, and Spencer, Bruce, *University Adult Education in Crisis*, Leeds Studies in Adult and Continuing Education, 1988, p. 11

¹⁷ This was the University of Cape Town's Department of Adult Education and Extra Mural Studies.

¹⁸ Jepson, N.A., *The Beginning of University Adult Education*, Michael Joseph, London, 1973.

¹⁹ Westwood, Sallie, *Adult Education and the sociology of education: an exploration*, in *Adult Education for a Change*, Thompson, Jane (Ed.), Hutchinson & Co., London, 1980.

²⁰ See Mellroy and Spencer (footnote 17 supra), *University Adult Education in Crisis*, p.6.

²¹ Elias, John L. and Merriam, Sharan, *Philosophical Foundations of Adult Education*, Kreiger, New York, 1980.

established fields of inquiry indicated by these three areas, might have satisfied more adequately the conventions of academic research, it would at the same time have undermined the capacity of the study to develop a comprehensive and textured account of the case and thus of what was intended as its first purpose.

For all these reasons, the study proceeds on the understanding that the situation of the case within the broad field and literature of adult education is a task beyond the study itself. What this study offers is a primary descriptive and analytical account which makes possible subsequent interpretation within a more general frame of reference. Such an interpretation would most usefully incorporate similar primary accounts from other South African Universities which would then allow the development of an understanding of the South African experience within the context of international development of the field of adult education.

Chapter 2

The Extension Programme

Establishment of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit (1970 - 1976)

2:1 Context

The student protest and campus unrest which swept through many European universities towards the end of the 1960s had echoes in South African universities. The relationship is complex since English-language universities and their students in particular were already entrenched in oppositional positions partly over State interference in university government but also in respect of apartheid policies in general. At the University of Natal the general climate of student revolt was exacerbated by a deep ideological rift between the then Principal, Professor Owen Horwood and the student body which provided a focus for confrontation and eventually led to the suspension of student government structures by the University administration.¹ But insofar as international student unrest was directed towards more relevant curricula and to addressing critical social issues, there may have been some relationship between the groundswell of this movement and the establishment of a programme of extension lectures at the University of Natal.

In Natal amongst the University's traditional, white middle class constituency and especially amongst the business sector – which at that time exercised considerable influence - there developed a marked negative attitude to the behaviour of students and the conduct of university administration and by the time Professor Horwood left his post as Principal in 1969 to join the Nationalist government, the University of Natal had come to be held in fairly low esteem by this constituency.

Insofar as international student protest was a more general challenge to hierarchical privilege and the status quo, it meshed in South African universities with opposition to apartheid. Government attempts to counter its effects can be seen as an extension of the repressive measures introduced through the 1960s in opposition to black protest. Up to this point the universities had been relatively unscathed by these measures (although their autonomy had already been severely eroded by the Extension of University Education Act of 1959 curtailing their right to admit students of all races). As political forces sought to exploit this remaining opportunity for opposition, the Government responded by attempting to define and limit the scope of legitimate university action in the narrowest terms and thereby to limit the scope of universities to intervene on social and political issues. This is evident in the

¹ Professor Horwood was generally understood to be in support of the policies of the Nationalist (apartheid) government and an instrument of its policy with regard to its response to student protest. He later joined the Nationalist government as Minister of Finance.

Schlebusch Commission's investigation into the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) and through the introduction of more rigorous criteria and formulae for the financing of universities. One of the areas which the Government sought to exclude from the ambit of Universities was adult education, relegating it instead to the Department of Cultural Affairs and precluding that department from making grants to universities for work in this area.

In relation to adult education more specifically this period (1970-1976) is very evidently one in which university interest in adult education begins to find more definite form and direction. Although there is little direct evidence, it is probable that this awakening interest is related indirectly to the circumscribing of other adult education opportunities and particularly to the closure of the night school system which by the end of the sixties was more or less complete. By the late 1960s the University of Cape Town's Department of Adult Education was beginning to refocus its work towards adult education development², the University of Natal started its pilot extension programme in 1971 and the University of the Witwatersrand incorporated the formerly independent Institute for Adult Studies in 1973. The 1973 conference on Adult Education organised by the University of Cape Town attracted delegates from all the (then) 16 South African Universities³ and included representatives from the Universities of Rhodesia and Malawi. While the nature of adult education activity was very differently understood and while very few of the universities had established departments of adult education or extra mural studies, most claimed some involvement although this commonly included diverse activities across several departments. The 1973 conference served to generate interest and led by the University of Cape Town and particularly championed by its then Vice Chancellor, Sir Richard Luyt, the interest of Universities in this area grew to the extent that by 1975 the Committee of University Principals set up a sub-committee on continuing education.

2:2 History

Beginnings (1970-71)

The Centre for Adult Education at the University of Natal had its institutional origins in a 1970 joint initiative by the Durban SRC and Convocation of the University of Natal in the form of a motivation to the University to mount a programme of extension lectures.⁴

² Millar, C J, *Adult Education at the University of Cape Town in Educating the Educators* p.98. See also Walker, D, *Extra Mural Programmes and Adult Education at the University of Cape Town*, Chpt 4.

³ Tobias, R, Report on Seminar, Proceedings of the Universities Seminar on Adult Education, 24-26 September, 1973, Centre for Extra-Mural Studies, University of Cape Town, 1974.

⁴ Mackie, R D A, The University of Natal Extension Programme, Proceedings of the Universities Seminar on Adult Education 24-26 September, 1973, p.26, Centre for Extra Mural Studies, University of Cape Town, 1974.

As indicated in the first section of this chapter, the motivation was made at a time of international student protest and in as much as this was directed towards more relevant curricula, the motivation can be understood as an attempt to provide students with an opportunity to broaden their curriculum by enabling them to register for courses of study as a supplement to their formal curriculum.⁵ This in turn can be seen as a very modest and pragmatic response to the more general demand for more relevant curricula. It can also be seen to be underpinned by an essentially liberal view of education in the liberal arts tradition of university extension.⁶

Convocation's interest was built on a similar understanding but with a different constituency in mind; its intention was to provide its members with a means of keeping abreast of developments in academic and professional fields, both in their original field of study and more widely.

In addition to these two impulses the motivation was driven by a commitment to more open access to the University – particularly across racial barriers – and the recognition of the opportunity which this initiative provided to further this aim.

In formal terms the initiative was taken forward on the basis of a memorandum written by Mr Middleton of the SRC to the University Administration and entitled “Memorandum on the Possible Establishment of a Department of Extra Mural Studies.” and dated 9 October 1970. The memorandum is couched in very general terms and confines itself to the broad concept with an indication of support from a group of staff and students. In describing what could be provided it draws heavily on the experience of the University of Cape Town. There is also recognition of the broader context in an explicit reference to the closure of the night schools:

With the enforced closing of the night schools in the country there has been a complete lack of provision of extra mural studies or adult education for black and white people.

It also contained a suggestion that buildings which the University then owned in the city centre - known as “Oldham Buildings” (also sometimes known as “City Buildings”) – would be a suitable venue. Although this suggestion was made again later in the history of the Centre it was never accepted which given the Centre's later difficulty with accommodation and with appropriate venues, was unfortunate.

⁵ There is only fragmentary documentary evidence to support this assertion. I have a personal recollection – as a student – of a survey conducted by the SRC at this time to gauge student support for short courses for the purpose of broadening formal studies. The special dispensations negotiated for students which included a 50% discount on fees and a facility for charging these fees directly to student accounts lends support to the view expressed here. In addition there is a record of an SRC suggestion for “a year-long series of non-credit lectures ...which students from other faculties might attend” (Minutes of the 15th meeting of the Academic Planning and Policy Committee, 6 October, 1971).

⁶ The memorandum produced in pursuance of this initiative clearly envisaged courses in the liberal-arts studies mould and makes specific mention of support from the departments of English, Economics, History, Speech and Drama, Political Science and Philosophy. Memorandum on the Possible Establishment of a Department of Extra Mural Studies, P. Middleton, 9.10.1970

The University's response, though cautious, indicated a measure of enthusiasm. The new Principal, Professor Stock, in particular saw the opportunity which it presented to improve the image of the University and took it under his wing.⁷

The memorandum was tabled at the next meeting of the Academic Planning and Policy Committee (AP&PC) on 15 October – a mere 6 days later – from where it was referred to the November meeting of the Executive Committee of Senate and from there back to the December meeting of the AP&PC where four members including the Principal were allocated the task of discovering information relating to university involvement in adult education from Britain, Australia, America and South Africa.

In March of 1971 the Committee heard reports from its members on the various countries from which they had sought information and in addition considered a memorandum prepared by the Academic Planning Officer, on the proposed establishment of a department of Extra Mural Studies⁸. The memorandum is a fairly comprehensive review of university involvement in adult education drawing on sample information from Britain, Australia, the United States and South Africa. It drew a distinction between “Regular extra-mural studies and refresher courses at undergraduate or graduate level”, “Professional and Vocational Guidance Programs”, “Cultural and Liberal Arts Studies” and “Community Programmes” and considered university responsibility for each area. It also distinguished a wide range of programme formats including *inter alia* public lectures, series of public lectures, short courses, summer schools and educational tours. It considered subjects covered, management, staffing, finance and regional activities. The comprehensive nature of the memorandum and the level at which it was considered indicates the serious consideration which the University gave to the establishment of this initiative. This is in sharp contrast to the University's later neglect of the Centre as will be seen in Chapter 4.

The public relations value of an extra mural function was not lost on the University and was specifically recognised in the memorandum:

One further point that may be relevant in relation to the question of whether the University should enter the field, is that adult education programmes have considerable public relations

⁷ Apart from my own recollection of Professor Stock's keen interest – as a new and very junior part-time member of staff he nevertheless asked to see me to impress on me the importance of this new venture – the documentary record shows that Professor Stock personally undertook some of the negotiations and planning as evidenced by a minute of the Academic Planning and Policy Committee of 14 April 1971 which records that the Chairman advised members of informal discussions which had taken place and which notes that “The Committee agree that the Chairman and Mr Masson would compile a suggested programme of lectures as a pilot scheme”. Professor Stock was also frequently present to support the evening extension courses.

⁸ Academic Planning Office Memo No.1, Proposed Establishment of Department of Extra Mural Studies, 10.3.71, in *Extension Programme 1970-1975*, Mackie, R.D.A (Compiler), Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit, 1976.

value in that the advertising inevitably involved in running the courses serves also to provide favourable publicity for the University.⁹

Given that relations between the University and the community were at a particularly low ebb it is not surprising that the University was conscious of the public relations value of an extension lecture programme. In addition the University saw, as a further possibility, an opportunity to build support with professional constituencies by servicing the continuing educational needs of the professions.¹⁰

The memorandum stopped short of making any recommendations and the committee, after debating the memorandum and reports, decided that it needed to consult representatives of organisations already offering programmes of various kinds in order to ensure future co-operation and avoid duplication. A sub-committee was appointed for this purpose with the Principal as Chairman.

At the next meeting in April 1971, the Principal reported that the consensus of opinion reached in consultations with other organisation was that “there appeared to be quite considerable unsatisfied demand”¹¹. The Committee agreed that the Principal and Academic Planning Officer “would compile a suggested programme of lectures as a pilot scheme”¹². Only at its next meeting in June, when presented with a proposal for nine courses of five lectures, did it decide to recommend to Senate Executive that approval be given for the introduction of a pilot scheme of public lectures.

Pilot Years (1971-1973)

The cautiousness of the University - amounting perhaps to no more than prudence - can already be seen in the careful process leading up to this point. In making its recommendation to set up a pilot series of courses, the Academic Planning and Policy Committee specified a number of conditions including minimum registration levels. Even at the experimental stage the University was not willing to risk any course unless a minimum registration was assured. In the event all courses achieved the prescribed minimum.

Five courses were offered in the second half of 1971. These courses were in the areas of English literature, industrial psychology, structural design; cybernetics, and international relations. Each course comprised five related lectures given in the

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ I can find no direct documentary evidence to support this contention in the formal record. I rely here on my own memory of efforts made to involve professional bodies – such as the Institute of Civil Engineers – at an early stage and courses run in co-operation with professional bodies. This link was strengthened later when the Association of Scientific and Technical Societies based itself in the Centre.

¹¹ Minutes of the Academic Planning and Policy Committee, 14 April, 1971, Item 2.1

¹² Ibid.

evenings at weekly intervals. With the exception of the course on English literature (titled “Modern English Poets”) all the courses were offered in both Durban and Pietermaritzburg. In addition the course on cybernetics which was directed particularly towards civil engineers, was run as a day-long workshop in Empangeni to gauge support for regional activities. In general the courses were intended for the “educated layman” and first year undergraduate level was assumed to be appropriate for this target.

Three yardsticks appear to have been used to judge the success of this experimental programme. The first is the support which the courses received, the second appears to have been the comments of participants and the third the financial cost.

Registrations for the Durban courses ranged between 29 and 123 and for the Pietermaritzburg courses between 12 and 61. In total 473 people registered for full courses in both centres. These figures led to the conclusion that “there is no doubt that the demand in Durban is sufficient to support an expanded programme.”¹³

A questionnaire was administered to participants on these courses to gauge their response. The tentative nature of the programme at this stage is reflected in the introduction to the questionnaire:

In attending this course you have been taking part in an experiment to find out whether there is a demand for university extension courses of this kind.....¹⁴

The comments made in response to the questionnaire were very favourable and in addition give a clear impression of the constituency who responded to these extension courses – as indicated by the following selected comments:¹⁵

The university is a very suitable place and the time p.m. is suitable as it allows working people to get home from work, have dinner and still get here on time. Parking is no problem at the University and it is centrally situated for most of the suburbs.

As a B.Sc. graduate, and industrial chemist, these lectures have opened new vistas for me.

Most of us (by looking about one) at these courses left school sometime ago.....

These comments obviously reflect an essentially white, middle-class, well-educated and probably professional-orientated constituency.

A few of the responses, through their mild criticism which looked for a more adult education orientated approach, give some indication of the nature of the curriculum:

¹³ Academic Planning Memo No: 3, 15 December 1971. It is clear from the record that this conclusion had been draw long before this memorandum came to be written.

¹⁴ Extension Courses Questionnaire, Appendix to Academic Planning memo No.2 (Interim Report of University Extension Courses)

¹⁵ Ibid.

I find it strange for the University to adhere to hackneyed lecture-type presentations.

I think audience participation would be better effected if we could divide into small groups ...

I feel that the lectures should be kept at a *fairly* general level. The Dylan Thomas lecture, though brilliant, was hardly at the level of the audience.

... the lectures were much too long (and) discussion ... did not take place. It would have been interesting to see what people thought about the topics dealt with in the course.

Clearly these were sets of fairly formal lectures in a traditional tried and trusted format with little or no concession to evolving adult education techniques and general methodology.

The third yardstick against which the viability of the programme was measured was cost. The financial result was encouraging. Total “takings” (course fees) were reported as R2527 as against direct costs of R1252.

Throughout the pilot years and particularly during the period leading up to and during the experimental programme the Academic Planning and Policy Committee played a direct role at a level of considerable detail. In making its recommendation to begin a pilot programme, the Committee specified a number of conditions which were to become the basis of future policy with regard to Extension Lectures. These included minimum registration levels, conditions for accepting single lecture attendances, course fees to be charged, fees to be paid to lecturers, conditions under which staff members might be admitted free of charge and special fees for students.¹⁶

As the experimental programme developed the Committee received and discussed detailed reports. It went further to involve itself in administrative matters where policy had not been developed and in this way developed policy. This is evident for example, where it considered and determined what refunds should be awarded in individual cases where these were claimed.¹⁷ The Academic Planning Officer often in direct consultation with the Principal, played a key role in organising and implementing the programme. The reasons for and consequences of this association were significant to the development of the Centre and will be explored more fully in the final section of this chapter.

By December 1971, the Committee was sufficiently encouraged by the response to the experimental programme to agree to continue on an enlarged pilot basis for another year and the Principal, as Chairman, undertook to ask the University Council to approve the appointment of an organiser on a temporary basis and to underwrite the salary (which was not to exceed R4000) in the clear expectation that income from the programme would cover the costs including the cost of the organiser’s

¹⁶ Minutes of the Academic Planning and Policy Committee, 16 June, 1971, item 2.1 and 11 August, item 2.1.

¹⁷ Minutes of the Academic Planning and Policy Committee, 6 October, 1971, item 2.1.2

salary. The Committee specifically agreed that the appointment would continue after the initial year “only in the event of the scheme’s proving to be self-supporting”¹⁸

In the event an “Organiser”, a political science honours student, was appointed only in April on a four-hours-a-day basis and a salary of R175 per month. Nevertheless a programme of courses was arranged for both halves of the year with a total of 17 courses in Durban, nine of which, were also offered in Pietermaritzburg. There was some attempt to experiment with the format of the courses; a few courses consisted of six lectures, one of 12, two of four while the rest remained five lecture courses. In addition in Pietermaritzburg a locally developed course on child psychology was run in conjunction with a Pietermaritzburg based organisation. The subject matter took on a more definite liberal arts character and included Greek history, political studies, law, education, art, anthropology, geology and religion. In Durban the average registration per course was approximately 70 with additional “single lecture” attendances.¹⁹ Interestingly the registration figures distinguish “full registrations” and “student registrations”. Student registrations accounted for some 35% of total registrations indicating high student support and reflecting one of the points of origin of the programme.

The appointment of an Organiser changed the role of the Academic Planning Officer in relation to the Programme. From the beginning he had been the executive arm of the Academic Planning and Policy Committee reporting to it via the Principal who was Chairman of that committee. With the appointment of an Organiser the Academic Planning Officer assumed a more supervisory role. In some respects this change was immediate but in other respects it changed gradually although it was more or less fully accomplished by the end of 1974.

In September 1972 the Organiser was able to report as follows:

Although the organisation is in a trial stage, the basis for a permanent existence has grown during the year. There has been a fair profit. There is a separate office, an Addressograph system, a substantial mailing list, and most importantly, a growing influence on a part of the population of Durban. The idea of the Open University is gaining some currency.²⁰

This is the first sense one gets of a separate organisation; indeed it is the first time the word organisation is applied to this experimental programme of lectures. There is also a sense of mission implied in the words “Open University” which is absent from the formal record up to this point. In fact the programme was far from being an organisation at this stage; it was still very much part of the Academic Planning Office, but the process of organisational birth and development had obviously begun.

¹⁸ Minutes of the Academic Planning and Policy Committee, 6 October, 1971, Item 2.1.4.

¹⁹ Academic Planning Memo No.4, 15 September, 1972, p. 5

²⁰ Ibid.

The Organiser's report is preoccupied with the financial aspects of the programme – with its costs and income – and with registration and attendance figures and patterns. As already noted these were the yardsticks chosen by the Academic Planning and Policy Committee to measure the success of the programme and reflect the concern of the University with regard to finance. Amazingly the Programme was able to report a “profit” even after paying the Organiser's salary which together with the balance on the 1971 courses enabled the programme to begin 1973 with a balance of R3500 which was only a little short of the amount which Council had agreed to underwrite the programme.

The report went on to outline the basis on which the Programme could be run in 1973, making a case for putting it on a permanent footing with a full-time Organiser. At its September meeting however, the Academic Planning and Policy Committee decided that “in view of the current financial stringency it would be unwise to embark on a greatly expanded extension programme in 1973 (and that) the programme should be continued on the current scale.”²¹

In consequence the 1973 Programme continued on the same basis but with a new temporary part-time Organiser. Courses in both Durban and Pietermaritzburg were continued at the same level but in addition a Winter School on environmental issues provided a focus for the programme as a whole and the BBC film series “Civilisation” which was shown as part of the programme drew unprecedented audiences of over 1000, demonstrating both the interest in and lack of public cultural/educational programmes. At another level this overwhelming response can be attributed simply to the absence of a television service in South Africa.²²

Participants continued to be essentially middle-class and well educated but though predominantly White the programme was from the outset deliberately and self consciously open and was advertised as such. In addition to a statement in all publicity material which stated that the courses were open to all and that no formal qualifications were required, a further statement was included which read:

Courses are open to all races.

This was little more than a gesture but it was considered an important point of principle. Although the University did not consider itself in a position to flout the law it was willing to exploit any available loophole. Along with the other liberal universities it had protested vigorously against the Extension of University Education Act which had prohibited “non white” students from registering at “white” universities. Legal opinion was sought as to whether extra mural activities were

²¹ Minutes of the Academic Planning and Policy Committee, 22 September, 1972.

²² The absence of a television service was understood by many as a deliberate attempt on the part of the Government to control the South African public by limiting exposure to material which might undermine its ideological position.

covered by this and other legislation.²³ The opinion suggested that it was probably not and the University determined to act accordingly. The decision was no doubt influenced by the original motivation which had drawn a link between the need to establish an extension programme and the closure of the night schools. In reality few “non whites” made use of this opportunity although some attempt was made particularly by Convocation to develop interest and support and some courses, particularly one which looked at the issue of race and which was run early in 1973, attracted some interest. The “Civilisation” films and later and more particularly the film series “Roots” attracted sufficient interest from across the colour spectrum to warrant direct government intervention.²⁴

Establishment of the EMS Unit and Board of Control (1973-1976)

In all the “experimental programme” lasted for two and a half years from the middle of 1971 to the beginning of 1974 and even when it ended, there was no obvious transition to a more permanent status except in the most formal terms and even these were ambiguous. The programme was simply allowed to grow and evolve in line with the direction and policy established at the outset of the experimental phase and within a minimal formal framework and organisational infrastructure.

This process of transition was initiated by a memorandum prepared by the Academic Planning Officer in April 1973,²⁵ in his capacity as unofficial guardian of the growing experimental programme.²⁶ The memorandum briefly summarised the development of the experimental programme to that point and came to the following conclusion:

From the experimental programme thus far it can therefore be concluded that there is sufficient public demand for such courses to justify their continuance. On the social side there is no doubt that they contribute to the intellectual life of the community and are a legitimate activity for a university. On the public relations side, they have perhaps helped to counteract the somewhat tarnished image of the University in the eyes of the public. On these grounds a good case can be made for placing the extension programme on a permanent basis and setting up a special department to deal with it.²⁷

²³ Four acts of legislation had to be considered, viz: The Extension of University Act; The Bantu Education Act; The Group Areas Act; and, The Bantu (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act.

²⁴ This incident occurred in 1978 and is dealt with more directly in Chapter 3.

²⁵ The Extension Programme 1974-1976, Academic Planning Office Memo No: 6, 10 April, 1973, in 1970-1975 Extension Programme, Mackie, R.D.A (Ed.), Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit, 1976.

²⁶ I believe that the memorandum was probably drawn up on the instigation of the Principal and was to some extent a briefing paper for him. I remember close informal consultation between senior administrative staff who at the time formed an inner counsel with the Principal. In formal terms it was prepared for the Academic Planning Committee.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 1

The memorandum went on to identify and describe six primary functions for such a department. These were:

1. to organise extension courses
2. to organise professional and semi-professional courses, seminars, symposia and conferences on behalf of academic departments
3. to organise residential winter schools
4. to collaborate with the Departments of Fine Arts, Music and Speech and Drama in arranging exhibitions, concerts and public performances
5. to co-operate with outside bodies in arranging courses
6. to arrange for the showing of cultural and educational films²⁸

Four further subsidiary functions were also outlined. These included: arranging the weekly “College lecture”²⁹; arranging inaugural lectures³⁰; arranging public lectures³¹; and, maintaining a register and publishing a daily bulletin of extramural activities on the campus.³²

Neither the recommendations made at the end of the memorandum nor any subsequent minutes record anything further with regard to the functions of the proposed department. From the absence of further discussion and from the subsequent work of the department which included some involvement in almost all the areas mentioned, it must be assumed that there was agreement on these functions but this agreement was implicit rather than explicit; there is no formal statement of the functions or terms of reference of the proposed department.

In a paragraph headed “Control”, the memorandum explored the most appropriate institutional location for the proposed department. It recognised that while the experimental programme had been carried out under the aegis of the Academic Planning Policy Committee, “it would not seem appropriate that the Extension Department should continue under this committee indefinitely after it becomes permanent”. It also recognised the multifaceted nature of the work that would be required of the department:

²⁸ Ibid, pp. 2-3.

²⁹ This was an already well established institution at the University of Natal introduced by an earlier Principal, Professor Malherbe. It was a weekly lecture given either by a visiting academic or prominent local academic for the benefit of the entire University community and had a lecture period deliberately blocked out for this purpose. Although the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit did not immediately take on this function, it became closely involved with it and this association continued throughout the period of this study..

³⁰ The Extra mural Studies Unit successfully resisted taking on this function.

³¹ Particularly in the early days the Unit did organise a number of public lectures.

³² Although the Unit avoided taking on this function directly, it nevertheless contributed to it.

While much of the work of the Department will be administrative, it nevertheless manifests many features which are essentially academic.

There is no attempt in the document to identify the academic features nor to reconcile this with the essentially administrative functions previously described. Nevertheless its assumed academic functions were used to argue that ultimate responsibility for the department should vest in Senate but that since “it could not logically be assigned to any faculty”, it should ultimately be governed by a small board of control “reporting through Senate to Senate Executive” comprising “a member of the Executive Office and nominees of the Senate, Convocation and the SRC, numbering not more than five in all”.³³ However as an interim measure the memorandum saw the Department continuing under the supervision of the Academic Planning Officer and that office providing accommodation and clerical services.

The memorandum mapped out a staff plan which envisaged the appointment of a permanent organiser at the beginning of 1974 – initially at junior lecturer level and then at lecturer level, with a part-time administrative assistant appointed in the middle of 1974 to become full-time by 1975. It also envisaged a part-time student assistant in Pietermaritzburg.

With regard to the financing of the department the memorandum expressed the opinion that it could continue on a self-funding basis with Council having to underwrite its costs “by no more than it does at present.”

The memorandum also envisaged that by 1976 it would be necessary to assess the achievements of the department “to decide whether the University’s extension activities should be maintained at that level or should be allowed to develop further”.³⁴

Finally, by way of summary the memorandum made the following recommendations:

1. a permanent Extension Department be set up by the University of Natal at the beginning of 1974,
2. the initial staff shall consist of an organiser appointed at junior lecturer level with the assistance of a part-time administrative assistant in Durban and a part-time student organiser in Pietermaritzburg,
3. initially the Department be run as a section of the Academic Planning Office, but provision should be made for it to be split off as an independent unit with its own board of control by the end of the 1974-1976 triennium,
4. the cost of accommodation, postages and telephones be borne by the University Administration,

³³ Academic Planning memo No: 6 (supra), p. 4.

³⁴ Ibid.

5. the remaining costs be set off against fees charged but that Council be requested to underwrite any losses on the operations of the Department to an amount not exceeding R4000 per annum.³⁵

The memorandum was significant because it provided a reference point for the development of the Centre over the following three years and because the course that it mapped out was followed, in reality, almost exactly as it envisaged. The Academic Planning and Policy Committee, Senate Executive and Council, each in turn, adopted the recommendations in exactly the same form without any amendment or recorded discussion.³⁶ A permanent, full-time organiser was appointed from the beginning of 1974 and other staff were appointed as planned. The status of the department was not defined and as will become evident in Chapter 3 was clearly subject to different interpretations by key players. Throughout 1974 the programme continued to refer to itself as “the Extension Programme” although there is some evidence to suggest that a distinction was drawn between the organisational structure and the programme of courses, which may account for the continuance of this name.

By 1975 there is a more developed sense of an organisational structure which was beginning to be called the “Extension Unit and shortly thereafter as the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit³⁷ but the nature of the structure as between administrative and academic was not clear and this lack of clarity was linked to the failure to specify the terms of reference of the new “department”.

The Programme continued to develop and in 1974 added a very successful Winter School which unlike the previous year offered a range of courses mainly in the liberal arts but also including an intensive course on the use of X-rays in industry. The five or six lecture course format was augmented by longer courses in languages, accounting and social work. Public lectures and educational and cultural films also became part of the curriculum. By 1975 the Unit had a programme of over 40 courses in Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

In general these organisational and curriculum changes reflecting both growth and development were achieved in a smooth and continuous fashion. There was no fanfare and nothing to mark the establishment of an extension activity as a new feature of campus life.

The Programme was not without its critics and detractors. In part this was due to the identification of the Extension Programme with the Academic Planning Office. Both

³⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

³⁶ Academic Planning and Policy Committee, 9 May, 1973; Senate Executive, 29 May 1973; Council 22 June 1973.

³⁷ Officially it was given the name Extension Unit. Units were defined by the University as essentially special service entities with a strong administrative connotation. The words “Extra Mural” were inserted by myself in order to make its function more publically accessible and in due course this simply became its official name.

the Extension Programme and the Academic Planning Office were established at about the same time; consideration of an extension programme was one of the first items of business of the newly established Academic Planning and Policy Committee. Both initiatives were driven by a new Principal who was perceived to be introducing norms which were regarded with some suspicion. In fact the new South African Post-Secondary Education (SAPSE) statistical requirements were introduced by a government intent on limiting the scope of university activity – as discussed in the first section of this chapter. Attempts by the newly appointed Academic Planning Officer to explain the new requirements for annual statistical returns reflecting use of staff time and at the same time to encourage staff members to contribute to the Extension Programme were sometimes confused and misinterpreted in some quarters as an attempt to make additional demands on staff.

In other respects suspicion of the Extension Programme may have arisen from the way in which the University Administration had taken hold of the initiative and driven it forward (see section 3) in an exclusive manner. There was also resistance to the very notion of an extension activity on the grounds that it was unacademic and inappropriate to a university. In a milder form this criticism was directed towards limiting the kind of courses provided through the Programme to courses which could be understood simply as an extension of the normal university curriculum.

Most of this antipathy was expressed informally³⁸ but indications are also present in the formal record, as in a minute of a meeting of the Academic Planning and Policy Committee of 11 August 1971, which recorded that:

Mr Nupen's request that a staff meeting be organised to discuss the whole question of the University's extra-mural activities, was not approved.

While much of this hostility was misdirected or based on various misconceptions, the Committee did not make much effort to placate its critics or show much willingness to accommodate other views. In response to a staff request for unrestricted access to extension lectures, the minutes record that:

The Committee unanimously agreed that it was not prepared to accede to the request of Professor van Niekerk that staff members be allowed to attend lectures free of charge or on payment of a reduced fee.³⁹

Similarly in response to a student suggestion of a year-long series of non-credit lectures which students from all faculties could attend and for which a certificate of attendance could be issued, the minute reflects that :

³⁸ It reached the Programme directly and indirectly in the course of normal interaction. I remember some of it as aggressively hostile.

³⁹ Minutes of the Academic Planning and Policy Committee, 28 September, 1971, item 2.1.3

The Committee did not view this latter suggestion with favour.⁴⁰

Much of the early discontent dissipated as the Extension Programme began to demonstrate a capacity to provide good quality courses and once it became obvious that some of the fears were unfounded. But some of the distrust which lingered finally erupted in a meeting of the Board of the Faculty of Arts in March 1974. After a series of acrimonious exchanges concerning a proposed series of lectures to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the landing of the first white settlers in Natal, Professor Webb⁴¹ persuaded the Faculty Board that there should be co-ordination between the Extension Lectures department and itself and the Board resolved to recommend to Senate Executive:

That proposals for extension lectures should be submitted to the appropriate Board of Faculty before they were implemented.⁴²

This brought into question the line of accountability. The Programme as established at the beginning of 1974 was properly accountable in a formal sense but the line of accountability was unusually short, directed to the centre of the institution and exclusive of the broad academic community. Essentially it ran from the Organiser to the Academic Planning Officer to the Principal and from the Principal to the Academic Planning and Policy Committee, Senate and Council. It was not unusual for the Principal to be consulted on matters of detail.

The response of the Extension Programme to the Arts Board's resolution typifies the relationship just described and at the same time proposes a way of resolving the problem. The response took the form of a letter from the Academic Planning Officer directly to the Principal and contained the following proposal:

I should strongly resist a move to submit proposals for extension lectures for vetting by faculty boards as this would further complicate what is already a difficult task and, in the case of controversial programmes, introduce intolerable delays while boards attempted to secure consensus. On the other hand, in my report to the Academic Planning and Policy Committee on the future of the extension programme, I expressed the opinion that eventually the Senate should be requested to set up a "board of management" for the programme. I wonder if the time for this has not come.⁴³

The Principal supported this proposal and the Organiser was asked to prepare a further memorandum on the future development of the Extension Department. This

⁴⁰ Minutes of the Academic Planning and Policy Committee, 6 October, 1971, item 2.1.1. (d). In this instance the Committee did direct the Academic Planning Officer to discuss the whole matter with the student representative.

⁴¹ Then head of the department of History in Pietermaritzburg and later (in 1984) as Vice Principal to become Chairman of the Centre for Adult Education's Advisory Committee.

⁴² Minutes of the Board of the Faculty of Arts, 5 March, 1974, item 10.6.

⁴³ Extract of a letter from the Academic Planning Officer, Dr. D. R. Masson to the Principal, Professor F.E. Stock, March 1974.

memorandum⁴⁴ followed the general direction set out in the memorandum of the previous year which had been written by the Academic Planning Officer. While primarily concerned with the establishment of a board of control, it also made further proposals regarding the staffing and financing of the department and on management of the Pietermaritzburg programme.

The memorandum constructed an argument in favour of establishing a board of control in the following terms:

A Board of Control would provide a broad base from which the Extension Programme could operate by involving, by representation, the whole University community and by committing individual members to the interests of the Extension Programme. It would furthermore, meet some of the criticism which has been levelled at the present programme and which is probably largely directed at its *ad hoc* nature.⁴⁵

It also explained the purpose of the board in a way which makes clear that both an immediate and an ongoing function were intended. The immediate purpose was seen as gaining clarity on the role of the department.

The board will have to decide on the ultimate objectives of the Extension Department; it will have to determine the role of the department in the field of adult education. From time to time it will also have to make decisions concerning the continuing development and direction of the programme.⁴⁶

The terms of reference for the board were therefore proposed as:

- (a) to plan the future development of the Extension Department; and
- (b) to assess, evaluate and develop the current programme by formulating general policies within which the programme can operate.⁴⁷

In line with earlier thinking with regard to the Board of Control, the memorandum noted that the department could not be logically assigned to any faculty but that the board should be responsible directly to Senate through the Senate Executive Committee.

With regard to staffing, the memorandum provided the clearest indication to that point of the nature of the post of Organiser and its functions, recognising the academic and administrative facets and anticipating a status “equivalent to that of director of one of the University’s research units”. It also proposed the establishment of a full-time administrative assistant post from the beginning of 1975.

⁴⁴ The Future Development of the Extension Department, Academic Planning Memo No:14, October 1974 in 1970-1975 Extension Programme, Mackie, R.D.A (Compiler), Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit, 1975.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 1.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 2.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

The main proposal with regard to finance was a recommendation that the University assume direct responsibility for the fixed costs of the department including staffing, that the department itself bear the running costs and that the University no longer be required to underwrite the operations of the department.

The difficulty of organising a programme in Pietermaritzburg from Durban was mentioned for the first time in the first report of the Organiser in 1972. The memorandum addressed the problem directly and proposed a two stage development. The first stage proposed the appointment of a part-time organiser in Pietermaritzburg in 1976, responsible either to a Pietermaritzburg based “supervisor” or to the Durban department. The second stage envisaged a separate department and Board of Control in Pietermaritzburg by 1978.

The proposals regarding the board of control and finance and the new administrative assistant post were accepted by the University.⁴⁸ The only alteration was the addition of a clause stipulating the membership of the Committee to include “the Principal or his nominee and nominees of Senate, Convocation and the Student’s Representative Council, numbering not more than five in all.”

One further development during 1975 which helped secure the independence and establish the identity of the Extension Unit was a physical move out of the academic planning offices to new accommodation. This move was not prompted by the needs of the Unit but rather by pressure on the space which the Unit was occupying. The choice of new accommodation was significant because it reflected a powerful notion of the broader purpose of the Centre which despite the carefully argued memoranda, still prevailed in the minds of the Executive. The new accommodation assigned to the Unit was within the Public Relations office.

It took over a year for the Board of Control to be established but it was finally constituted and met for the first time on 13 February 1976.

The Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit was now firmly established. It had a staff of three with two establishment posts, a secure funding base, its own accommodation, a flourishing programme of courses and a board of control to protect and promote its interests and develop policy.

At the end of March 1976, I resigned as Organiser for personal reasons. A new Organiser was appointed and together with the recently established Board of Control began a new chapter in the development of the Unit.

⁴⁸ Minutes of Senate Executive, 29 October, 1974, Item 9.1.2

2:3 Analysis – Policy in a policy vacuum

The way in which the Centre came into being had significant and lasting implications for its later direction and policy development as will be seen in succeeding chapters. The nature of its origin was a powerful determinant of the kind of work which the Centre later undertook and the way in which it understood and organised itself. This initial phase constructed many of the constraints and framed many of the opportunities of later years. It is therefore crucial to understand the elements of the legacy of these formative years.

In attempting to analyse policy through this period one is faced with the difficulty of identifying clearly articulated policies in what is in many ways a policy vacuum. The record as portrayed in the previous section contains very little by way of direct policy decisions and there is not much record of policy debate. And yet there are clear policy directions operating beneath the surface of formal decisions and actual development of the Extension Programme. Under these circumstances, policy has to be inferred from the decisions and actions.

In broad terms the University's extension policy through this period can be characterised as centralised, support-driven, theoretically weak and orientated towards an administrative function, and gradualistic. It was centralised in that the University developed it from the central administration. It was support-driven in that the curriculum was determined by the level of support which the various courses in the programme could attract. It was theoretically weak in that there was little sense of social or educational purpose - as illustrated by the ambiguity regarding the status of the Programme and the lack of clarity with regard to its functions. Insofar as it is theoretically conceptualised, the policy was to construct an administrative body to *organise* extension lectures. Finally, it was gradualistic in so far as it was decided to allow the programme to evolve slowly without determining any major objective, as opposed to beginning with an overall design and setting in place an organisational structure to achieve that end. This section explores each of these policy strands and the links between them.

Centralised control

It is clear from the previous section (2.2) that although the first impulse for the introduction of an extension service came from representatives of broad constituencies - the student body and Convocation, the crucial role played by the SRC and Convocation in initiating the Programme did not continue in any significant way⁴⁹ and the initiative from that point on was taken over by the University

⁴⁹ Convocation did help publicise the Extension programme both through its administrative office and through the personal efforts of its Executive members but it did not have a voice in the development of the Centre until the Board of Control was established in 1976, when representatives of both the SRC and Convocation were included in recognition of their initial interest in the Programme.

administration in a quite exclusive fashion. This could be interpreted as an act of leadership and doubtless this was a factor, but the antipathy which was generated towards the programme – though never intense – suggests a failure to build on and carry forward the “popular” origins. It seems important in this respect to recognise that although taken forward in the name of the University quite properly in formal terms, it was held very close to the centre of the institution. Neither the student body through the SRC, nor Convocation, nor the academic staff appear to have been involved in determining the kind of extension service which would best suit the University of Natal and the communities of Durban. Indeed, in respect of the academic staff it will be remembered that a request to discuss the development of an extension function was refused.

While this perspective seems substantially accurate, it is also necessary to guard against imposing judgments which are out of context. University management styles have changed considerably over the past twenty years and while it is inconceivable that an initiative of this kind would today occur without the involvement of wider representation, the manner in which the University set about the task was not at all unusual for the time.

Nevertheless the way in which the Centre came into being marked it, in these early years, as a project of the administration and set it apart from the rest of the University. The academic staff had played no part in the original proposal and had been denied an opportunity of contributing at a formative stage. This crucial constituency was in consequence effectively excluded and it is not surprising that some hostility was directed at the programme from members of this constituency in its early days. The effect as the Programme developed into a Unit was to leave it substantially isolated and this both contributed to and was exacerbated by its unclear status. Once it ceased to be the project of the day, it found itself to be neither a part of the administration nor with any links to the academic structures of the University.

There was never any deliberated decision to locate the Programme in a central way and no alternative was ever mooted. It seems unlikely that it was ever discussed; rather it probably seemed at the time to be the most logical and quite possibly the only course of action, to utilise the infrastructure of the newly created Academic Planning Office. This was after all a curriculum innovation and the Academic Planning and Policy Committee and its attendant post had just been created to co-ordinate these kinds of development. But it is also reasonable to infer a policy operating at an implicit level. The elements of this policy would almost certainly have been that in the absence of any logical place to lodge a new development of this kind it would be best held close to the administration and to the Planning Office in particular, where it could be both nurtured and directed in accordance with the wishes of the administration under the guidance of the Academic Planning and Policy Committee. The instrumental purpose which the programme was judged to have in terms of its public relations value and the personal interest of the Principal were also, no doubt, factors in determining this policy.

This policy was not without benefit to the Programme. The patronage of the Principal made it possible for the Programme to secure resources, support and access which it might otherwise have found more difficult and in addition protected it from its critics, some of whom may not have been unhappy to see the initiative founder. Conversely, the Programme was vulnerable to the particular vision or interpretation of its Patron and when that patronage dissipated, it left it with weaker structural links than it might otherwise have developed. In addition the programme might well have been strengthened by a robust debate with its critics. The weak theory on which the Programme was founded as well as its satisfaction with a support-driven curriculum to which aspects this analysis now turns, can be attributed in part to this strand of policy which relied on a small centrally located vision.

Support-driven Curriculum

As noted in section 2 of this chapter, the gauge for success of the programme was determined by the support which each course and the programme as a whole received. This was measured by reference to the number of people registering and attending courses and by audience response to the course. Audience response was tested by means of evaluation questionnaires as well as through informal feedback. Financial viability was a further significant factor but this was largely a reflection of the number of persons attending any course. These were easily accessible and understandable measures of success but they are also inadequate and misleading. They were intended no doubt as a rough and ready measure but they quickly acquired the force of policy and throughout this period and beyond, the prominence of these crude but seductive statistical measures in the Programme's annual reports reflect the importance which was attached to them. The measures were seductive because they made it possible to believe that the Programme was simply responding to demand and in the area of adult education, it could be justly argued that demand was a reasonable criterion. The fallacy concealed was that demand could somehow be equated to need and there was no attempt at this point to assess need in any objective fashion.

It is slightly ironic that at more or less the same time, Robert Tobias, then Director of the University of Cape Town's Centre for Extra Mural Studies, was warning against the limitations of relying on public response.

We must also seek evidence on the quality of the education provided, the breadth and scope of our complete programme....⁵⁰

The reliance on these measures led very quickly to a market- orientated curriculum policy from which, in respect of its extra mural programme, the Centre for Adult Education never escaped throughout the twenty year period of this history.

⁵⁰ Tobias, R., 1974 Annual Report of the Centre for Extra-Mural Studies, University of Cape Town. Quoted in Walker, D., *Extra-Mural Programmes at the University of Cape Town* (1984), p. 116.

What the University failed to do with regard to this aspect of policy was to exert its unique position and harness its considerable resources to determine and define need in relation to the society of which it was a part. It failed to do this not only in relation to the wider community, the dimensions and implications of which it had not yet fully understood, but also in relation to the much narrower constituency which it did understand. The reasons for this are fundamentally linked to the absence of any clearly thought-through theory which could guide the development of the programme.

Theoretical weakness and orientation to administrative function

Given the narrow range of interests represented in the group which made themselves responsible for taking the extension initiative forward it is perhaps not surprising that there was no strong sense of mission. This is not to say that there was no conception of the broad scope and purposes which adult education subsumes; there was even some excitement present from the outset at the possibilities which the project contained but there was also a separation between the broad vision of what might be possible at some indeterminate future date and the far more limited immediate purpose. Commitment to a wider fuller vision was conditional in many ways and particularly to the success of the initial venture.

Again given a limited commitment, it is perhaps not surprising that there should be no concerted attempt to consider the theoretical base on which the enterprise was to be founded. There is in the record no real explanation of the purpose of the enterprise which proceeded rather on the basis of assumptions and bland statements such as:

On the social side there is no doubt that (extension courses) contribute to the intellectual life of the community.⁵¹

But the theory underpinning the programme can be inferred. The theory most likely had two interlocking strands. The first strand would recognise the need for the University to develop and maintain links with the community of which it is a part and would further recognise that those links were at that time less than the University would wish them to be, to the detriment of the University. The second strand would recognise the wealth of cultural and intellectual resources contained in the University, the absence of opportunities for the people of Durban and Pietermaritzburg to access these resources, and the fact that many universities throughout the world had for some time offered programmes of non formal courses to facilitate access by the general public to these university resources. In short this theory was that the University could “contribute to the intellectual (and cultural) life of the community” and at the same time build better links with the community by mounting a programme of extension courses. A subsidiary version of this theory linked the educational enrichment of professional constituencies – rough refresher courses, for example – and the strengthening of links in those directions.

⁵¹ A fuller version of this extract was quoted on page 28 and referenced at footnote 25.

At best this is a simple theory on which to base a limited programme; at worst it worked to undermine a more complex and comprehensive theory which sought to address critical adult education needs in a more socially meaningful way. Vestiges of this fuller theory are present in muted and unexplored form in this initial phase, although competition between the two theories is not really discernible except through some of the contradictions which are present – as, for example, in the lack of clarity regarding the status and functions of the Extension Department. The “complex” and latent theory asserts itself more powerfully and ultimately successfully in the next phase which is the subject of Chapter Three.

The “simple” theory translated into policy at a number of points. One of these was the list of functions envisaged for the proposed Extension Department set out in the memorandum of April 1973.⁵² These understandably point to an essentially administrative body. One of the contradictions suggesting the more “complex” theory is the unexplained assertion of an academic function for the department.

The Programme’s association with and location in the Academic Planning Office and its general identification with the administration emphasised its administrative nature and the ambivalence between its administrative and academic character. The “simple” theory can be glimpsed again in the subsequent move of the programme to offices within the Public Relations Office.

Gradualistic development

The weak theoretical base can be seen to be both a result of and the reason for, the gradualistic development policy which is clearly evident in the record. It was consequential insofar as the cautious, limited and incremental approach which the University adopted towards the development of an extension initiative did not demand a clearly articulated theoretical base from which to proceed; it was causal in that the limited commitment and vision of the theory which did underpin the enterprise did not suggest the need for a bolder approach to the development of an organisational structure.

As the previous section (section 2.2, *supra*) has shown, there is no real end to the pilot phase or any launch of a full scale programme – the experimental phase is simply allowed to merge into a permanent programme and though an attempt was made to establish the programme, the record has also shown that the formal changes lacked real significance and were themselves ambiguous and variously understood. Subsequent changes in the status of the Centre which aimed to establish it and secure recognition for its work more definitely, will be seen in later chapters to be dogged by a similar unreality and ambiguity. The winning of formal recognition in various ways at various points turn out to be hollow achievements which although seemingly substantial, prove to be quite ethereal.

⁵² See pages 28-29 above.

A key factor in this gradualistic development model was clearly financial. The first section of this chapter in sketching the wider context, indicated the reluctance of government to commit funds to this aspect of university education and the reasons why this was so. The University of Natal along with other universities in South Africa was not permitted to use state funds for extension work and the work had to be funded instead out of the University's private funds. These were obviously limited with many other claims on them. Since in addition the Extension programme's claim on them was judged to be peripheral to mainstream university activity, it was generally accepted that the Programme should be mounted with as little cost to the University as possible.

The absence of a compelling theory in this early stage to ground the work of the Centre together with this severe financial limitation led inevitably to a policy of incremental development. Ironically the very success of the Programme in the terms in which it was cast allowed the University to be content with this policy and to shift the focus of its attention away from the initiative.

The Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit

The search for a role (1976-1983)

3:1 Context

The broad social and political history of this period is obviously beyond the scope of the present study but the events which comprised it were of such magnitude that they inevitably made their impression on every area of activity including university adult education and the points of impact must be noted in order to frame the more particular history of this study.

In the history of South Africa, this period began with the 1976 Soweto uprisings and ended with the new “tri-cameral” constitution. Between these two markers, processes of repression and reform worked to create a context which at the level of policy mixed hope and frustration in the area of adult education. The primary vehicle for this was the de Lange Commission but before considering this, it is necessary to explore an earlier attempt to develop policy for university based adult education.

The Sub-Committee on Adult Education which the Committee of University Principals set up in 1975 was most active in the second half of the 1970s and the early 1980s which coincides with the period now under review. The Committee was established in order to find a basis for government funding of university based extension programmes and although this ultimately proved a fruitless search, the work of the committee is not without significance not least because it constitutes the first attempt to develop policy for university adult education. The Sub-Committee itself formulated its task in the following terms:

To identify the role of universities in adult education in South Africa; to examine the practical considerations relating to that role and to make recommendations.¹

The forum brought together universities who held very different views on the appropriate role for universities in this area and who had never before met (and who have never yet met since), for this purpose. The proposals put forward by the Committee are in general an uneasy compromise of competing and strategic positions designed to provide a basis for government funding. The history of these proposals and deliberations is one of agonisingly protracted negotiations mediated by bureaucrats in a climate of financial stringency and ideological suspicion and even

¹ Minutes of the first meeting of the CUP Sub Committee on Adult Education, 2 May 1975, item 2

antipathy to the cause of university adult education.²

From the outset the Sub-committee understood the role for universities in the area of adult education in almost exclusively non formal, direct delivery terms and maintained a distinction between this function and the training of adult educators which it saw as simply a normal function of education faculties. Later attempts to define the activity even more closely in order to win government subsidy, led to a change in name of the Sub-committee to “Continuing Education.” The Sub-committee was also reluctant to recognise community education and adult basic education work and in relation to research in the area of adult education, declared that it had “no special recommendation to make.”

This separation of the training of adult educators from extension work stands in sharp contrast to the holistic development of the departments of adult and continuing education in the universities which developed both extra mural and adult education programmes. The conceptualisation of the field in these dichotomous and restrictive terms inevitably influenced policy, even if only negatively. In the case of the University of Natal, for example, the view of the Sub-committee was of little assistance to the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit in arguing for the development of a teaching function in respect of adult educators or for a community orientated programme. More generally, this view of the university’s role, while it did not actually prevent, did nothing to encourage the transformation of the existing extra mural departments into departments of adult education³ and failed to recognise that these departments through their experience held the key to this development. Fortunately in this respect the influence of the Sub-Committee was not significant; it had no direct power at all, but its thinking inevitably permeated policy debate and decisions in subtle ways.

Notwithstanding the view of the CUP, the University of Cape Town transformed its Department of Extra Mural Studies into a Department of Adult Education and Extra Mural Studies in 1979⁴ in such a way which allowed both components to flourish with a high degree of integration which yet maintained the integrity of each. The University of the Witwatersrand sought a more formal solution which maintained a high degree of autonomy for the academic and continuing education functions. The University of the Western Cape, entering the field much later than the other three universities in 1986, focussed its work on adult and community educators but did not confine this to formal courses. Some of the Afrikaans universities, by contrast, either maintained a

² I rely here (and throughout this section) on my own interpretation of these meetings in which I was a participant as well as on an analysis of the history of these meetings which I made in a draft and unpublished paper written in 1993.

³ I recognise that the Sub-Committee was intent on securing subsidy for the unsubsidised extra mural component of the activities of these departments but I understand the distinction it made to have been based on more than this strategic consideration.

⁴ Strictly speaking this was formalised only in 1983, but the *de facto* separation can be dated to 1979.

much stronger separation between the formal and non formal areas, as in the case of Stellenbosch and the Rand Afrikaans universities, or concentrated mainly on academic functions such as the University of the Orange Free State or on non formal provision as in the case of the University of Port Elizabeth. The University of Natal as the second section of this chapter will show, attempted to move towards including an academic function while standing on its extra mural base.

By 1980 it was clear that the route through the CUP was very unlikely to deliver funding and recognition for university adult education work. The report of a conference on the role of the University in Continuing and Adult Education hosted by the Centre for Extra Mural Studies at the University of Cape Town in 1980 and held on the eve of one of the Sub-Committee's meetings gives some indication of the extent of disarray.

(T)he discussion of what universities might do took place in the absence of any tradition of developing national policy for adult education as a whole, this being an area of striking neglect in South Africa, in terms of research, concepts and theory, legal framework, administrative structures, professional preparation of adult educators and resources. There was, therefore no available framework for debate, no common currency of ideas to draw on.⁵

Fortunately another opportunity to begin to develop a framework for debate presented itself the following year. This was the de Lange Investigation into education⁶ which was commissioned by the Cabinet in 1980 in response to the protests against the education system which had erupted in the Soweto revolt of 1976. Although the de Lange Investigation was not specifically concerned with adult education, the wide ranging nature of the review provided the first opportunity since 1946⁷ to engage with policy for adult education at a national level. Contributions made to the various committees which constituted the Investigation from groups and individuals with interests in adult and non formal education and in training, won support for the notion of integration and articulation between formal and non formal education systems. This notion was enshrined in one of the 11 key principles and permeates the body of the report.

Following the de Lange Report and arising from it the Urban Foundation launched a national project which was an attempt to develop policy for the provision of non formal education, in the absence of direct attention being given to this area in the de Lange Investigation. The process included a national survey on a regional basis of as much adult and non formal education work as could be uncovered in and around the

⁵ Millar, C.J, and Walker, D., Introduction to the conference proceedings on "The Role of the University in Continuing and Adult Education, Centre for Extra Mural Studies, University of Cape Town, 1981.

⁶ More properly called the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) Investigation into Education and chaired by Professor J.P. de Lange. Its report, published in 1981 was titled "Provision of Education in the RSA".

⁷ In 1943 the Minister of Education set up the Eybers Commission of Enquiry into Adult Education which published its report in 1946.

regional centres and involved a number of consultant groups of practitioners and experts as well as four interest groups. Although a draft report titled “Design Study for the Provision of Non-Formal Education” was produced, the project ended without a final report.⁸

At about the same time the Buthelezi Commission which was driven by more general concerns directed at constitutional reform, undertook a wide ranging inquiry which included proposals in respect of adult and non formal education.

All these processes generated debate around policy issues in adult education creating points of contact between individuals and fora for discussion. They also generated policy documents, research papers and reports which fed the debate. Significant amongst these was a submission to the de Lange Investigation by Morphet and Millar⁹ which was a milestone in the definition of the key concepts in the field and made clear proposals for the first time for a comprehensive lifelong education system. The University of Natal’s Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit through its staff contributed to the debate¹⁰ and drew from it inspiration for its own development.

Other developments in the field of adult education were significant to this period. These were related chiefly to increasing interest and activity in the area of literacy and of training. Edward French¹¹ in a report of his survey into literacy in South Africa notes the growing interest in the promotion of literacy in the 1970s and identifies three sources of this interest, the private sector, government and voluntary organisations. This interest was spurred by the need for a better trained workforce and more generally in the interests of social and economic development. Several events and developments bear witness to this awakening interest during the period of the study. The HSRC convened a national conference on literacy in 1978 and in the same year established a Division for Literacy Research in the HSRC. A number of literacy projects which later became prominent in the field began during this period. These included the Molteno project (1978), Learn and Teach (1979), and USWE (1982). Some of the larger commercial institutions began developing and running literacy

⁸ To some extent its work may have been taken over by the Non Formal Education Work Committee of the HSRC’s Main Committee for Educational Research when that committee was established in 1983.

⁹ Morphet and Millar, Continuing Education throughout Adulthood, Submission to the Work Committee on Educational System Planning of the Human Sciences Research Council’s Investigation into Education, Centre for Extra Mural Studies, University of Cape Town, February 1981.

¹⁰ John Aitchison and myself, then the only two academic staff members in the Centre, were part of the Durban “Interest Group” set up by the Urban Foundation to help formulate input to the de Lange Investigation and the Urban Foundation’s own “design study”. We also wrote a response on the adult education component of the de Lange Report for the University of Natal.

¹¹ French, Edward, The promotion of Literacy in South Africa, Human Sciences Research Council, 1982

programmes and the private sector as a whole initiated a number of educational and more general development projects of which the Urban Foundation was most significant. In partnership with the State, the Small Business Corporation, which included a training dimension, was launched in 1981.

The Government re-established a night school system in 1977 by opening a series of Adult Education Centres under the control of the Department of Education and Training. This provided a range of educational opportunities including literacy and in-service training. In 1981 the government passed legislation in the form of the Manpower and Training Act which provided the framework for training and established the National Training Board. It also introduced an incentive scheme to encourage and increase opportunities for training.

More specifically in the area of university adult education, three developments in particular had significance for the development of policy. All of these centred on the University of Cape Town. The first was the establishment of the first chair of adult education in a South African University and the appointment of Professor Clive Millar to that post in 1979; the introduction of the first diploma course for adult educators in 1980 and the establishment of the first university department of adult education in South Africa in 1983 at the University of Cape Town. The University of the Witwatersrand followed in similar fashion in all these areas shortly afterwards and these two sets of precedents provided powerful arguments for the recognition of adult education at other South African universities.

All these events and processes provided the background against which the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit forged its own development through this period.

3.2 History

Within the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit two significant changes mark this period. The first was the appointment of a new Organiser; the second was the development of the work of the Board of Control.¹²

Transition to a new Organiser (1976)

The appointment of Tony Morphet as the new Organiser in July 1976 was the first of several key changes in personnel during this period both within the Unit and in the University management positions which affected the Unit. All these changes were significant for the development of the Unit; the changes within the Unit will be recorded as the history is related but the reader who wishes to gather an overview is

¹² Although it had been officially established as a “board of control”, the committee never called itself by that name. Rather it called itself and came to be known as the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Committee. I have referred to it throughout as the “Committee of Control”.

referred to the note at the foot of this page.¹³

Morphet brought with him into the Centre an established academic background and status as a Senior Lecturer,¹⁴ a reputation as a liberal thinker and a network of contacts both within the academic community and beyond the university. The 1976 programme continued along the lines already set with the same kind and number of courses but with significantly smaller audiences.¹⁵ At the end of the year the same criteria were applied to assess the impact of the programme¹⁶ and the inferences drawn were that the lower attendance figures were attributable to the introduction of television, saturation of the market for evening courses and the impact of changes in personnel and particularly the transitional period between April and July.¹⁷

¹³ Robin Mackie resigned as Organiser on 31 March 1976. Tony Morphet was appointed as the new Organiser with effect from 1 July 1976 although he assumed a limited commitment from 1 April. From January 1978 to August 1979, Morphet took a combination of unpaid and sabbatical leave during which period Mackie returned to the Unit as Acting Director. (The post of Organiser was re-titled "Director" sometime between April and August 1977. In July 1979 Mackie was appointed Deputy Director with responsibility for developing a Pietermaritzburg office. Morphet resigned as Director with effect from 1 October 1980 and Mackie was then appointed Director in his place. In April 1981, John Aitchison was appointed Deputy Director in Pietermaritzburg to fill the vacancy left by Mackie's appointment as Director.

Dr Doug Masson, the Academic Planning Officer, served as Chairman of the Committee of Control for the first year of its existence. In March 1977, Professor Ray Sands (head of the department of English and Morphet's former head of department) took over and remained as Chairman until the Committee of Control was replaced by an Advisory Committee in 1980. Dr Mike Muir, the new Academic Planning Officer and former colleague in the department of Physics of the new Principal, then chaired the Advisory Committee as the Principal's representative.

Professor Stock's term as Principal came to an end in 1977. Professor Clarence, the then Vice Principal in Durban, was appointed in his place. Professor Booysen was appointed Vice Principal in Durban and in turn became Principal at the beginning of the next period of this history. All three men together with two other Vice Principals, Professors Webb and Cresswell who appear later in this history, were significant to the history of the development of the Centre as Vice Principals and Principals.

¹⁴ Morphet came to the Unit from the University's department of English.

¹⁵ The average attendance figure at each lecture fell from 98 in 1975 to 64 in 1975, 1977 Annual Report of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit.

¹⁶ These criteria were specifically identified in the Unit's 1976 Annual Report. "The three criteria by which the general performance of the year may be measured are the number of courses offered in the two centres, the average attendance per lecture and the financial accounts of the year." 1976 Annual Report of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit.

¹⁷ During this period Morphet was only able to act as Organiser in a part-time capacity.

The Committee of Control (1976)

The Committee of Control which had first met in February, held two further meetings in 1976, in May and in August. It was primarily concerned with determining its own role and in August decided that this was:

- 1) Accountability to Senate
- 2) The review of programmes
- 3) The academic direction
- 4) The review of finances¹⁸

But much of its work had to do either with administrative detail such as campus notice boards or accommodation or minor matters of policy such as admission fees for pensioners or complimentary tickets for academic staff. The Committee was reluctant to address larger policy issues. A minute of the meeting of 10 May, makes this point quite starkly:

The question of the Committee's policy on the long term educational objectives of the Unit was raised. It was decided that there was no need at this stage to define such objectives.¹⁹

Nevertheless the Committee gave its enthusiastic support at its next meeting to a request by the Organiser for approval to raise funds outside the University to fund "a project aimed at defining adult education needs of the greater Durban area."²⁰

Curriculum changes (1977)

The impact of Morphet's appointment began to be felt in the following year, 1977. The Annual Report for that year records greater interest in the work of the Unit by the academic staff and by the press and the general public. The average number of people attending the courses also picked up again. The programme of extension lecture courses and public lectures reflected a stronger interest in literature, music and film and the programme of pre-registered extra-mural courses continued to grow, boosted in particular by an energetic team of two lecturers, Gavin Staude and Paddy Miller,²¹ from the Pietermaritzburg faculty of Commerce who had seen the opportunity for short business courses. The Unit's work in academic support which began in 1975, assumed a larger proportion through the pre-university course for students known as *Bridging the Gap*. These developments did not amount to a major change of

¹⁸ Minutes of the third meeting of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit, 16 August, 1976, item 4.4.2.

¹⁹ Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit, 10 May 1976, item 10.

²⁰ Minutes of the meeting of August 16 (see above), item 11.

²¹ Gavin Staude and Paddy Miller together contributed nine courses to the 1977 programme and went on to contribute a total of over 30 courses over the three year period to 1979. Their courses, affectionately termed "cash-cows" contributed significantly to the financial stability of the Unit over this period.

curriculum either in scale or in content but they held the promise of a change of direction.

A Teaching and Research Unit (1977)

The change of direction was more obviously expressed in organisational and policy terms. This was prompted by an unexpected incident which brought into focus the ambiguity surrounding the academic status of the Unit.²² As already indicated Morphet came into the Centre with independently established academic credentials and, as an internal appointment, carried with him academic conditions of service. The previous incumbent had also been on academic conditions of service at the time of his resignation and it was generally assumed that this was an academic post but this was not unequivocally clear.²³ In any event Morphet had accepted the post on the understanding that it was an academic one and with the expressed intention of wishing to take the sabbatical leave already due to him, in 1978. When Professor Stock (the outgoing Principal who had nurtured the Unit from its inception) came to hear of Morphet's intended sabbatical, he expressed his consternation and his opinion that the Unit was an administrative body. The outcome of the ensuing debate was a request from Stock to Morphet to prepare a memorandum setting out Morphet's vision for the future of the Unit.

This document, entitled *Memorandum on the future development of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit*²⁴ was the first attempt to recast and re-position the Centre within a broad understanding of educational need in South Africa and of an appropriate role for a university. It sought to institute a more definite focus and systematic approach for the work of the Unit in place of the somewhat random construction of the programme of courses and it challenged the narrow interpretation of the University of Natal's interests (and consequent definition of constituency) on which the Extension Programme had been predicated.

²² There is no documentary record of this incident and I rely here on subsequent verbal accounts by Tony Morphet. Despite the personal overtones I have considered it essential to the integrity of this history to include an account of this incident. It is illustrative of the happenstance way in which policy shifts were initiated and also of the significantly different interpretations of the role of the Unit, which the broad policy decisions made to this point, permitted.

²³ As the previous incumbent, I was initially (in 1972) employed on administrative conditions of service. However, a letter from the Registrar, dated 20 October 1975, informed me that the University Council had approved my promotion to the "grade of lecturer". The wording is (perhaps deliberately) ambiguous on two counts. First, insofar as it refers to a personal promotion it is not a definitive categorisation of the post itself, and second, the words "grade of lecturer" left open the possibility of a distinction of the post from that of a "lecturer".

²⁴ Morphet, A.R., *Memorandum on the Future Development of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit*, March 1977, in *Collection of Documents relating to the development of the Centre for Adult Education*, Volume 1.

... the time when the University could integrate its extra and intra mural activities purely with the interests of the dominant groups in the community has already passed. It is a matter of urgency that the university finds the ways and means of making its resources available to groups and individuals who do not have the advantages of a dominant position.²⁵

Although it makes no direct reference to the previous year's Soweto uprisings, these events must have lent support to its argument and shaken the complacency of understandings of the early 1970s which had been the context into which the Extension Programme had been born.

The document reviews and categorises the kinds of university- level educational facilities made available to the public both in South Africa and internationally. These were identified as general interest courses of suitably modified internal curricula, post-university updating courses, short intensive courses to meet specific community needs and full length courses leading to qualification. It pointed to the correlation between the choice of activity and the relationship which the University sought to develop with the community. Three possible structures for the Unit were explored, a small administrative unit, a research and teaching unit and an academic department, and an argument was constructed in favour of developing the Unit into a Research and Teaching Unit. The functions envisaged for the Unit were: diagnosing education needs; designing educational programmes; presenting courses and training adult educators. Although it was not explicitly stated, the memorandum clearly understood these functions as being grounded in and directed towards adult education theory and practice. The staffing projections were modest, comprising a Director, Deputy Director (in Pietermaritzburg), two Research and Teaching Officers and two secretaries, all allocated equally between Durban and Pietermaritzburg. Funding of the Unit would be through a mixture of contract work and cross-subsidisation from the evening programme of courses.

The memorandum stopped short of any direct proposal, recognising that "in the present financial climate expansion on this scale is not possible." Instead it saw that "the process of development would have to be a slow change of emphasis" towards the adult education teaching and research functions envisaged.

An administrative or an academic unit ? (1977)

The consequences flowing from this document were at three different levels. The immediate outcome appears to have been that the Principal conceded the academic status of the Organiser, which post came to be known hereafter as Director. There is nothing in the formal record to reflect this change which seems to have been accomplished through the intervention of the new Chairman of the Committee of Control, Professor Sands. There was in fact no need for any formal process regarding the academic status of the Organiser / Director; the interpretation of the *status quo* had been challenged and conceded but the absence of any formal recognition left lingering doubts. In a private letter to me at the time Morphet wrote:

²⁵ Ibid.

It is now agreed that this is an academic post but I am not sure how happy everyone is with that definition.²⁶

At an intermediate and more organisational level the memorandum seems to have won recognition for a more academic mission for the Unit. It was endorsed by the Committee of Control at a meeting in March 1977 (although without any recorded debate) and sent on to Senate Executive. This began a labyrinthine process (see below) from which it never fully emerged being in due course overtaken by other events, but the process itself served to draw attention to the academic direction which the Unit saw for itself and to shift for the moment the general perception of the Unit as an administrative body. In the same letter referred to above, Morphet went on to say:

the way it looks to me is that the Unit has changed from being an administrative body on the periphery of the academic activity to something more like a department inside the university. I have tried to find out whether this is the view that others (Principal, Vice Principal, etc.) have of us but haven't got very far yet. There is no real clarity that I can count on.

On a third and longer term level the memorandum laid the ground work for the later development of the Centre's academic work and for its entry into the Education Faculty. Its general acceptance at this time was used later to support arguments for these subsequent initiatives.

In August the Committee of Control moved to consolidate the policy shift contained in the Morphet memorandum. But by then the intervention of the Finance Officer on a different issue (see *Financial disputes below*) and the views of members of the Senate Executive Committee, who were concerned that the Unit should not become a department and lose its position at the interchange between the university and the community, had eroded the earlier enthusiasm. The views noted by the Committee of Control at a meeting in August 1977, give a good indication of the nature of the concerns:

- (i) Although the same object of education (is) followed in the two spheres, the Unit could not at this stage be seen to be an academic department as it did not hold examinations and did not award diplomas, certificates or degrees.
- (ii) The Unit function(s) over a wider educational area than any academic department and it (is) important to maintain the scope of its operations.
- (iii) One of the values of the Unit (is) its freedom from academic restrictions and its ability to offer courses freely, without question."²⁷

Having noted these and other views, the Committee maintained the essence of its position in relation to the proposal for a Teaching and Research Unit while making

²⁶ Letter from Morphet to Mackie, 6 April, 1977

²⁷ Minutes of the fifth meeting of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Committee, 16 August, 1977, item 5.10.

clear that this was not a move to a full academic department. The Committee resolved to recommend to Senate Executive:

- (1) That the principle of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit expanding its present function of providing extension lectures to the public, and developing in the future into a research unit for the training of teachers in the field of adult education be accepted.
- (2) That the Unit remain independent but that the comments of the Dean of the Faculty of Education be obtained on the desirability of the Unit being affiliated to his Faculty with direct accountability to the Dean²⁸

Senate Executive accepted this recommendation a few days later, but added a rider to the effect that when the comments of the Faculty of Education were received consideration should be given to the future financing of the Unit. This referred to a dispute which had arisen over the way in which the Unit should be financed.

Financial disputes (1977)

Parallel to the attempt to shift the focus of the Unit's role, there arose a dispute over the way in which the Unit was funded, particularly in relation to the funds which the Unit had accumulated. In 1977 the University found itself in a severe financial crisis and looked to all possible sources to balance its budget. In April, Council acting on the advice of the University's Finance Officer resolved:

... that, in recognition of the payment by the University of the salary of the Director of the Extension Unit, an amount of R10 000 be returned to the University Revenue account from the accumulated funds of the Unit, and that the Committee of Control of the Unit be permitted to retain R7000 in view of future development plans for the Unit.²⁹

The Director and Committee of Control were dismayed by this development and noted in the minutes of the August meeting, the 1974 resolution of Council to bear the Unit's staffing costs which was now undermined by its later decision.³⁰

The financial dispute went further. The Finance Officer, influenced no doubt in part by the Unit's change of direction which drew it closer to normal academic activity and by the capacity of the Unit to generate funds,³¹ maintained the opinion that in future the Unit should submit an annual budget to meet its funding needs in line with other departments and that all course revenue should accrue to the University. He convinced the Finance and General Purposes Committee that it should require the Unit to submit

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Resolution of Council of 15 April 1977, quoted in the minutes of the fifth meeting of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Committee, 16 August, 1977, item 5.6.8.

³⁰ Minutes of the fourth meeting of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Committee, 24 March, 1977, item 5.6.8.

³¹ The opinion was also held within the Unit that ideological differences and personal antagonism underlay the dispute but the evidence for this is circumstantial and speculative.

proposals for its future funding.

In response the Director developed a set of proposals which identified government subsidy as the long term aim for the financing of the Unit in line with the CUP Adult Education Subcommittee's decision. As general interim guidelines, the Director proposed that the Unit should be self-supporting with regard to its programme costs but that its overhead costs should be borne by the University; that the Unit should not be required to generate a profit but rather should be allowed to off-set profit-making courses and loss-making courses against each other; that the University might take a proportion of the Accumulated Fund when a substantial profit accrued but that some should be left as a development fund; and finally, that "to balance the payment of excess profit into general revenue the Unit should ... submit an annual budget request to cover recurrent determinable costs."³²

The Committee supported these proposals and recommended to Senate Executive that they be approved. Senate Executive as indicated above, linked them to a decision on the future direction of the Unit.

An Acting Director (1978/79)

Nothing further occurred in the area of policy development in 1977 and by the beginning of 1978, Morphet was on sabbatical leave and Mackie had returned in an acting capacity. The programme flourished, partly due to the natural propensity for growth which it had shown from the beginning; partly from the happy co-incidence of the additional contacts brought to the Unit by Morphet and Mackie's experience and flair for administration. The 1978 report commented:

Nineteen seventy-eight saw the continued growth of the Unit with a total of 62 programmes offered as compared to 43 in the previous year. The programme now divides into three distinct categories: Extension Lecture Courses, Extra Mural Courses; and Films, Tours and Public Lectures.

In the following year, 1979, the programme reached its zenith in terms of the number of courses offered with a total of 79 events of different kinds. The growth was evident not only in terms of the number of courses; there was in addition a widening range of courses. In 1978 the programme included art courses, language courses, a four-day music workshop, a photographic course, a 10 day archeological fieldschool, a film festival and a range of business courses. In collaboration with the American Cultural Centre, the film *Roots* was shown to an audience of 1000 over three consecutive evenings. This was one of the points where the broader social context intruded; the screenings were disrupted on one of the evenings by the South African police who threatened the Acting Director with prosecution for showing the films. The threat was only withdrawn after American and University intervention. The Programme also

³² Minutes of the fifth meeting of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Committee, 16 August, 1977, item 5.

included a week- long bridging course for students entering the university and the administration of the University component of a diploma course in nursing administration. By 1979 the programme had expanded further to include other specialist areas for land surveyors, electrical engineers, social workers, property appraisers and information technologists. Neither was the programme limited to Durban and Pietermaritzburg. Under pressure from threatened expansion of the University of the Orange Free State into Natal,³³ the University Executive were keen for the Unit to develop regional activities. The very first pilot courses for the Extension Programme in 1971 had included a course for civil engineers in Empangeni. In 1977 Miller and Staude had taken their business courses to Ladysmith and Empangeni and in 1978, Newcastle was also included.

Against this background of a thriving programme, the policy initiative to shift the work of the Unit towards a Teaching and Research Unit continued. In March the Board of Education agreed in principle to the affiliation of the Unit to the Faculty and gave the Dean the task of discussing the details with the Unit.³⁴ Following discussions the Board agreed in May, to recommend the affiliation of the Unit to the faculty on a two year trial basis and referred the recommendations to the Academic Planning and Policy Committee.³⁵ When the Academic Planning and Policy Committee considered the matter at its meeting in August, it discovered reservations:

The view was expressed that the Unit should not, since it offered service to the general public in many different fields, be subject to any single faculty and it was decided that the matter be referred back to the Management Committee of the Unit with a request for a detailed motivation of any change in the present system.³⁶

The Unit's Board of Control discussed the matter briefly when it met later in August and decided to hold it in abeyance against the Director's return. It was never taken any further. In the meantime other developments were pushing the unit very decidedly back towards its position as an administrative Unit.

Extra Mural courses mounted independently of the Unit (1978)

The very success and wide-ranging scope of the on-going programme and its demonstrable and effective administrative role in this regard worked against the shift towards a teaching and research function and this counter-direction was given further impetus through a policy debate which began in 1978 over the question of extra mural

³³ Reference to this can be found in Morphet's Design Study for a University Based Adult Education Service in South Africa, p. 86.

³⁴ Minutes of the one hundred and thirty second ordinary meeting of the Board of the Faculty of Education, 6 March 1978, Item 4.2. The Board's recommendation was subsequently noted by Senate on 17 May 1978.

³⁵ Minutes of the Board of the Faculty of Education, 1 May, 1978, item 4.4.

³⁶ Minutes of the eighty-second meeting of the Academic Planning and Policy Committee, 9 August, 1978, item 4.3.

courses mounted independently of the Unit. This was indirectly an issue of financial policy. The debate was initiated by a request for clarification from the head of the Department of Electrical Engineering to the Acting Director as to whether or not refresher courses should be offered through the Unit. In a very frank reply, Mackie explained that the policy was unclear; that in 1974 Stock, as Principal, had required the proceeds of an extra mural course run by the Language Laboratory to be paid into the account of the Unit; that the Unit had run courses in conjunction with other departments on a profit-sharing basis; that the kind of course envisaged fell within the scope of the Unit's activities; and, that the Unit depended on high revenue earning courses for funding other unprofitable courses. The letter went on to say:

I hope you appreciate my dilemma. On the one hand I do not want to stifle incentive for mounting programmes of this nature by insisting that they are offered through the Extension Unit - indeed, I do not know whether I can insist. On the other hand I am anxious not to create a precedent which would encourage departments to offer only those courses which are not profitable through the Unit.³⁷

The letter ended with an appeal to run the course through the Unit. The matter was considered by the Committee of Control when it next met in April. The Committee agreed that departments should be encouraged to run courses through the Unit and that monies should be channelled into some form of adult education rather than be retained by departments "whose requirements were already budgeted for". The issue was referred to the Academic Planning and Policy Committee who mandated the Principal as its Chairman to discuss the matter with the Chairman of the Committee of Control. In due course the Acting Director was requested by the Principal to prepare a memorandum proposing a levy of 15% of gross revenue on all courses payable to the University for the financing of the Unit.

The memorandum³⁸ noted by way of argument in favour of its proposal: that the University received no subsidy for the University facilities from courses run independently; the establishment of the Unit by the University as a central facility to promote extra mural courses; and, the educational design and administrative services which the Unit could offer. By way of counter-argument the memorandum notes that the Unit depended on the support and goodwill of academic staff and academic departments for courses and that a future role as a Teaching and Research Unit might not be compatible with a position which required all extra mural courses to be offered through the Unit. The proposal attempted to take all these considerations into account and was couched in the following terms:

Wherever possible departments should be encouraged to offer courses through the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit where departments do not wish to work through the Unit, a commission of 15% of the gross revenue should be payable to the University for the

³⁷ Letter from the Acting Director of the Unit to the head of department of Electrical Engineering, 24 January, 1978.

³⁸ Memorandum on courses run outside the Auspices of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit, Mackie, R.D.A, 21 August, 1978.

credit of the Extension Unit's account. ...³⁹

The proposal was in due course supported by the Committee of Control and the Academic Planning and Policy Committee but in October, Senate Executive noted that “the proposal was unlikely to be acceptable to, *inter alia* the faculty of Medicine” and referred it back to the Academic Planning and Policy Committee who in turn referred it back to the Committee of Control. In the meantime the Principal had negotiated an *ad hoc agreement* with the department of Electrical Engineering whereby the department agreed to pay a 15% levy to the Unit for the course which had initiated this fruitless policy debate. When the Committee of Control next met in March 1979, it agreed to drop the matter at the request of the Acting Director. The matter did not however rest there; in 1981 it was re-awakened with added fervour.

Further dispute over financial policy (1979)

Whether or not the Finance Officer saw any connection between the proposal to levy a charge on all extra mural courses for the benefit of the Extra Mural Studies Unit, and the broader financing of the Unit is impossible to say but at the end of 1979 the ongoing contest over financial policy came to a head. Throughout that year there had been disagreement between the Unit and the Finance section over the fees which the Unit agreed to pay various lectures with certain payments being initially refused. The standard fee had been increased during the year to R25 per lecture but interestingly the Committee of Control had not felt competent to make that decision alone and had referred it to Senate Executive for approval. A number of courses – particularly the business courses – involved substantially higher fees and even profit-sharing arrangements to which the Finance Officer objected. In October, Council on the recommendation of the Finance Officer, resolved:

1. That the Unit be requested to set its fees for courses offered at such a level to enable the Unit to become self-supporting as soon as possible
2. That any surplus funds at the end of 1978 should revert to the University Revenue account.⁴⁰

This completely reversed the position won from Council in 1974 whereby Council had undertaken to bear all fixed costs including staffing. The Committee of Control was incensed, the more so because the Finance Officer's proposal had not first been submitted to it for comment and because its own recommendations developed the previous year did not appear to have been taken into account. At a meeting in March 1979 it expressed “regret” and “alarm” at the course of events, noted that the fees charged by the Unit were already higher than those of the University of Cape Town and expressed the opinion that any increase in fees would have the inevitable effect of

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ This Council resolution of 20 October 1978 is reported in an appendix to the ninth meeting of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Committee on 13 March 1979 and was considered by that Committee at that meeting under item 5.

lowering the attendance figures, and, that:

(t)he Unit could only become self-supporting by abandoning its present role and by concentrating instead on the provision of administrative facilities for high-income professional, business and technical courses. This function negates the present conception of the Unit's role of providing a service to the community⁴¹

The Committee reaffirmed its original recommendation that the Unit should be required to cover its course operating costs but that fixed costs should be met from general university funds. The Committee's objections were sufficient to suspend the processes which had been set in motion but final resolution was only achieved through a comprehensive restructuring of the Unit's constitution in 1980.

Executive preference for separation of academic and continuing education functions (1979)

The Unit at this time was still heavily influenced by the views of the Executive. In the third quarter of 1978, Professor Booysen, the newly appointed Vice Principal in Durban (later to become Principal) undertook a study tour of selected universities in the United States, Canada and Australia and made continuing education one of five points of interest. In the course of these visits Booysen formed the impression that continuing education provision and adult educator training were best kept apart.

Continuing Education units are usually separate from the Faculty of Education which has a quite distinct objective, the training of adult educators. In most cases they see considerable advantage in informal cooperation but see their role as different and therefore a need to be administratively quite separate.⁴²

It was also clear that Booysen saw the Unit as more definitely concerned with non formal provision rather than with adult educator training. In a letter to Morphet in January 1979, Mackie reported a meeting with Booysen:

He sees the Unit as essentially an administrative body responsible for the general administration and co-ordination of all courses offered to students not registered for "official" university courses. He does not deny the legitimacy of an academic function but he sees this as quite separate and a secondary priority.

The Opening of an Office in Pietermaritzburg (1979 -1980)

Morphet's return in 1979 prompted the University to open an office in Pietermaritzburg leading to a doubling in size of the Unit's staff. This was driven more by expediency than by deliberate policy although it did occur within the framework of an already established intention to expand the Pietermaritzburg programme. Mackie's 18 month tenure as Acting Director had been on the unwritten understanding that a

⁴¹ Minutes of the ninth meeting of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Committee, 13 March 1979, item 5.

⁴² Booysen, P.de V., Report on a visit to selected Universities, p. 99

post in Pietermaritzburg would be established at the end of the period. Morphet now made a case for the establishment of a post of Deputy Director based in Pietermaritzburg relying strongly on this tacit agreement.⁴³ In addition Morphet argued that the Unit's programme had grown beyond the size where a single person could continue to "maintain a sufficiently close contact with the staff and material resources of the Pietermaritzburg campus". He also pointed again to the University's concern to develop a Natal-wide presence:

... the expansion of the university presence in the inland country areas can best be achieved from Pietermaritzburg.⁴⁴

The University again responded cautiously. At a meeting of the Committee of Control in March 1979, which was joined for the purpose by the Vice Principal in Pietermaritzburg, Professor Schreiner, it was decided to recommend that a post of Deputy Director be established on a two and a half year "experimental" basis "in order to determine the viability of the move."⁴⁵ On this occasion the nature of the post was unambiguous; it was to be at senior lecturer level on academic conditions of service.

Mackie was offered the post without advertisement and set about establishing an office in Pietermaritzburg. A part-time administrative assistant, Vren Humphris, was employed and a considerably expanded programme was developed and run in 1980. A Community Education Project was established to meet the need of communities not served by the extra mural programme. But before the Pietermaritzburg programme could move beyond these beginnings, Morphet had resigned as Director and Mackie had been appointed in his place.

Three Divisions (1980)

The four year period since 1977 had thrown into question the role, structure and financial basis of the Unit. Morphet's work on his return and before he resigned was directed towards establishing coherent policy in each of these areas on which future development could proceed. Part of his sabbatical studies in Edinburgh had included an analysis of the Unit's position with a view to understanding "whether the university in the South African context provide(d) a viable base on which to establish an Adult Education Programme" and to explore a design for any possible programme. His

⁴³ In a letter from Morphet to Mackie of 7 February 1979, Morphet commented, "Natal University usually responds to argument of that kind. They have never so far as I can see made a decision of policy in their lives." More formally Morphet wrote in the memorandum which proposed the establishment of a post of Deputy Director, "The verbal assurance given to Mr Mackie on his accepting the position as a leave substitute, while possibly not binding on the University, is an important consideration."

⁴⁴ Morphet, A.R., Memorandum on the Immediate Staffing Situation in the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit, 20 February, 1979.

⁴⁵ Minutes of the Ninth Meeting of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Committee, 13 March, 1979.

answer was a “strenuously qualified ‘yes’” and his design proposed establishing three divisions within the Unit. The analysis was based on an understanding of the different “system-maintaining” interests which underpinned the existence of the Unit. Morphet concluded that the task was to develop the Unit from a “fragile and distorted base towards an education process aimed at (development, equality and integration)”⁴⁶ “The difficulties, Morphet wrote, “cannot be overestimated”. It entailed on the one hand, “extension and development” and on the other, “defence”. The Unit would need to be able to resist “generalised pressure from the education market to become exclusively or predominantly a service for providing up-dating information and professional re-training”. It would also need to withstand pressure from the political interests of the University “to use the department as a low budget public relations agency” and “to head off territorial challenge from the University of the Orange Free State.” Morphet acknowledged that establishing divisions within the Unit would be “somewhat artificial” in view of the fact that it was extremely unlikely that posts could be immediately created to staff these activities, but rather saw the divisions “as a means of analysing and directing growth” with the aim not of dividing but of integrating the three educational functions posited. Moreover the divisions were seen as “bear(ing) a relationship to existing practice.”

The *Division of Liberal Studies* would generate income for the Unit and “maintain broad public support and credibility. Its educational purpose would be to promote “processes of enquiry about values and attitudes.”

The purpose of the *Division of Social and Community Studies* would be to “shift the balance of the department towards working with the underprivileged and educationally dispossessed”. Initially the Division would “organise alternative educational activities” for community groups and voluntary organisations.⁴⁷ A later development would be training adult educators.

The *Division of Professional Studies* was seen as taking responsibility for organising and presenting the full range of in-service or updating courses in pursuance of the integrative purpose.

⁴⁶ Morphet drew these categories from Bowles and Gintis where the “developmental category” refers to the development of individual personal potentials; the “egalitarian category” to the socially equalising effects of education; and, the “integrative category” to the process whereby people are equipped with economic skills which enable their integration into the socio-economic order.

⁴⁷ Especially what later became known as “non governmental organisations” or “NGOs”.

The proposal to create these three divisions was presented – in highly modified form⁴⁸ – to a meeting of the Committee in August 1979 and accepted with little debate. It is doubtful whether the Committee appreciated the highly sophisticated analysis on which the proposals for the divisions was based nor the profound implications which they held for the Unit if fully implemented.

The Advisory Committee (1980)

The meeting of the Committee of Control of 30 August 1979 was a watershed in the development of policy for the Unit. Not only did it establish the three divisions but it also instigated a new institutional structure for the Unit and made recommendations for financial policy which finally resolved the long-running disputes in that area. The memorandum which made the case for a change in the institutional structure, identified two essential problems with the *status quo*. The first was the need for more direct access to policy making bodies in place of what was described as “largely *ad hoc* control” which encouraged intervention by the administration in a way which did not occur in “normal” departments. The second problem was the need for wider representation of University and Community interests in the activities of the Unit. The argument made sought to maintain some logical progression from the reservations of Senate and Executive and the Academic Planning Committee for the Unit to affiliate to the Education Faculty, by arguing that incorporation within the Faculty would work against wider community representation because it would move it closer to the formal core of the institution and would disturb its existing neutral position vis-a-vis other faculties. It also suggested that “the Unit need(ed) to develop further its role and autonomy before crystallising its structure within the University”. The memorandum recommended that the proposal to affiliate the Unit to the Faculty be postponed indefinitely; that the Director be appointed as a member of Senate; and, that the Committee of Control be replaced by an Advisory Committee with broader representation. The Committee accepted the first two proposals without difficulty but the composition and terms of reference of the proposed new advisory committee occasioned extensive discussion. The Director and Deputy Director were concerned to replace the circuitous accountability of the existing Committee of Control which reported via Senex to Senate with a more direct accountability to Senate through the Director; and wanted the Advisory Committee to act in a truly advisory fashion.⁴⁹ Other members of the Committee saw the need to retain part of the Committee’s current accountability function. In the event the terms of reference which were finally

⁴⁸ The divisions were presented as encompassing three educational aims, viz:

- (a) The provision of skills to provide for or to improve a person’s capacity for working (Professional)
- (b) The provision of opportunities for a person to enrich and develop his own personal understanding of himself and his experience (Liberal)
- (c) The provision of the means through which a community may reach towards greater enlightenment and equity (Social and Community)

Memorandum on the Future Development and Policy of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit, August 1979.

⁴⁹ There was even a suggestion that the Advisory Committee should be chaired by the Director.

accepted by Senate were a compromise between these two positions. But the terms of reference recommended by the Committee of Control were essentially advisory as indicated by the following clauses:

- (a) The committee shall act in an advisory capacity to the staff of the Extra Mural Studies Unit.
- (d) The committee shall advise the Director and Deputy Director on the best means of developing the Unit to meet the needs of the University and the community it serves.⁵⁰

The essence of what was intended by the Director is contained in this clause:

- (c) The committee shall hold under constant review the general educational relationship between the University and its surrounding community.⁵¹

When the Committee of Control's recommended terms of reference were considered by Senate Executive an altogether different conception is evident. In place of the Committee of Control's recommendation that the new advisory committee be required "to consider a statement of accounts in order to review and evaluate the financial performance of the Unit and to advise on the future use of financial resources", Senate Executive inserted a direct accountability clause:

- 8. The annual academic and financial reports shall be submitted through the committee to Senate Executive, Senate and Council.⁵²

This effectively negated the autonomy which was being sought for the new Advisory Committee and inhibited the development of a closer and more direct relationship between the new advisory committee and the Unit. This new Advisory Committee when it was eventually constituted and met for the first time in the following year, continued to function in an almost indistinguishable fashion from the previous Committee of Control.⁵³ But there were important differences. The Director and Deputy Director now had a place, *ex officio*, on the Advisory committee whereas previously they had merely been in attendance, and the Unit was directly represented in Senate through the Director. Moreover in April 1980 Council as part of the resolution of the financial policy accepted that:

⁵⁰ Minutes of the tenth meeting of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Committee, 30 August, 1979, item 6.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Minutes of a Senate meeting of 21 May 1980, item 4.5.

⁵³ The continuity is unconsciously reflected in the cataloguing of the meetings. The agenda and notice of the first meeting of the newly constituted Advisory Committee announce "the eleventh meeting of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit Committee" and the minutes are titled "Minutes of the eleventh meeting of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit Advisory Committee".

the Unit be semi-autonomous, but having responsibility for academic matters to Senate and for all other matters to Council through Senate.⁵⁴

Resolution of Financial Policy (1979/80)

The third aspect of policy addressed by the meeting in August 1979 was finance. As has been shown the financial basis on which the Unit had been founded had been put in issue by the Finance Officer's contention that it should be funded on the same basis as any other department and that revenue should accrue to the University - either directly through fees or indirectly through course "profits". Morphet now produced a further memorandum which developed a powerful argument for reverting to the original understanding. The memorandum⁵⁵ reviewed three possible models for the financing of extra mural activities. "Model A" drawing on British university practice described an essentially liberal studies, non vocational programme, with low student fees and overheads subsidised by the university and the local authority. "Model B" drew on American practice and comprised "job related, credit earning and personal enrichment programmes" which were profit-earning from high student fees and organised by a facility with a high degree of autonomy from the university. "Model C" was a mixed economy model with a mixed programme of job related and non vocational courses; mixed fees; direct financing of programme costs from fee revenue with cross-subsidisation between courses; staff and overhead costs met by the university "to provide a secure operational base"; and a semi-autonomous relationship between the extra mural body and the university. The memorandum carefully identified the policy issues involved and the relationship between them. These were: the rate and direction of growth; the type of programme; the relationship between the programme as a whole and the university; and the intended educational purpose. The memorandum sought to establish two points:

- (1) That it is necessary to have coherence between financial procedures and policy decisions; and,
- (2) That model C represents the best possibility for financial and policy development at Natal

⁵⁴ It is not altogether clear to me how this particular clause came to be included in the Council resolution. It does not appear in the Minutes of the Committee of Control which initiated the changes. It appears for the first time in a minute of Senate noting Council resolutions of 21 March and 18 April 1980. That minute includes together items relating to the change in the institutional structure and the financial policy but not the constitution and terms of reference of the Advisory Committee. This is probably because the latter were not strictly speaking the concern of Council. The issues raised in the discussion of financial policy included the nature of the Unit and it is possible that this clause arises from that source. It is also possible that the clause was a reaction to Senate's rewording of the accountability of the Advisory Committee. Its separation from the primary discussion on the institutional structure seems unfortunate because although it establishes an important principle, the procedure established by Senate Executive's wording of accountability took precedence in practice.

⁵⁵ *The Financing of the Extra Mural Studies Unit*, Appendix B to the minutes of the tenth meeting of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Committee, 30 August, 1979.

University.⁵⁶

The memorandum went on to develop an argument in favour of Model C, pointing to the consequences of Model B (which was the only other one in serious contention). In support of its argument it drew attention to the commitment given to the Unit by the Executive in various ways.

The Principal took a generally expansionist view of the Unit in his inaugural address. He mentioned that the university should be prepared “to assist and foster” the process of continuing education.⁵⁷

The argument went on to point to the contradiction between this commitment and the decision of Council to instruct the Unit to set fees at a level which would make it self supporting as soon as possible which suggested the implicit view of a “self-supporting, slowly growing unit”, with the purpose of “providing the university with a public service facility at no cost”. It makes plain staff dissatisfaction with this position.

The contradiction between these two views will not trouble anyone other than the Unit staff and it is not surprising that the University should expect high quality, public education to be provided at no capital or recurrent cost to itself. It is understood that the University seeks to curtail expenditure and develop its service at the same time. Such a position is, however, unacceptable to the individuals who have the responsibility of carrying out the contradictory policy.⁵⁸

The Committee of Control was already in sympathy with the position taken by the Unit’s staff; it accepted the argument “and appeal” and asked its Chairman to seek an interview with the Vice Principal, Professor Booyens, to discuss the document. The Vice Principal was convinced and in April 1980, Council formally rescinded its resolution of 1978 calling for the Unit to become self-supporting, and instead accepted that staff costs of the Unit should be met by the University; that the programme should be mixed so as to include “*inter alia* job related, professional, non-vocational, socially valuable programme; that fees be variable; and, that surplus funds from profitable courses be used to subsidise non profitable courses through a two year revolving fund.

Evaluation and Goal setting (1980)

In June 1980 Morphet suggested to the first meeting of the new Advisory Committee (in the course of a discussion on the goals of the Unit), that “the Unit would benefit from some form of external evaluation”.⁵⁹ The Committee agreed and asked Morphet to approach Dr James Moulder to conduct an “informal, non statistical evaluation of

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.2.

⁵⁷ Quoted in the memorandum on the financing of the Extra Mural Studies Unit – see note 52, p. 4.

⁵⁸ Memorandum *The Financing of the Extra Mural Studies Unit*, p.4 – see note 52.

⁵⁹ Minutes of the 11th Meeting of the Advisory Committee, 18 June 1980, item 8.

the Unit”.⁶⁰ It also asked for a statement of goals as required by the new constitution of the Advisory Committee. The subsequent evaluation process identified a number of strengths and weaknesses. The strengths included the Unit’s flexibility, informality, capacity for immediate response, organising skills, autonomy and sound basic (adult education) philosophy. The weaknesses included weak funding base, institutional marginality, diffuseness of operation, the lack of an accepted discipline, over commitment in project range, lack of strong support group within the University, lack of planning and poor definition of roles and responsibilities for staff.

The statement of goals distinguished “organisational goals” from “activity goals”. The “activity goals” saw the need for a more focussed use of resources and more clearly defined education provision and recommended a target of one major and deliberately planned project in each calender year. A further goal under this heading was research leading to the rationalisation of the “mailing list”. The first goal identified at the organisational level was the development of a tiered network of contacts for the Unit within the University comprising: at the lowest level informal relationships with at least one member of every department (termed “acquaintances”); at the middle level a smaller set of informal relationships with individuals who expressed a deeper level of interest and involvement in the work of the Unit (termed “friends”); and, at the upper level, the Advisory Committee and its members, which was seen “individually and collectively as the prime agent involved in the development of continuing education in the University”. The second organisational goal required the redistribution of work loads within the Unit. In this regard the report encompassing the evaluation, written by Morphet just before he relinquished the post of director, and presented to the September meeting of the Advisory Committee commented:

... it is crucial that the Director be free to delegate immediate administrative matters the Unit urgently needs a clearer focus and a more defined purpose and this can only be achieved if the Director has more time to explore options and possibilities....⁶¹

In order to make this possible, recognition was sought for the key administrative work done by the Senior Administrative Assistant⁶² through the upgrading of that post.

This evaluation and the goals identified together with the establishment of the three divisions and the new institutional structure flowing from the Advisory Committee, was the legacy which Morphet bequeathed to the Unit. The task now was to bring these ideas to fruition.

A new Director, the permanent establishment of the Pietermaritzburg office and a new Deputy Director (1980/81)

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Morphet, A.R., Evaluation of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit: Record of discussion between Dr James Moulder and the Director, 2 September, 1980. This document contains both a record of the evaluation discussion in note form and an argued statement of goals.

⁶² Then and throughout the rest of this history, this post was occupied by Mrs Sue Budd.

The appointment of Mackie as Director on the resignation of Morphet at the end of September 1980, left open the post of Deputy Director. That post had been created on a 30 month trial basis 15 months earlier and the question now arose as to whether the post should be made permanent. Although only half way through the originally intended trial period, the groundwork for an office in Pietermaritzburg had been laid and the evidence, although inconclusive, pointed to the viability of the office. Nevertheless Mackie argued against the establishment of the post, suggesting instead that implementation should rather begin on the basis of the policy accepted in the recent establishment of the three Divisions and pointing to the disadvantages flowing from the opening of a Pietermaritzburg office.

The establishment of a Pietermaritzburg office has, in effect, created two separate Units. Although formally linked there has been little practical co-operation. This organisational arrangement has two serious disadvantages. In the first place it does not allow for any specialisation. ... In the second place the two centres will inevitably have similar and competing interests in terms of finance and staffing.... The Unit has identified three areas in which it should be involved. The priority need for the Unit at this stage is the appointment of persons to develop (these) particular areas....⁶³.

The proposals which followed sought the postponement of a final decision on Pietermaritzburg until the end of 1981; the appointment in the interim of a person to the Social and Community Studies Division in Durban; the maintenance of the Pietermaritzburg office and its administrative assistant and the continued planning of the Pietermaritzburg programme from the Durban office. The argument and proposals were, however, too weak to be sustained against the larger dynamics of the institution which, at the time, in response to the international oil crisis⁶⁴, were driving the University to separate departments which had hitherto functioned on a unitary basis across both campuses. In April 1981 John Aitchison was appointed as the Unit's Deputy Director based in Pietermaritzburg. Mackie and Aitchison immediately set about developing the Unit as a unitary body.

Organisational and curriculum development (1981-1983)

Writing in the Unit's 1980 Annual report, Mackie, as the new Director, indicated the focus for the following year. It flowed logically from the evaluation and goal identification exercise.

1981 will be a year primarily of consolidation and of planning. The Unit will attempt to define its long-term objectives more closely. ... Consideration will also need to be given to expanding and rationalising the administrative based of the Unit. ...

This began a three year process which culminated in 1984 with a fundamental shift in

⁶³ Report and Recommendations for the Pietermaritzburg Centre, R.D.A. Mackie, 6 October, 1980.

⁶⁴ The University of Natal at that time relied to a significant extent on staff travelling between the two campuses. The increased price of petrol and drastic speed restrictions encouraged the University to separate those departments which were still operating on both campuses.

the emphasis of the Unit's work with the introduction of a diploma course for adult educators and of the Community Organisation Project, and was marked by a change of name. That point was eventually reached through a labourious process of organisational and curriculum developments, many of which were distractions or explorations which proved fruitless and some of which, although deviations, were useful to the achievement of the change which was finally achieved at the end of 1983.

Organisational development (1981-1983)

At the beginning of 1981 the Centre moved from its accommodation within the Public Relations Office where it had been since 1975, to temporary accommodation within the Howard College Building which was being renovated. The move was both fortuitous and significant. It resulted from the negotiation of an association between the Science Education Project and the Unit (see below) which necessitated bigger accommodation. The move also brought the Unit an additional staff member since it was agreed that the Unit would no longer be able to rely on administrative support from the central administration and therefore needed its own messenger. The significance of the move was the autonomy which it brought the Unit; it was physically no longer under the wing of the administration but firmly located within the academic sector.

By April when John Aitchison assumed the post of Deputy Director in Pietermaritzburg, the changes within the previous six months included a new director and deputy director and in Durban a new administrative staff member, new accommodation, greater institutional autonomy, a partnership relationship with the Science Education Project and broad acceptance for a formal statement of its role and philosophy (see below).

Aitchison and Mackie now set about the tasks the Unit had set itself. A newsletter outlining developments in the Unit and in adult education in South Africa was launched and sent to about 80 interested people in an attempt to develop a constituency of "friends of the Unit".⁶⁵ In a further effort to secure this constituency annual planning workshops were introduced to which interested persons were invited.

Over the following two years almost all the Unit's organisational procedures were reviewed with each procedure entailing some small aspect of policy development. The Unit's mailing list was computerised and in the process revealed a profile of the average user of the Unit's programme which was essentially white, middle class and well educated – usually with well established university connections. This was useful in supporting arguments to shift the Unit's curriculum. Tools were developed to evaluate the Unit's courses, again with the purpose of giving staff more control over

⁶⁵ Only two letters were ever produced. The first in May 1981 described developments in adult education at the University of the Witwatersrand, the appointment of John Aitchison, the Social and Community Studies Division and Future Development. The second, in August 1981 featured the newly developed policy document, a report on a conference and news of the planning workshops which the Unit planned to hold later in the year.

the planning of the curriculum. The financial system was completely overhauled. Fee structures and guidelines for costing courses were determined. Policies were developed to standardise contracts with the people who taught the Unit's courses as well as with the students who assisted with course administration.⁶⁶ Regular staff meetings were instituted; usually these were simply between the Director and Deputy Director but the Director of the Science Education Project and the Senior Administrative Assistant in Durban were also involved.

In the area of staffing the Unit experienced considerable frustration. The broad development plan based on the acceptance of the three divisions depended for its implementation on additional staff; at very least it depended (as Morphet had pointed out) on freeing the Director from immediate administrative tasks, but attempts to upgrade the Senior Administrative post (first mooted in 1980) met with little initial success. What additional staff resources the Unit was able to attract were achieved indirectly. The messenger post as mentioned came about as a result of the Unit moving to new accommodation. The Unit also managed to acquire a second administrative post in exchange for agreeing to provide secretarial services for the Association of Scientific and Technical Societies⁶⁷ and was able to convert the part-time administrative post in Pietermaritzburg to a full-time post in 1981 but in general the Unit found it very difficult to secure additional posts on the terms and for the purposes the staff had in mind. The regrading of the Senior Administrative Assistant post was unsuccessful in 1981. A tutor post at lecturer level requested in 1982 to develop one of the three divisions was also unsuccessful. A measure of the frustration felt is reflected in a letter from the Director to the Principal appealing for his intervention.

The two main factors which constrain the Unit's development are its weak financial base and the seemingly marginal status which it enjoys within the University. These two factors acting together make it extremely difficult for the Unit to compete against the mainstream and more powerful interests of departments. I believe ... that the Unit deserves special consideration and that the priority for its development needs to be established by yourself.

Both applications were again submitted in 1983; the request to upgrade the Senior Administrative post was clearly incomprehensible to the staffing committee despite the clear rationale which had been accepted in 1980. It met with a response to the Chairman of the Advisory Committee which asked the committee to "review the functioning and staffing of the Unit before any establishment changes are considered".⁶⁸

It seemed evident from the information before the Staffing Committee that the Director had in mind a level of responsibility akin to that of a person who might be considered an Assistant Director. The change was seen therefore, not just as a matter of regrading a post

⁶⁶ Known within the Unit as "Cashiers" and "Doorkeepers"

⁶⁷ The Unit's involvement with The Association of Scientific and Technical Societies is discussed later in this Chapter.

⁶⁸ Letter from the Assistant Registrar, Personnel to the Chairman of the Advisory Committee, 22 August, 1983.

but of introducing a fundamental change to the management and staffing of the Extra Mural Studies Unit.⁶⁹

The Chairman, Dr Muir, called a special meeting of the Advisory Committee in September 1983 which reaffirmed its opinion “that the need for the post was the result of a logical development in the work of the Unit”.⁷⁰ The Director prepared a memorandum for the Staffing Committee explaining the present and envisaged future staffing structure for the Unit.⁷¹ These interventions ultimately secured the Unit’s request. Whether it was related or not, the Tutor post was also established in 1983 and the messenger post was upgraded to clerical assistant so that by the end of 1983 the Unit had an establishment staff of seven.⁷²

Curriculum development (1981-83)

In March 1981, Mackie presented a comprehensive memorandum to a meeting of the Advisory Committee. The memorandum⁷³ explored the contradictions inherent in the Unit’s role and the need for urgent clarification; it articulated the philosophy⁷⁴ and values which underpinned the Unit’s commitments; it described a role built on the foundation of the three divisions and proposed a staged process for the development of the divisions which emphasised the staffing needs. The Committee was supportive of the broad thrust but required amendment to certain details. A considerably summarised document entitled *Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit - Role and Underlying Philosophy* was presented to the Committee’s next meeting in June. The document described four function’s for the Unit:

1. The direct provision of continuing education opportunities for adults at university level.
2. The educational support of groups engaged in continuing education and community development.
3. The provision of programmes designed to enable adult educators to develop

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit Advisory Committee, 20 September, 1983.

⁷¹ *The Present Functioning and Future Staffing of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit*, Mackie, R.D.A., 7 September, 1983.

⁷² The seven comprised, in Durban, the Director, Tutor, Administrative Officer, Administrative Assistant and Clerical Assistant and in Pietermaritzburg, the Deputy Director and an administrative assistant.

⁷³ Mackie, R.D.A., Future Development of Extra Mural Studies, 6 March 1981

⁷⁴ This was the first attempt to publicly and explicitly express the set of values, beliefs and judgments on which the Unit’s work was founded. It drew heavily on a document produced by the University of Cape Town’s Centre for Extra Mural Studies and was in essence a creed of adult education philosophy.

professional skills and insights.

4. The conduct of research necessary to the achievement of the previous three functions.

The first function incorporated the Liberal and Professional Studies Divisions and went on to identify them specifically; the second function expressed the purpose of the Social and Community Studies Division; the third function singled out adult educator training as a particular concern of the Unit ranking it alongside the other functions. Although adult educator training was implicit in the purposes of the Professional and perhaps Social Studies Divisions, it was not privileged in any way; this re-formulation provided the basis on which the Unit was able to develop its diploma in adult education. The document was endorsed by the Advisory Committee and sent forward to Senate with the recommendation that it be accepted as a statement of policy. Senate's subsequent acceptance gave formal recognition and authority to an academic function for the Centre and made this visible to the university community. Morphet's articulation of the three divisions had gained support within the Committee of Control but this had been tentative⁷⁵ and not broadly recognised; it could now be relied on as officially endorsed policy.

Programme Planning and Goal Setting (1981-1983)

The establishment of the three divisions and the identification in the 1980 evaluation of the Unit of the lack of planning as one of the Unit's weaknesses led, through this period, to attempts at more deliberate planning of the annual programme. The open planning workshops initiated in 1981 were part of this process; so too were the deliberate setting of annual goals in each of the three divisions and the measurement of the Unit's performance against these goals. The goals set for 1982 included, in the Liberal Studies Division, "(a) more selective programme of extension lectures", continued investigation of the idea of "introductory/basic/foundation courses and of a certificate in liberal studies". In the Professional Studies Division the Unit sought to broaden the programme, "more active involvement in the Diploma in Nursing Administration course" and "continued development of a course for adult educators"; while in the Social and Community Studies Division the goal was "continued educational support" of a number of identified groups involved in "adult education and community development".⁷⁶ The goals set for the 1983 programme were along similar lines though stated in far more specific operational terms.⁷⁷ One significant difference though was the addition of a "Division of Adult Education" which by separating it out from other aspects of the Professional Studies Division, emphasised

⁷⁵ The minute of a discussion on the Institutional Structure at a meeting of the Advisory Committee in June 1980, illustrates the tentative status of the three divisions: "In answer to a question raised by Professor Hellberg, the Director explained that at present the three internal divisions were seen as guidelines to the future development of the Unit".

⁷⁶ Statement of Goals and Objectives for 1982, Mackie, R.D.A, 22 October, 1981.

⁷⁷ Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit – 83 Programme Guidelines, Mackie, R.D.A., 8 November, 1982.

the growing importance which staff were attaching to this area.

While the process of deliberately setting programme goals did achieve a measure of control over its general direction, the staff still found it difficult to refuse courses which the Unit was offered and felt the need in 1983 to develop policy guidelines which attempted to provide a rationale for curriculum choice. Two documents in particular, “*Guidelines for involvement in Professional courses*” and “*Basis on which courses offered to the Unit are run by the Unit*” were developed for this purpose.

The 1981-1983 Programme

The Programme through this period was slightly smaller as measured by the number of events and compared to the programme in the late 1970s.⁷⁸ but it did perhaps achieve a slightly better balance between the Liberal and Professional Studies Divisions; the Social and Community Studies Division was largely untouched although the beginning of a programme is evident in 1983. Across the entire programme there was a greater emphasis on courses which taught skills which resulted in longer and more intensive courses with fewer participants. Language, fine arts and business course predominated. There was a corresponding decline in extension lecture courses of general interest. But the significance of the programme lay not so much in the courses themselves or their number but in the experimentation of the period which was not necessarily visible in the programme.

Role experimentation (1981/1982)

Notwithstanding the determined attempts to clarify the Unit’s role, goals and objectives, the role described by those processes remained extremely broad and open to interpretation. The range of projects which were explored during this period gives an indication of the extent to which the form of the Unit’s role still remained open. The development of part-time classes linked to the notion of foundation and bridging courses was debated and canvassed on several occasions.⁷⁹ A “diploma in Liberal Studies” was considered and a “School of Art” within the Liberal Studies Division was mooted in 1983.⁸⁰ Drawing on the Unit’s involvement with the Science Education Project in Durban and on the experience and success of refresher courses for mathematics and science teachers in Pietermaritzburg, the development of teacher

⁷⁸ In 1983 there were 62 events as compared to 79 in 1979.

⁷⁹ “Where have we got to with part-time studies / foundation courses?” Record of a discussion between Aitchison and Mackie, 17 September, 1981. Also Extra Mural Studies and Part-time classes, Mackie, R.D.A., 6 July, 1983.

⁸⁰ “*A possible model for a School of Art within the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit*”, Mackie, R.D.A., 23 September, 1983. The proposal was considered by the Unit’s Advisory Committee at a meeting on 16 November 1983. The Committee agreed that “for various reasons including the need to develop other areas of the programme and the shortage of floor space, that the art courses should continue ... (as they were)”.

upgrading was explored as a way of fulfilling the Unit's commitment in the area of professional studies. In this regard a Mathematics Project was proposed but although it received the general support of the Advisory Committee, the proposal was not developed.⁸¹ In Pietermaritzburg, the Deputy Director took an active part in the development of academic support on that campus particularly through the annual *Bridging the Gap* programme for first year students.⁸² One course in particular engaged the attention of Aitchison and Mackie; this was a diploma course for Nursing Administrators. The Unit's involvement with this course began in 1977 but although Morphet had done some teaching on it, the Unit's work was primarily administrative and consisted of co-ordinating a range of university components contributed by a number of individual university departments to a course run by the provincial administration. Aitchison and Mackie succeeded in expanding the nursing education component of this course and used it to establish a teaching function for the Unit's staff.⁸³ In certain respects this served as a prototype for the later development of the diploma in adult education.

Rationalisations and Red Herrings (1981-1983)

Some of the initiatives were distractions or dead-ends, some held opportunities which could not be realised, some simply pulled the Unit in the wrong direction. Three such projects which played a major role in helping to define more closely the Unit's role were the Science Education Project (SEP), the Associated Scientific and Technical Societies of Southern Africa and an initiative to co-ordinate all extra mural courses mounted in the name of the university.

⁸¹ The proposal arose from a course run by Mr George Parish in January 1981. Parish's proposal, *Towards a Mathematics Project* was considered by the Advisory Committee at meetings held on 22 June and 4 November 1981. The notion of the Unit's involvement in a "School of Part-time Studies" had some connection to this proposal – see Minutes of the Advisory Committee, 11 March 1982.

⁸² In Durban by contrast Morphet and Mackie had agreed in 1980 to relinquish the Durban Office's interest in that area to a committee of academic staff.

⁸³ Aitchison and Mackie's involvement in this course also led to an invitation to run a counselling skills course for hospital matrons in 1983.

The Science Education Project⁸⁴

The Science Education Project joined the Unit at the end of 1980 and negotiated a tripartite agreement between the University, the sponsor and the project. The Project Director, Brian Grey saw in the Unit an institutional and physical base in sympathy with the progressive ethos of the Project. The Unit saw in the Project the opportunity to broaden its focus towards the educationally disadvantaged by supporting a project which was addressing a critical area of educational need; it was formally affiliated to the Social and Community Studies Division.⁸⁵ As has been shown, the Project also contributed “critical mass” which attracted physical resources to the Unit from the University. The Unit staff contributed to the planning and development of the Project and helped to train “zonal leaders”.⁸⁶ Despite this close association the project maintained a largely independent status even in this period; the Unit’s primary role was directed towards managing the Project’s relationship to the University.

The Associated Scientific and Technical Societies (1981)

In 1981 the Durban branch of the Associated Scientific and Technical Societies (AS&TS)⁸⁷ approached the University with a view to the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit providing secretarial services for the organisation and help to its member societies in organising their events. In exchange AS&TS envisaged that the Unit would benefit from increased contact with its members; it also offered to contribute half the annual cost of an additional administrative assistant for the Unit. The Vice Principal in Durban was receptive to the idea seeing in it the possibility of

⁸⁴ The Science Education Project is a science teacher upgrade project which at the time was directed to standard 5,6 and 7 science teachers and which was based on simple but effective science “kits” and worksheets. At the time it was a loose collection of innovative projects with a common philosophy and methodology and loose national connections. It has since evolved into a major national school science curriculum project with regional offices. For a fuller understanding of the relationship between the Unit and the Science Education Project see Mackie, Robin, *A Review of the Science Education Project (Natal) for the period July 1985 - April 1991*.

⁸⁵ Minutes of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit Advisory Committee, 22 June 1981, item 4 (c). See also Gray, B.V. and Mackie, R.D.A. *The Science Education Project and Extra Mural Studies* 17.6.1981.

⁸⁶ A system of geographic “zones” was introduced which grouped together science teachers from schools participating in the project within a zone. The zones were a means both of implementing the Project and of fostering the professional development of teachers and were led by “zonal leaders”.

⁸⁷ The Associated Scientific and Technical Societies of South Africa is a national body to which most scientific and technical societies are affiliated. Its main purpose is to coordinate and stimulate the activities of its various affiliate societies.

extending the service to other “learned societies”.⁸⁸ The Advisory Committee also supported the proposal.⁸⁹ The Director was reluctant to accept the proposal, understanding that the role that the Unit was being asked to play was primarily administrative rather than educational. But the promise of an additional post was a powerful inducement and in addition the work could be understood as contributing to the objectives of the Professional Studies Division. The proposal was accepted, an additional administrative post followed, the Unit provided an efficient secretarial service, but there was little connection between the work undertaken by the Unit on behalf of AS&TS and the rest of the Unit’s work.

Attempts to co-ordinate extra mural courses mounted in the name of the University (1982/1983)

The 1978/1979 attempt to clarify the status of extra mural courses mounted independently of the Unit (see above) had been abandoned without resolution. The lack of clear policy in this area continued to be a source of confusion. In November 1981, Mackie again brought the matter to the attention of the Advisory Committee, setting out the history of the earlier attempt to address the issue and identifying the Unit’s interests in the area.⁹⁰ The Committee decided to again ask Senate Executive to require that all extra mural courses whether mounted through the Unit or not, be required to pay a levy for the financial support of the Unit. Senate Executive “expressed sympathy with the Advisory Committee’s concern over the lack of policy”⁹¹ and asked the two Vice Principals to discuss the proposal with the Chairman of the Advisory Committee and the Director. The outcome of that meeting was a set of proposals which went far beyond the Advisory Committee’s suggestion, to construct a policy for “the co-ordination and control of continuing education

⁸⁸ In a report of a meeting between the Vice Principal, the AS&TS representative and the Director, the AS&TS representative recorded, “The Vice Principal was sympathetic towards this idea especially since this service could be extended to other learned societies not falling under the AS&TS umbrella thereby achieving a much wider coverage of local activities”. In *Outline of Proposal to Coordinate Activities for the Associated Scientific and Technical Societies of South Africa*, Appendix C to the Agenda of the thirteenth meeting of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit Advisory Committee, 10 March, 1981.

⁸⁹ The Director reported the ongoing negotiations to the Advisory Committee meeting held on 10 March 1981 and presented a memorandum (see previous note) outlining the proposal. The minutes of the meeting recorded that “The Committee supported the proposal in principle”.

⁹⁰ In summary the issues identified were: that departments were confused as to whether or not they were expected to offer extra mural courses through the Unit; that the Unit was beginning to loose high revenue earning courses; that in the absence of any government subsidy base to its funding, the Unit relied on revenue from its courses; that there was no proper control over courses mounted in the name of the University; that in many instances the Unit did not have a meaningful role to play; and, that the issue was extremely delicate. Mackie, R.D.A., *Non-formal courses mounted by individuals and departments independently of the Extra Mural Studies Unit*, 4 November, 1981.

⁹¹ Minutes of the seventeenth meeting of the Advisory committee, 15 June, 1982, item 5(a).

courses”. It recognised seven distinct categories of courses in two broad classes – those mounted officially by the University and courses other than those mounted officially.⁹² The matter went backwards and forwards between Senate Executive and the Vice Principals for the next 18 months until in September 1983, Senate decided that it was impossible to formulate a rule and that the *status quo* should be retained.

Ambivalence with regard to project management (1982)

All three of these experiences suggested, in different ways, service roles for the Unit. Neither Aitchison nor Mackie was interested in involvement with projects or functions which could not be seen as central to the Unit’s objectives or which required purely administrative support. The question of project support was discussed at one of the open planning workshops in 1981 and the comments of the “friends of the Unit” supported this position

“I think you should be quite ruthless in getting rid of projects that take up a lot of time and effort if they are not helping you to reach your goals...”

“I would think that the only administration the Unit should be involved in is the administration of its own programme.”⁹³

But in relation to support for projects which, like the Science Education Project, were complementary to its objectives the position was more complex. These experiences together with the Unit’s involvement in teacher upgrade and academic support work led staff to consider the stance which the Unit should adopt in relation to project support. In an internal document.⁹⁴ Mackie attempted to tease this out and what emerged was a clear concern to focus on extra mural, non formal adult education needs while recognising common interests with work directed towards addressing shortcomings in mainstream education such as academic support and teacher upgrade. There was a further concern that any projects which attached to the Unit should be integrated with the work of the Centre rather than for them to be semi-autonomous appendages.

The development of a diploma in adult education (1982/1983)

Although the experimentation continued, by 1982, one project began to emerge clearly and this was the introduction of a post- graduate diploma course for adult educators. This project headed the list of priorities at the planning workshop in November 1981 and by April 1982 Aitchison and Mackie had developed a

⁹² *The Co-ordination and Control of Continuing Education Activities mounted in the name of the University or on University Premises*, 1982. In Collection of Documents, Vol 2, p. 185.

⁹³ Comments recorded in a report on planning workshops, Aitchison, J.J.W., 30 September, 1981.

⁹⁴ “*Towards a coherent policy for project support*”, Mackie, R.D.A., June 1982. In 1982 Record Book, section 4.2.

comprehensive proposal. This had of necessity to be more than a normal proposal for a new course; it had to argue the logic of the development in terms of the Unit's policy, it had to justify a direct teaching function for an entity which was not an academic department, it had to offer a procedure by which the diploma could be regulated and it had to reassure significant interests in the University that the Unit's role of providing extra mural courses was not being abandoned. Aitchison and Mackie engaged in intensive lobbying to gain support and the proposal in turn gained the support of the Advisory Committee and the Boards of the Faculty of Education, Arts and Social Science. But more information was required before the Academic Planning and Policy Committee would approve the proposal. This took the form of two further documents. The first had to argue further the need for the diploma, the need for formal certification, its relationship to the Unit, the structure of the curriculum and the financing of the course. The second had to spell out in fairly simple terms who adult educators were, what they did, why they needed professional development and provision made in this area by other universities. Initially staff hoped that the Diploma could be introduced in 1983 but the lengthy process of acceptance and of working out appropriate procedures of governance through the education faculty delayed its introduction until 1984. In the meantime the Director and Deputy Director held a series of workshops with consultants from other universities to develop the curriculum. Its introduction in 1984 marked a milestone in the development of the Centre and fundamentally changed its character.

The development of the Social and Community Studies Division (1983)

The second development which ran alongside the development of the diploma and which also helped produce a fundamental shift in the focus of the Unit was the development of the Social and Community Studies Division. Although the work of the Science Education Project had been claimed as a contribution to the aims of this division this was little more than a formality. No real progress was made until 1983 when a decision was made to employ Crispin Hemson on a contract basis against funds generated from the Unit's programme with the brief of "investigate(ing) ways in which the Unit can begin to give effect to its commitment to the Social and Community Studies Division". In addition Hemson was asked to mount a pilot programme along lines contingent to this purpose. Hemson undertook a survey which explored needs, facilities and the views of selected bodies and individuals with interests in the area. The report of this survey considered five options for the Unit:

1. Extra curricular courses linked with part-time classes.
2. The Unit acting as an "umbrella" organisation for different projects.
3. Doing nothing
4. Mounting a programme of courses for non-profit organisations

5. Running in-service courses for various organisations.⁹⁵

The report went on to recommend a combination of the last two options with a curriculum focussed on organisational development; the pilot programme of three courses having already indicated support for skills development in this area. The Advisory Committee accepted the recommendations and a programme was set in place for 1984 which heralded the development of the Community Organisations Project (COP).

A new direction in place

So by the end of 1983 the Unit was firmly set in a new direction with two major new curriculum initiatives about to commence, new purpose built accommodation in Durban and with a proposal for a name change to the Centre for Adult Studies endorsed by the Advisory Committee and recommended to Senate.

3.3 Analysis - Neither fish nor fowl

The overwhelming achievement of this period was to move the Unit from what Morphet called its “fragile and distorted base” to a position where it was poised to make a contribution to social development through adult education. This can be judged as no mean achievement given the Unit’s pitifully small base in terms of staffing, finance and the constituency of support which it was able to command within the University. It achieved what it did from a decidedly marginal position within the institution and in the face of an executive who at best had very little sense of the scope and potential of the Unit’s mission and who were very reluctant to allow the Unit to move away from its extension role of short course provision. At worst, in Morphet’s view, the Executive and Administration saw the Unit as a low cost public relations exercise which held some potential for buttressing the University’s territorial claims against incursions by other universities.⁹⁶

There were several components to the Unit’s achievement. Through this period it transformed its role from providing a programme of extra mural courses to one which recognised a much broader spectrum of provision and which included the professional training of adult educators; it held at bay a challenge to its source of financial independence even though this financial base was fairly meagre; it won recognition for its academic status and acquired a measure of institutional autonomy even though this was less than it would have liked; and, it secured a more substantial though far from adequate staffing establishment and physical accommodation. Finally it set in place

⁹⁵ Report of the Social and Community Studies Division to the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit Advisory Committee, Hemson, C.M.C., 14 October 1983.

⁹⁶ Morphet, A.R., *Explorations towards a design study for a University based adult education service in South Africa*, p. 81.

two curriculum developments which had the capacity to transform its role in practice.

Yet despite this considerable achievement there is a sense in which the Unit achieved less than it might have. The progress made is distinctly uneven and there is a degree of ambivalence present in the failure to consolidate and carry forward immediately the advances which were made at various points. There is ambivalence too in the unwillingness to commit the Unit to a fully academic path but instead to hold it in a unique position which was neither fully academic nor fully administrative. The independence which the maintenance of this position won accentuated the marginality of the Unit in relation to the mainstream of the institution and rendered it vulnerable.

This criticism cannot be made without considerable qualification and explanation. What the history as recorded in this study is unable to reveal, is the subtle but powerful interplay of relationships, of pressures and of opinion held by key players which because of the Units vulnerability were all the more influential. What appears as ambivalence or lack of resolve at this distance may be attributable to judgments of the time as to what was and was not possible. The interchange of Morphet and Mackie at the helm is also a factor which bears on this criticism. Despite the continuity which was made possible by Mackie's earlier association with the Unit and despite the broad sense of the Unit's mission which they shared, Morphet and Mackie both brought with them different experiences, strengths and weaknesses and these inevitably influenced their management of the Unit and accentuated different aspects of the Unit's work to the University and to the wider community. Neither can the ambivalence be located entirely within the Unit; it was deeply rooted in the wider institution itself and in a style of management both within the Unit and within the University which preferred to tolerate varying interpretations rather than force clarity through confrontation. Most importantly with regard to the insistence of straddling a service and academic position, it should be recognised that not only was this politically expedient at the time, it was also a position of principle; what is debatable is whether it was wise when judged against a longer perspective.

Was the decision to maintain a unique position essentially a matter of expediency? Was it substantially influenced by the attractiveness of the independence which this position afforded? Was it primarily driven by the judgment that an integrated Unit spanning a wide range of functions was the ideal which should be sought? It is not possible to give unequivocal answers to these questions; each factor conspired with the others to suggest the need to maintain this independent position.

The expediency is implicit in Morphet's Edinburgh analysis which understood that the survival of the Centre depended on a judicious mixture of extension and development on the one hand and of defence on the other. The defence which Morphet saw as necessary was that of "maintain(ing) the department's right to develop on its own terms" but this could clearly not be asserted to the exclusion of the interests already vested in the Unit nor did staff wish to do so. Insofar as those interests were educational, they were not seen as illegitimate; rather they were considered too narrow and staff sought to broaden the range of interests served by the Unit and the

University while maintaining the support of the constituency which it already served. The Unit could not achieve this objective if it restricted itself to the essentially service cum administrative role which had been thrust upon it from its inception. The wider range of interests could also not be addressed as directly as those of the Unit's original constituency; they required educational intervention at several steps removed from direct provision. There was a necessary coincidence between broadening the range of interests served by the Unit and moving it in a more academic direction just as there was a coincidence between serving more traditional interests and a more administrative or service role.

The alternative to straddling these two constituencies and modes of delivery was to move the Unit more definitely towards academic departmental status. The feasibility of that move can be judged by the limited acceptance of the notion of a Teaching and Research Unit. That proposal, it should be remembered, eschewed full departmental status in favour of a more limited teaching and research role which nevertheless retained elements of direct delivery while shifting the emphasis to more indirect educational intervention aimed at addressing the inequalities inherent in South African society as manifest in education. Despite the conditional initial acceptance which met this proposal, the later objections raised to the affiliation of the Unit to the Faculty of Education by Senate Executive, testify to the unlikely success of any attempt to push too fast in the direction in which staff believed the Unit should move. In this regard too, the opinion of the Durban Vice Principal which asserted the need to maintain an organisational distinction between the academic and service roles and of the need for the Unit to focus on the latter, is a salutary indication of the resistance which could be expected to meet a move in a contrary direction.

The role played by the determination of staff to maintain a high degree of autonomy for the Unit was also instrumental in adopting its ambiguous position. The second chapter of this study showed the very considerable influence which the Executive exerted over the Extension Programme. In order for the Unit to assert its own direction, it had to distance itself from such direct control. The attempt to restructure the Committee of Control as an Advisory Committee was an attempt to address this issue and was only partially successful as has been seen. The Unit's continued accountability through the Advisory Committee worked against a strong autonomy by locating final decision making in relation to its development, beyond the reach of the Unit. The appointment of the new Academic Planning Officer as the Principal's representative to chair the Advisory Committee re-established an umbilical connection and privileged the influence of the Administration and the Executive. In certain respects the highest degree of autonomy was achieved with the Committee of Control under the more neutral Chairmanship of Professor Sands.

On the other hand staff saw little advantage in locating the Unit firmly within the academic structures where its needs and interests would most likely be swamped by the more mainstream concerns of traditional departments whose functions were limited to teaching and research without any significant direct community service commitment.

An institutional position which gave the Unit access to both sectors while maintaining a degree of independence from both held clear advantages; it also held the danger of falling between two stools. The position won by the Unit did manage to achieve a degree of balance between the two sectors. The new status of the Organiser as Director, the seat on Senate, the academic conditions of service, the physical separation of the Unit's office from the Administration all helped to distance it from that sector and provide it with points of identification with other academic departments. On the other hand, its location outside the normal faculty structures, the links it retained to the Administration through its history, the nature of much of its work, the continued link to the Academic Planning Office through the Chairman of the Advisory Committee and the non specific, non evident nature of its academic function, worked to distance it from normal academic departments and mark it as distinct.

In certain respects the confirmation of the academic status of the Unit's staff was too easily won. There was no real debate through which the nature of the academic functions claimed for the Unit's staff could be articulated, contested and generally understood and there was no pressure to specify the functions claimed as academic. It was simply asserted and conceded that academic skills and judgments were required to design and run a programme of courses and to conceptualise the future development of the Unit. Even within the Unit there was no attempt to attach any priority to the normal academic functions of teaching and research or to evaluate staff competence in any of these areas. It is doubtful whether any research programme which curtailed in any way the programme of short courses would have been acceptable to the University.

The third impulse which pointed the Unit towards the position where it had a foot in both camps was the judgment that an integrated Unit spanning a wide range of functions was the ideal which should be sought. This argument had many forms but was put most eloquently by Morphet in conceptualising the three division internal structure for the Unit. The contribution of the three divisions was primarily intended and was most effective as a tool for "analysing and directing growth" in order to balance what was a very lopsided programme. Essential to the notion of the divisions was their integrative capacity for conceptualising the work of the Unit as a whole. They encompassed three key areas of educational endeavour; personal growth, vocational skills and social development. Conceived in this way it can be seen that the ideal of an integrated Unit was far more than an expedient; it was grounded in a coherent theoretical model for the development of the Unit. The weakness lay not at the conceptual level but in translating this into organisational form. Morphet's acknowledgement that the construction of the divisions would be "somewhat artificial" without staff being appointed to each of the divisions was borne out in practice. The failure of Mackie's early attempt to secure staff for these divisions in preference to establishing a post for the Pietermaritzburg office should perhaps have prompted a re-evaluation of the three division model because the staffing of Durban and Pietermaritzburg on a more or less even-handed basis, relied on an organisational logic which ran counter to that implied by the three divisions. The good working relationship which Mackie and Aitchison developed to some extent disguised the need for a change of this nature. Nevertheless focussed attention to either the Professional

or Social and Community Studies divisions proved to be impossible until the end of this period when the funds were found to appoint a staff member whose duties were dedicated to the Social and Community Studies Division. The eventual decision to include both Durban and Pietermaritzburg in the terms of reference of this post privileged the three division logic over the Durban / Pietermaritzburg logic. Contrary to Morphet's intention that the divisions should provide a means of conceiving the work of the Unit in an integrated fashion, in practice the divisions had the effect of compartmentalising sections of the work. This judgment perhaps anticipates developments in the following period for the disintegrative force of the divisions is not really evident in this period, but the origins of the later effects lie squarely in the period now under review.

A further weakness of the division categorisation was its seductive tendency to oversimplify the choices available to the Unit with the suggestion of choice between the three divisions, while under-playing the vast range of choice within each division. The curriculum experimentation which can be seen to have occurred from 1981 to 1983 exemplifies the scope for interpretation within each division.

A major theme running through the history of this period and especially up to 1980 is the issue of finance and to a lesser extent and more obviously after 1980, staffing. On the surface this is easily understood in terms of securing a sound resource base for the Unit and in these terms the Unit clearly succeeded within the limits of what was possible. Judged against other universities at the time, the Unit managed to negotiate a very favourable arrangement;⁹⁷ its overheads were fully covered by the University and it acquired an establishment staff of seven. It was required only to cover its operating costs from fee revenue which it managed to do without difficulty and even produced a modest but steady annual surplus. The surpluses were not sufficient to sustain any major development but were able to seed the initial stages of projects as was the case with the development of the Social and Community Studies Division towards the end of this period. Despite the approval which Morphet secured from the Committee of Control as early as 1976, to raise funds for the Unit, no funds were sought nor was any project conceived which could have attracted funds. The Unit looked exclusively to the University to finance its current work and its future development. Inevitably this meant that such development would have to be on the University's terms. The composition of the establishment staff complement reflects to some extent these University terms; what the Unit was able to secure was four administrative and three academic staff members. Notwithstanding the obvious effect of a second office in Pietermaritzburg which in itself created a distortion to this composition, this staff structure suggests a strong administrative role such as would be expected of a department concerned with the delivery of a fairly large programme of non-formal courses.

A full explanation for both the contest over the basis for the Unit's finances and the exclusive focus on the University as the source of funds, cannot be found entirely in

⁹⁷ The University of the Witwatersrand, for example, was treated far less favourably by comparison, having to cover its staffing costs for its continuing education function.

terms of the need to secure adequate resources for the Unit; it must be sought in other terms, partly historical, partly symbolic and partly ideological. The Unit unlike the many university-based projects which came later, was fundamentally a university project. In origin the notion of an extension service was conceived by important constituencies within the University and the idea was nurtured and developed at the highest level, as Chapter One has shown. The Unit was constructed to serve needs felt by the University and with a public service ideal in mind. The University had given and continued to give strong support to the Unit. In contrast with the first period of this study, the support given by the University as expressed by its Executive was more indirect, strong on rhetoric and less certain of the mission of the Unit it had created. The Unit on the other hand was asserting a direction which challenged the original conception by broadening it to the point where the initial purposes seemed in danger of being subsumed by larger social and educational aims. The issues of finance and of staffing while crucial to the survival of the Unit, provided the focus for debate over these deeper concerns. The Unit had primarily to engage the University as its sponsor and in doing so it sought to change its terms of reference while retaining the University's support. It had to put University commitment to the test by requiring the University to deliver resources against an emerging vision. At stake was the role of the Unit and even, though obscurely, an aspect of the role of the University itself. That may seem a preposterous assertion on behalf of an agency which it has already been acknowledged was very marginal to the institution as a whole, but it is a valid claim insofar as the Unit was pushing the University to examine and redefine its own interests. At an ideological level, the Unit located itself at the more liberal end of the spectrum of university political practice and belief. In some quarters it was seen in radical terms. This put it in opposition to more conservative opinion and the issue of resources was a natural place for battle to be joined.

Finally, in relation to the context as a whole, the Unit can be seen to be emerging along with the Universities of Cape Town and of the Witwatersrand as one of three Universities with broadly similarly understood missions each comprising continuing education delivery and adult educator training functions. As compared to these two universities, the University of Natal's Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit still maintained an amateurish quality; it had appointed no professor of adult education nor was its academic status as well established but it had begun to establish a reputation which enabled it to rank favourably with the other two universities.

The Centre for Adult Education

Towards a department of adult education (1984 - 1991)

4:1 Context

The broad context of this period was one of protest and repression in which the “liberation” forces sought to make the country ungovernable and the State imposed drastic counter measures in order to assert its authority and retain control. This was marked by escalating violence, which in Natal in particular, progressively took on the hallmarks of a low-intensity civil war. Although the consequent disruption and dislocation of everyday life was distinctly uneven across the society as a whole, no sector escaped without experiencing some of the effects. As education became a primary site of struggle with the demand for “people’s education”, it more than most bore the brunt of this groundswell of social unrest. The most traumatic events in relation to education were undoubtedly felt in black schools as pupils rallied to the slogan “People’s Education for People’s Power” and the black school system ground to an effective standstill in many areas. Tertiary institutions, particularly universities, and especially the traditional white, “liberal” universities, were also prominent points of protest. As the powers assumed by the State through the successive states of emergency, began to take effect, the Universities presented one of the few remaining sites for protest. Within the white universities such as the University of Natal, confrontation was initially often, directed primarily (albeit indirectly) towards the State authorities as represented by the South African police with the University authorities acting as mediators sympathetic to the popular cause; towards the end of the period this confrontation was more directly with the Universities themselves.

The emergency powers were also used to harass and curtail the activities of the myriad community and service organisations and projects which had become significant vehicles for promoting the struggle against apartheid. Universities came to be recognised as being able to provide limited protection against State persecution and a host of projects sprang into being on university campuses. Some of these were essentially reinventions of organisations which had found it impossible to continue in the open; some were existing projects which simply attached themselves to university departments in a variety of ways. The tertiary educational link was sometimes quite tenuous.

The effect of these developments on the Centre for Adult Education were various and extensive. A large part of the Centre’s work was by this time connected with these

community and service organisations which now came to be known as NGOs¹ and the disruption of their work and their organisational existence had an obvious effect on the work and on staff of the Centre. Within the Centre itself, at least one member of staff² and a number of students were detained at different times and for various periods with consequent disruption of the organisational life of the Centre and its teaching.³ In Pietermaritzburg, where much of this violence was centred, the disruption was most severe with that part of the Centre taking on an extensive violence monitoring function and serving for a time as an unofficial political information and refugee centre. The Centre's teaching was disrupted by boycotts and stayaways but most significantly the curricula of courses for adult and community educators were diverted by the magnitude and trauma of the external events. The 1986/87 Diploma in Adult Education was particularly affected with considerable class time devoted to analysis of events and to mutual reassurance. Similarly a large part of a course in administration for youth leaders in 1987 was devoted to dealing with personal and group trauma. In many respects an educational response was simply inadequate and inappropriate to the context of that time.

The mushrooming of educational projects on campus also had an effect on the Centre. It undermined the unique position which the Centre had hitherto enjoyed as a para-academic department with a community orientation and a non formal mode of delivery. The advent of other similar-looking projects also served to disguise the university origin and ownership of the Centre. Although the Centre remained as the only community outreach project deliberately constructed, staffed and financed by the University, the Administration appeared to lose sight of this and lavished more attention on a number of the newer, privately or community spawned projects. This was exacerbated both by the penurious state of University finances and a coinciding increase in the availability of foreign donor funds with which to finance these new education and developmental projects.

The instability was not limited to the broad social and political context; in the second half of this period the institutional context within which the Centre was situated was also unsettled. The government cuts to the subsidies by which the universities were funded prompted a process of institutional review and restructuring at the University of Natal which dominated the Centre's domestic context from the beginning of 1988.

¹ Non governmental organisations. The term is not indigenous to South Africa but began to be applied to community and service organisations and projects towards the middle of the 1980s. Later community based organisations (CBOs) were distinguished from NGOs.

² The member of staff referred to here was Jeremy Routledge, Director of the Science Education Project. Strictly speaking he was not a member of the Centre's staff but at the time the relationship between the Centre and SEP was still very close; SEP shared the same offices and infra structure, and attended Centre staff meetings. SEP staff were formally employed by the University and the Centre for Adult Education was the University body responsible for the Project.

³ There was also a personal dimension to these detentions which resulted from a close intermeshing network of staff, students colleagues and friends.

This was punctuated by a series of initiatives beginning with the “Short- Term Plan” which sought to rationalise departments and faculties on the basis of their viability as measured essentially by reference to staff student ratios.⁴ The Short-Term Plan also sought to address the peculiar problems associated with the University’s dual campus by proposing closures and amalgamations of departments, the establishment of schools – including a School of Education – and separation of faculties which up to that point operated on a university-wide basis. Very few of these initial proposals were put into practice but the Faculty of Education, which had included Durban and Pietermaritzburg departments of Education, did divide into two Faculties of Education on a Durban / Pietermaritzburg basis and this was a source of confusion for the Centre for Adult Education which had joined a unitary faculty in 1986 and remained a unitary department operating on both campuses. No finality of the broad University restructuring process was achieved within the period which is the subject of this chapter; the Short-Term Plan gave way to a second and related initiative to construct a Mission Statement for the University and this in turn gave rise, under a new Principal⁵ to the Vice Chancellor’s Review. Nevertheless, the uncertainty which these initiatives generated and consideration of and response to these initiatives and proposals were the institutional background against which the Centre operated in the second half of this period.

Inter-university contact and co-operation through this period was initially largely informal; the Centre maintained strong ties with the University of Cape Town’s Department of Adult Education and Extra Mural Studies and weaker contact with the University of the Witwatersrand’s Centre for Continuing Education. It also developed links to the University of the Western Cape’s Centre for Continuing Education. Formal contact was limited to the Committee of University Principal’s sub-committee on Continuing Education which limped along, meeting sporadically, until it finally dissolved in 1989. Education at a policy level turned from the failed promise of reform to critique and a process of conceptual reconstruction. In time this was overtaken by the broader political processes which constituted education as a site and tool of the struggle for political liberation by the popular democratic forces. Right at the end of the period the focus shifted decisively back towards policy development as the political struggle sighted the achievement of its objectives. The political nature of the intervening period between these two historical moments of policy interest limited the contribution of university-based adult education departments for whom political intervention was neither appropriate nor credible. Nevertheless attempts were made to form an inter-university group which would be able to influence the development of national policy for adult education.

⁴ The criteria proposed were complex and nuanced and did not seriously envisage a mechanical application of a formula, but in essence the proposals were initially closely related to subsidy entitlement.

⁵ Professor Booysen retired as Principal in June of 1991 and was replaced by Professor Leatt who immediately set up the vice Chancellor’s review. Although under the auspices of a new Principal, there was a strong thread of continuity and congruence between these initiatives.

From September 1989 to September 1990 there were a series of five inter-university meetings between four university departments of adult education (UCT, Wits, Natal and UWC) who shared a similar commitment in their work in adult education. The meetings were driven by recognition of the changing political climate and of the stronger role which adult education could play in the future. This understanding together with the absence of developed policy options suggested the need to explore possible co-operation between these universities toward promoting the interests of adult education. Adult education policy development was the central concern and the meetings became loosely known as the *Inter-University Adult Education Policy Research Initiative*. The meetings revealed different commitments as between the different university departments with emphasis variously placed on research and advocacy. The initiative also tested the limits of any collective identity.⁶

The tension between a research and an advocacy focus reflected in part different perceptions of the adequacy and legitimacy of a university base as a policy lobby.⁷ Up to this time the universities, and particularly these four universities, had occupied a leadership position in a sector of adult education practice which could be loosely described as “progressive”. But this had been in a context in which other sectors had been repressed or deliberately limited. Inevitably as the situation normalised, the other sectors, notably the trade unions and the NGO sector, emerged to exert their influence on policy formation. Throughout the period the business sector was a major participant although operating in the area of work which was in many respects discrete; as policy work became the primary focus the strength and influence of this sector became readily apparent. The State’s role, although significant in terms of numbers of learners, was minimal in the area of policy development. The universities through their adult education departments and particularly through individual members of those departments, were able to play a significant role in various ways and most prominently through the National Education Policy Initiative (NEPI).⁸ At the very end of this period the inter-university co-operative group began to formalise its activities into an annual conference which in time led to the establishment of an association.⁹

In the wider field of adult education, beyond university-based adult education, there was, in the second half of this period, an awakening of interest and activity in literacy or more generally adult basic education. Regional Literacy Co-operatives comprising progressive literacy organisations emerged towards the end of the 1980s and in 1989

⁶ Mackie, R.D.A., Introduction to the *Proceedings of the Conference of University-based Adult Educators*, Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal, Durban, 1992.

⁷ This difference was not only between but also within departments. In Natal in particular, I stood out against the general view that supported the development of a strong advocacy function.

⁸ In particular through the Reports of the Adult Education and Adult Basic Education research groups. Although NEPI was a major policy research initiative, its influence on policy at the time of writing is far from certain. In contrast to the attempts to build a co-operative university-based policy initiative, the NEPI Adult Education Report in particular was essentially the result of an individual effort.

⁹ The Association of Tertiary Based Adult Educators (ATBAE) was formed in 1994.

a National Literacy Cooperative was formed. In 1989 too, a national conference on literacy was held in Gaborone which brought together the major literacy organisations. 1990 was designated by the United Nations as the International Year of Literacy which was intended to herald the beginning of a decade of development in this field. The prospect of large-scale funding intensified this interest and probably compounded the already high level of ideological and personal conflicts which permeated the field. Finally by 1991 the scope of adult basic education expanded in policy terms to the point where it all but eclipsed other forms of adult education practice and adult basic education policy research became a major focus. COSATU's involvement in this aspect became a significant factor at the end of this period. These developments in adult basic education were of more than academic interest to the Centre for Adult education. The ABE programme which it developed during this period was itself a member of the Durban Regional Literacy Co-operation Group and the Centre maintained a wide range of contacts with literacy organisations in the greater Durban area. The programme was inevitably drawn into the ideological conflicts which characterised the field and the programme was influenced in its development by the nature of the field.

4:2 History

The Diploma, Liberal Studies and Professional Studies (1984-1987)

The introduction of the post graduate diploma course for adult educators in 1984 changed the Unit in a fundamental way. The most significant changes occurred almost overnight; other changes took longer to make themselves felt. Most obviously the focus of the work of the Director and Deputy Director changed to teaching the Diploma. Because the teaching was concentrated in a weekly three and a half hour session; because the detail of the curriculum was being designed on a session by session basis; and, because it was exciting, innovative work, it inevitably absorbed the time and attention of these two key academic staff members. The effect of this drastic shift in the work of Mackie and Aitchison was ameliorated in several ways. Firstly, although absorbing and demanding, the work was not exclusive of ongoing policy development work. Secondly, the appointment of Crispin Hemson to the newly established post of Tutor with responsibility for developing the Social and Community Studies Division (see below) expanded the development of work in this area. Thirdly and most significantly, the design and administration of the Liberal Studies Programme in Durban was taken over by the Administrative Officer, Susan Budd. This was significant because until this point the Liberal Studies Division had been the cornerstone of the Unit's programme and the primary work of the Director – as witnessed by the history related in the previous chapters. This was less true of Pietermaritzburg, where the programme had not developed to the same extent as it had in Durban. Although there was an immediate transfer of certain functions, the changeover was progressive rather than instantaneous but the functions which transferred immediately were sufficient to be significant. This change was driven by necessity but it was not an unconscious decision; amongst the staff there was agreement that it was necessary to withdraw resources from the Liberal Studies Division for the purposes of developing a new area which would achieve the balance

which had been recognised as lacking in the late 1970s. There was however no formal policy decision at any higher level (such as the Advisory Committee) partly because it would have been politically unwise within the context of the University to draw attention to any potential reduction in the Liberal Studies programme. The diploma was mounted on the understanding that the work of the Liberal Studies Division would be sustained. Later the withdrawal of staff resources was acknowledged openly in the Advisory Committee and used as an argument for additional staff.

From 1984 to 1987 the Liberal Studies Programme continued at more or less the same level with an increasing bias towards skills orientated courses particularly in languages and fine arts. The effect of withdrawing the academic staff support from the Liberal Studies Division was eventually felt as will be seen later in this Chapter.

In the area of professional studies the Unit also managed to maintain the semblance of a programme which was boosted briefly by awakening interest in basic computer skills, but the annual reports for this period openly acknowledge the Unit's lack of capacity to develop this area without additional staff. It is also clear from the reports that the original rationale for the Division of Professional Studies was gradually being lost; overlaps began to appear between the work of this programme and both the Liberal Studies and Community Studies Programmes, the work with AS&TS and with SEP was claimed for the Division but the key work of the Diploma which could have been understood as central to the aims of this division was unacknowledged and the Division began to be vaguely identified with business studies rather than with the broader conception of professional studies.

The single most important change flowing from the introduction of the diploma was a fundamental change in the Centre's image both of itself as perceived by its staff, and by a key constituency of its users – specifically its diploma students and the various educational agencies from which they were drawn. To these students, agencies and to its own staff, the Unit became more analogous to a university teaching department while yet retaining a degree of independence which distinguished it from “the establishment”. The Unit located itself in relation to the slowly emerging field of adult and alternative education as a resource which offered a credible route for the academic accreditation of this work. This altered perception and function of the Unit was not universally recognised. To the traditional users of its Liberal Studies Programme, this change was not apparent; to members of the Education Faculty the diploma probably appeared as the major work of the Unit; to the Advisory Committee it was recognised as an important new development which while incremental to its existing work, was understood, however vaguely and variously, as heralding a major change of direction; to most of the University community, the introduction of the diploma was barely noticed and extension work continued to be understood as the Unit's *raison d'être*.

Changing the Unit's name (1983-1984)

Even before the Diploma began, Mackie and Aitchison sought to mark the change which its introduction would make by altering the Unit's name. In October 1983 a memorandum was presented to the Advisory Committee proposing a change in the Unit's name.¹⁰ The memorandum traced the evolution of the current name *Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit* and drew attention to the disadvantages of that name.¹¹ It went on to review current terminology and particularly the terms "adult education" and "continuing education" and proposed that the name of the Unit be changed to "Centre for Adult Studies" on the grounds that:

1. It immediately suggests the focus of the Unit's activities;
2. It is an accurate reflection of those activities;
3. It is readily understandable by reference to its literal meaning;
4. It maintains in the name a balance between the present Unit's Extra Mural Studies and Adult Education functions;
5. The designation "Centre" rather than Unit is probably more attractive to students as suggesting something more substantial.¹²

The Advisory Committee accepted the proposal and recommended the change to Senate Executive. When Senate Executive came to consider the recommendation in February 1984, there was little support for the proposal and "a general feeling that the name "Centre for Continuing Education" was preferable". The Advisory Committee was asked "to reconsider the matter".¹³ A staff meeting of the Unit discussed Senate's Executive's unenthusiastic response to its proposal and its counter suggestion. Staff were opposed to the name "Continuing Education" seeing it as biased towards continuing professional education¹⁴ and agreed to argue the case for "Centre for Adult Education". The Advisory Committee supported the new proposal later in March¹⁵ and Senate in due course agreed. By June of 1984 the Unit became known as "The Centre for Adult Education".

¹⁰ Minutes of the twenty-first meeting of the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit Advisory Committee, 24 October, 1983, item 6..

¹¹ *New name for the Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit*, Mackie, R.D.A., 24.10.83. The memorandum points out that the official name was "Extension" and that the words "Extra Mural" had been added unofficially to explain "extension" which was not readily understood. It argued that "Extra Mural" was strictly speaking inaccurate because the Unit's programmes were "extra curricular" rather than "extra mural". It further explained that the designation "Unit" was the result of a classification of administrative structures dating from 1975.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Minutes of a meeting of Senate Executive, 7 February 1984, item 6.12.

¹⁴ Minutes of an Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit Staff Meeting, 1 March, 1984, item 8.

¹⁵ Minutes of the twenty-second meeting of the Extra Mural Studies and Advisory Committee, 19 March, 1984, item 5.4.

Joining the Faculty of Education (1984-1986)

The institutional position won for the Centre in 1980 was based on a series of uneasy but to some extent inevitable compromises as this history has shown and the arrangement had not proved satisfactory to the Unit. There had been two elements to this compromise; the staff had judged it both impossible and undesirable to commit the Centre to a full academic role and the University had been unwilling to concede autonomy to the Centre thereby compelling the Advisory Committee to continue to perform essentially the same function as the earlier Committee of Control. The status of the Centre had remained ambiguous and the extent of this ambiguity became abruptly apparent when the incoming Principal¹⁶ put forward a proposal to group together under an umbrella structure all para academic and service units including the Centre for Adult Education.¹⁷ The Centre responded with a memorandum from its staff to the Advisory Committee which made clear its opposition to this proposal:

The Centre's most fundamental objection is to the concept of the Centre's work as a service of a similar kind to the services provided by the other bodies mentioned (Student Advisory, Academic Support, Audio Visual, etc.) Insofar as all education is a service, the Centre does indeed provide a service but it is not a support service to other teaching departments as is the case of the other five activities mentioned. The Centre, by contrast, provides an educational programme in its own right.¹⁸

The memorandum also drew attention to the fact that the Centre functioned on an integrated basis as between Durban and Pietermaritzburg, in contrast to the proposed umbrella structure which envisaged only the Durban campus. It also noted previous decisions accepting in principle affiliation of the Centre to the Faculty of Education and Senate Executive's recognition in setting up the Advisory Committee of the interim nature of that arrangement. It finally suggested that the time was now right to consider locating the Centre within the Faculty.

The Advisory Committee accepted the view of staff noting specifically that "it was not able to support the view that the work of the Centre could be regarded as a service in the sense implied by the term 'Academic Services'". It also agreed that the Centre should be understood as "having a University-wide function". The Committee then requested the Director to draw up a proposal to locate the Centre in the Faculty of Education.¹⁹

¹⁶ Professor Booysen, formerly the Durban Vice Principal. Professor Booysen's strong view of the Centre as a service unit was recorded in the previous chapter.

¹⁷ *Committees related to Academic Services on the Durban Campus* a memorandum by Professor Booysen, 1984.

¹⁸ *Future Institutional linkage for the Centre for Adult Education* A memorandum from the Staff of the Centre to the Centre's Advisory committee, 16 August, 1984.

¹⁹ Minutes of the twenty-third meeting of the Centre for Adult Education Advisory Committee, 20 August, 1984, item 7.

The resulting memorandum was in three sections. The first section identified problems related to the status quo and the primary problem identified was the difficulty experienced by the Centre in acquiring adequate resources which was considered to be a reflection of “the low status and priority accorded to the Centre within the University”

We attribute this situation of disadvantage in part to the *ad hoc* position which the Centre occupies within the overall University structure. We believe that to remedy this condition the Centre must lodge more definitely within the normal University structure.²⁰

The second section explored reasons for locating the Centre within the Faculty. These included the Faculty’s 1978 decision accepting the Centre, the limited relationship already forged to regulate the diploma, the possibility of further formal courses in adult education such as an option within the B.Ed and arguments pointing to the essentially academic character of the work of the Centre. Benefits to the Faculty in terms of broadening its limited focus on schooling and of promoting interchange between staff of the Faculty and of the Centre, were also suggested.

The final section detailed a comprehensive set of proposals. In essence they called for the establishment of a new department within the Faculty to be known as the “Centre for Adult Education”. This department would be responsible both for teaching and research in adult education and for the continued development of the extra mural programme. The department would undertake this work as a single department in both Durban and Pietermaritzburg. The Director would be responsible to the Board of the Faculty and Senate for the work of the Centre but the Advisory Committee would be retained with expanded membership and with terms of reference restricted to advising the Centre with regard to the non formal programme.

The Advisory Committee considered the document and the proposal it made at a meeting at the end of 1984 and decided to set up a sub-committee to consider the implications and report back to the next meeting.²¹ Although the first meeting of the sub-committee was held promptly in December of the same year, it took two-years before the proposal was finally accepted. The sub-committee met again in June of the following year; the Academic Planning and Policy Committee sought the views of other faculties and negotiations took place with the Faculty of Education concerning the details of the proposed relationship. The major concern of the sub-committee was the future role of the Advisory Committee. Both staff in the Centre and the Advisory Committee were reluctant to commit the Centre’s non formal activities unconditionally to the control of the Faculty of Education but there was a concomitant concern to avoid a continuance of the dual accountability structures and routes which the 1980 transformation of the Committee of Control to the Advisory Committee had failed to resolve. Two key clauses were included in an attempt to

²⁰ *The Centre for Adult Education and its place within the Organisational structure of the University of Natal*, 1985.

²¹ Minutes of the twenty-fourth meeting of the Centre for Adult Education Advisory Committee, 15 October 1984, item 6.3.

balance these concerns:

- (vi) ... all staffing requests related to University establishment posts (should) be routed through the faculty of Education and the Faculty be required to prioritise these requests and forward them to the staffing committee *with any comment received from the Advisory Committee* [emphasis added]
- (vii) ... the Committee shall have the right to report independently to Senate and Council via Senate Executive. In any case, it should report to Senate and Council on an annual basis indicating whether or not the Centre had met its reasonable expectations. The Committee shall be autonomous in the area of its extramural programme.²²

This last clause was slightly but significantly different from the intention of the Director and Deputy Director and paved the way for continued ambiguity in the institutional linkage of the Centre.²³ The full Council resolution of which these clauses were a part was also a source of future confusion regarding the status of the Centre; the resolution began:

RESOLVED

- (i) That, *subject to ministerial permission being received*, a new department – to be known as the Centre for Adult Education – be established within the Faculty of Education [emphasis added]²⁴

When subsequently ministerial permission was not forthcoming, a request for clarification by the Director to the Registrar drew no response²⁵ and the departmental status of the Centre remained ambiguous throughout the rest of the period of this history.

²² Minutes of a meeting of Council, 17 October, 1986, item 4.2.

²³ The two clauses arose from the deliberations of the sub committee and reflected a concern felt more strongly by Professor Webb as Chairman of the Advisory Committee and probably reflected the view of the Executive. The clause relating to staffing was not included in the original staff proposal. The clause relating to the reporting function of the Advisory Committee was, in the original staff proposal, importantly prefaced with the words “The Committee should be autonomous but under exceptional circumstances should have the right to report independently to Senate and Council....”. No route via Senate Executive was suggested. This original wording was borrowed from the constitution of the University of Cape Town’s Department of Adult Education and Extra Mural Studies and its slight alteration in the final Council resolution provided the basis for a dual route for institutional linkage and accountability.

²⁴ Minutes of Council, 17 October 1986, item 4.2.

²⁵ The application for the establishment of a Department of Adult Education was turned down by the Department of Education and Culture “in view of the fact that the proposed Department would cater for one diploma only” - Letter from the Superintendent-General, Department of Education and Culture, 11 August, 1988.

On 3 May 1989, Mackie wrote to the Registrar “Since the entire move of the Centre into the Faculty of Education is premised on the assumption that the Centre would be recognised as a department, the status of the Centre is now unclear. I would appreciate your interpretation of the current status of the Centre for Adult Education.

Reappraisal of academic staff roles (1985/1986)

The proposal to locate the Centre within the Faculty of Education had included a request for a review of the level of the posts of the Director and Deputy Director as part of the restructuring process.²⁶ Part of the problem identified for the Centre's structure equated its relatively low status with the low level of its staff posts. The initial meeting of the sub-committee dealing with the relocation of the Centre accepted the linkage between the two issues²⁷ but they soon became separated. In March of 1985, the Director reported to the Advisory Committee that:

... the lack of clarity surrounding the status of professional staff within the Centre, the lack of definite and appropriate job performance criteria for those staff and of established channels and procedures for dealing with these matters (is) causing concern.²⁸

The Committee responded by setting up a further sub-committee to review:

- (i) the status of staff employed in the centre on academic conditions of service
- (ii) the criteria for the promotion of staff employed on academic conditions of service within the Centre
- (iii) the level of the existing posts of Director and Deputy Director within the Centre
- (iv) the academic staffing of the Centre as a whole given the present workload and the anticipated development of the Centre and particularly the criteria against which motivations for additional posts within the Centre should be evaluated.²⁹

The subsequent memorandum prepared by the Director at the request of the sub-committee revealed other reasons prompting this review of staff. These included *inter alia* "general misconceptions about the nature of the Centre's work", "the sense that the University has never directly considered what it expects of staff of the Centre", "the exclusion of CAE staff (by omission) from various academic events (and procedures)" and "the recognition by CAE staff that the work they undertake is different from the work of other academic departments". The memorandum clearly understands the shift in the work of academic staff resulting from the curriculum developments introduced in 1984 as prompting the need for review, and is permeated by a strong sense of dichotomy and tension between administrative and academic demands made on academic staff and of heavy workloads. It contains the first (and only) comprehensive description and categorisation of the nature of the work

²⁶ The post of Director was at Senior Lecturer level and that of the Deputy Director was at Lecturer level.

²⁷ The report of the meeting of the sub-committee of December 3 1985, noted as item 2.5, "A recommendation to review the level of the post of Director and Deputy Director should be made together with the proposal to Senex to establish a department within the Faculty of Education."

²⁸ Minutes of the 25th meeting of the Advisory Committee of the Centre for Adult Education, 25 March, 1985, item, 8.

²⁹ Ibid.

undertaken by the Centre's staff. The primary recommendations called for a commitment by the University to a development plan; full and unconditional recognition of the academic status of staff in the Centre employed on academic conditions of service; promotion based on criteria determined by the Centre's stated objectives; and, the upgrading of the posts of Director and Deputy Director.³⁰

The report of the sub-committee, which did not include staff of the Centre,³¹ while generally sympathetic to the interests of the Centre and its staff revealed a disturbingly different perception of the Centre to that held by staff. The report began by stating the purposes which the sub-committee understood for the Centre in a manner which, while it recognised the need for academic status, totally ignored the teaching function which the Centre had developed:

Since the Centre exists for the purpose of designing and mounting a range of specialised programmes, it is essential that the senior personnel of the Centre should be appropriately qualified academically and should have academic status within the university and community.³²

The report also recognised that "the Centre's functions (were) significantly different from those of conventional teaching departments" and that "the University's general criteria for promotion of academic staff are unsuitable" for staff within the Centre.

Particularly important in this regard is the fact that the academics of the Centre do not operate from a clearly defined disciplinary base. Instead, they are involved in the design, administration and and presentation of a wide variety of disparate courses.³³

The recommendation flowing from these observations seem in certain respects to be *non sequiturs*. In attempting to reaffirm the academic status of staff, the sub-committee recommended:

no change to the Centre's present staffing dispensation, in terms of which the posts at the levels of Director and Deputy Director are established on academic conditions of service.³⁴

³⁰ Mackie, R.D.A., *The Role of the Academic Staff of the Centre for Adult Education*, 1985. The memorandum contained five sections; the first described the need for the review; the second described the nature of the work of the staff of the Centre and classified the administrative and academic work in six primary categories; the fourth section detailed the workloads and responsibilities of the academic staff members; the fifth section outlined a model for the development of the Centre in relation to staffing needs and the final section made recommendations.

³¹ It comprised four members of the Advisory Committee including the Vice Principal who was Chairman of the Advisory Committee. All were influential opinion-makers within the University.

³² *Report of the sub-committee (of the Centre for Adult Education Advisory Committee) appointed to review the staffing position in the Centre for Adult Education*, 28 April, 1986.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

The sub-committee also saw no need to regrade the posts of Director and Deputy Director, suggesting instead that “if adjustments are needed, they should be achieved, in the first instance by the mechanism of personal promotion”. The sub-committee did however recommend that the Staffing Committee be asked “to develop special criteria and possibly also special procedures for handling academic promotions within the Centre”. Ironically the special criteria when they were finally developed were interpreted as additional rather than supplementary criteria for staff within the Centre.

In response to the wider issue of additional staff for the development of the Centre, the sub-committee was even more cautious.

Since the principal activities of the Centre are not subsidy-earning, it would be unwise and inappropriate to seek funding from the university for additional staff, except for the purposes of undertaking activities specifically requested by the university ...³⁵

The sub-committee’s report was in due course accepted by the Advisory Committee with minor modifications to its wording.

Development of the Community Organisations Project (1984-1987)

The Community Organisations Project (COP) which had been set up on a pilot project basis towards the end of 1983 was the primary manifestation of the work of the Social and Community Studies Division in this period. The project grew rapidly to a level where it was able to mount between fifteen and twenty events in Durban in each of the years from 1984 to 1987. In Pietermaritzburg in 1984 and 1985 there was steady but smaller scale development but this fell back in 1986 as other priorities asserted themselves.³⁶

Throughout this four year period the curriculum was focussed on organisational skills which were offered to people working in non profit-making organisation³⁷ through a variety of workshops short courses and seminars. Within the project there was considerable experimentation directed towards curriculum innovation. A Community Education Forum of seminars on current issues of interest to community and adult educators was introduced in 1985 which although it did not survive very long gave birth to a consultative function.³⁸ A newsletter directed to community organisations was introduced in 1986 but again this was short lived. In 1987 a scheme was

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ The changed priorities can be attributed to a number of causes including a policy decision in 1985 to concentrate development in Durban, staffing changes in Pietermaritzburg in 1986/7; and, the escalating violence in Pietermaritzburg.

³⁷ The term “non profit organisations” preceeds the now generally understood term “non governmental organisation” (NGO) but it was not synonomous since it included governmental departments such welfare and health.

³⁸ This was originally proposed as COCO (Consultation of Community Organisations although it never really functioned under this title.

introduced to train people who were interested in adult education but who lacked experience. Known as COPAPPY, it was based on an apprenticeship model and although a few trainees participated in the scheme, it did not survive the pilot stage.

In 1986 a second staff member, Paul Graham, joined the project and in 1986 and 1987 the project developed a strong sense of mission and organisational coherence which was given impetus by the political crisis of 1986/1987 through the state of emergency. The emergency powers adopted by the State during this period were directed in part towards curtailing the activities of non governmental organisations and the escalation of political violence directly affected many of these organisations and particularly youth organisations. The Project's most significant response took the form of a three month long course held in Pietermaritzburg for black youth leaders.. The course called "Voluntary Organisation and Administration Course for Youth" (VOACY) was in part an act of political intervention and community counselling at a time and in circumstances when normal educational activity was understood to be either impossible or inappropriate.

The scope and identity of the project were constantly in issue. Even before it really began, other interests within the University questioned the appropriateness of the Centre's intervention in this area and to pre-empt these concerns a meeting of all interested parties was called late in 1983 under the auspices of the Advisory Committee to discuss areas of possible overlap.³⁹ Despite this meeting, early in 1984, the department of Social Work expressed strong objections to the project, claiming that it was already covering the area and questioning the competence and qualification of Centre staff for this work.⁴⁰

Another reaction was a concern expressed in Senate Executive that the project was confined to Durban.⁴¹ The Centre's response, minuted in a staff meeting and subsequently endorsed by the Advisory Committee,⁴² maintained that the question of Pietermaritzburg had been considered, that research of this nature was specific to the area and pointed out that the funding for the Project was drawn from the Durban Extra Mural Programme. Nevertheless the Centre made an effort to expand the project to Pietermaritzburg. A report on the Project in October 1984 made four

³⁹ Record of Consultation Meeting on Social and Community Studies, 14 November, 1983.

⁴⁰ Record of a staff meeting between Mackie and Aitchison, 1 March, 1984.

⁴¹ Senate Executive was actually responding to the report of the survey which led to the establishment of COP and which had been limited to the Durban area. The criticism was however transferred to the project itself.

⁴² Minutes of a Staff meeting, 1 March 1984, item 7; and, Minutes of the twenty second meeting of the Advisory Committee, 19 March 1984, item 5.3.

specific proposals for developing the Pietermaritzburg programme⁴³ and the record of a staff meeting held early in 1985⁴⁴ reflects agreement that the Durban based Social and Community Studies Tutor should assume responsibility for the Pietermaritzburg programme. This arrangement was successfully maintained until the end of 1987.

Within the Centre itself, key aspects of the project including its identity, nature, scope and relationship to the rest of the Centre were never completely resolved nor were these aspects stable. The Project was conceived in terms which were narrower than those on which the Social and Community Studies Division had been founded and the manner in which it was established obscured this ambiguity. The original conception of this division saw it as shifting the balance towards the “underprivileged and educationally dispossessed” in a manner which fundamentally challenged individual, social and educational relationships.⁴⁵ The Community Organisations Project as already indicated was limited to courses teaching organisational skills.⁴⁶

Despite this more limited purpose it was never entirely clear whether the Project represented the Division as a whole or whether it was simply one part of a broader programme. This was evident in the initial consultation meeting on the Social and Community Studies Division held in late 1983 (see above) which raised issues which, without exception, were concerned with the Centre itself rather than the community outreach project which was the subject of the meeting⁴⁷. It is also evident in the initial understanding of the Project in relation to the Division of Social and Community Studies. The Project was initially regarded as a component part of that Division which was understood to have a wider programme which included at various points the work of the Science Education Project and the early stages of the Adult Basic

⁴³ Report on the Social and Community Studies Division, Appendix 3 to the Agenda of a Staff Meeting of 30 October, 1984. The proposals were that contacts should be developed with emergent community organisations in Pietermaritzburg, that a meeting should be set up with people from these organisations, that a list of workshops for 1985 should be developed from that meeting and that a budget should be drawn up.

⁴⁴ Record of a Staff meeting, 27 February, 1985, item 2.

⁴⁵ Morphet, A.R., *Explorations towards a Design Study for a University based Adult Education Service in South Africa*, 1979.

⁴⁶ The report on which the Project was founded envisaged “courses for non-profit organisations” and “in-service courses”. Although primarily focussed on organisational skills, the curriculum did include development of wider social understanding but although this was understood by staff to be an important aspect it was subsidiary to the main focus.

⁴⁷ A major concern was the need for a structure to co-ordinate outreach work undertaken by various departments. The other concerns expressed included the “need to control E.M.S. activities”; certification of non formal work; and, the limited representation of the Centre’s Advisory Committee.
Record of the Consultation Meeting on Social and Community Studies, 14 November, 1983.

Education Project.⁴⁸ But towards the end of 1985 it was agreed that the project stage of the Community Organisation Project should come to an end and that the work should be run under the Community Education Division.⁴⁹ It was also agreed that the programme would comprise several components, viz:

- * Courses of workshops in three key areas, viz:
 - Administration of non-Profit Organisations
 - Financial Administration of Non-Profit Organisations
- * Special Workshops
- * Consultancy services to community organisations
- * The Community Education Forum⁵⁰

Nevertheless the Community Organisations Project continued to be known as such and as already shown developed its work to the point where by 1988 the Project had become in effect a mini Centre within the Centre with a strong identity of its own and a duplication of functions. The attempt made to rationalise this development is explored later in this chapter.⁵¹

The beginnings of the ABE Programme (1984-1989)

The general change in curriculum direction which gave rise to the Diploma in Adult Education and to the Community Organisation Project, prompted a third innovation which in time became a major thrust of the Centre's work. This was the Adult Basic Education Programme. Since the early 1980s this area of work was seen by staff as a logical expression of the aims of the Social and Community Studies Division but an initial proposal was only mooted within the Centre in 1984. This proposal saw three broad goals, viz, the provision of an adult basic education service, the development of an adult basic education resource centre and research.⁵² That proposal was not developed but early in 1985, the Centre commissioned research which was aimed at "clearing the ground for future involvement by the Centre in ABE activities in

⁴⁸ There was a large degree of uncertainty and vacillation in these categorisations. They were not based on formal decisions but are evident in reports and memoranda. The Science Education Project it will be remembered was initially formally attached to the Professional Studies Division; the work of the diploma although it fell squarely within the original conception of the Social and Community Studies Division was never really regarded as part of this Division partly because of its very different formal form.

⁴⁹ There is no real distinction between the names "Social and Community Studies Division" and "Community Education Division". It is not clear how or when this change occurred.

⁵⁰ Minutes of the 26th meeting of the Centre for Adult Education Advisory Committee, 14 November, 1985, item 6.

⁵¹ See section headed "Redefining roles and internal structures".

⁵² *Project Proposals for 1985*, Appendix for agenda item of Staff Meeting of 2 October, 1984 which was deferred to Staff Meeting of 30 October, 1984.

Natal”.⁵³ The resultant research report was incomplete and inconclusive but insofar as it did point the way forward, it indicated the need to proceed with caution.

A review of recent literature relating to adult literacy work in South Africa indicated that there were major problems with regard to the ways the activity was being talked about. This impression was reinforced by the various statements made by people working in the field. It became clear that the activity was under-theorised and under-researched, and that an exploration at a conceptual level was required as a prelude to practical recommendations.⁵⁴

Despite this caution, Elda Lyster was appointed in 1986 to take this initiative forward. The brief given was extraordinarily wide, viz:

Investigate what the Centre can do by way of educational provision and resources to meet the educational needs of the less well educated sections of the community and suggest practical ways in which the Centre can initiate provision and provide resources.⁵⁵

The brief went on to indicate three broad areas which this might involve which included the notion of foundation courses and of the development of materials “either for use in a programme of educational provision or for the resource centre”.⁵⁶

The progress made over the four year period to the end of 1989 was fairly slow. By the end of 1986 the work was being seen as involving the collection of literacy materials, the setting up of a forum for literacy teachers and the running of workshops for literacy learners⁵⁷. A year later the work was reported in more general terms:

This project aims to provide both resources and support for people working in the area of Adult Basic Education. To date the Centre has gathered together relevant material from a variety of sources and has initiated contact with a number of literacy groups and organisations.⁵⁸

In part the slow progress was the result of difficulty experienced in finding an appropriate form of ABE activity which meshed with the Centre’s other work. This difficulty and the time it was taking was acknowledged directly in the Centre’s 1988 Annual Report:

The work of the project to date has been directed towards building a detailed understanding of the nature of the (ABE) initiatives which presently exist, building credibility with the various people and organisations involved in the field, developing our own theoretical knowledge and

⁵³ *Study into Possibilities for the Centre to Contribute to Adult Basic Education (ABE) Activities*, A memorandum outlining the brief given to the researcher and presented to the twenty fifth meeting of the Advisory Committee on 25 March, 1985, as Appendix M.

⁵⁴ Prinsloo, M., Untitled research report, June 1985.

⁵⁵ Contract and brief, February, 1986.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Adult Basic Education Project Proposal, November, 1986.

⁵⁸ 1987 Annual report of the Centre for Adult Education, p. 7.

understanding and building a collection of relevant resources. The search has been for a response which is appropriate both to the Centre as a university agency and to the needs of the field. The nature of the work just described is necessarily slow ...⁵⁹

This tendency within the ABE programme towards a networking, resource building, consultancy function, contrasted with the more discernible and direct forms of delivery evident in the rest of the Centre's work. Attempts by Mackie to pin this work down and to mould it into a coherent function within an appropriate organisational structure for which objectives could be determined and against which progress could be measured,⁶⁰ led to frustration and a degree of friction.

But there were other reasons both for the difficulty in moving towards an operational programme and for the friction which this engendered. The "post" devoted to this work was not only part-time and temporary but also involved other teaching duties.⁶¹ This arrangement not only limited the time available for ABE work but blurred the distinction between this work and these teaching duties. The post was funded in an *ad hoc* fashion through a combination of leave substitute funds and funds generated by the Centre's Extra Mural Programme.⁶² With the passage of time, as the "officially temporary" became "effectively permanent", the dissonance between the formal and actual reality became a source of confusion and of pressure to find a means of securing what was effectively an infrastructure cost in the absence of a clearly identifiable function. The priority accorded the networking function and especially membership of the Regional Co-operation Group tended to distance the project from the Centre and cause it to understand itself as an organisation similar to the NGOs with which it worked.

The Project nevertheless built up a solid base of expertise and resources and an extensive network of contacts and associations with a range of literacy agencies. It engaged in a series of contract consultancies which helped build a positive reputation and contributed a specialised option in ABE to the Diploma course. On the basis of this work it finally proved possible at the end of 1989 to agree a basic framework for the ABE programme. This established the Project as a Programme in its own right⁶³

⁵⁹ 1988 Annual Report of the Centre for Adult Education, p. 4.

⁶⁰ In a memorandum to Lyster dated 4 March 1989, Mackie wrote "... what I am looking for is conceptual clarity, rationale, goals and objectives and understanding of these in relation to the Centre's goals, implementation and development strategies, staffing implications, funding needs, a definite timetable and a built-in procedure for periodic review".

⁶¹ Specifically this involved teaching parts of the Diploma in Adult Education. There were periods of unpaid leave which inevitably extended the development period.

⁶² These funds were channelled through an ABE Fund established by the Centre, thus avoiding a direct link between the funds generated by the Extra Mural Programme in any one year, and expenditure on the ABE Project.

⁶³ Up until this time, insofar as the original proposal could still be relied on, the Project was logically a project of the Social and Community Studies Division but this was not generally understood.

with very broad aims directed towards the development of literacy⁶⁴ and more specific functions which reflected the work already being undertaken, viz,

- 3.1 To develop and maintain an Adult Basic Education Resource Centre
- 3.2 To provide a consultancy service for people working in adult basic education.
- 3.3 To develop curriculum for formal and non formal courses on adult basic education and to offer these courses through the Centre for Adult Education.
- 3.4. To develop appropriate materials for learners at the level of adult basic education
- 3.5 To undertake research into any area of literacy and adult basic education.⁶⁵

The framework document envisaged the programme achieving its objectives “through successive limited period sub-programmes” and specific focus projects. “A basic core staff complement (would) be supplemented by staff appointed for specific periods against specific projects”. Donor funding would be sought to fund each sub-programme or project and the infrastructure costs would be funded by a combination of contributions from the sub-programme and projects and other donor and Centre funds. The document also made provision for a small departmental advisory committee to assist in the development and management of the programme. The Programme was thus finally established after five “pilot” years; the following year saw the construction of the first major sub-project, the New Readers Project which gave practical form to the envisaged framework. The New Readers Project will be discussed later in this chapter.

The Durban - Pietermaritzburg relationship and the development of the Pietermaritzburg Programme (1984 - 1989)

When in 1981, the Academic Planning and Policy Committee had decided to establish a permanent post in Pietermaritzburg, against the recommendation of the Director, it had sought to accommodate the Director’s reservations by instructing the Chairman of the Centre’s Advisory Committee to ensure co-operation between the two offices.⁶⁶ In the event Mackie and Aitchison developed a close working

⁶⁴ The aims of the Programme were:
1. To encourage and support the development of literacy initiatives in Natal.
2. To contribute to the development of more effective literacy teaching in South Africa.
3. To provide opportunities for the development (training / education) of literacy workers.
Establishment of an Adult Education Programme, Internal memorandum of the Centre for Adult Education, November, 1989

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Reported in the Minutes of the 13th Meeting of the Centre for Adult Education Advisory Committee, 10 March 1981, item 7. The Academic Planning and Policy Committee entrusted Dr Muir with this task because he was both Chairman of the Centre’s Advisory Committee and Secretary of the Academic Planning and Policy Committee. This connection is made explicit in the minute referred to above.

relationship in which policy decisions were made jointly and which led to a number of joint projects including the introduction and development of the Diploma in Adult Education.⁶⁷ In 1984 Mackie and Aitchison reviewed the relationship between the Pietermaritzburg and Durban offices and decided against splitting into separate Centres.⁶⁸ Instead they agreed to formalise the existing *de facto* situation in which Durban was being developed at the expense of Pietermaritzburg by bringing this to the attention of the Advisory Committee.⁶⁹ The memorandum written for this purpose explained this decision in terms of the need to “obtain and maintain” the “critical mass” needed for development in Durban in the face of the limited resources available to the Centre. The memorandum commented that “(n)o other option was seen as viable.”⁷⁰ The Committee accepted the six recommendations proposed in the memorandum with only one alteration and without objection. The two key policy recommendations accepted were the following:

- 9.1. Out of necessity the Centre should remain a unit, though in accordance with general University policy, separation should be planned for.
- 9.2 Durban should be developed in the first instance but this should be done in such a way that Pietermaritzburg will be provided for as fully as possible.⁷¹

Two years later the unitary nature of the Centre was reaffirmed in the Council resolution which incorporated the Centre into the Faculty of Education, the relevant clause reading:

That the Centre undertake this work in both centres as a single department (but with offices in both centres as at present) until such time as sufficient funds can be allocated to allow for independent operation in each centre.

⁶⁷ Other examples of co-operative projects included a diploma course in Nursing Administration, a counselling skills course for hospital matrons, and the Community Organisations Project. Reference to this co-operation is included in a memorandum titled, *The Relationship between the Durban and Pietermaritzburg Branches of the Centre for Adult Education* which was attached as Appendix F to the agenda of the 24th meeting of the Centre’s Advisory Committee, 15 November 1984.

⁶⁸ Minutes of a Staff Meeting of 1 March 1984, item 10.

⁶⁹ Behind this decision there may have been some thought that a Pietermaritzburg lobby might react to this policy and bring pressure to bear which would lead the University to provide the Centre with sufficient staff to develop both Centres independently. Earlier reaction to the development of the Community Organisation project in Durban had provoked this kind of response. If this was a hope it was a vain one, for there was no outcry.

⁷⁰ *The Relationship between the Durban and Pietermaritzburg Branches of the Centre for Adult Education*, Appendix F to the agenda for the 24th meeting of the Centre for Adult Education Advisory Committee, 15 November, 1984.

⁷¹ Minutes of the 24th meeting of the Centre for Adult Education Advisory Committee, 15 November, 1984, item 9.

In 1987 the relationship changed fundamentally and irrevocably although the change was never formalised within the period now under review. Broadly speaking the change can be attributed to the development of the Pietermaritzburg programme but this was underpinned and prompted by several other factors. Mackie's absence on a year's sabbatical leave was probably catalytic because it removed the personal dynamic on which the relationship had been built. This effect was compounded by an increase in the number of academic staff in the Durban office to the point where it began to develop a dynamic of its own.⁷² The process was also driven by developments in the Centre in Pietermaritzburg which in turn were consequent to the situation in Pietermaritzburg and in the country as a whole. Aitchison, as Acting Director, turned his attention to the development of Pietermaritzburg.

The major influence was the outbreak and escalation of politically motivated violence in the Pietermaritzburg area. Aitchison's concern for the social consequences of this violence, his political involvement and penchant for statistical analysis and interest in computers all combined to give birth to the Unrest Monitoring Project. This project was certainly tangential to the Centre's primary brief but its undoubted social importance was sufficient to secure its acceptance⁷³ and it immediately raised the profile and established a unique identity for the Centre in Pietermaritzburg. The representation of the Project in the Centre's 1988 Annual Report was compelling and reflects the rationalisation developed to include this work in the Centre's programme while at the same time recognising the unusual nature of this project.

One of the most important public education functions that the Centre has ever performed was the research, documentation, seminars and publications that the Centre produced through its project to monitor the violence that plagued the Pietermaritzburg region in 1987 and 1988 and which caused over 1000 fatalities over this period. Although in some senses an unusual project for an adult education department, it was precisely the Centre's community links and credibility, ability to communicate with a non university public, appropriate research methodology and (through its Computer Literacy Project) the technological expertise to handle a monitoring project, that enabled this project to succeed and bring national and international attention to the University and the Centre's work.⁷⁴

⁷² By 1987 there were four additional staff members in Durban. Hemson had been appointed to an establishment post in 1984, Lyster was appointed as Mackie's leave substitute in 1986 and had been given responsibility for the ABE programme; Paul Graham joined Hemson in 1986 to help with the Community Organisation Project and Maggie Louis had been appointed as an additional part-time administrative assistant. In addition the Science Education Project had a staff of three which contributed to the overall size of the Durban office.

⁷³ The facility with which it was accepted can also be understood as a measure of the importance which the University attached to the work of the Centre. Had greater importance attached to this work it is doubtful whether it would have been allowed to be subverted so easily. From this it can be surmised with some degree of confidence that the University was neither clear nor particularly concerned about the primary work of the Centre. In addition the continued work of the Centre in Durban masked the degree and nature of the violence monitoring work.

⁷⁴ 1988 Annual Report of the Centre for Adult Education, p.5.

A second project, the Computer Literacy Information Project (CLIP) helped establish and reinforce the independent identity and function of Pietermaritzburg. It was established “to assist community and community related organisations develop computer systems within their organisations so as to enable them to utilise this technology to the same effect as most other public and private organisations”.⁷⁵ It was made possible by the increase in foreign donor funding which began coming into the country at this time in support of NGOs and in response to government repression of this sector. The Project was linked to the unrest monitoring function as acknowledged in the quote above. When Mackie returned at the beginning of 1988 there was general concern in the Durban branch of the Centre at the free agent approach which had been adopted in Pietermaritzburg.⁷⁶

Mackie moved to reassert the unity of the Centre in part by re-establishing staff meetings which had fallen away in 1987. Debates about accountability, the nature of delegation and decision-making ensued and there was a temporary return to the situation which had existed in 1986 which relied to a great extent on the habit of the working relationship previously established between Aitchison and Mackie. But while Mackie and Aitchison continued to work together in the interests of the Centre as a whole, the independence achieved by the Pietermaritzburg programme could not be denied and by May of 1988 it proved necessary to introduce separate staff meetings for Durban and Pietermaritzburg in addition to a monthly general staff meeting.

From this point the Durban-Pietermaritzburg relationship was seriously complicated by the emergence of a series of University initiatives to rationalise all its activities in the face of severe subsidy cuts which precipitated a University budgetary crisis. The first of these initiatives, called “the Short-term Plan”⁷⁷ advocated *inter alia* closing down uneconomic departments and amalgamating faculties. It called for a response from departments which indicated how they might best be “rationalised”. The Centre’s response explored a number of options (including that of closing down the Pietermaritzburg office) but its strongest argument was to claim that it was already rationalised as a single department operating on two campuses. The internal organisational development imperative pointing towards separation of the Centre into two parts was now at odds with a broader institutional dynamic.

The positions adopted over the following twelve months were uncertain and ambivalent. By the end of 1988 Mackie was of the opinion that the Durban and

⁷⁵ 1988 Annual Report of the Centre for Adult Education, p.5.

⁷⁶ The CLIP project, for example, had been set up without it ever having been made part of a Centre decision and Durban staff tended to regard it “as a somewhat autonomous bubble doing things which were not entirely clear to them and which seemed unrelated to the Centre’s main work.” Personal record of a staff meeting of 2 March 1989.

⁷⁷ Alternatively known as the “Walker Document” after its author, Professor A.D.M. Walker.

Pietermaritzburg offices needed to separate;⁷⁸ Aitchison returning from a sabbatical visit to the United Kingdom where he saw the effects of Thatcherite educational rationalisation on adult education agencies was convinced that Durban and Pietermaritzburg should remain a single centre for the time being and that separation was, for the present, unrealistic.⁷⁹ A staff meeting in March 1989 noted that, “together the centres have a critical mass, which would not exist if split”.⁸⁰ But the nascent separation was irresistible. The April staff meeting records agreement that “Pietermaritzburg staff would meet to draw up a proposal for their future development” and Mackie and Aitchison were given the task of examining the future relationship.⁸¹ By June, the notion of separate Centres and a common department of adult education had come into being though there was disagreement as to whether the separate Centres should be part of the common department or distinct from it.⁸² The Centre’s 1989 Annual Report publicly advocated separation along these lines.

... Whereas the unitary structure worked to the advantage of the Centre in the earlier stages of its organisational development, the point has been reached where a degree of autonomy as between Durban and Pietermaritzburg is now desirable. ... The Centre has therefore proposed a single department of adult education spanning both centres with two semi-autonomous Centres for Adult Education.

The attempts to formalise this arrangement took two more years and by then the proposal had undergone considerable modification in favour of total autonomy in response to a wider University decision to devolve autonomy to the two campuses. The account of these endeavours are part of a more general attempt to restructure the Centre and are described below under the paragraph, *Attempts to restructure the Centre*. In the meantime Mackie sought to give effect to the proposal. In a letter to Aitchison he formally asked Aitchison to assume responsibility for the development and management of the Pietermaritzburg Centre for Adult Education.

In doing this I have in mind the structure which we have discussed and which we envisage for the organisation of the Centre’s work, namely, two separate Centres of Adult Education within a single Department of Adult Education.⁸³

It was little more than a gesture which recognised the *de facto* situation. It was impossible for Mackie as director unilaterally to relinquish formal responsibility for the Pietermaritzburg programme to Aitchison.

⁷⁸ Personal record of Staff Meeting of 2 March, 1989, item 7.

⁷⁹ Reported by Mackie to a Staff Meeting in Durban, 2 February, 1989, item 1.

⁸⁰ Minutes of a Staff Meeting of 2 March, 1989, item 8.

⁸¹ Minutes of a staff meeting of 27 April, 1989.

⁸² Minutes of a staff meeting of 26 June, 1989.

⁸³ Letter from the Director of the Centre for Adult Education to the Deputy Director, 17 October, 1989.

The following year the Echo Project began in Pietermaritzburg. This project offered basic education material in areas such as health, study skills, literacy, career advice and trade unions through a weekly supplement to the “Natal Witness” called *Learn with Echo*. It was a significant project with high public profile and it entailed a production team of four people. The visibility of the project reinforced the separate identity of the Pietermaritzburg Centre and the additional staff gave it the critical mass it needed to establish its independence. Although the Centre remained formally a unitary department for the remainder of this period, and although Mackie and Aitchison continued to work together to restructure the Centre, the *de facto* separation was complete at this point.

Role and Organisational Review, the amalgamation of the Liberal Studies and Community Organisations Programmes and the Dissolution of the three Divisions (1988)

By the beginning of 1988 the Centre had lost a considerable degree of its functional integration and corporate identity. Mackie returned from a year’s sabbatical to discover a series of projects which were operating in a largely autonomous fashion with minimal reference to each other and with no internal procedural mechanism to facilitate joint decision making; there were very few general staff meetings held in 1987. In particular the Pietermaritzburg programme and the Community Organisation Programme⁸⁴ were developing independently of the rest of the work of the Centre. This tendency in the Pietermaritzburg Programme was discussed above; a similar tendency in the Community Organisation Programme can be understood from an independent mission statement which it had constructed which might have been a mission statement for the Centre as a whole but which did not refer to the Centre:

The Community Organisation aims to create a more integrated understanding of learning and knowledge through the process of enabling people to organise and act effectively in meeting their needs. ... This mission is not compatible with any form of oppression. Our work is directed towards a just society and is thus intended to help achieve a society free of oppression.⁸⁵

A prior indication of the distinct development of aspects of the Centre’s work was given at a planning meeting at the end of 1988 which attempted to develop a degree of coherence for the work of the Centre. The meeting recognised that the Centre was about “two complementary functions – the education of adult educators and the provision of non formal adult education”. In respect of the latter a number of “diverse” purposes were identified which although “not necessarily exclusive ... do make our work in this area unconsolidated”.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ The programme was thus titled notwithstanding the 1985 decision of the Advisory Committee to end the Community Organisation Project and run the courses under the Community Education Division. – see page 123 above.

⁸⁵ Community Organisation Programme; Statement of Policy on Admission to courses, September, 1987.

⁸⁶ Notes from the planning meeting held on 8 December 1987.

Mackie attributed this disintegration to a failure to develop adequate management procedures as the Centre had expanded as an organisation. In a memorandum prepared for discussion in a Staff Meeting, he wrote

I believe that many decisions and initiatives presently being taken within the Centre lack coherence. In my view this is due to inadequately developed policy and decision making procedures which in turn may be attributed to the recent expansion of the Centre both in terms of staff and of the scope of our work.⁸⁷

The memorandum went on to propose a series of procedures specifically in relation to what were termed “new initiatives” designed to bring the decisions then being made autonomously at programme level back into a central process. Although staff meetings and the Advisory Committee were included in the proposed decision-making fora, the procedures centred around the Director and the circumstances in which decisions would be referred to these other fora were not made explicit. Against this model Aitchison propounded the LA Law⁸⁸ model which understood a group of professionals each operating autonomously but sharing a common infrastructure and bound together by a commitment to commonly understood values and goals. This model sought a solution in more precisely defined levels of delegation.⁸⁹

There was sufficient concern amongst staff in the Durban Centre to support the general direction of the proposed procedures although the details were never really fully agreed. The only substantive agreement was a commitment to regular staff meetings. These were undermined in a very short time by developments in Pietermaritzburg as described above and by a prolonged restructuring process which is discussed below.

Mackie’s memorandum also contained a more specific proposal with regard to the co-ordination and management of the non formal programme.

I believe that our programme of non formal provision which basically consists of COP and Liberal Studies presently lacks a sufficiently clear sense of purpose. I think it is in need of co-ordination, rationalisation and renewal.

This signalled the beginning of a process which led by the end of the year to the amalgamation of the Liberal Studies and Community Organisation programmes. The immediate outcome was the acceptance of the proposal contained in the memorandum for a weekly staff meeting which put the non formal programme as a whole on the agenda of the department.

⁸⁷ *The Management of the Centre* A memorandum written by Mackie for a staff meeting on April 14, 1988.

⁸⁸ After a television series which was showing at the time and which was called “L(os) A(ngeles) Law”.

⁸⁹ In commenting on the level of delegation being sought Mackie wrote, “(Aitchison’s) interpretation implies *carte blanche* for the unlimited exercise of personal discretion.” Mackie, R.D.A., Response to the second staff meeting of 1988, 14 April 1988.

The first step in this process was to invite independent comment on the programme as a whole from someone outside the Centre.⁹⁰ The response highlighted a number of points which were cause for concern. In respect of the Liberal Studies Programme, the comments included the lack of intellectual or critical content, the non-political or context free nature of the Liberal Studies Programme, the focus on leisure-time activities directed towards an “old” audience and the observation that the Programme did not meet its stated objectives. By contrast the Community Organisations Programme was seen as meeting its stated objectives with a marked focus on skills. The Programme was seen as having a strong sense of servicing needs, raising the question as to whether it was not meeting the Centre’s legitimacy needs which at that particular time was a sensitive area. In general the Liberal Studies Programme was seen as one which was *administered* while the Community Studies Programme appeared to be one which was being *developed*. Neither was seen as giving a high priority to intellectual content or to be mobilising the intellectual resources of the university.⁹¹ Mackie’s concerns over the Community Organisation Programme continued and in June this was expressed in a discussion document which questioned the focus on organisations and organisational roles as opposed to a focus on community educators and their educational role.⁹²

The process was extended into a general review of the Centre’s role through a workshop held in August. In a further memorandum in preparation for this workshop, Mackie outlined the concerns prompting the need for this review:

My primary concern is to clarify and extend our understanding of our role both because I believe this is fundamental to the development of the Centre as a whole and of COP and the Liberal Studies programme in particular, and because I think we are operating with different, conflicting and largely submerged models of what we are.⁹³

The memorandum went on to sketch the different models which could be identified:

Through some of our activities we seem to function as a resource agency particularly for community organisations and individuals, through other activities a very strong provision model is evident, and related activities suggest a service model. Through still other activities

⁹⁰ Professor Millar of the University of Cape Town’s Department of Adult Education and Extra Mural Studies was asked to give a reading of the programme by responding to the question, “What does it look like we are up to? – bearing in mind we are a university based agency” (Letter to Professor Millar from the Director, 28 April, 1988). Only a superficial interpretation was sought on the basis of documents describing the programme, as a spur to discussion within the department.

⁹¹ Notes of a telephone conversation between Millar and Mackie, 4 May, 1988

⁹² *Some initial thoughts to open a discussion about the future of COP*, Mackie, R.D.A., June 1988.

⁹³ *Clive Millar’s Visit to the Centre*, a memorandum prepared by Mackie, for the review workshop, 17 August, 1988. Millar had been invited to the workshop as a facilitator.

we attempt to function as an academic department.

At a conference the previous year Mackie had, in similar vein, pointed to the multiple images of the Centre – a service organisation as seen by its extra mural students, a low-key, low-cost public relations agency as seen by the University, a community centre as seen by its COP students, a dynamic, relevant organisation with exciting potential as seen by its staff and a radical pseudo-academic body as seen by certain conservative elements both within the University and beyond.⁹⁴

The diversity of the Centre's work, its compartmentalisation and the need for coherence were the major pre-occupations of the workshop. This was expressed variously in terms of identity, vision and decision-making procedures. There was a partially articulated, commonly held, sense of a large vision⁹⁵ which was part of a socio-political project but the workshop was unable to articulate the educational solution which it sought as a shared task. Essentially missing was a theoretical framework within which practice could be grounded.⁹⁶ The most compelling visual image was that of a series of bubbles each containing a staff member in splendid isolation with the Director alone in a sea of bubbles.

Although the workshop was not able to reach a point of resolution of this complex of interlocking concerns, a degree of closure was finally achieved towards the end of 1988 through the acceptance of a proposal from Mackie to amalgamate the Liberal Studies and Community Organisation programmes and to dissolve the three division structure which had provided the framework for the development of the Centre over the previous nine years. The document containing this proposal rehearsed the rationale for the establishment of the three divisions and reviewed the current position within each division. The Liberal Studies Division was presented as having been "robbed of staff resources by the diploma" and to a more limited extent "robbed of social relevance by the Community Organisation Programme". It was seen in consequence as having "lost some of its intellectual rigour and capacity for social relevance and social analysis." The Professional Studies Division was recognised as never having been developed and in the changed circumstances no longer capable of development without "fundamental reappraisal of the Centre's present role and direction." The Social and Community Studies Division was presented as having been deliberately developed through the Community Organisation Programme but despite certain differences was not understood as being significantly different from the Liberal Studies programme.

⁹⁴ 1987 Conference for University-based adult educators, Centre for Adult Education, University of Natal, Durban, July 1987.

⁹⁵ The scale of the vision sometimes achieved dimensions which bordered on megalomania and which were oblivious to the Centre's meagre resources.

⁹⁶ The best attempt posited a circular relationship between provision, research, theory and consultancy.

It does not in my view have a sufficiently distinct, coherent and integrated curriculum or a clearly identifiable group of students. ... Functionally it is not dissimilar from the Liberal Studies Programme..(with which) ... there is considerable overlap.⁹⁷

The memorandum then proposed that the three divisions should be dissolved and replaced by a single non formal programme known as the Community Extra Mural Programme. It also proposed that Hemson assume overall responsibility for the new programme and that its curriculum become a departmental concern through a biannual review process. Finally it proposed that the community commitment be reviewed in 1989 “with a view to reconstructing a community education initiative”.⁹⁸ The proposals were accepted by staff and noted by the Advisory Committee at its meeting in December.⁹⁹ In practice the change had very little real significance. Within a year Hemson had accepted a position in a new university project¹⁰⁰ outside the Centre on a two-year secondment and while this provided an opportunity to reconstruct the Community Education Programme (see below), it nullified the attempt to consolidate and provide leadership for a broad non formal programme.

Three new curriculum initiatives: the New Readers Project, the B.Ed adult education course and the Community Adult Educator Training Project (1990/1991)

The closing years of this history saw the introduction of three new major curriculum initiatives; these took the form of the first major project of the newly established ABE Programme, the New Readers Project, the introduction of an adult education specialisation option within the B.Ed curriculum and the Community Adult Educator Training Project. These innovations taken together gave a sense of regeneration and development to the life of the Centre but at the same time insinuated a new and powerful dynamic – in the form of new staff members and additional demands and pressures – into an organisational situation and structure which was inherently

⁹⁷ *Amalgamation of the Liberal Studies and Community Organisation Programmes* Mackie, R.D.A., November, 1988

⁹⁸ While the dissolution of the three divisions applied to the Centre as a whole, the more specific aspects of the proposal relating to the amalgamation of the two programmes was limited to the Durban branch.

⁹⁹ Minutes of the 32nd meeting of the Centre for Adult Education Advisory Committee, 6 December, 1988, item 4. Interestingly the proposals were presented to the Committee for noting and comment rather than for a decision. This contrasts with the careful negotiation of the three division structure through the Committee in 1979.

¹⁰⁰ This was initially an initiative which aimed to develop an Intermediate Tertiary College but which was later transformed into a student/staff development programme.

unstable, being at a crucial point of transition.¹⁰¹

The New Readers Project

This history has shown how, by the end of 1989, the Adult Basic Education Programme had been established with a *modus operandi* involving a succession of short-term projects and programmes managed and supported by a basic infrastructure programme. Up to this point the Centre had been unable to obtain funds to support either the infrastructure work or to mount any of the intended projects.¹⁰² The funding proposals seeking support for the general work were not attractive to funders but when in 1990 a funding proposal was drawn up which presented as a focus the writing and production of thirty literacy “readers”, the response was so overwhelming that the proposal was increased in scale to utilise the funds which were made available for this work. The work was conceived as a two-year project to write and produce thirty books appropriate to the needs of newly literate adults in contemporary South Africa. The books were to be at three different levels (“beginners” “intermediate” and “advanced”) and were to include books written in Zulu as well as in English. In addition the project was conceived as having a research component as it was breaking new ground in writing books of this genre and a research report was intended as an integral part of the project.¹⁰³ It also included provision to undertake much of the infrastructure work for which it had proved so difficult to find funding alone. This was primarily devoted to the continued collection of books and materials related to adult education in general and adult basic education in particular and was known as the Library.¹⁰⁴ Although the Project only began very near the end of this history,¹⁰⁵ its impact was already being felt by the middle of 1991. By that time it had brought three additional staff members into the Centre¹⁰⁶ and attracted considerable

¹⁰¹ During this period five new staff members joined an existing staff of five in Durban thus doubling the staff complement. Of the core establishment staff, the three administrative staff members remained the same while amongst the academic establishment staff only the Director remained in office to provide continuity. The other academic staff member was co-opted from the Centre for two years during this time and a new post was established and filled at the beginning of 1991. A further academic staff member who had been with the Centre on various contracts since 1986 also continued through this period.

¹⁰² The Programme had been supported up to this point by a fund created and sustained by the contributions from the Extra Mural Programme.

¹⁰³ Originally a teaching function was also intended but this fell away except in an informal spin-off.

¹⁰⁴ Two years later funds were granted by USAID through a trust set up by the four university adult education departments which was known as the DEAL Trust. This gave more direct support for infrastructure work and the development of the library as a resource centre.

¹⁰⁵ After a number of minor postponements it officially began in November 1990 but the planning of the project began a year earlier.

¹⁰⁶ Two writers, Nozizwe Madlala and Wendy Annecke, and, as production manager and librarian, Lesley Lewis.

attention amongst literacy organisations and agencies because of its naturally high profile which derived from the innovative and tangible nature of its “product”.

The B.Ed Adult Education Course

The specialisation option in Adult Education was introduced as part of the B.Ed curriculum at the beginning of 1991 – again in the final year of this history although the course had been proposed by the Centre and accepted by the Faculty of Education as early as 1989. The original proposal had seen the need to provide teachers with the skills necessary to contribute to non formal and adult education. About that time alternative non formal education had assumed prominence as the legitimacy of the formal system was challenged. In addition the proposal recognised that many Black teachers also taught in the night schools which in KwaZulu were known as adult education centres.¹⁰⁷ At the time the proposal was made the Centre argued that while it had the expertise to offer the course, its staff were fully committed and that the course could only be offered when the Centre was given additional staff; the introduction of the course in 1991 followed the establishment of a new post in the Centre towards the end of 1989.¹⁰⁸ From the Centre’s point of view there was also a strategic reason for introducing the course; it demonstrated its commitment to faculty work and buttressed its position as a department in the faculty. Mackie’s assessment of the impact of the course indicates the achievement of this objective:

... it reinforces the Centre’s role as a specialist department in adult education as opposed to an agency responsible for general adult education course provision (but whereas) ... the introduction of the B.Ed Adult Education Option has considerable visibility in the University and particularly within the Faculty ... its impact in terms of perceptions within the field is correspondingly small.¹⁰⁹

This remark was made to contrast the impact of the introduction of the Community Adult Educator Training Project (see below) which heightened perceptions of the Centre within the community of adult and community educators but which had little impact within the University.

The Community Adult Educator Training Project

The Community Adult Educator Training Project was born from attempts to reconstruct the Community Organisation Project in terms of the proposal which

¹⁰⁷ *Proposal for the introduction of a new adult education specialisation course within the existing B.Ed programme, 25 April 1989.*

¹⁰⁸ Although the post was established it had not been filled by the beginning of 1991 and at that time the occupant of the other establishment tutor post was seconded away from the Centre. The course was thus introduced under less than favourable conditions to honour the undertaking to offer the course once an additional post was established. This was done single-handedly and the detail of the curriculum had to be developed as it was taught.

¹⁰⁹ Mackie, R.D.A., *The Role, Work and Structure of the Centre for Adult Education 1971 - 1991*, p. 36.

amalgamated that project with the Liberal Studies Programme.¹¹⁰ Primarily this was a process of shifting the curriculum focus from organisational to educational skills. Mackie was strongly in favour of a shift to teaching adult education skills seeing this as the more appropriate role for the Centre. This view was lent support by a shift in the context at the time which began to place the emphasis in organisations on training. The initial attempts to build this new community education initiative were undertaken by Mackie and Hemson on the assumption that Hemson would lead this new development. A three-month course, *Skills in Adult Education* was run and when Hemson left the Centre on a two year secondment towards the end of 1989, the brief given to his replacement outlined a larger vision:

The work involves the setting up of a certificate level course for people working in community and adult education. What I have in mind is a year-long course for people who do not have the educational level to cope with the diploma in adult education but who are involved in educational work through various community and non governmental organisations. The notion of a year-long course is also driven by the rather fragmented nature of our present involvement which does not allow us to work with a group of students over any extended period of time. The main aim would be to give participants the capacity to understand better the context and implications of their work. I imagine that the course will probably have a core component of both conceptual and practical skills and possibly specialisations in particular areas such as literacy, project management, organisational development, etc.¹¹¹

The work which developed from this brief came to be known as the *Community Adult Educator Training Project* and comprised, as envisaged, a year-long course for community orientated adult educators known as the *Community Adult Educator Training Course (CAEC)* and a programme of short courses and workshops intended as introductory courses to basic aspects of non formal education practice. There were also a few follow-up courses both to the introductory courses and to the certificate course and some specialisation courses in various aspects of adult education such as literacy, health, labour and environmental education. This last aspect can be seen in some respects as a successor to the earlier Community Organisation Programme and was initially also drawn to a focus on organisational rather than educational skills. This was to some extent seen as a prior requisite to providing students with the educational skills to teach the organisational skills to others within their own organisations. The Project, particularly with regard to the Certificate course, insisted on the support and commitment to the course which individuals attended, of the organisations of which they were part, with the intention of fostering a partnership relationship between the organisations and the course. Within the period of this history the Certificate course developed a niche for itself and was generally acclaimed by its students; the programme of short courses struggled to establish itself and eventually fell away as an on-going programme.

The effect of the Project, as indicated earlier, was to emphasise the Centre's role as an agency with specialised knowledge and skills in adult education. "It heighten(ed)

¹¹⁰ See paragraph "Role and organisational review ... etc., above.

¹¹¹ Draft Job description, 17 November, 1989.

perceptions of the Centre as a trainer of adult educators and encourag(ed) the perception of it as a resource for adult educators.”¹¹² In this it was clearly allied to the work done by the Centre through the Diploma in Adult Education but the dislocation in accountability between these two courses was a source of confusion and a weakness. The diploma as a formal post-graduate course was within the normal university academic structure and responsible to the Board of the Faculty of Education; the Certificate course by contrast, was, despite its obvious links to the Diploma, part of the Centre’s non formal programme and the responsibility of the Centre’s Advisory Committee. But the specialist adult education focus of the Project distinguished it from the more general provision of the bulk of the non formal programme as represented by the Extra Mural Programme. It also narrowed the constituency which the Centre served. Like the Community Organisation Programme before it and the Adult Basic Education Programme, its distinction from the mainstream diploma course and the Extra Mural Programme (the mainstream of the non formal programme), led to a tendency for it to develop a separate identity from the Centre:

... the compartmentalisation of this key area and its constitution as a distinct project may be problematic. There is a danger of it leading to over use of the project and to its isolation from the rest of the Centre. As with the Adult Basic Education Programme, the separate identity of a programme or project in an organisation as small as the Centre for Adult Education can work against the cohesiveness of the organisation and against the most effective use of resources.¹¹³

Attempts to restructure the Centre (1988-1991)

This period began with initiatives which led to the Extra Mural Studies Unit changing its name to the Centre for Adult Education and, in 1986, joining the Faculty of Education as a department with a revised constitution and a modified role for its Advisory Committee. This can be understood as a logical outcome of the direction the Centre had set for its own development and it was achieved without undue procedural difficulties or delays. It can also be seen to have been understood as the achievement of a more stable status for the Centre from which it could be expected to mount a new phase of development without revisiting its constitutional position for some time. This position achieved at the end of 1986 was however fundamentally flawed in several respects. First and foremost it did not make provision for the development of the Pietermaritzburg office with consequences which have been described earlier in this chapter. In addition the departmental status of the Centre was left ambiguous, the staffing structure was left unresolved and inadequate and there was an implicit tension between the Centre’s formal and non formal functions, as reflected in the dual accountability structure of the Faculty Board and the Advisory Committee. To these weaknesses was added the additional factor of institutional instability. For all these reasons, the structure of the Centre which had been

¹¹² Mackie, R.D.A. *The Role work and structure of the Centre for Adult Education*, p.26.

¹¹³ Ibid. p. 27.

seemingly settled in 1986 was thrown into question in 1988 and thereafter subject to an ongoing attempt at resolution which was not achieved within the scope of this history.

The initial steps taken to restructure the Centre were essentially internal and have already been described under the heading *Role and Organisational Review* and the related section *Durban - Pietermaritzburg relationship*. This led, by the end of 1988, to recognition within the Centre of the need to restructure the relationship between the Durban and Pietermaritzburg branches and of the related need to secure a more adequate and appropriately structured staff base. Simultaneously the Centre responded to the University's Short Term Plan to rationalise its activities. From this point on, the inter-meshing of the University-driven and Centre-driven initiatives complicated the ensuing process; at times the Centre can be seen to be responding to the larger University initiatives, at other times it can be seen to be acting independently and at still other times the two initiatives worked together.

In this regard it should be noted that there were three major interlocking processes at work together. At the macro level was the University's various and progressive attempts to restructure itself; at faculty level in response to these attempts, the Faculty of Education was engaged in a process of restructuring itself both by splitting into two autonomous faculties on a Durban - Pietermaritzburg basis and by attempting to reconstitute itself in both centres as schools of education.¹¹⁴ Finally, at departmental level the Centre was pursuing its own attempts to restructure itself.

The Centre's response to the Short Term Plan considered far-reaching options including closing, variously, the Centre altogether, the Extra Mural Programme and the Pietermaritzburg branch of the Centre. In answer to the call for proposals to rationalise its activities, the Centre claimed an already high degree of rationalisation by virtue of its integration across both campuses. While it applauded the notion of a school as an integrating mechanism for other departments in the Faculty, it argued against joining the school itself on several grounds but most particularly because it threatened the unique identity of the Centre.

The degree of integration envisaged for the School of Education puts at risk and perhaps even destroys the identity of the Centre for Adult Education which has within itself functionally distinct operations which are held together at departmental level.¹¹⁵

Instead of joining the school, the Centre argued that it should remain as a separate unitary department based within the Durban Faculty of Education. The Advisory Committee discussed and forwarded the document containing the Centre's response

¹¹⁴ Technically (at least initially) the faculty remain *de jure* a unitary faculty, but through agreement and a procedural mechanism, the Education Faculty, in line with all other faculties which previously had departments in Durban and Pietermaritzburg, functioned in practice as separate faculties. Although the notion of a school of education was under constant discussion, it was not established in either centre within the period of this history.

¹¹⁵ *The Centre for Adult Education and the Short Term Plan*, May 1988.

to the University Planning Committee¹¹⁶ together with the minute of its own discussion of the document. Notable in that discussion was the reliance which the Committee placed on the public relations value of the Centre as an argument in favour of the Centre's continued existence.

(The Committee) agreed that closing the Centre would be a disaster for the University in terms of the University's public relations and its concern for the community.¹¹⁷

The Centre never received any response to this submission (which it had been requested to make) to the University Planning Committee. The Short Term Plan met with such criticism that it was gradually abandoned and a new initiative was begun to construct a "Mission Statement". This required from the Centre a statement of its present activities and projected future development which was designed to feed into a Faculty submission and thereafter into a university-wide planning process. The document containing the Centre's response described its existing activities together with the staffing and financial implications of those activities. A taught masters programme was included in projected future development. Once again the Centre received no response but to some extent it was able to force a response by serving the document to the March meeting of the Advisory Committee later in the same year. At this meeting the Committee also considered the Centre's annual report for 1988 in which the Director reviewed the future development of the Centre and drew attention to the choices which it faced.

The provision of non formal university level education opportunities for adults covering a wide range of cultural and intellectual interests has been a primary area of the Centre's programme of provision. It must remain a proper function of a university but it cannot enjoy the same priority for development against the needs of adult educators in the present context particularly where the Centre has very limited staff resources.

In another section of the report, the Director made plain the limits of the present staff resources:

The work of the Centre outlined in this report is underpinned by three permanent academic posts spread between Durban and Pietermaritzburg. This is an inadequate base from which to sustain the present level of activity and precludes the further development of the Centre which is clearly indicated by the level of need and by the logic of the present development direction.¹¹⁸

These comments in the context of the University's focus on development plans, impressed on the Chairman of the Advisory Committee the need to address the concerns which were felt in the Centre and resulted in an Extra-ordinary meeting of

¹¹⁶ Formerly the Academic Planning and Policy Committee which as such had nurtured the Centre in its early days – see Chapter Two.

¹¹⁷ Minutes of the 31st meeting of the Centre for Adult Education Advisory Committee, 6 June 1988, item 4.

¹¹⁸ 1988 Annual Report of the Centre for Adult Education.

the Advisory Committee. In preparation for that meeting, a working paper¹¹⁹ was prepared which again emphasised that the Centre had reached a stage in its development where its potential was being limited by the inadequacy of its staff base. The document accepted the dual function of the Centre; the problem of operating on two campuses; the need to remain a unitary department; the problem of different perceptions of the Centre; and, the need to focus more definitely on training adult educators. It made five recommendations which the Committee supported in principle, adding a further one of its own which urged a fundraising function on the Centre:

1. The Centre should strengthen its role as an academic department by developing post-graduate programmes for people working in adult education and by instigating a programme of research.
2. The Centre should maintain and develop its programme of non-formal provision.
3. The Centre should aim to achieve a balanced provision as between Durban and Pietermaritzburg.
4. The University should commit itself to providing an adequate establishment staff base to provide a core for the development of the Centre. This core should comprise five academic posts (currently three). In addition, the University should establish a Chair of Adult Education.
5. The Centre should aim to achieve structures that will fully serve the needs of both Centres.
6. The Centre should examine any possible means of generating funds and of tapping into sources of funding which could contribute to the achievement of its aims.¹²⁰

As a further outcome of the meeting the Chairman, Professor Webb, who as Vice Principal, Pietermaritzburg¹²¹ was also Chairman of the Humanities Liaison Committee¹²² undertook to call a meeting of that body together with members of the Centre to discuss the six points endorsed by the Advisory Committee. The meeting was duly held but had no significant outcome.

¹¹⁹ *The Future Development of the Centre for Adult education*, June 1989.

¹²⁰ Minutes of an extraordinary meeting of the Centre for Adult Education Advisory Committee, 1 June 1989.

¹²¹ Professor Webb moved from the post of Vice Principal, Durban to Vice Principal, Pietermaritzburg in 1987. Since the Centre was a unitary body and because he was Chairman of the Advisory Committee as the nominee of the Principal, there was no reason why he should not have continued as Chairman of the Advisory Committee. Nevertheless it did create a slightly anomalous situation in which the Director (in Durban) effectively reported to the Vice Principal in Pietermaritzburg. This may account for the subsequent lack of understanding of the Centre in Durban by the new Durban Vice Principal, Professor Cresswell.

¹²² The Humanities Liaison Committee was one of several inter faculty bodies which were set-up at that time in terms of the Short Term Plan, to monitor and co-ordinate attempts directed towards the rationalisation of faculty activities.

By the middle of 1989 as recounted earlier in this chapter,¹²³ Mackie and Aitchison had reached the conclusion that a degree of separation was required and at the August meeting of the Advisory Committee, proposed a revised constitution which established separate Centres for Adult Education on each campus held together within a common department. The Advisory Committee discussed this proposal at length but agreed only that it should be used as the basis for further discussion.¹²⁴

The matter was raised again at an Advisory Meeting in November and the Committee agreed to the Chairman's suggestion that separate Advisory Committees for Durban and Pietermaritzburg be set up for a trial period of one year.¹²⁵ These committees were never established. Instead the next meeting of the Advisory Committee in April 1990 agreed to establish a working committee of the Chairman, the Director and Deputy Director, to take the whole process forward.¹²⁶ When by July 1990, no real progress had been made, Mackie and Aitchison as Director and Deputy Director, presented the Chairman of the Advisory Committee with a memorandum in which they expressed the opinion that "the existing situation within the Centre for Adult Education in respect of its constitutional structure and staffing is approaching a crisis point." They saw the crisis as being "precipitated by the following related factors:"

1. An inadequate staff base.
2. A formal constitutional structure at variance with the *de facto* situation.
3. The dual campus problem.
4. Confusion in the expectations of the University Administration over the role of the Centre.
5. The inability of the advisory committee to play a meaningful role either in advising the staff of the Centre or in securing resources for its operation.
6. A sense of frustration over attempts to restructure the Centre.
7. A lack of proper career paths for senior staff within the Centre.¹²⁷

¹²³ See above under heading *Durban - Pietermaritzburg relationship*.

¹²⁴ Minutes of the 35th meeting of the Centre for Adult Education Advisory Committee, 3 August, 1989, item 3. The points recorded in this minute are numerous but point in no particular direction.

¹²⁵ Minutes of the 36th meeting of the Centre for Adult Education Advisory committee, 2 November, 1989, item 2.1.

¹²⁶ Minutes of the 37th meeting of the Centre for Adult Education Advisory Committee, 20 April, 1990, item 2.1.

¹²⁷ *Memorandum to the Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the Centre for Adult Education from the Director and Deputy Director*, July 1990.

The memorandum stipulated seven conditions which any reconstruction of the Centre should meet¹²⁸ and explored three options including total separation of the two Centres. This option was considered viable only if the University accepted the commitment involved in developing two departments.

The October meeting of the Advisory Committee considered a revised version of the memorandum which included draft constitutions for the two separate Centres and a single Advisory Committee. The Committee supported the proposals in principle and set up a process to finalise the detail.¹²⁹ These negotiations took a further six months during which time the only substantial change was to replace the proposed single Advisory Committee with two separate Advisory Committees. At a meeting in April 1991, the Advisory Committee accepted the detail of the proposals and agreed to recommend to Senate and Council that:

1. The existing Centre of Adult Education be separated into two departments each within their respective Faculties of Education and each responsible for the provision of non formal adult education programmes and for formal teaching and research in adult education.
2. The present Advisory Committee be dissolved and separate Advisory Boards be constituted in each Centre, each with the function of ensuring that the two departments meet the University's expectations in the area of non formal provision.
3. The existing posts of Director and Deputy Director be upgraded to professorial level.
4. The University commit itself to increasing the academic staff establishment to minimum levels comprising in each department a Director (professorial level) an Assistant Director senior lecturer level and two tutors (lecturer level).
5. The attached constitutions of the Centre for Adult Education - Durban and the Centre for Adult Education - Pietermaritzburg and of the Advisory Boards be adopted.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ The conditions which Mackie and Aitchison believed a revised structure should meet were: (that it should)

- “ 1. Be based on a clear and unambiguous conception of the role and function of the Centre and its constituent parts.
2. Safeguard the continuation and development of the programme of non formal courses.
3. Provide for the further development of strong postgraduate teaching and research programmes in adult and non formal education.
4. Describe clear administrative and accountability routes and delineate the roles and functions of the various parts of the Centre and of the bodies to which it relates.
5. Recognise in principle an optimum staffing structure for the Centre which provides career paths which recognise the unique function of CAE staff.
6. Provide recognition for adult education by according staff an equivalent status to that enjoyed by similar units and centres.
7. Provide for regional autonomy as between Durban and Pietermaritzburg while at the same time permitting rationalisation of scarce resources between the two Centres.”

¹²⁹ Minutes of the 38th meeting of the Centre for Adult Education Advisory Committee, 15 October, 1990, item 2.1.

¹³⁰ Minutes of the 39th meeting of the Centre for Adult Education Advisory Committee, 19 April 1991, item 2.1.

These recommendations were considered to be an integrated set of proposals. The memorandum stressed that “they flow(ed) from comprehensive consideration of possible options for the future structure of the Centre including various permutations of a unitary department.” The proposals were prefaced by an important proviso:

... in making these recommendations, the Centre remains concerned that they should not be adopted without full consideration of the costs involved and without clear commitment for the development of both Centres. In particular the establishment of two inadequately resourced departments must be avoided.¹³¹

The proposals went forward to Senate and Council with the formal support of both Durban and Pietermaritzburg Faculties of Education. Senate Executive considered them at a meeting in June 1991¹³² and after a lengthy and confused discussion agreed to separate the Centre into two bodies and dissolve the Advisory Committee. It did not adopt the proposed constitutions but instead recommended that the two Centres undergo a process of review.

The Centre was outraged and protested to the Principal, the Registrar and the Chairman of the Advisory Committee that the decision was confused on a number of important points;¹³³ that it effectively suspended the constitution of the Centre; that it left the Centre in an *ad hoc* position facing a further indefinite period of undefined review; and, that it negated the carefully negotiated outcome of what had already been a labourious process.

This history ends with this formal dissolution of the Centre as a unitary body. It was not at all the solution which had been sought and instead of finality it heralded a period of confusion and uncertainty which at the time of writing (four years later) still remains to be resolved.

4.3 Analysis *The centre cannot hold*

The title of this chapter, *Towards a department* and the title of this section, *The centre cannot hold* stand in some opposition to each other but this seems to capture what emerges as an inherent contradiction in this period of the development of the Centre for Adult Education. The initial steps which led to the formal construction of a department (1984-1986) can be seen to be checked in the middle part of this period

¹³¹ *Restructuring of the Centre for Adult Education* March 1991. This was the final version which as an appendix to the minutes of the Advisory Committee meeting, went forward to Senate Executive.

¹³² Minutes of a meeting of Senate Executive, 4 June 1991, item 7.1.

¹³³ In a briefing paper in an attempt to clarify the decision, Mackie wrote, “The minute is confused – it accepts two of the enabling recommendations but is completely silent in respect of the constitution and staffing. There is thus confusion on a whole range of implications which flow from the minute – e.g. the status of the Deputy Director and the present constitutional state of the Centre” August 1991.

(1987-1989) and while the coherence of the initial phase is not regained, there is nevertheless a sense in which a departmental direction reasserts itself in the closing years (1990/1991). This assessment divides the period into three phases and the analysis accordingly takes these phases in turn and explores in each the relationship between policy and actual development.

From and to the centre (1984-1986)

This phase is dominated by two primary policy strands. The first of these strands was to broaden the Centre's curricula and constituency in the direction of the educationally and socially disadvantaged. The second aimed to achieve a precarious balance for the Centre between the core and periphery of the university. Both strands have their origins in the previous period and in Morphet's 1979 analysis which understood the task facing the Centre as, on the one hand, "extension and development", and, on the other, "defence".¹³⁴

The three major curriculum initiatives were the introduction of the post-graduate diploma course for adult educators, the development of the Community Organisations Project and the beginning of what eventually became the Adult Basic Education Programme. The policy of which these developments were the fruition, was set in place in the previous period and was intended to redress the skewed focus of the Centre's work which up to the end of the 1970s had been directed almost exclusively to the educationally privileged. This policy however had two goals in mind which can be crudely characterised as "development" and "balance" and which, given the Centre's meagre resources, were not compatible. The task was simply too big to be achievable. The notion of "development" was fundamental and was essentially driven by the demands of social justice and recognition of a universal mission of adult education which identifies as its interest the needs of the socially and educationally marginalised. The notion of "balance" – as the analysis of the previous period has shown – was partly expedient and partly principled. It was expedient insofar as it attempted to move the Centre in the direction of "development" while maintaining the support of the University by continuing to fulfil the University's expectations; by stretching without breaking the limits of the University's understanding of the Centre's mission. It was principled insofar as the notion of balanced provision was understood and accepted as good and proper and was based on the integrative logic of the three division structure.

The introduction of these three curriculum innovations moved the Centre substantially in the direction of "development". It clearly marks the beginning of the Centre as a specialist adult education agency which takes seriously a universally recognised developmental mission of adult education. It also aligned the Centre with a marginal constituency and thus emphasised the marginality of the Centre itself. This effect was ameliorated by the emergence of a particular context, in which legitimacy was looked for through identification (however spurious) with this constituency. By

¹³⁴ See Chapter Three and especially section 3.3 above.

contrast these innovations did not in reality move the Centre in the direction of “balance” although at a superficial level this might have seemed to be so and although the Centre made some claim for this. As the history of this period has shown, the Professional Studies Division was left undeveloped and the Liberal Studies Division was neglected. The latter managed to continue at a credible level on the basis of the attention lavished on its earlier development. The focus of the Centre’s work shifted decisively through the introduction of these developments and it shifted unequivocally in the direction of the educational needs of the socially disadvantaged; it was fundamentally a shift of focus rather than a broadening of focus. The “fragile and distorted base” remained fragile and distorted though the fragility may have been of a different kind and the distortion could now be regarded with honour rather than with disdain. And yet the Centre understood itself as advancing on a broad front in terms of a policy of balanced provision; imbalances would in time be removed through new initiatives and additional resources. The source of this confusion may be attributable in part to the dual incentive of expediency and principle which drove the quest for balance. But the notion of balance was also rooted in the development of a formal teaching function and to the extent that the diploma exemplified that function a degree of balance was achieved. The diploma was itself very much part of the “development” agenda and any extension of a formal teaching function which did not directly support that agenda would face competition from this community education service commitment.

The second policy strand was directed towards achieving an institutional location for the Centre which balanced in organisational form the demands of the core institution and those of the periphery constituency. As the Centre moved its curriculum away from the core of university teaching,¹³⁵ it moved at the same time closer to the core organisational form of the University. This is evident in the move by the Centre into the Faculty of Education as an academic department. The move was essentially strategic insofar as it was a reaction to a proposal from the Principal to locate it with other service organisations. It was obviously intended to secure for the Centre a base within the establishment from which it would be able to sustain the task it had set itself. In making this move there is no evidence which suggests any intention to fundamentally alter the nature of the Centre’s work to accommodate an academic agenda; rather the arguments used suggested the need to broaden the interpretation of the faculty agenda to recognise the work of the Centre. It is as if the Centre sought to make itself appear more like the core while moving towards the periphery. It can also be seen as an attempt by the Centre to secure a new sponsor within the University. In relinquishing its exclusive focus on its original constituency, the Centre’s value to the University administration as a public relations tool in its original terms was reduced and the Centre needed a new champion for its cause. (In reality it probably held far more public relations value in relation to a new emerging constituency but this was not immediately recognised by the University.) The reluctance of the Centre to

¹³⁵ The extension lectures which were the core of the Liberal Studies Programme were not dissimilar to normal university lectures; the content and teaching of the courses offered through the Community Organisations Project and even the teaching on the diploma courses was, at the time, substantially different.

commit itself fully to an academic agenda resulted in a dispensation which left the Advisory Committee as the major sponsor of the Centre and effectively relegated the Faculty to a formal role.

By the end of 1986 the Centre can be understood in two different ways. On one reading the Centre can be seen to have broadened its focus and to be developing coherently in an integrated manner underpinned by a policy which seeks to balance non formal provision and support with an academic teaching commitment. It is securely located as a department within the Faculty of Education, the organisational structure and development of the Centre appear to be sound and even the Durban / Pietermaritzburg relationship has achieved a degree of rationalisation. From another perspective a different picture emerges. The Centre's policy of balance and development appears unrealistic; the commitment to an academic role is in tension with a community service role, the departmental status seems a little hollow, the organisational logic implicit in the three divisions is wearing thin, organisational development rests very much upon individuals and personal relationships and the Pietermaritzburg / Durban relationship is inherently unstable.

Things fall apart (1987-1989)

The disintegration of policy and organisational coherence within the Centre which marks this period was situated within a multilayered context which was characterised by instability. At a national level the legitimacy of educational institutions was challenged, and a host of NGOs emerged to offer alternative sites for educational work of a social and political nature. At a university level, the University of Natal began a protracted groping towards new structures and processes partly in response to the national crisis and partly in response to pressures born of the dynamics of its own organisational development.¹³⁶ Within the Centre itself, several factors can be identified which partly in interaction with this context, worked to undermine the policy and organisational structure which the Centre had developed.

The dislocation of the Durban / Pietermaritzburg relationship and the failure of organisational process which enabled communication and corporate decision-making, was one set of factors. As this history has shown, this was initially precipitated by the absence of the Director on sabbatical leave and by the simultaneous assertion in Pietermaritzburg of a substantial degree of independence for that part of the Centre. The impulse giving rise to the need for greater autonomy in Pietermaritzburg came in turn from the outbreak of political violence in that region and the consequent availability of donor funds with which to mount projects to counter State repression. But the explanation lies deeper than these precipitating events, at the level of policy and organisational development as it related to the Durban Pietermaritzburg relationship. The complexity of this relationship permeates and bedevils the entire period of this part of the Centre's history and can be seen as a major obstacle to the subsequent development of organisational coherence and consequently policy.

¹³⁶ The nature and extent of this process is obviously beyond the scope of this study but it is reasonable to judge it as a prolonged crisis of major proportions such as is rarely encountered in the life of an institution.

The policy which the Centre developed in 1985 with regard to Durban and Pietermaritzburg sought to hold the Centre together and to develop it as a whole with the initial emphasis on the Durban Centre. This was a pragmatic attempt to concentrate limited staff resources in order to gather sufficient organisational momentum. Despite this policy decision and its subsequent entrenchment in the Centre's constitution when it joined the Faculty, it was inevitable that as soon as Pietermaritzburg acquired sufficient resources to mount a significant programme of its own, separation would follow. In addition the continued integration of the Centre ran counter to the prevailing institutional logic which separated departments on a campus basis.¹³⁷ The formal union of the Centre together with the physical location of the Director and Deputy Director on separate campuses with separate staff, inevitably focussed policy development and organisational decision-making in respect of the Centre as a whole on these two offices. This effect was compounded by the historical development of the Centre which tied together the biographies of these two key players. Although internal organisational communication and decision-making processes had been developed prior to 1987, they relied heavily on this informal relationship which, when it was removed in circumstances which included an assertion of autonomy in Pietermaritzburg, left a vacuum in the Centre as a whole. The subsequent attempts to establish organisational processes while flawed in several other ways, were primarily confounded by the contradictions surrounding the Durban/Pietermaritzburg relationship. Whereas the formal situation understood a director and deputy director within a unitary structure, the *de facto* situation was increasingly one of two separate organisational structures each with their own director yet within a single formal structure held together by a director and deputy director. The endless attempts to restructure the Centre were centrally concerned with resolving this major structural anomaly and the failure to do so effectively paralysed the development of the Centre for the remainder of this period.

A second set of factors worked to undermine the identity of the Centre as a department by promoting a competing model which viewed the Centre more like an NGO than like an academic department. This trend was most marked in the Adult Basic Education, Community Organisations and Pietermaritzburg programmes. Each of these programmes in different but similar ways was involved in the NGO sector at the time when it rose to prominence as an alternative set of structures to those of the establishment. In recounting the history of this period mention was made of the multiple images which the Centre presented discretely to its various constituencies.¹³⁸ These different images can in part be attributed to the curriculum policy (discussed above) which sought to maintain a balance of provision across a wide spectrum. Because the identity of the Centre was thus various, it became possible for different parts of the Centre to accentuate those images which most appealed to their interests. Insofar as the Centre was a department of the University it was identifiable with the establishment. But there was an aspect of the Centre's persona which could be

¹³⁷ This was contradicted for a time in 1988 and 1989 in accordance with the Short-Term Plan's search for points of rationalisation see section 4.2.

¹³⁸ See page 137, *supra*.

understood as alternative and community orientated and it was this aspect which was exploited to understand the Centre as having an essentially NGO character. This was made easier by the proliferation of non formal agencies on campus which attached themselves to various university departments about this time; many of these were essentially NGOs. The Science Education Project which was in the Centre itself, was one such example.

The Centre necessarily straddled the interchange between the University and the community and this implied a relentless dynamic between the core and the periphery of the institution with the point of equilibrium in a constant state of flux. At this time the pull in the direction of the community was particularly strong while the pull towards the core of the institution was, through the University's neglect of the Centre, particularly weak. The assertion of an NGO character for the Centre had implications for the organisational processes such as decision-making and accountability. It also held implications for the curriculum where the strong pull towards community worked against the policy of balance inherent in the three division structure. Finally, it invited a counter-pressure towards the centre which was provided by the Director through a stronger assertion of a departmental role for the Centre than had hitherto prevailed.

The compartmentalisation of the Centre and the collapse of the three division logic and theoretical base which underpinned it were together a third set of factors which contributed to the disintegration of policy and organisational coherence. The tendency of the divisions to compartmentalise the work of the Centre, which was noted in the previous chapter, becomes readily apparent in this period and can be seen to be operating in all the Centre's programmes and particularly in the Community Organisation Programme and the Adult Basic Education Programme. Ironically these two programmes were conceptually situated within the same division – the Social and Community Studies Division – but by then the logic of the divisions had broken down to the point where this was not recognised. What persisted as a legacy was the notion of appointing staff to discrete areas of work with the purpose of developing those areas. It was this practice which encouraged compartmentalisation. This tendency was not unrelated to the other sets of factors already discussed in this analysis but the nature of the relationship is not altogether clear. The extent to which the tendency to compartmentalise was causal or consequential to the dislocation of organisational process cannot be answered with any certainty. Likewise the attraction of these two key programmes towards an NGO as opposed to a departmental model may have resulted from the compartmental structure of the Centre and may in part have contributed to the disintegration of the identity of the Centre. More fundamentally, the alternative organisational model reflected a different understanding of accountability which constituted fellow change agents as the key reference group in preference to the authority of the institution. This point will be elaborated in Chapter Five.

The failure of the three division logic and structure can be ascribed to a number of factors. Foremost was a failure of understanding of the inherent logic of the divisions and the comprehensive theory on which they were based. In part this was a failure of

communication to succeeding staff members. In part it resulted from the way in which the divisions were first presented to the then Committee of Control; this largely stripped them of their theoretical foundations.¹³⁹ Without these theoretical foundations, the three divisions could only appear as an organisational structure devoid on any compelling logic. The balance looked for across the Centre's curriculum may have been illusive partly because the integrative nature of the three division logic was not generally understood. As noted in the previous chapter, the strength of the divisions was their value as a conceptual tool rather than as an organisational structure. The development of the divisions in the Centre emphasised their structural purpose and therefore their weakness and underplayed the strength they offered as a theoretical base. As an organisational structure, the divisions were not well suited to the size of the Centre; a much larger organisation was required to sustain the kind of divisional structure which they implied. Perhaps more fundamentally, they required a more substantial core than the Centre could offer. While the divisional logic held together the various divisions in a unified theoretical frame, it provided no organisational structure through which the essentially equal and autonomous divisions could be held together. The core within which the three divisions were situated was essentially a vacuum which was held by the Director and Deputy Director. This is the explanation of the bubble-like structure observed in the review workshop of August 1988.¹⁴⁰ This situation was exacerbated when the Pietermaritzburg Programme became in a sense a fourth division under the Deputy Director. In any case, as already noted, the divisional logic was fundamentally at odds with a Durban / Pietermaritzburg logic. In the presence of this counter-logic, the construction of a viable core to unite the divisions in an organisational frame was a formidable task which was not achieved.

Towards a department (1990-91)

The construction of an alternative theoretical frame to replace the divisional logic which was finally abandoned at the end of 1988, was again complicated by the unresolved Durban / Pietermaritzburg relationship. At this point it becomes impossible to conceive the Centre as a whole. The Centre in Pietermaritzburg had for some time been operating in terms of a different theoretical frame which privileged community service above academic work but yet engaged in research of an advocacy nature. A detailed understanding of the development in Pietermaritzburg must await another study; this analysis now turns to the final stages of the development of the Durban Centre within the period of this study.

The claim to a reassertion of a departmental direction is a little tenuous within the confines of this study. Its fuller substantiation lies in chronological developments in the years following the closing of this study. And yet the beginnings of this trend are evident as early as 1988. In challenging the organisational skills focus of the Community Organisation Programme, the Director began to substitute a simpler logic

¹³⁹ See Chapter 3, Section 3.2, paragraph heading, *Three Divisions (1980)*.

¹⁴⁰ See page 137, *supra*.

for the developmental policy of the Centre; this was the training of adult educators. It pulled the Centre one step back from the more direct educational intervention it had hitherto sought and instead understood the Centre's task in terms of equipping adult educators with the understanding and skills necessary to intervene themselves at the point where the Centre had hitherto sought to make direct provision. To some extent this was made possible by a change in the context which had seen the rapid development of a number of agencies which were themselves engaged in direct provision. The reconstruction of the Community Organisation Programme as the Community Adult Educator Training Project and the introduction of the certificate level course for community adult educators was one manifestation of this shift of policy; the introduction of the adult education specialisation course within the B.Ed curriculum was another. So too was the development of an ABE specialisation course within the diploma curriculum. But contradictions remained. The burgeoning of a consultative function within the ABE programme and the Community Adult Educator Training Project dissipated the focus on teaching; it was rationalised as a form of research and it did indeed contribute at one stage removed from direct provision. The major anomaly was the Liberal Studies Programme which continued to make direct provision at a level which could not always be regarded as appropriate to a university. The attempt to revitalise this programme through amalgamation with the Community Organisation Programme was made but failed as this history has shown. Nevertheless the tradition of direct provision which gave birth to the Centre was deeply entrenched and the final proposals made within this period to restructure the Centre retained this function. It must be left to a subsequent history to relate whether this area of the Centre's work was eventually, incorporated within an overarching frame or whether the initial vision of the Centre was finally abandoned to be reconstructed as part of some new innovation.

Policy in retro-perspective

In Chapter One, which constructed the framework of this study, the position of the writer as researcher and primary actor was recognised as being able to provide a richness of texture born of immediacy but was also understood as a limiting factor arising from “the embeddedness of a personal and role perspective”. Although the intention throughout the study has been to present a “research perspective” there must in these circumstances be a degree of slippage between these two perspectives. Whatever measure of success has been achieved in maintaining a separation between the role of “researcher” and that of “actor” there remains an area of uncertainty from which it has proved impossible to escape. This is partly because the “researcher” is at all times possessed of a privileged knowledge of the Director’s perspective while having no special insights into the perspectives of the other actors.

The uncertainty of role perspective has been compounded by the assumption of an indefinite and detached perspective somewhere in time beyond the period of the study. This was a necessary fiction to fix the research subject within an ongoing and inconclusive reality; without it the study would not have been possible. But while the role of “researcher” has remained in a fictitious sense outside of time, the role of Director has been stressfully and dramatically engaged. The course of this engagement is beyond the study but a real time perspective can now be introduced as a mechanism for focussing the study to a conclusion in a way which engages with current reality and thereby gives present meaning to this last chapter.

While this provides a better grasp of perspective in terms of time, it is unable to resolve the role perspective. At best, it alerts the reader for the need for circumspection by providing knowledge of the present situation. The uncertainty surrounding the role perspective remains as a limitation of the study.

1995 Changes in the Centre

In June 1995 at the same time as the writing of this final chapter, Senate resolved:

1. That the existing (Durban) Centre for Adult Education be disestablished.
2. That the post of Director for the Centre for Adult Education be disestablished.
3. That an academic Department of Adult and Community Education be established. ...
4. That a Chair in Adult and Community Education be established subject to the necessary funds for this post becoming available through fund-raising and the transfer of funds from existing resources within the Centre for Adult Education.¹

¹ Minutes of a Special Meeting of Senate, 7 June, 1995.

The supporting documentation describes the mission of the new department as training Education and Training Development Practitioners (ETDPs) and suggests that this should be understood in the following context:

The primary focus of the Department of Adult and Community Education is in the development of Education, Training and Development Practitioners. The effectiveness in this task depends on engagement not only in teaching, but also in provision of non formal courses, community service, curriculum development and materials production, consultancy and research.²

A further integral part of this process was the expressed intention to separate the former Centre's Extra Mural Programme and relocate it as a Unit for Continuing Education within the University's newly established Innovation Centre.³

The decision as a whole was in respect of the Durban Centre alone; the future of the Pietermaritzburg Centre although developing in a similar direction remained undecided.

This decision ended a four-year review which began at the end of the final period of this study, in June 1991. During this review period several different proposals were made to restructure the Centre in a way which would rationalise its various activities and establish clear procedures and forums for policy development. The June 1995 decision of Senate established the proposal which was finally agreed.

It must be noted that the introduction of this later development at this point is not intended to extend the period of the study; the history from 1991 to 1995 remains unexplored. What it does is make possible a concluding analysis from a real and present perspective; it enables the study to be viewed from a distance in time with the knowledge of subsequent development and it puts the reader in a position from which the perspective can be discerned.

It also makes possible a closer understanding of the writer's relationship to the study as actor thus enabling this to be distinguished more definitely from the role as researcher. Without this mechanism further analysis would be constrained by the need to conceal future developments while retaining knowledge of them and the undisclosed perspective would limit the strength of the analysis.

² Report of the Interim Committee for the Durban Centre for Adult Education – Proposal to restructure provision for adult and continuing education on the Durban campus. February, 1995.

³ The Innovation Foundation was set up by the University as an independent trust in 1993 to develop the interface between the University and the community. The notion of technology transfer and partnerships with commercial and industrial enterprises is a primary emphasis but it also provides physical accommodation and a "home" for developmental projects in its Innovation Centre. Adult Education is part of the envisaged function and it is to this aspect that the erstwhile extra mural function of the Centre for Adult Education is intended to be linked.

From a present perspective there are at least two different ways of understanding the June 1995 Senate decision in relation to the study. An initial interpretation could be that the institutional entity which has been the subject of the study has disintegrated. This would place the study unequivocally in the past and would consign it to an exclusively historical analysis. The course of this history itself, however, suggests the likelihood of another reading. This is that rather than marking an end, the decision represents a further moment of transformation analogous to other changes of a metamorphic quality which are evident through this history. The various changes of name – “*Extension Programme*”, “*Extra Mural Studies and Extension Unit*” and “*Centre for Adult Education*” – reflect this transformational process in general terms but although these name changes imply more significant functional or operational changes, they do not mirror them precisely. There are two more obvious points of change of a fundamental quality and each can be seen to be addressing a problem which confronted the Centre at the time. The first was the 1979 introduction of the three division structure which was designed to address the problem of social relevance (and ultimately of social legitimacy) by shifting the focus of the Centre’s work towards the broader community. The second was the 1986 reconstitution of the Centre as a department and its entry into the Faculty of Education. This development sought to address the problem of institutional marginality and credibility by moving the Centre closer to the mainstream structures of the University.

The present change can be understood as a transformation similar to these two previous moments but this requires some explanation of the driving problem. This chapter reviews the more significant policy issues identified in this study from a present perspective and locates them within analytically discrete policy frames. In doing so the analysis moves (within the limits of the confines of the study), towards an explanation of the problem prompting this latest change.

Policy Issues and Policy Frames

A review of the analysis sections of this study reveals a number of key policy issues. Also implicit within the study are a number of policy frames. The study has assumed a relationship between policy and context and these frames represent particular kinds of discursive mediations between context and policy.

The notion of a policy frame draws on James Gee’s work on discourses in relation to literacy.⁴ In Gee’s meaning a discourse is,

socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group.⁵

⁴ Gee, James, *Social Linguistics and Literacies - Ideology in Discourses*, Falmer Press, Bristol, 1990.

⁵ Ibid, p. 143.

The concept is fundamentally ideological with each discourse constituting a closed system of values and perspectives which define social interests and which are sustained by reference to the discourse itself. The term “policy frame” as used here incorporates the general tenets of this understanding of discourse and applies it to policy. Policy issues are recognised as being driven by particular discourses and consequently “framed” by that discourse. Policy frames, like discourses, are internally self-referential but policy itself is generally formulated in situations where policy frames intersect, without the frames being necessarily explicit.

Three clear policy frames can be identified as operating within the subject of the study and these can variously be referenced to the authority of the institution of the University, to the academic field of adult education or to a particular understanding of social mission. These different frames can be respectively characterised as “institutional” or “bureaucratic”; “mission orientated”; and, “academic” or “professional”.

The significant policy issues are centralised policy control, incremental or gradualist development, the weakness of the three division structure, the inherent contradiction of a unified Durban / Pietermaritzburg enterprise and the contested nature of the Centre’s mission.

This section explores these issues employing the policy frames identified as a way of drawing together the previous separate analytical accounts and, as indicated above, in order to develop an understanding of the 1995 decision.

Policy issues within a “bureaucratic” frame

The bureaucratic frame is essentially contractual and bureaucratic. It recognises the authority of the logic and processes of the University and seeks to develop policy within the constraints and ethics imposed by this frame. The sponsorship of the Centre by the Vice-Chancellor and its early development by the Academic Planning and Policy Committee and within the Academic Planning Office proved to be powerful influences which gave particular prominence to this frame. As indicated in the analysis of the first period of this study it set a pattern of centralised and gradualistic development. These characteristics can be observed throughout the history. The initial centralism is carried forward through the various forms of the Advisory Committee which each maintain an unusually direct relationship to the executive core of the university administration. In practice this located authority for policy decisions outside the Centre. Although over the years the Centre progressively took more of this authority on itself, the area of autonomy was never really clarified. The habit of practice also inhibited the assertion of a fuller autonomy. All this served to obscure the locus of policy decisions.

The gradualism is evident in the incremental changes which slowly transformed the Centre from a programme of extension courses to a department of adult education. The strength of this policy was precisely its ability to win these incremental changes without subjecting the changing mission of the Centre to undue scrutiny in

circumstances where this might have prevented this change. Conversely its weakness was the limited opportunity to signal the significance of the changes which the Centre was in fact initiating. The tentative nature of each advance may also partly explain the inability of the Centre to capitalise on the formal advances which were made at various times, most notably in 1979/80 when a new direction and structure for the advisory committee were negotiated and again in 1986 when the Centre joined the Faculty as a department.

The three division curriculum structure comprised, of the liberal studies, professional studies and social studies divisions, was also informed by the same bureaucratic frame insofar as it extended the organisational logic of the University into the Centre in an attempt to provide a recognisable base for securing resources and at the same time paralleled faculty structures. While the three division curriculum structure was primarily conceived within the “mission orientated” frame in as much as it encapsulated an educational rationale, with the passage of time that origin was significantly obscured and greater reliance was placed on the bureaucratic frame. The history has shown both how this particular curriculum structure outlived its usefulness and how intrinsically weak it was as an organisational mechanism. In retrospect and despite the notion of integrated provision which it incorporated, it can be seen to have lacked sufficient grounding in reality and any real capacity to deliver. As a strategy for securing resources it failed. As a basis for organising the work of the Centre it proved in practice to be a divisive rather than an integrating force. Its survival for nine years probably had more to do with its convenience as an academic fiction and the absence of an alternative theoretical base, than with its own intrinsic merit.

The policy which held the Durban and Pietermaritzburg branches of the Centre together in an organisational whole was also framed by bureaucratic logic although for most of the time this ran counter to general university policy. The analysis of the history of Chapter Four showed how this policy was a fundamental contradiction of the three division policy structure and how it eventually led to what were in effect three separate organisational structures: Durban, Pietermaritzburg and the Centre as a whole. The effect of this policy which bound Durban and Pietermaritzburg together in an organisational whole was profound. It worked against the growth of coherent organisational processes in terms of which the scope and authority of policy formulation could have been lodged more definitely within each of the two Centres, instead of externally in the Advisory Committee or in the conceptually unified whole, which as Chapter Four has shown, was inhabited primarily by the Director and Deputy Director. And yet it is difficult to see how the actual policy could have been varied. The marginal nature of the Centre and the limited resources available to it argued against organisational duplication but the Director’s 1980 proposal in this regard was not accepted.⁶ The other opportunity might have been in 1985 when the Director and Deputy Director recommended the development of the Durban branch of the Centre while holding back on development of Pietermaritzburg with the purpose

⁶ The proposal referred to argued against establishing an office in Pietermaritzburg. It is discussed in Chapter Three under the paragraph heading “*A new Director, the permanent establishment of the new Pietermaritzburg office and a Deputy Director (1980/1981)*”.

of concentrating sufficient “critical mass”. A bolder approach might have suggested either the closure or separation of the Pietermaritzburg branch at that point. But it is unlikely that this would have won support.

The Director because of his position, association with the evolution of the Centre and a natural inclination towards organisational clarity attached more importance to this formal policy frame than did other members in the Centre to the point where he became the single person responsible for the maintenance of this frame. Up to the mid-1980s the University insisted on recognition of the policies and processes deriving from this policy frame. Under these circumstances the Director’s careful observance of this logic won for the Centre the space to pursue the development direction of its choice. But in the late 1980s as the University itself began to lose confidence in its own procedures, the Director’s continued reliance on this policy frame and on its effective reform, became more and more anachronistic and ultimately counter-productive. The frame relies essentially on institutional authority. As the authority of the University was increasingly questioned as part of the wider process of destabilisation and change, the frame lost power to more compelling policy frames. It was further undermined by the protracted process of restructuring in the University. This restructuring process tended to favour *ad hoc* policy development over more formal policy making procedures.

Policy issues within the “mission orientated” frame

An altogether different frame referenced policy back to understandings of the social purpose of the Centre and sought authority for policy from its projected mission. The word “mission” has become a fairly standard organisational term for describing the broad aims of any collective enterprise from the largest corporation to the smallest NGO. In the form of a “mission statement” it generally includes statements of beliefs and values. In this sense it becomes a formal expression of corporate culture. In its more original meaning “mission” is the “act of sending out ... to perform some function”⁷ and in its religious meaning it suggests the performance of some function of a philanthropic nature and most particularly in response to a vocation. This implies a level of commitment born of conviction. As used here the word “mission” refers primarily albeit loosely to the generally understood meaning in relation to organisational purpose but it is also chosen to connote a sense of missionary zeal and the notion of moving out from the University into the community and in this it relies on the more original meaning.⁸

The interpretation of the Centre’s mission is not static but has been shown to change direction and emphasis at various points in the history. Neither is it a single interpretation and this is particularly evident towards the end of the history. In part

⁷ Chamber 20th Century Dictionary, Chambers Ltd, Edinburgh, 1983.

⁸ The missionary analogy was first drawn in caricature form by my colleague John Aitchison in a paper entitled *Gnosis, ritual and faith* (1987). Published in *Breaking the Formal Frame*.

the interpretation of mission can be referenced back to the bureaucratic frame - especially in relation to the early part of the history. But the notion of mission which is inherent in this frame derives from beyond the institution. It derives *inter alia* from notions of social justice, from political commitment, from recognition of educational disadvantage and need, and from the ethos of the broad international movement of adult education.

Whereas organisational policy was essentially held within the “bureaucratic” frame, curriculum policy was primarily framed by this sense of mission. The mission itself was contested and revisited several times through this history most notably, in 1977 when a Teaching and Research Unit was proposed, in 1979 when the three division curriculum was established, in 1981 when Senate endorsed the Centre’s statement of its role and philosophy, in the 1986 constitution of the Centre and in 1988 when the Director’s review of the Centre led to the amalgamation of the Liberal Studies and Community Organisation Programmes. The restructuring process which led to the University decision to review the Centre with which this study ends, points to a further revision of this mission. Each of these moments either established new dimensions or emphases or consolidated recent changes in order to secure recognition for them. Contestation over interpretation of the Centre’s mission was not only between the Centre and the University but also within the Centre, particularly towards the end of this history, as Chapter Four shows.

Through all these various interpretations, two essentially different positions can be discerned. The first can be described as a “classic extension” mission and the second as a “development extension” mission. Neither label is an adequate description of the missions they denote. They are used here as convenient identifiers of the missions which are discussed below. It is also important to note that there are two versions of the “development extension” mission which are not easily distinguished since the difference is one of degree; the basic version is present through most of the history and has a muted quality by contrast to the assertive tone of the radical variant which emerges and rises to a peak in the second half of the 1980s and then begins to recede. This latter parallels the political and moral crisis which culminates in 1990.

The original mission referred to here as “classic extension” was, as the study has shown, cast in the mould of a traditional university extension programme as exemplified by the extra mural programme and summer school of the Department of Adult Education and Extra Mural Studies at the University of Cape Town, and inspired more generally by the United Kingdom university extension movement. This reflected a view of the university that was fundamentally confident of its values and its curriculum. In essence it sought to celebrate its role by extending its provision - albeit on a non formal basis - to a wider community. This understanding of mission was strongly present in the early years and the curriculum throughout the 1970s was its expression. The analysis of the time which is mirrored in the analysis of Chapter Two may be too cynical or anachronistic in attributing to the University a strong public relations motive in establishing the programme. Though an improved public image was undoubtedly a welcome consequence which may well have been foreseen and intended, it was only achievable because it was possible to conceive a mission in

terms which extended and expressed the primary function of the University. This mission was however limited in the particular circumstances of the time. Except for a relatively brief period at the beginning of this history it could not be sustained as the rationale for the programme and even then it was sustained in the restricted and exclusive circumstances born of apartheid. The group with which the University could appropriately celebrate its essential nature was too small and the demands of the wider community were too urgent and compelling to be ignored.

The “classic extension” mission was displaced by a “development extension” mission which was critical of the traditional culture implicit in the university curriculum as a whole and mirrored in the “classic extension” mission,⁹ seeing it as alienating and inaccessible to all but a small privileged white group. This new vision of extension sought to make universities more accessible and relevant by harnessing university resources to the cause of social change. Its essence is contained in the concepts of social development and social transformation. In curriculum terms the focus was on alternative forms of social and economic development and on alternative education. But rather than extending and celebrating the essential nature of the University, expressions of this mission mediated university expertise in a way which could be immediately appropriated to the cause. In its strongest form - most evident in the late 1980s - the “development extension” mission sought to construct universities as change agents and as locations for (mainly) white intellectuals in the “struggle” against apartheid. The cause in this radical version was strongly identified with empowerment and political liberation. This essentially describes a liberal / radical continuum which moves from development to reconstruction. In both variants of the “development extension” mission, it is the insistence on a shorter, more direct loop between theory and practice which distinguishes it most sharply from the “classical extension” tradition.

This “development” interpretation of mission is present very early in the Centre’s history in muted form, as evidenced by the Centre’s involvement with bridging programmes in Durban, which began in 1974. The notion of a Teaching and Research Unit expressed a similar impulse to engage with tasks which would not normally be the province of a university; the 1979 three division proposal encapsulated this as curriculum policy; and the curriculum experimentation of the early 1980s expresses attempts to put this into practice. But the most explicit and focussed expression is the introduction of the Community Organisation Project and later the Adult Basic Education Project. The diploma course for adult educators is also driven in part by this development understanding of mission but at the same time appeals to a different policy frame which will be discussed below.

⁹ This assertion is somewhat paradoxical since the original notion of University extension which I have coded here as “classic” was the very antithesis of an elitist understanding of University. The university extension movement in origin was driven by an understanding of the need to take the University to ordinary people “beyond the walls”. The explanation of this apparent paradox lies in the way in which university extension had come to be interpreted and practised as exemplified by the description of its form at the University of Natal in the 1970s. It is further explained as a criticism not of university extension *per se* but as a more general criticism of the university curriculum as a whole.

All these initiatives despite their focus on needs beyond the traditional scope of a university, were nevertheless either proposed as an appropriate university response – as in the case of the Teaching and Research Unit and the Diploma – or understood as justified by the special historical circumstances. But from 1985, as the political situation became more and more violent and repressive, there was less and less concern in the Centre for maintaining a function which accorded with the Centre’s traditional extension mission or even with a role appropriate to a university agency, and a far greater reliance on justification by reference to the external circumstances. This is evident for example in some of the courses offered through the Community Organisation Programme, through the strong identification of the ABE programme with the NGO sector and through some of the more political aspects of the Violence Monitoring Project. Chapter Four indicated the related tendency within the Centre which understood it as being more like an NGO than a university department¹⁰ and subject to the calls and accountability of an NGO. In the context this called for the taking of sides in “the struggle”, through alignment with its various manifestations such as the Mass Democratic Movement and the United Democratic Front. Although the Centre stopped short of formal affiliation, it projected an image of itself and was widely understood and accepted as an aligned organisation rather than a university department. In this the Centre relied on a radical version of the “development extension” mission.

The Director’s response, beginning in 1988, to attempt to pull the Centre back towards its university base could not be achieved within this “mission orientated” policy frame although this was clearly attempted in the move in Durban to amalgamate the Liberal Studies and Community Organisation programmes. The failure of this attempt can be attributed in part to the relative weakness within the context of the time, of the “classic extension” interpretation of mission as compared to the “developmental extension” mission. There was an historical claim to the original “classic extension” mission but its expression through the extra mural programme lacked the prestige and the necessary depth of tradition to which an appeal might otherwise have been made; although the Centre had a long record of involvement in extra mural provision, the 1980 decision to compensate for the bias in its programme by deliberately concentrating its resources on the “development extension” mission, had weakened the quality of its extra mural programme.¹¹ Moreover the reassertion of this original mission which is implicit in the amalgamation of the two programmes referred to above was out of step with the

¹⁰ Some measure of the extent of this can be gauged from the fact that views were expressed to the effect that the Centre might leave the University and operate independently. Although this was never seriously considered, the fact that it could be contemplated at all is an indicator of the slight significance attached to the university base as compared to the mission of the Centre. It also reflected disillusionment with the support given by the University to the work of the Centre.

¹¹ This is reflected in the number of skills orientated fine arts and language courses and the corresponding decrease in more intellectually inquiring extension courses. It is also reflected in the evaluative comment which noted “the absence of a university mind” from this programme.

context. Although the original imbalance in the Centre's work may, in the Director's view, have been over-corrected, this could not be successfully asserted at a time of challenge to the *status quo*.

The Director's reassertion of the "classic extension" mission was also without support within the University¹² itself. The University continued to understand a moral / political purpose for the Centre and the substitution of a "development extension" role as opposed to the original "classic extension" role did not require any change in this understanding; rather it could be welcomed as an accommodation by the Centre to the changed context. The original mission served a public relations function by presenting its then significant white professional constituency with a programme which gave access to the best which the University had to offer; the development mission served a similar public relations function by demonstrating to a different constituency its involvement and identification with the needs of an emerging black leadership class which was increasingly demonstrating its commitment and ability to secure political power.

The Director's concern that the Centre's work should be congruent with a universally recognised university role and logically coherent was therefore increasingly his own rather than a shared concern. Different interpretations of an appropriate university role, particularly in relation to changing circumstances, may have lain beneath the difference of importance which was attached to this concern but these different interpretations were never articulated nor was debate joined. More probably it was underpinned by different judgements of expediency and principle and different levels of political commitment. In essence though, the Director's attempt to discover a logic which would hold together in a creative balance the disparate missions with their attendant activities, which were emerging within the Centre, was a search for an impossible synthesis. The compromise inherent in the three division curriculum structure concealed a basic fallacy; it suggested the possibility of holding together in a single organisational frame a series of missions which it presented as a spectrum, whereas these missions were increasingly oppositional. The "development extension" mission introduced in its muted form in 1980 to supplement the "classic extension" mission was in reality alternative rather than complementary.

Nor was there much support to be found for the Director's concerns within the bureaucratic policy framework discussed earlier, though this too was brought strongly into play through the various attempts to get the University to take seriously the need to restructure the Centre. This policy frame was undermined towards the end of the 1980s by the weakening of this frame throughout the University as discussed above and in Chapter 4.

¹² University here, and elsewhere where policy is concerned, refers to that part of the University which was directly concerned with Centre Policy. In essence this was the view of the Executive which was transmitted through the Advisory Committee and most particularly through its Chairman who was himself - as one of the Vice Principals - part of the Executive.

The “academic” or “professional” policy frame

The Director can ultimately be seen to use a third policy frame to draw the Centre back towards its university base. This could be described as an “academic or professional” policy frame. The characterisation conflates what might more strictly be understood as two separate policy frames; the academic frame deriving authority from an academic discipline and the professional frame deriving authority from its field of professional practice. Since in the field of adult education both sources of authority are particularly weak and since academic work largely concerns professional practice, they are considered together in this analysis.

The frame was first introduced in 1977 through the proposition of a Teaching and Research Unit. Although this proposal was not developed, it was a significant intervention insofar as it raised and gained a considerable degree of acceptance for an academic and teacher-training role for the Centre. It took a further 7 years before the Centre was able to introduce its diploma course for adult educators, but this and subsequent teaching programmes were made possible by the earlier insertion of this academic frame. Prior to 1977, this frame is completely absent.

The importance which the Centre attached to this academic policy frame was related to its marginal status as a department with a mission quite distinct from that of mainstream departments. Its mission and *modus operandi* set it apart from traditional academic departments but it also distinguished it from the University administration. The focus of the Centre’s work beyond the University’s walls and its essentially non formal mode of delivery located it at the periphery of the institution. This marginality extended to the nature of the subject itself as a largely unrecognised field of study. The demonstration of a mainstream academic function – initially through the introduction of the diploma – enabled the assertion of this academic policy frame and the Centre can be seen to use it effectively to gain entry to the Faculty in 1986.

The later assertion of this frame in response to the organisational disintegration and political-NGO-orientated involvement, evident in the Centre in the second half of the 1980s, is apparent in the move to reconstruct the Community Organisation Project. This made possible a change of curriculum which replaced the teaching of organisational skills with the teaching of adult education while maintaining an orientation to an NGO context. Unlike the attempt to revitalise the Liberal Studies programme which failed because it was out of step with the times, this succeeded because it coincided in 1990 with a move within the NGO sector which placed strong emphasis on training. The introduction of the B.Ed course in adult education also strengthened the authority of this policy frame by increasing the weight of formal teaching and by bringing the Centre into closer contact with the Faculty of Education and its processes.

Policy frames in present perspective

The foregoing analysis has portrayed a policy history which in the early stages is dominated by a strong bureaucratic policy frame which underpins an uncontested mission frame. This mission understands a “classic extension” role for the Centre

celebrating the essential nature of a university. During the course of the history the interpretation of mission within the mission-orientated frame shifts decisively to a transformational role (“development extension”) which replaces a celebratory function with one which essentially mediates the resources of the university to the representatives of a disempowered community. At the same time the bureaucratic frame can be seen to be weakening to a point towards the end of the history where it is in a state of near collapse. A third policy frame, referred to as an academic/professional frame is introduced near the middle of the history and steadily gains ground. The ascendancy of this policy frame is becoming readily apparent by the end of the study. As adult education moves on to the national political agenda during the four years since the end of this study, it appears to finally mesh with the mission orientated frame in that adult educator education/training becomes the Centre’s mission.

At the beginning of this chapter it was proposed that the history of the Centre reveals a series of changes, each prompted by the need to resolve a problem which confronted it at the time. The succeeding analysis was then undertaken with the promise that it would reveal a deeper understanding of the problem driving the current change reflected in the Senate minute recorded at the beginning of this chapter. It is now possible to attempt this explanation. In undertaking this task the intention is to employ and project the understandings developed through this study to “read” the present position. Knowledge of events subsequent to this study complicates this task but the argument developed relies on the understandings developed through the study.

Although the logic of each policy frame is separate and internally referenced, the frames cross each other in ways which have significance for the evolution of policy within the Centre. Implicit in the previous analysis which saw the academic frame as helping to secure a less marginal institutional position for the Centre, is an overlap between the academic and bureaucratic frames. More significantly the directions indicated by the academic frame on the one hand, and the mission frame on the other, can be seen at different points to be alternatively convergent, divergent and ultimately to converge. It would, for example, be a mistake to understand the diploma as an innovation entirely within the academic frame; it was very much an expression of policy within the more muted interpretation of the “development extension” mission. The introduction of professional training for adult educators was understood at the time as the most appropriate way of working towards the aims implicit in the development interpretation of the extension mission. In the second half of the 1980s as the more extreme version of the “development extension” mission is asserted and the Centre begins to understand itself as more like an NGO than an academic department, the goals implicit in the academic and mission frames can be seen to diverge sharply. At the point at which the Centre begins to align itself politically, the area of coincidence between the mission and academic policy frames is substantially reduced. At this point the bureaucratic frame is also at odds with the mission frame but is too weakened to influence policy.

As the political context changed and the end of “the struggle” came into sight, the sector of civil society with which the Centre was most concerned through its “development extension” mission began to shift its focus from resistance towards development. In particular amongst NGOs, CBOs¹³ and trade unions, the notion of “training trainers” moved on to the stage. The vanguard of this change could be discerned in the late 1980s and it was given further impetus through the policy development work of the early 1990s which gave prominence to a major adult education function in the new South Africa.

Within the Centre, this change prompted a revision of the form of the “development extension” mission. It enabled a reversion from the radical expression of “development extension” which involved political alignment and organisational support to a more traditional university role. This new role placed the “training” of adult educators at the core of the Centre’s mission and found support for this in the goals understood through the “academic” frame. This intersection of the mission and academic frames is not however as complete as it might first appear. The new role contained in the 1995 change envisages a continuing strong outreach role in non formal mode as evidenced by the statement of mission quoted at the beginning of this chapter. This role owes more to the mission frame *per se* than to the academic policy frame and moreover to a particular understanding of mission. The policy options within this frame set an exclusively “development extension” mission against the historical interpretation which sought a synthesis of the “classic” and “development” understandings of mission. This historical interpretation had support within the bureaucratic frame in terms of the initial and continuing mandate to the Centre for the University. The 1995 change separates the “classic extension” and “development extension” missions grouping the latter together with an academic function and seemingly consigning the former to an administrative function within the Innovation Centre.¹⁴

What this analysis suggests is that the 1995 restructuring of the Centre is directed towards resolving dissonances between the various policy frames and of consolidating the “development extension” mission. While the analysis here has focussed on the academic and mission policy frames, the change also addresses dissonances with the bureaucratic frame insofar as it formally revises the Centre’s mandate and finally removes its original function. The contradictions within the bureaucratic frame in relation to Durban and Pietermaritzburg were also part of the problem which precipitated this change but the process has been so protracted that this part of the problem had already been resolved in 1991 when the two Centres separated.

¹³ Community Based Organisations

¹⁴ The uncertainty which still surrounds the final proposal prevents a more definite statement. The intention to lodge the Extra Mural programme within the Innovation Centre seems uncertain and there is still an intention to hold the two functions together through various structural mechanisms. There is a further anomaly in that the mission of the Innovation Centre itself is clearly an expression of “development extension”.

It is debatable as to whether or not through this process the academic frame finally prevails. This frame brings to the enterprise significant “academic capital” which secures for the Centre a position within the field from which it can contribute to an elaboration of the “development extension” mission. But the commitment to the “development extension” mission within the Centre is such that it is more likely that the academic frame is, by this process, pressed into service to drive forward the “development extension” mission. This mission has been understood within the Centre as the vanguard of curriculum change within the University itself. If this is an accurate perception then it is not so much a question of the academic frame prevailing but rather a re-definition of the mission of the University and this implies that the academic frame is itself in the process of being shifted. Within the context of the University of Natal where the restructuring process referred to in Chapter Four has led to a transformation process that includes initiatives which envisage radical reform of the University curriculum, this is the present possibility. Whether or not this new direction will develop into what amounts to at least a partial redefinition of the meaning of “university” or whether it will falter cannot be judged within the scope of this study.

The thesis that the restructuring of the Centre is fundamentally concerned with contestation between, and realignment of, the policy frames is the final conclusion of this study. It offers the understanding that the problem seeking resolution through this most recent change is not simply the reconciliation of different options within policy frames but that it is more essentially an attempt to resolve the policy frames which can be regarded as significant. Clearly the bureaucratic frame recedes as a frame of influence. At a time of change this is not surprising - indeed its relative weakness may be a necessary condition of fundamental institutional change. Such change would be less easily accomplished in the face of a strongly asserted bureaucratic policy frame. It is reasonable to expect however, that this frame will re-emerge as the situation stabilises. The discussion of the relative strengths of the “academic” and “mission” frames has shown that the “mission” frame appears to dominate the “academic” frame in this restructuring moment while relying quite heavily on credibility borrowed from this “academic” frame.

Clearly there are other factors contributing to the definition of the problem around which the restructuring of the Centre is focussed. Notable among these are the process of policy development and the interplay between the key actors. Exploration of these factors would require different kinds of enquiry to that which has driven this present study which now ends with the focus on the frames through which policy has been negotiated.

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