

AN EVALUATION OF THE CURRICULUM

FOR

SENIOR PRIMARY STUDENTS

AT

A COLLEGE OF EDUCATION.

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**Master of Education**

in the

**Department of Education**

**University of Natal**

Durban

1991

## ABSTRACT

The curriculum for Senior Primary students at a college of education was selected for study as it is a curriculum that seems to be more problematic than other curricula at the college. The study sought to gather a range of evidence from lecturers and students and about the issues that they identified as being of concern and about the learning milieu. The evaluation aimed to engage students and lecturers in a process of critical reflection on the assumptions and values which underpin practice at the college.

The overarching research design was multiple operationalism located within a naturalistic paradigm. Interviews were used to generate critical issues from participants. Further interviews, questionnaires and documentary analysis provided thick descriptions of the critical issues. The ways in which the position of the evaluator as a member of the management team influenced the choice of methods and role as evaluator are discussed and the problem of incompatibility between the ethos of the college and the assumptions which support democratic evaluation is considered .

In discussing the strengths and limitations of the Senior Primary course, the dichotomy between general and vocational education for teachers is explored and the problematic nature of a knowledge base for teachers is considered. Curricular principles of balance, relevance and cohesion are related to the college curriculum. In considering the obstacles to curriculum change at the college, institutional values of privacy, territory and hierarchy are discussed. Throughout the study an attempt is made to reveal the different

perceptions of participants and the many views of reality on which these perceptions are based.

The evaluation report concludes by posing key questions which highlight the essential issues which need to be addressed by the college. These are the need to achieve a shared sense of purpose about education for the Senior Primary phase, to make students more responsible partners in the teaching and learning relationship, to forge closer links with primary schools, to move away from subject-centricity and a transmission mode of teaching and to empower lecturers to bring about the changes that they feel are necessary.

### Declaration of Originality.

This thesis represents original work by the author. Contributions from other sources are acknowledged below and in the text.

### Acknowledgments.

I acknowledge, most gratefully, the participation of the students and staff of the college of education. Their cooperation and contributions made this evaluation possible.

I extend particular thanks to my colleagues who took on additional responsibilities and work while I was on study leave. I appreciate the period of study leave granted to me by the Natal Education Department.

I am indebted to Mr Jack Todd for his support and for his assistance with the generation of the figures in the text. I thank Mr Mike Graham-Jolly for his generous guidance and thorough supervision.

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## Chapter One.

## A College ; It's People and Practice.

The focus of this study was an evaluation of the curriculum for teacher training for the Senior Primary phase at a college of education. Curriculum evaluation is an integral part of the process of curriculum development. It is concerned with the description of existing practice with a view to promoting understanding for decision making and judgement. Up to the present time, curriculum development at the college has been incremental and largely in response to the needs of the employing authority and to a lesser extent in response to the needs of schools and college students. This rather technical addition of courses, subjects or areas of knowledge has, arguably been adequate for a college within an 'own affairs' education system during times of little perceptible change. Under the influence of this system of education, values implicit in particular approaches to education have been adopted by the college and regarded as non-problematic . With the imminent changes in primary education and teacher education in South Africa, the college will have to reconsider its' position and practice. This evaluation aimed to provide an opportunity for participants to reflect critically on the models and values upon which the Senior Primary curriculum is premised.

The college also offers courses for junior primary and secondary teachers. Each course seems to have an identity rooted in the character of the phase of education it serves, the Junior Primary Course being child - centred and the Secondary courses being subject - centred.

The Senior Primary Course lies somewhere in - between. It spans the transition from child centricity to subject centricity. The course exhibits tensions that are not as problematic in the other courses. Course structure, content and organisation are frequent sources of conflict between students, lecturers, department heads and members of the management team. Each party has different expectations and criteria of worth for the course. There appear to be contrasting notions of relevance and of what should be emphasised in the curriculum. This diversity of opinion seems to have been at the expense of course coherence and any shared sense of purpose in the presentation of the course. The resulting tensions seem to have given rise to a phenomenon in some senior students known as 'fourth year-itis'. Its symptoms are apathy, lack of motivation, frustration and resentment. These feelings have a negative effect on the relationship between lecturers and students. It is common knowledge at the college that Senior Primary students are more prone to 'fourth year - itis' than students on other courses.

This evaluation aimed to identify and foster a shared understanding of the issues and concerns related to the tensions apparent within the Senior Primary Curriculum. The insight gained would inform decisions about curriculum change and contribute to curriculum development. The study also sought to involve participants directly in a process of evaluation by encouraging them to reflect critically on the curriculum. It aimed to make lecturers aware that many of the issues in teacher education that they take as given, are problematic. It must be stressed that the main emphasis of the study was

the promotion of understanding and as such would be of an evocative nature, exploring issues and posing questions rather than attempting to prescribe neat solutions.

Teacher education is problematic at many levels. This evaluation sought to research the tensions in teacher education, noted in the literature, within a particular context at a college of education [ de Landsheere, 1989; Judge, 1989; Lomax, 1976; Popkewitz, 1987; Reynolds, 1989; Schneider 1987; Tamir, 1989; Wiebe, 1967]

Teicher [1989] describes the tension that exists between the goals of higher education in preparing students for research and the creation and reproduction of knowledge and the goal of preparing students for an occupation. The latter goal frequently conflicts with broader institutional aims, such as personal enrichment and non-utilitarian thinking. This conflict may lead to the obscuring of occupational goals. Judge [1989] highlights the tension that exists in teacher education between the aim to produce efficient and compliant teacher workers and the ideal that teachers should be educated to have independence of mind and creativity. Lomax [1976] refers to this as the tension between efficiency and emancipation. The notion of preparation for a vocation is sometimes interpreted narrowly as the most efficient way to achieve given ends and would not promote the personal enrichment and non-utilitarian thinking described by Teicher . In South Africa, teacher education is commonly viewed narrowly as promoting competencies to enable teachers to do the job of teaching [ de Landsheere, 1989]. Popkewitz [ 1987] refers to this narrow view as instrumental reason.

A fundamental tension in teacher education is the conflict between a broad, general education to promote abilities of creativity, flexibility and critical reflection and a more competency-based approach to promote the ability to do the job .

The debate about the nature of a knowledge base for teachers is also a source of tension. This contentious issue has attracted much attention in the literature. [Judge, 1989; Popkewitz, 1987; Reynolds, 1989; Schneider, 1987; Tamir, 1989; Wiebe, 1967]. Discussion on improvement of teaching and upgrading the professional status of teachers invariably focuses on teachers' knowledge. The Carnegie Commission [1986] views teachers as :

people whose knowledge is wide-ranging and whose understanding runs deep....Teachers will not come to school knowing all that they have to know, but knowing how to figure out what they need to know, where to get it and how to make others make meaning out of it.

[25]

Shulman and Sykes [1986] define the knowledge base of teaching as :

that body of understanding and skill, of disposition and values, of character and performance that together underlie the capacity to teach.

[5]

These statements are not supported by any specific indication of the nature of the knowledge base upon which such views are based. The uncertainty that characterises this fundamental aspect contributes to the tensions within teacher education in general and at the college.

At the outset, it is necessary to declare the broad view of curriculum which underpins this evaluation. A definition of curriculum usually conceals more than it reveals. Curriculum is frequently defined as the planned learning experiences of pupils [ Tunmer, 1981]. This oversimplification ignores the important distinction between the actual and the intended curriculum. It overlooks the hidden curriculum which may be more influential than the planned curriculum. A more useful approach is perhaps to attempt to describe ones' notion of curriculum. Kelly [1989] describes curriculum as embracing the following dimensions : the intentions of the planners, the procedures for adopting the implementation of those intentions, the actual experiences of students resulting from teachers attempts to carry out the planners' intentions and the hidden learning that occurs as a by product of the organisation of the curriculum and the school. Taylor and Richards [ 1985] contribute to this broad view in their acknowledgment of the relationship between curriculum and societal views of education. They describe curricula as vehicles for expressing the fundamental values enshrined in the ends of the educational enterprise. In this report, curriculum is

interpreted in the broadest sense and the word 'course' will be used to refer to the planned learning activities for the students.

By and large, a broad view of curriculum is not shared by most educationists in South Africa. The prevailing view is one of curriculum as product and of curriculum development as following an objectives model. The tension in theory between democratic, naturalistic and technological, positivistic paradigms is also manifested in the field of curriculum evaluation. The technicist view sees evaluation as measuring the extent to which objectives have been achieved. The evaluator, who is assumed to be neutral and value free, is concerned with explaining and predicting learning outcomes rather than understanding them. The alternative view adopted in this evaluation is more concerned with understanding, description and interpretation. The evaluator acknowledges her value positions and seeks to be a broker promoting understanding amongst stakeholders who may hold different views.

Most of the literature published locally seems to fall into the technocratic, positivistic paradigm and was not useful to this study [Basson, 1990; Botes et al 1990; Fransman, 1991; Glencross and Fridjhon, 1990; Marais 1990; Smith and de Villiers, 1990; and Swanepoel, 1990]. Studies that do appear to be relevant are still in progress, thus there is a noticeable lack of references to local studies in this thesis.

### The Context Of The Study.

#### Background Information About The College and its People.

The college is housed in large, modern buildings on a 34 hectare campus. The landscaped gardens with fountains and ponds, paved walkways and imposing architectural style of the buildings create the impression of a well provisioned institution. This is echoed by the immaculately maintained sports fields, tennis courts and swimming pool surrounding the college. The interior finishes are of good quality and have worn well. The buildings do not look as though they have used by students for 13 years. There is a noticeable lack of graffiti. The absence of litter and shining floors suggest a large maintenance staff. Unlike many other colleges of education in Natal, this one has its own library and a well equipped sports complex. In the residences, students have access to television lounges, kitchenette and laundry facilities. Most students have single rooms. A large students' union provides recreational facilities such as a billiard room, social club, health club equipment and a large indoor venue for balls and discotheques. The college facilities are enjoyed by 400 pre-service students and 70 members of academic staff. Outside bodies make extensive use of the college facilities. In comparison with most other colleges of education in Natal, this one is particularly well provisioned.

The college is funded by the Natal Education Department [ N.E.D. ] and administered by a college council. Both the University of Natal and the N.E.D. are represented on the council. The committee concerned with the appointment of lecturers to and promotions is made up of representatives from the university, the N.E.D. and the college. The relationship between the college and the N.E.D. is a precarious one. In line with the authoritarian , bureaucratic system of education in the country, the N.E.D. 'controls' the college. In many ways the relationship is a 'topdown one'. In other ways, however, the superintendent responsible for colleges of education seeks the recommendation or advice of the rector of the college and acts accordingly. Such consultation stems more from a sound working relationship and respect between the people involved than a departmental policy of consultation. The superintendent has been known to support the college in conflicts even when the college's view does not correspond with that of the department. Basically, however, the N.E.D.'s role is that of an employing authority which constrains the autonomy of the college.

The student body at the college is largely 'white'. Until recently, the admission of students to the college has been the site of an ongoing battle between the college and the department. It represents a clash of ideologies . The N.E.D. has applied the official ' own affairs' education policy of the government without compromise and has steadfastly refused to allow the admission of any students who are not classified as 'white'. Until very recently, this ban was also applied to the admission of qualified teachers to diplomas in further education. Filling the places

available on undersubscribed courses would have made them more viable economically and more rewarding to the lecturers and students. A change in attitude to the admission of all races to further diplomas came about at the same time as the 'opening' of schools. The change of attitude might also have been influenced by the financial constraints placed upon the N.E.D. One of the further diplomas was discontinued by the department as they did not consider there to be a need for general science teachers within their department. The college was 'permitted' to raise funds and offer the course independently. Admission of students to a degree course offered by the college in conjunction with a university is open as it is not under the control of the department. The department was not able, however, to obtain the governments 'permission for students of other race groups to stay in the college residences. The rector of the college exerted every effort to accommodate these students on the campus. The minister of national education was approached directly but to no avail. Despite extraordinarily difficult circumstances, these negotiations were always conducted with impeccable diplomacy and tact. The college's well-being was never compromised by procedures that were not thoroughly correct. The eventual success of these efforts was well deserved but the groundswell for change in the country probably also influenced the positive outcome. The college enjoyed the active support of the university in these negotiations. On the issue of an open admission policy the colleges' position is closer to that of the university than the N.E.D. The relationship with the university has had its own tensions over courses offered jointly by the two institutions and in the negotiation of accreditation for

college courses. In these negotiations, representatives of the college often felt that they are regarded as the 'poor relations' from an institution of lower academic status. The relationship with the university cannot be regarded as a partnership in the true sense of the word.

The government's process of rationalisation in education has had a marked effect on the college. The rationale for the process was that fewer teachers are needed as the enrollment of 'white' pupils in schools is falling. A vicious cycle was set up whereby the department limited the intake of students to the college and then declared the college overstaffed. For years college staff had to live with the prospect of closure of the college [at worst] or the threat of some people losing their jobs [at best]. This insecurity and incredulity at a situation in which colleges are being closed and teachers are losing their jobs in a country that is desperately short of teachers, depressed morale. During the course of the evaluation, the minister announced that the college would not be closed but this did not seem to have much effect in raising morale. The fact that the college could have been closed by the stroke of a pen perhaps best illustrates the precarious autonomy 'enjoyed' by the college.

The internal structure and organisation of the college are similar to those of schools. The hierarchical structure within the college is illustrated in Figure 1.

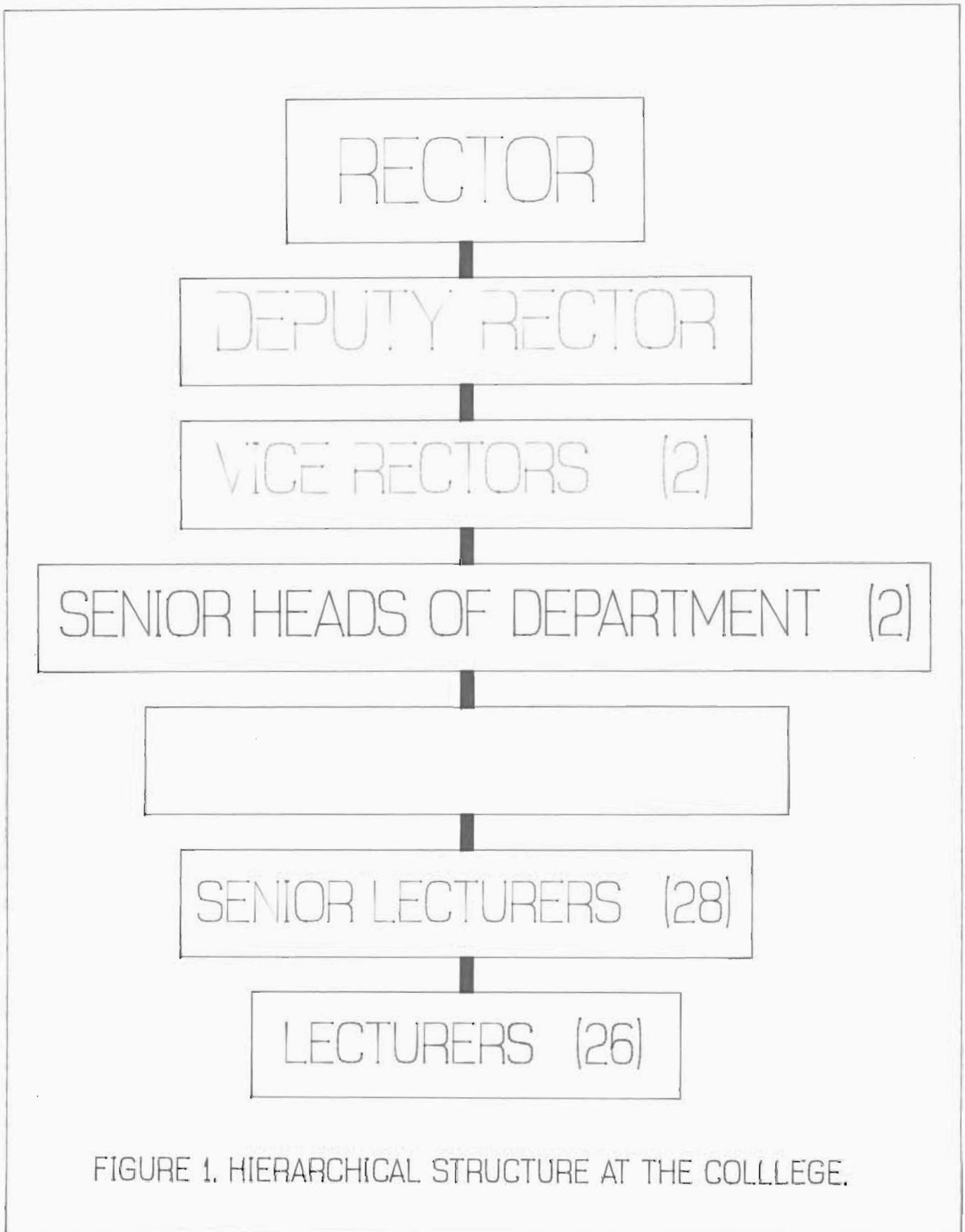


FIGURE 1. HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE AT THE COLLEGE.

The management team of the college consists of the rector, deputy rector, vice rectors and senior heads of department and meets formally on a regular basis once every two or three weeks. Members of the management team do not meet informally over tea or lunch. One senior head of department is female, the other members are male. The management team functions in much the same way as the management teams of schools and management bodies at the N.E.D. Their role is more one of traditional management than facilitation of change.

The college is organised around subject departments, most with a head of department. The college is large enough for subject departments to have their own lecture venues and office areas. Lecturers have their own offices and telephones. Heads of department have larger offices than other lecturers. All lecturers have access to a central administrative office for typing services. Some subjects with large practical components have technical assistants.

There are some committees that function inter-departmentally. Examples are the committees responsible for practice teaching, curriculum studies and the fourth year project. Curriculum studies is included in the course to give students an experience of primary methodology in all the subjects that they will be required to teach in the schools. The course is planned by groups of lecturers from different subject departments.

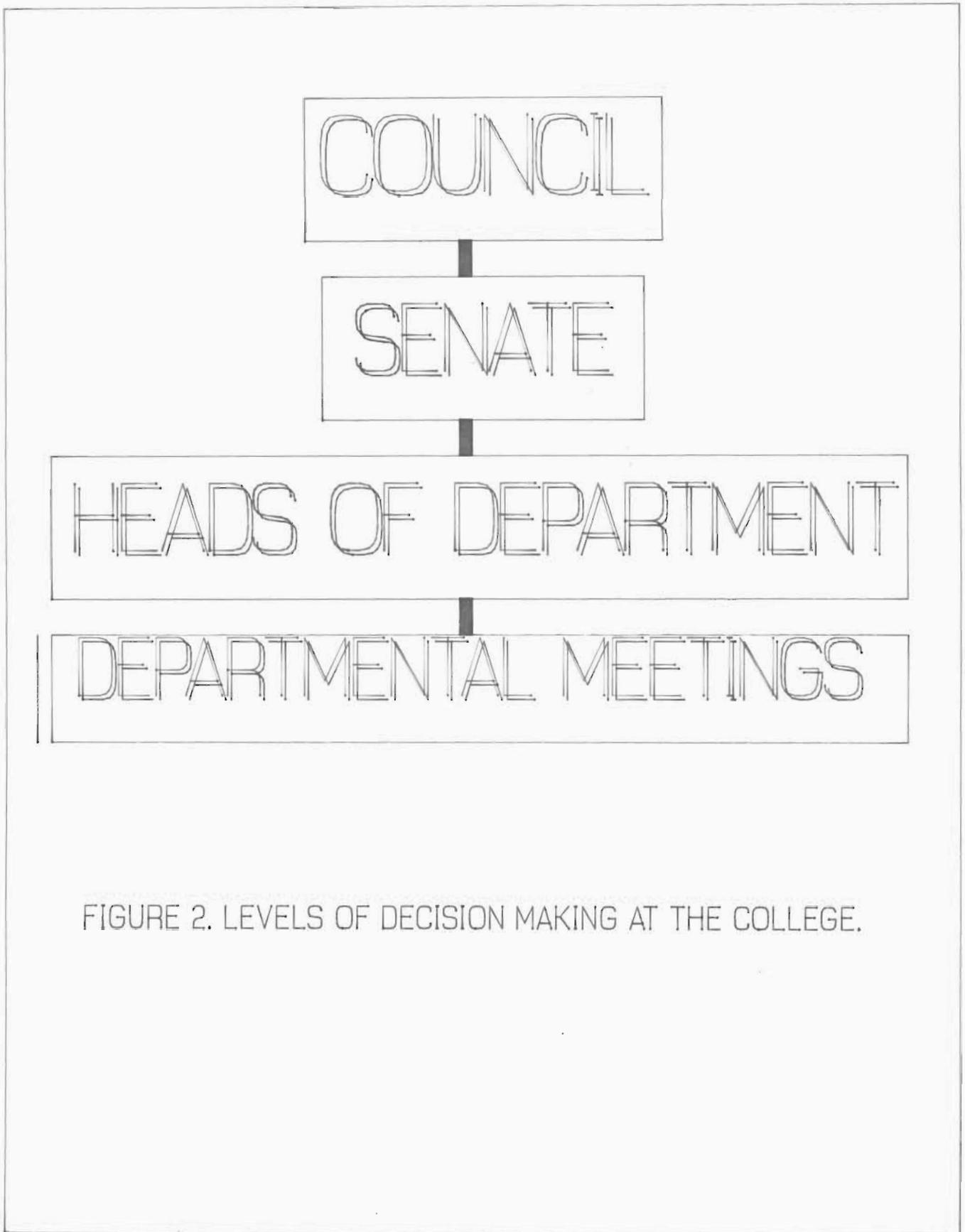


FIGURE 2. LEVELS OF DECISION MAKING AT THE COLLEGE.

I am responsible for chairing these meetings and find that many lecturers have difficulty in conceptualising the role of their subject as part of primary education. They also have difficulty in planning for integrated learning experiences such as theme work, projects, language across the curriculum and field work. Some subject departments are not prepared to participate in any form of integration and run separate courses within curriculum studies.

The decision-making structure in the college is illustrated in Figure 2.

Decisions about subject issues and policy are taken at departmental meetings chaired by heads of department. Decisions about changes in exam requirements or suggestions about college policy and procedures are referred to the heads of department meeting and in certain cases to the senate and college council. Proposals from bodies such as the Practice Teaching Committee, the College Conference Committee and the Civil Protection Committee are discussed at the heads of department meeting. Minutes from all of these meetings are submitted to the rector. With the exception of departmental meetings, meetings are formal and are held in the board room with a minuting secretary in attendance. In most cases, first names are not used unless there is an interlude of informal discussion.

In practice, this decision making procedure operates in such a way that informal, exploratory discussion takes place at subject department meetings but this is usually about matters related to the presentation of the subject courses.

General college and policy issues are referred to departmental meetings for discussion but this discussion does not reflect the diversity of opinion that would arise at a heads of department meeting. The agendas for heads of department meetings are often long and filled with business items. It is rare that curriculum issues are discussed at length in a way that promotes shared understanding. This situation is not peculiar to the college. Ruddock [ 1986 ] notes that :

' --- there are few institutional conventions that support time spent exploring the meanings that underpin practice.'

[ 107 ]

Towards the end of the year in which the study was undertaken, an agreement was signed which made possible the admission to the college of 200 Kwa Zulu students . A series of forums for discussion amongst all members of staff was set up to prepare for the new intake. It is significant that opportunities for discussion and reflection had to be created. They do not arise in the normal college system of decision making.

The senate membership comprises all heads of department, two senior lecturers elected by the staff, the management team of the college, representatives from the university and from the N.E.D. The council is ultimately responsible for college policy. It consists of the rector, deputy rector, two elected members of senate, and representatives from the university, department, local municipality, regional teachers' society,

and Department of National Education. A selection committee representing the college, N.E.D. and the university make recommendations to the N.E.D. about appointments and promotions. The majority of lecturers are appointed to the college on the basis of a degree. This limits the selection of potential lecturers to high school teachers in spite of the fact that lecturers are likely to be required to lecture students who will teach in the primary school. There are some exceptions and a few lecturers have had primary school experience. [ Of the 53 lecturers who participated in this evaluation, only 10 had 2 or more years of primary experience.]

Student representation on college committees is a recent innovation. There is student representation on the practice teaching committee, the college conference committee and the student-staff liaison committee. Meetings of the latter committee are formal and provide an opportunity for discussion between students and staff. There is no student representation at the senate. The students elect a student representative committee which manages the student clubs and acts as a liaison between the student body and the administration. Each student residence elects a house committee which liaises with the wardens of the residence and decides on disciplinary procedures for students who break rules. Major disciplinary transgressions are referred to the management team or the disciplinary committee.

Students are selected for admission to the college on the basis of matric results and recommendations from schools. A few students are interviewed. There are more applicants than

places available. In the primary courses there are roughly 4 applicants for each place. Some students re-write the senior certificate exam to improve their symbols and chance of gaining admission to the college. The majority of students are female. The college is required [by the N.E.D.] to admit a proportion of male students and these generally have poorer matric results than the female students. Many students own cars and can afford to patronise the social club and college cafeteria. Some spend their long vacations overseas. Most students come from homes that are financially secure. A number of students have part time jobs. As a group, the students are probably more homogeneous than other students at tertiary institutions. 'Radical' college students are not as radical as university students. Their dress and behaviour are more conservative. College students do not organise protest meetings or marches. Very few are politicised and most are apolitical.

All members of the college are required to attend formal assembly led by the rector. Academic dress is worn on this occasion and a prayer and hymn are part of the proceedings. The college choir participates in the assembly. Indifferent student attendance at formal assembly has, at times, posed a problem. On one occasion, a register was taken at formal assembly in response to poor attendance. This angered the students who felt that they were being treated like school children in being punished by having notes placed on their files. The student body also holds less formal meetings to promote communication between students and the S.R.C.. Attendance at student body meetings has also posed a problem for the S.R.C.

The lecturing staff is made up largely of graduate teachers with high school experience. New lecturers at the college frequently comment favourably on the opportunity to become immersed in their subjects and the freedom from classroom administration and sport coaching. Lecturers are not required to remain at the college in the afternoons if they do not have lectures. The only specified dress requirement is that male lecturers wear ties. An unwritten code of dress results in all lecturers dressing formally. If a lecturer were to wear jeans and a teeshirt it would be assumed that they were about to go on a field trip. Lecturers are required to attend formal assembly and staff meetings in the staff-room at tea-break twice a week. At these meetings announcements are made by the rector and any other members of staff who wish to do so.

The staff-room is a large, carpeted room shared by all lecturers. It is not used as a common room by the administrative or technical staff. Students rarely enter the staff-room. They wait at the door while lecturers are called. The rector does not take tea in the staff-room. With a few exceptions, seating in the staff-room tends to be in subject department groups. These group positions are fixed but people do not have their 'own' chairs. Some lecturers have established tea stations elsewhere and do not always use the staff-room. Limited undercover parking is available and is occupied by the management team, heads of department and lecturers selected according to criteria of seniority.

These descriptions have attempted to set the scene and establish the context in which the participants work. Two imaginary visitors to the college might come away with very different impressions after observing the same college activities. One visitor might see the college as an extremely well run, efficient institution where things usually go right. This visitor might envy the people associated with a well organised , well provisioned and effectively managed college. The other visitor might view the college in a different way. They might miss the diversity and complexity typical of other tertiary institutions. They might find the conservativeness and conformity of the students monotonous.. They might miss the dynamism of radical students, graffiti, crowded student noticeboards and loud music in student recreation areas . The tendency of most lecturers to avoid heated exchange at meetings might be viewed as uninteresting. The compliance with hierarchical procedures might be seen as passive. The existence of clearly defined , departmental procedures and regulations might be interpreted as stifling. This visitor might not envy people associated with the college.

To complete the picture, a description of the evaluator is required. Most of my time at the college has been as a lecturer and head of the biology department. With the exception of a higher education diploma, my qualifications are in the field of science. I have always been interested in curriculum development and involved in curriculum innovation in the college. I was recently appointed to the position of senior head of department, curriculum development. As senior head of department, one of my responsibilities is the co-

ordination of the senior primary course. I have always had a particular interest in the diversity of this course.

It has to meet a diversity of needs and this results in a comprehensive and full course programme as is shown in Figure 3.

FIRST YEAR	SECOND YEAR	THIRD YEAR	FOURTH YEAR
A. English A Afrikaans B Gen. Maths	A. English A Afrikaans B Gen. Maths	A English A Afrikaans B Gen Maths	A. Education
B. Curriculum Studies  General methods Expressive arts Biblical studies Geography History Natural Science Zulu Practice Teaching.	B. Education	B. Education	B. The 2 subjects taken in 3rd year or 1 subject and English.
	C. One or Two of:  Biblical Studies Geography History Mathematics Natural Science Zulu	C. Subject taken in 2nd year.	C. One minor subject not taken in 3rd year OR Remedial Education OR Computer Studies OR one of Biblical Studies Geography History Mathematics Natural Science Zulu OR Afrikaans
	D. If only 1 taken in C, One of:  Art Computer Studies Handicraft Music Needlework School Librarianship Speech and Drama	D. Subject taken in 2nd year	as a major subject provided it was not taken under B
E. Curriculum Studies			

FIGURE 3. THE STRUCTURE OF THE SENIOR PRIMARY COURSE.

Two critical incidents will be described to illuminate my position in the college. In an attempt to get a view of the course as experienced by students, I designed a procedure which yielded a weekly analysis of the amount of 'own' time each student is required to spend on college work and of the sorts of activities set as assignments. The work-load analysis was an attempt to provide lecturers with an overview of the course and additional information about the students studying their particular subjects. The information yielded by the analysis, however, came to be used to identify lecturers who were not working the students hard enough. This resulted in lecturers inflating the estimates of the time required for students to complete assignments when they submitted the information for the analysis. This made the analysis unreliable and it was viewed by many lecturers as a checking up procedure by the management.

The other incident involves the introduction of the Fourth Year Project. The project aimed to encourage students to implement a process approach during practice teaching. The initiators of this project [ including myself ] were concerned that a particular approach to teaching was being emphasized in the college at the expense of a more process oriented approach. The project also aimed to give senior students the chance to work independently. During the project the normal lecture programme ceases and students work with a tutor in the preparation of a teaching package embodying a process approach to be implemented and evaluated during practice teaching. The initiators of the project were well aware that a short project [ 2 weeks ] is inadequate to achieve independent work habits and an understanding of the

process approach in students . It was felt, however, that a short project is better than no project and that a specific project devoted to process would be more successful than attempting to launch a more diffuse approach within each subject department. The project has been in operation for 4 years and an evaluation of the this year's project has shown it to be successful and valued by the students. The incidents of the workload analysis and the fourth year project and their reception by the college and its people had an obvious bearing on the way in which this evaluation would be received.

My position on the management team and role as internal evaluator were highly problematic for the sort of participatory, democratic evaluation planned [ Adelman, 1984; Guba and Lincoln, 1981; Macdonald, 1974; and Simons 1987]. I was aware of the problem at the outset, but I felt sure that the trust of colleagues and my personal credibility would overcome such difficulties. When these commodities proved unequal to the task, I adopted the strategy of deliberately changing roles from senior head of department to university student doing research during my study leave. This role switch was necessary to allay fears that information collected would be used for a bureaucratic accountability exercise. It was also probably an attempt to distance myself from an organisational climate that was not conducive to democratic evaluation. [ I was to learn later, just how pervasive this climate is.]

Simons [1987] likens schools to clubs. Members of the club know what the rules are although they are not written down. They must either **obey** these rules or **change** them. This has a profound effect on the way in which an internal evaluator goes about an evaluation. An external evaluator is not expected to know the rules and may break these rules in a one-off evaluation with little effect. On reflection, my changing roles might have been an attempt to 'leave the club' so that I could break the rules rather than obey or change them.

The role of the evaluator is a fundamental issue in evaluation theory and has been given prominence in the literature. The literature distinguishes between internal and external evaluation [ Elliot, 1983; Eisner, 1975; Harlen, 1973; Parlett and Hamilton, 1972, Scriven, 1967; Stenhouse, 1975; and Stufflebeam 1971]. A second distinction is between professional evaluators and amateur evaluators [ Elliot 1983; Scriven, 1967; Simons, 1987; Stake, 1967, Stenhouse, 1975; Stufflebeam, 1971 and Tyler, 1949] . Cronbach [1980] describes the role of the evaluator as an educator performing a service to society. Stufflebeam [1971] perceived their role to be in the service of providing information to administrative managers who make decisions. MacDonald [1974] and Simons [ 1987] support the notion of a democratic evaluator as a broker of information who seeks to promote understanding between stakeholders and to address their pluralistic values. Patton [1975, cited in Alkin, 1975] considers the qualities of enthusiasm, interest and commitment in the evaluator to be more important than internal/ external : amateur/ professional categories .

Nisbet [ 1975] warns that accountability structures may cast the evaluator in the role of gatekeeper who controls access to information.

The role of the evaluator and the context of the evaluation are profoundly important in an evaluation. Their significance at all levels of the evaluation is only revealed as the evaluation progresses.

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## Chapter Two.

## Gathering Information.

## Research Design and Implementation.

The overarching research design selected for this evaluation was multiple operationalism [Simon,1986]. The strength of this approach to research is that the target population generates the crucial concepts for investigation . In more traditional research designs predetermined concepts are imposed on the target population. In this study, it was particularly important for the participant students and lecturers to identify those aspects of the course that were of concern. At the outset, I had my own list of issues that I considered problematic and worthy of investigation. It was essential, however, for me to find out whether these perceptions were shared by others involved with the course. My particular view was that of a senior member of staff responsible for the co-ordination of the course. This view had to be balanced by the perceptions of students and lecturers who had different involvements with the course, in generating the issues and concerns for study. The generative phase of multiple operationalism is followed by an elaborative phase in which the issues are explored further using within method and or between method triangulation. Simon offers multiple operationalism as an ideal type of methodological model to be adapted to meet the exigencies of particular studies in educational research and not as a blue-print.

An adaptation made in this study was to place multiple operationism within a naturalistic research paradigm.

The more classical, scientific research paradigm is an inadequate model for a curriculum evaluation. It is based on assumptions about the nature of reality as singular and convergent. It seeks to reduce relationships to variables which can be manipulated experimentally and controlled enabling the prediction of results. The scientific paradigm assumes that the researcher is independent of the investigation and vice versa. The naturalistic paradigm is based upon alternative assumptions. It is concerned with portraying multiple realities and seeks divergence rather than convergence. It acknowledges the interaction between the researcher and the investigation and makes use of qualitative methods [ Guba and Lincoln, 1981 ]. In evaluating the senior primary curriculum within its context at the college, it was felt that a naturalistic paradigm was more appropriate to reflect the complexities of this context.

Guba and Lincoln [1981] also used multiple operationism within a naturalistic paradigm in their model of responsive evaluation. In this model the concerns and issues of stakeholders are used as organisers for the evaluation and the model takes account of the differing values of the participants. It is supported by qualitative methods but does not preclude the use of quantitative methods should they be appropriate to the information required.

In any evaluation, the role of the evaluator influences the study, whether it be in the serving of decision makers, society, or as a broker of information to stakeholders. In this evaluation of the senior primary curriculum, my position as an internal evaluator who was also a member of the management

team of the college had a marked effect on the design and implementation of the study. I had hoped to start preliminary interviews with lecturers during the first term before my study leave. I abandoned this plan after the first three interviews which were awkward and unsuccessful. It was clear that lecturers were relating to me in my management role and not as a researcher. They skirted controversial issues and were uncomfortable when probed. In spite of assurances of confidentiality, lecturers felt threatened and would not 'open up'. I delayed the interviews until I was on leave and could devote myself to the task of metamorphosing from a 'management role' to one of 'researcher'.

I was also restricted in the choice of methods for the collection of information. I could not consider observing lectures to gather evidence about the nature of the interaction and relationship between students and lecturers. Observation would have been a method of choice, but it would have been threatening to lecturers and possibly students and would have strained my credibility as a researcher. Very little, if any, observation of colleagues teaching occurs at the college. Even in courses that are shared amongst lecturers, sitting in on each others lectures is discouraged. I judged lecturer co-operation and trust to be more important for the evaluation than the use of observation as a technique for obtaining information. These are only two of the many examples of the ways in which my position as internal evaluator influenced the evaluation. Others will be referred to throughout the text.

**GATHERING EVIDENCE.**1. Lecturers.

Before starting the research I sent letters to all lecturers involved with the Senior Primary Course [Appendix 1] explaining the purpose of the research. The letter also stressed my role as a researcher and assured lecturers that their participation was voluntary and that all information would be confidential. In view of the problems experienced previously when trying to interview lecturers, I made every effort to gain the confidence and co-operation of lecturers. I started the interviews during my study leave after the Easter vacation. I hoped that the break of the vacation would assist me in the metamorphosis from management person to researcher. I also took pains to avoid using any hierarchical procedures usually associated with a management person at the college. Interviews took place at a time chosen by lecturers and in their own offices. My dress was deliberately casual and I encouraged respondents to call me by my first name. When using the staff photocopier I declined offers to jump ahead, rather regretfully when I was in a hurry. These apparently trivial behaviours seemed to be effective. I sensed that lecturers were less guarded and the odd incidence of their being late or forgetting an interview suggested that I was being treated as a researcher rather than a management person.

Twelve lecturers were interviewed to generate issues and to give me a more general feel of the course. I selected the lecturers purposively using my knowledge of people who felt strongly about the course and who held diverging views.

Prospective respondents were approached verbally and asked to share their views. No-one refused to be interviewed, three lecturers volunteered and one person asked for a follow-up interview. In the initial approach I explained that I was interested in people's views on the ideal senior primary teacher and what changes they felt were necessary in the course to produce 'ideal' primary teachers. This priming enabled lecturers to gather their thoughts before the interview. I used the first question as a warm up and as a means of gauging people's position. I avoided asking directly for shortcomings in the course to avoid the interview turning into a 'gripe-session'. The 30 minutes scheduled for each interview were not adhered to rigidly. I took notes during the interviews to record responses and found this to be a satisfactory technique. It gave respondents time to reflect and it decreased the intensity of the interview as eye contact was broken while I made notes. Taping the interviews was not an option as I felt sure that this would have threatened lecturers. On reflection I am not sure why evidence in note form should be less threatening than evidence on an audio-tape. Perhaps the former offers respondents the possibility of claiming misrepresentation.

The frankness of lecturers and their openness reassured me that the planned transformation to researcher had occurred and that I seemed to have gained their confidence and trust. Five lecturers thanked me for the interviews. It was clear that they had enjoyed discussing issues that were important to them in a non-threatening situation. It was interesting to note that lecturers welcomed the opportunity to hear views that had been expressed by other lecturers. As Ruddock [ 1986 ] notes, teachers are often surprised to learn the opinions of their

colleagues. It seems that opportunities for this sort of exchange do not occur in the normal college routine. During the interviews, I found that I often had to refocus the discussion on the Senior Primary Course as lecturers drifted onto other issues that they found problematic. At times, I got the impression that the success of the interviews was a response to having a 'non-judgemental ear' and someone who was genuinely interested in peoples' opinions.

Using the issues generated in the interviews, I designed a fairly open questionnaire for all 52 lecturers and heads of department involved with the Senior Primary Course. [Appendix 2] This aimed to test the representativeness of the issues raised in the interviews and to elaborate on some of those issues. I also intended that the questionnaire would serve to sensitise lecturers to aspects of the course that they had not previously thought about. It could be argued that this was putting ideas into peoples' heads but this criticism could be made of any questionnaire or interview. The design of the questionnaire was sufficiently open in asking for reasons or elaborations of responses to overcome the possibility of influencing respondents to a significant degree. One of the aims of this research was to encourage lecturers to evaluate their own courses and the role of the questionnaire in providing new ways to think about courses is explicitly acknowledged.

The next stage of the elaborative phase required lecturers to meet in groups and to discuss the issues listed in Appendix 3. The purpose of this activity was to attempt to engage lecturers in critical reflection by exploring and clarifying their positions on issues related to the Senior Primary Course

and the presentation of their courses. I did not require any formal feedback from these discussions and have no way of knowing how many discussions took place. I did not want to burden participants anymore than was necessary as morale at this time was low. In spite of a pronouncement by the Minister of Education that the college would not be closed in the programme of rationalisation taking place throughout the country, lecturers were not totally reassured and were still concerned about the security of their jobs. I did not feel that asking for written feedback on the meetings would have 'encouraged' people to meet. There was also the likelihood of items being recorded merely for the sake of having something to hand in. The important issue was that lecturers reflect on the items listed in Appendix 3, ideally in discussion groups.

The final questionnaire for lecturers [Appendix 4] was compiled using issues and concerns from a questionnaire that had been administered to students. Items were also based on the first questionnaire for lecturers which had been completed at this stage. Most of the questions were closed and the aim was to survey respondents views on these issues and concerns. The questionnaire was distributed in the last week of the term and respondents were asked to return them within the week or in the first week of the following term. This attempt to be understanding of end of term stress was probably a mistake as initially only 41% were returned [ the return for the first questionnaire was 56 % ] . A follow-up letter, an announcement at tea, making additional questionnaires available to all lecturers and a reminder on the staff notice board increased the returns to 60% and 55% respectively.

The possible reasons for this low response rate for an internal evaluation are discussed in Chapter 3.

All participant lecturers were invited, by letter [Appendix 5], to attend an interim feedback meeting once I had processed the questionnaires. The purpose of this meeting was to make information available to participants and to see how lecturers reacted to the preliminary findings. This was one of many attempts to make the evaluation democratic by establishing a two-way flow of information as opposed to the traditional one-way, upward movement of information in bureaucratic evaluation [Simons, 1987; Lawton 1983]. Making information available for discussion before the distribution of the final report has been cited by Cronbach, [1980] as a means of involving participants and of making the information more immediately accessible. The attempt was unsuccessful as the meeting did not happen. No-one presented themselves at the venue for the meeting and I received 5 apologies. There may be a number of practical reasons for the failure of this meeting, relating to the preparation for a school principals' meeting and to lecturers using the time to fill in record cards for practice teaching. I suspect however, that the main reason was more fundamental i.e. the incompatibility of democratic evaluation with a traditional environment. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

While the prearranged feedback meeting failed, I gleaned valuable insights from incidental conversations that started with a casual enquiry about my research. I always answered these by sharing whatever issue or item occupied my mind at the time. Lecturers were happy to spend some time offering their insights to these issues.

The usefulness of these impromptu conversations made me realise that it would have been better to use interviews for feedback and discussion. Lecturers probably felt uneasy about revealing their views at a meeting of colleagues and their heads of department.

GENERATIVE PHASE

Interviews with 10 lecturers  
Interaction with students and perusal of records of meetings with individual students.\*

ELABORATIVE PHASE

Method	Participants
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Questionnaires</li> <li>2. Discussion of issues.</li> <li>3. Questionnaires.</li> <li>4. Feedback meeting and discussion.</li> <li>5. Documentary analysis of course outlines.</li> <li>6. Follow up interviews.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 52 Lecturers and 40 students.</li> <li>2. 52 Lectures in groups.</li> <li>3. 52 Lecturers.</li> <li>4. All interested lecturers.</li> <li>5. 13 Subject Departments.</li> <li>6. Random lectures and volunteer students.</li> </ol>

\* Information generated in the course of my job.

FIGURE 4. A SUMMARY OF METHODS USED TO GATHER INFORMATION.

## 2. Students.

The approach used to survey student opinion differed . I did not feel that it was necessary to have preliminary interviews with the students as I have fairly close contact with students in the course of my job. I am the person with whom they discuss problems with courses or suggestions for change. From time to time it is necessary for me to survey student opinion about courses in curriculum studies. This background information made it easier to draw up the questionnaire [Appendix 6] for students than it had been to compile the one for lecturers. Another possible explanation might have been that students are more open about their views than lecturers.

I did not have to work as hard at my relationship with the students as I had to do with the lecturers . At the time I thought that this was due to their healthy disregard for 'authority figures', but after analysing the student questionnaires I realised it was more to do with their unhappiness with the course and a sincere wish to be involved with its restructuring.

I originally planned to include 2nd and 4th year students in the study as I suspect that student attitudes change over their four years of training. As their time at the college comes to an end they seem more aware of the relevance of their studies to the classroom. As is discussed later in Chapter 3, their concept of relevance is explicitly concerned with the classroom, but they are also critical of what they perceive to be limited personal growth.

For practical reasons I had to limit the study and confined the student survey to fourth year students as they are in a better position to reflect on their entire course of study.

Letters were sent to all 40 fourth year students explaining the purpose of my evaluation and asking them to participate [ Appendix 6 ]. They were engaged in the Fourth Year Project [ described in Chapter 1 ] when the questionnaire was administered. I asked those who were prepared to participate to remain behind after a plenary session of the Fourth Year Project. Twenty-two questionnaires were filled in at this session. I placed additional copies of the questionnaires and explanatory letters in all fourth year students' postboxes in an attempt to improve the returns. This increased the return to 60% [24 out of 40] . Follow-up letters were sent to all students during practice teaching to remind them to return questionnaires and the final response was 64 %.

When I administered the questionnaires to the students, I mentioned that I would like to conduct interviews with a few students in the future. The purpose of these interviews was to clarify and explore further issues arising from their response to the questionnaires. The students' reactions were surprising. They were willing to be interviewed but only after the exams. In spite of reassurances of anonymity and confidentiality the students were adamant. I explained that the due date for submission of my thesis [September] made this impossible and that as they were valuable sources of information it would be a great loss to my research if they were not prepared to be interviewed. A compromise was reached with

some of the more moderate students volunteering for interviews. The less moderate students explained that they had aired their views about courses to the lecturers concerned and felt that their marks had suffered as a result. They were quite sure that if I reported their opinions in the evaluation their exam results would suffer. It was only after I had explained that the evaluation would not be available for general perusal until the following year that a few more students agreed to be interviewed. The students' perception that they would be penalised for speaking out was a strong one and seemed to be shared by most of the students present when the questionnaire was administered. This perception is even more noteworthy when one considers that it was voiced by the more conscientious students within the group. The plenary session was attended by 22 out of 40 students . Presumably these students would tend to be the more concerned ones.

The ten students who volunteered were interviewed. This sample cannot be considered to be random but I am satisfied that it was reasonably representative.

It was not possible to have an interim feedback meeting for the students as they were in the schools for their period of practice teaching. I made some of the preliminary findings available to the editor of the student publication 'Edgewise' when they were back on the campus. This was not as useful to me as a meeting at which students could contribute but it seemed to be an appropriate compromise.

### 3. Analysis of Questionnaires .

All completed questionnaires were read from start to finish. Notes were made of the major themes that seemed to recur. The questionnaires were then read item by item and the themes broken down into concerns and issues. These were written out on large pieces of paper in a 'map-like' format that would allow for the addition of new information. The interview notes were re-read and information relevant to the various issues and concerns was entered onto the 'map'. This analysis was done for students and lecturers. The 'maps' for students and lecturers were combined onto one composite 'map'. The questionnaires were read again from beginning to end to ensure that the composite 'map' captured the essence of the responses . All questionnaires were numbered as they were returned and these numbers were used in the map to refer to long responses that would have lost meaning in summary.

Lecturers' responses to Item 7 in Appendix 2 [ and the identical item 5 in Appendix 4] were treated in the following way. The rank position for each issue was noted and given a value between 1 and 13. [rank position 1 was scored 13 and rank position 13 was scored 1]. The values for each issue were summed and ranked .

#### 4. Documentary Analysis of Course Outlines.

Course outlines for Fourth Year students from 13 subject departments were analysed. The issues selected for analysis were:-

Were course aims described explicitly ?

If aims were stated, were they concerned with subject content, subject skills, primary methodology, attitudes and values, child development, and personal growth of the student?

If aims were not stated, were these implicit in the details of the course ?

Did the details of the course outline reflect the intentions stated in the aims ?

Was there evidence that the content of the course differed from similar courses offered to secondary and junior primary students ?

Was there any evidence of choice or accommodation of student interest ?

## Chapter Three.

## Issues and Concerns that Emerged in the Evaluation.

## Introduction.

On the whole , the return rates for questionnaires from students and lecturers were low for an in - house evaluation [ Simons, 1989 ]. There had been widespread agreement that aspects of the Senior Primary Course are problematic and ripe for review. The lecturers interviewed seemed positively disposed towards the evaluation . In view of these positive indications I was surprised that only 59% and 50% of lecturers returned questionnaires 1 and 2 respectively and students returned 64% of the student questionnaire. As was described in Chapter 2, every effort was made to encourage a more substantial return with little effect. These low returns and the failure of the feedback meeting amongst people who did not seem antagonistic to the evaluation suggested a deeper source to the problem than technical details. The literature [ Simons 1981 and MacDonald 1978] suggests three areas of evaluation that can be problematic and these seemed to have relevance in this study. These were the need for a shared tradition of self evaluation in the institution, vulnerability of participants in an evaluation and the need for understanding and respect for the conditions necessary for democratic evaluation and critical reflection.

In proposing a process approach to school self- evaluation Simons [1981] cautions that it may take at least five to ten years for teachers in schools to become practised and accustomed to this mode of evaluation which encourages a high degree of participation and the sharing of knowledge. Essentially, process evaluation is a

democratic form of educational critique and aspires to reflect on the processes of learning, teaching and schooling. It challenges the content and politics of product models of evaluation. While educators continually make judgements about the curriculum, these evaluations tend to be informal and confined to particular individuals or groups.

'----they are not part of a shared ,  
co-ordinated and public tradition.'

[Simons,1981:118]

Simons also observes that initially teachers seem to feel threatened by opening themselves to close-up observation and questioning. They feel safer with more 'scientific' instruments of data collection and analysis. It takes time and experience for teachers to extend their ability to ask intelligent questions, observe and make informed judgements. It also takes time to acquire a precise enough language and style of discourse through which professional concerns can be shared in a way that will achieve equivalence of meaning in the shared area of concern [Adelman and Elliot,1975].

It seems that my attempt to engage the lecturers at the college in critical reflection was unlikely to show results within the short period of time available. Discussions at staff seminars indicate that most lecturers do make evaluative judgements continually in the course of the planning and presenting of courses. These judgements, however, are not yet part of a shared, co-ordinated tradition at the college. They are made individually or in subject department groups and tend to relate to course presentation rather than wider institutional issues. The decisions are also probably

made intuitively without awareness of the underlying assumptions. Another factor at the college which mitigates against the development of a shared tradition of evaluative critical reflection is the view that lecturers at a tertiary institution should enjoy academic autonomy. They should have the freedom to make decisions and judgements within the confines of their subject responsibility. Interviews revealed that lecturers see themselves as subject specialists and not always accountable in a wider role as primary educators. The development of a shared, co-ordinated tradition is likely to be viewed as a threat to subject specialist autonomy.

I had probably also underestimated the threatening nature of critical self-evaluation at a time when jobs were threatened. As described in the introductory chapter, the college has been under the threat of rationalisation for some years. Everyone knew that a number of lecturing posts were likely to be lost at the end of the year and some people would be told to leave. The consequences of revealing that all was not well within ones sphere of teaching responsibility could be devastating for an individual. It was probably unrealistic to think that assurances of confidentiality and anonymity could overcome the vulnerability felt by participants in this situation.

In describing the conditions necessary for critical self-reflection, MacDonald [1978] maintains that it is necessary for all stakeholders to understand and respect the conditions under which it is possible. I do not think that such understanding is common at the college. In the absence of a shared, public and co-ordinated tradition of critical reflection, lecturers have not fully comprehended the one-sidedness of their accountability to

the college. In interviews some lecturers were surprised by the notion that the college should also be accountable to them and that they should be accountable to students. Traditional practice at the college has not been recognised as being undemocratic. The assumptions which underlie practice at the college will be discussed in more detail in relation to responses to questionnaires.

This introduction is intended to provide a context within which the analysis of the information gathered in questionnaires, interviews and documentary analysis should be read. It is also important to mention that when the questionnaires were analysed, it was necessary to read each questionnaire in its entirety to establish the context of specific responses described. There was also a measure of overlap in responses to different questions. The approach which has been adopted in reporting the analysis and correlation of the responses to questionnaires and interviews has been to select out those issues and concerns which seem to contribute most to an understanding of the Senior Primary curriculum. This approach would seem preferable to an item by item report which would be repetitive and rather mechanistic. I do acknowledge, however, that this selection may well introduce bias. Chapter Three is a synthesis of the insights and understandings gained from all of the information gathering techniques and of critical incidents prior to the study period which are relevant to the issue being discussed.

#### **A. Strengths of the Present Course.**

There were similarities and some interesting differences in the features that students and lecturers perceived as strengths of

the course in their responses to Item 2, Appendix 2 and Item 1, Appendix 4. Most of these features related to aspects of the structure of the course, for example, the breadth of the course, an in-depth study of major subjects, potential for personal development and preparation for teaching.

### 1. BREADTH OF THE COURSE.

Both students [29%] and lecturers [40%] commented on the variety of subjects which give the course breadth [ see Figure 3. Structure of the Senior Primary Course ]

Lecturers felt that students received a broad, general training. The compulsory study of Mathematics, English and Afrikaans for 3 years was seen to provide a foundation for the central areas of the primary curriculum. The range of subjects was described as giving a breadth of vision and methodology. Some lecturers felt that the course structure enabled students to gain subject specific and broad philosophical perspectives of education. Curriculum studies provided exposure to a wide variety of subjects necessary for the primary school. One comment was that the course is

'well structured and comprehensive in concept but in reality students leave the college with little more than the paper on which their diplomas are printed'.

This comment will be discussed further in the section on limitations of the course.

The use of the term 'general education ' by lecturers seems to be fairly loose . The notion of breadth seems to stem from the

observation that the course is made up of many components . This notion would not satisfy De Landsheer [1989], who describes general teacher education as :

'---- a critical discovery and acquisition of meaningful factual knowledge, of principles and methods in the domains of health, science, literature, aesthetics philosophy, politics and ethics. It includes the development of higher cognitive skills, of ability to communicate, to obtain information, to work independently and in groups,-----'

[5005]

This concept would appear to be more comprehensive and unified than the one employed by the lecturers. In response to the second questionnaire most lecturers stated that they do not consider final year students to be independent learners.

The students also mentioned the variety of subjects providing for all-round education in gaining knowledge and experience in different subjects. Ideas featured frequently in the students comments and they felt that the variety of subjects gave them 'lots of ideas'. Curriculum studies particularly in 3rd and 4th years was seen to make a valuable contribution to the breadth of the course.

Implicit in the notion of breadth is the principle of balance. This was not mentioned spontaneously by any respondents but probing during interviews revealed that lecturers felt that if a course is broad it must achieve some sort of balance . They seemed to hold a sort of 'shotgun approach' to balance. The notion

of curricular balance will be discussed further in the section dealing with views on the emphases on subject knowledge, personal growth and methodology.

## 2. SPECIALISATION IN MAJOR SUBJECTS.

This was regarded as a strength by both lecturers and students but in different ways. Lecturers supported the concept of specialisation in 2 major subjects as providing an opportunity to explore academic interests in some depth. Students referred to specific major subjects as strengths rather than major subjects per se. They were regarded as strengths because they were not done at school and will be useful for teaching. In many cases the strength of a subject was attributed to the contributions of particular lecturers who were enthusiastic and showed interest in the presentation of their courses. In only one instance was intellectual stimulation given as a reason for regarding major subjects as a strength.

## 3. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT.

There was a marked discrepancy in the way that students and lecturers viewed the potential for academic extension and personal growth in the course. Over 50% of lecturers regarded the potential for personal growth and development of students as a major strength of the course. Almost all lecturers included personal development or academic growth as one of the aims of their courses. Interestingly, this aspect was not mentioned explicitly as a strength by students at all. It was alluded to implicitly in discussion of course presentation, for example, 'in a few subjects our minds are challenged.' In response to the

question [ Item 15, Appendix 6] asking students if they felt they had matured as a result of their course at the college, 45% answered that they had, 51% felt that they had not matured and 4% were undecided. Some of the 45% explained that they found the course so unstimulating that they were studying through Unisa, or had sought challenges outside the college. Thus they had matured 'in spite of the course'. The explanations given for the view that they had not grown as people related to the content of courses but more particularly to the way that students are treated. The content of some courses was described as being boring, lower than matric level and repetitive. Students felt that they were not allowed to think for themselves, but dictated to like school children. The course was described as prescriptive and stifling. The explanations given for the feeling that students had matured related largely to the contributions of individual lecturers and the way that they presented their courses. The attribute of being knowledgable about a subject alone was not perceived by the students as sufficient to present a challenging course. By implication lecturers are unlikely to be enthusiastic and controversial if they are not knowledgable. They could however, be very well qualified in their subject but their courses might not be perceived by the students to be challenging. [Course presentation will be discussed more fully under limitations of the course.]

In considering the potential for personal development in the course, it must be borne in mind that students might not be realistic in their assessment of the extent of their personal development. They may be idealistic or it might be too soon for them to make this assessment. These considerations do not diminish the importance of the fact that over 50% of the students

surveyed do not feel that they have grown as people as a result of the course.

#### 4. PREPARATION FOR TEACHING.

The students surveyed regarded teaching practice as the most important form of preparation. It was named by over 50% as a strength of the course. Fewer mentioned classroom related aspects of their subject courses as strengths. Stones [1984] suggests that it might be the neglect of relating theoretical studies directly to teaching that leads to students commonly asserting that practice teaching is the most useful part of their course. The lecturers surveyed however, regarded the methodology components of their courses and curriculum studies as the most important forms of preparation for teaching. Few named teaching practice in this connection. It is interesting that lecturers do not seem to consider practice teaching as part of their courses. During interviews, students said that very few lecturers link teaching practice into the body of their subject courses. They felt that teaching practice 'stands alone' as a separate component of their course.

This disarticulation of practice teaching may result from the assumption that its supervision is non-problematic, in spite of the fact that many tutors, appointed on the strength of their subject knowledge, are not familiar with pedagogy [Stones, 1984].

Stones also refers to the problem of subject lecturers assuming that the practice-theory connection will be made by education lecturers and vice versa with the result that the connection may not be made at all.

It is noteworthy that while preparation for teaching was named as a strength of the course by lecturers and practice teaching by students, 40% of students considered themselves inadequately prepared to teach [ Item 14, Appendix 6]. Thirty-six percent felt that they were adequately prepared and 27% were undecided. Some of the reasons given for the perception of unpreparedness were : essential topics left out of the course e.g.multi-cultural education, spelling, reading and primary subjects not studied at college and not enough knowledge about the child and how to deal with potential problems. Those students who felt well prepared to teach cited as their reasons methodology, practice teaching, the fourth year project and a sound theoretical background.

#### **B. Limitations of the Present Course and Suggestions for Change.**

These two issues will be considered together as responses to Item 3, Appendix 1 and Item 4, Appendix 4 overlapped to a large degree.

##### **1. LACK OF COHERENCE.**

Lecturers frequently described the course as lacking cohesion or any coherent integrating framework. Over 40% of the lecturers surveyed felt that the course is fragmented as its component subjects are taught in isolation. Curriculum studies fails to fulfil its potential as an integrating subject as lecturers are locked into subject compartment thinking as result of subject socialisation. It is left to the students to achieve a synthesis but they do not have the time or the experience necessary to reflect on their knowledge and methodology to attain this overall synthesis. The lack of a policy towards Senior Primary Education

in the college was identified as a serious problem. Each subject department [or lecturer] tends to form their own interpretation of the students needs and as a result may place the emphasis of their teaching on different facets of the course e.g. academic enrichment, preparation for the classroom or educational theory. Some respondents explained that this leads to important areas being left out e.g.

'how to actually teach the English language is lost in dealing with literature'.

It is significant that lecturers rated 'the sharing of a sense of purpose' as the most problematic issue of the course in response to Item 7, Appendix 2. Co-ordination of the course was rated as the third most problematic issue. Both of these issues relate directly to course coherence and support my conclusion that most of the lecturers surveyed perceived the course to lack coherence.

There were 2 types of suggestions for change relevant to course coherence. These were noteworthy in that they seem to be contradictory. One suggestion for change was that the 'management' of the college should organize interdepartmental meetings to promote contact and to come up with an overall plan for all to follow. A scheme should be devised whereby departments could be informed of what other departments were doing to avoid overlap and underlap. The proposal that course outlines should be made available to all lecturers was made by a number of lecturers. The latter suggestion is particularly interesting as when I required lecturers to make course outlines available for circulation a few years ago, it was interpreted by some as an attempt to coerce them into revealing what they did. Thus on one hand there seemed to be

a feeling that the management of the course was responsible for the lack of coherence in the course. Other suggestions for change centered around the idea that there should be more 'openness' in the college among administration and staff' to explore options for change. The view was expressed that lecturers need to know and understand each others perspectives. They needed to meet informally but frequently so that discussion was ongoing. The comment was made that this co-ordination must be done 'with a light hand otherwise it will achieve nothing'

The first suggestion seemed to stem from the assumption that coherence can be managed if the right techniques are used. There was considerable evidence of a technocratic rationality underpinning thoughts and decisions expressed during interviews. The use of the word 'openness' in the alternative suggestion is particularly interesting. It appears to be similar to the value of openness which Simons [1987] feels is essential if members of institutions are to engage in democratic self evaluation. Simons identifies the values of privacy, territory and hierarchy as characterising practice in institutions and prevent any democratic process from happening. These values have to be replaced by values of openness, shared critical responsibility and rational autonomy for any kind of critical reflection to occur. The view that 'management' should be responsible for course coherence reflects the value of hierarchy. The offence taken to the request for lecturers to circulate course outlines is based on a strong sense of privacy and territory.

The students did not refer to a lack of course coherence directly but it was implied in a variety of comments . A few referred to

the disjointed nature of the course, some commented on the apparent lack of planning of the course which was evidenced by overlap and 'underlap'. Repetition was named as a limitation of the course by 60% of the students surveyed. This included the repetition of matric work in first year and the repetition of work in different subjects and in different years. The changes suggested by students included better planning to avoid repetition. They suggested including students at the planning phase because the students are the only people who experience the course as a whole and would know what work had been covered.

Coherence is a fundamental curricular principle. This evaluation has shown that it dominated the thinking of lecturers and was referred to implicitly by the students in many of their statements. This study does not show, however, exactly what lecturers meant by course coherence beyond a general sense of the course 'hanging together'. When probed in interviews, people had difficulty in articulating their concept of coherence and often gave an example of a course in the college that they considered to be coherent. Stark[1989] suggests that achieving coherence may imply any or all of the following: common studies or experiences for all students, changing and improving educational processes, increasing student participation in learning or linking ideas from different subject disciplines. Dearden [1981] is more illuminating in his explanation of coherence as the fitting together of elements according to some principle. Examples of possible organising principles suggested by Dearden that are appropriate to this course are a broad curriculum aimed at a general or liberal education and a curriculum which has a vocational basis e.g. teaching. Dearden draws a useful distinction between the 'objective' coherence that might be achieved by a vocational

curriculum while the 'subjective ' experience of the student is anything but coherent.

The principle of curricular coherence is a slippery concept. Perhaps this is because it raises more questions than it answers. Dearden [1981] proposes that coherence, like balance, is a secondary principle. It rests on the assumption that there is consensus on curricular and educational judgements and values. In the likely event of a lack of consensus about such fundamental judgements and values, any attempt to manufacture coherence will assume the function of concealing the lack of consensus rather than achieving coherence.

An apt description of coherence [and balance] in the context of the course under study is given by Dearden [1981 :108].

'My own view is that both of these notions have work to do, but whether they can work quite as hard as they have been expected to do is more open to question.'

Stark [1989] offers some helpful, practical, guidelines for those of us who have to try to help the notion of coherence do its work. Stark notes that on complex campuses, political factors influence curricular decisions more than educational factors do. She suggests that it is essential for lecturers in different subject disciplines to spend time sharing their different views of curricular coherence so that all involved come to understand the disciplinary differences in course planning. Discussion of beliefs about educational purposes helps participants to accept that disagreements may stem from these beliefs rather than personal dislikes or competition for students or time on the

timetable. Stark details four stages necessary in these discussions. These are :

1. Develop working definitions of curriculum and curricular coherence.
2. Explore educationally meaningful ways to bridge the disciplinary culture gaps. As strongly socialised views of subject disciplines are unlikely to change, coherence must build on curricular aims that are shared between diverse groups.
3. Mechanisms for curricular change must be explored that provide alternatives in planning and teaching for lecturers. Collegially explored options are more likely to succeed than changes imposed autocratically.
4. The colleges' view of coherence must be conveyed to students in broad terms. Lecturers should also communicate to students the essence of the deliberations by which the chosen approach evolved so that they are able to appreciate the context in which decisions were taken .

[66]

## **2. THE LACK OF FOCUS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING.**

This was perceived to be problematic by both lecturers and students but from slightly different perspectives. Some lecturers acknowledged the need for students to understand the structure of a subject in order to teach it. Many of these lecturers felt, however, that too much emphasis is given to subject knowledge at the expense of how to teach the subject. A few lecturers expressed the view that knowing how to teach is more important than knowing

what to teach. If this comment means that some lecturers think that knowledge of subject is not necessary to teach it, it would reveal a limited understanding of teaching and learning. A number of lecturers commented on the need for a more deliberate approach to the teaching of language. The need to address the different teaching abilities of students and to provide whatever support or remediation is necessary was identified.

The changes suggested by lecturers, to promote greater emphasis on teaching and learning revolved around a more classroom / child oriented approach. These included focussing on the teaching of language, numeracy and problem solving from first year. Lecturers felt that students should be actively involved in the planning and presentation of lessons from first year. Presumably this is in addition to micro-teaching and mini-lessons which are part of the existing first year course.

The lack of focus on teaching and learning was a recurring theme in the students' comments. It was one of their major criticisms of the course. In response to Item 1, Appendix 6, the students gave specific examples of aspects of teaching and learning that they felt were lacking in the course. These related to greater contact with the schools, more attention to the requirements of school syllabi and an explicit acknowledgment of the theory-practice link.

Most students felt that they should spend more time in the schools. This could be as an increased period of block practice teaching or by spending additional time in the schools on an irregular basis, focussing on particular skills, observations of children, trialling materials or subject methodology.

In interviews, the students who had experienced the latter commented that they found it very helpful for the teaching of particular subjects and in linking educational theory with practice. A number of students observed that it is not sufficient just to talk about teaching and what can be done in the classroom. The problems arise in putting ideas into practice. Lecturers do not have the experience or knowledge of primary teaching to discuss practical aspects of implementing different approaches. Students felt that it is essential to work in a school or to get in outside speakers who have recent classroom experience to cover topics such as the teaching of reading and language. It is interesting to note that lecturers ranked their lack of experience in a primary school as the second most problematic issue relating to the course, the first being the lack of a shared sense of purpose. It seems that both students and lecturers agree on the need for recent and relevant primary experience to provide a focus on teaching and learning. It would also appear that the experience gained by tutors in primary schools during practice teaching is not adequate for this purpose. [Stones, 1984].

Over 50% of the students felt that the course should familiarise them with the requirements of school syllabuses. Some lecturers have adopted the view that it is the students responsibility to consult the syllabuses available in the college library. Other lectures supply students with copies of the syllabus to be used for methodology assignments and analysis and discussion during lectures. At least 30% of the students felt insecure about promoting the development of certain skills in the classroom. These were mainly [ although not always] associated with subjects that they had not studied as majors. Group teaching, theme teaching and language across the curriculum were cited as

approaches to teaching that received inadequate attention in the course. One student remarked in an interview that it was absurd that students had to wait until 4th year to be introduced to the process approach. She explained that it is so relevant to primary education that they should have been exposed to the approach earlier, particularly as the approach is supported by the Natal Education Department. Another area of teaching in which students felt inadequately prepared is that of assessment. They were unsure about alternative forms of assessment, about ways of assessing processes and skills and about setting and marking tests. The students comments indicated that they were aware of the emphasis on assessment in the schools and this is probably why they were concerned about their ability to assess the children.

Many of the students comments indicated that they were not aware of the rationale for particular areas of study. In some cases the theory-practice link was revealed 'coincidentally' during practice teaching. Some students commented that the reasons for studying certain topics was not made explicit at the outset. Another comment was that 'until teaching practice in first year I had no idea how the theoretical work we were doing related to teaching. It was like doing two separate courses'.

Students did not refer to specific subjects in elaborating on the lack of emphasis on teaching in their course as did lecturers. Instead they referred to particular topics such as school administration, family life skills, sex education, remedial education and the Junior Primary child which they felt should be given more emphasis. Interestingly, they felt that as prospective teacher, they needed to be better informed about conditions of service such as medical aid, housing subsidies, and loan

repayment. The also expressed the need for guidance on professional matters such as ' how to deal with the N.E.D.'

Most of these issues were repeated in responses to Item 5, Appendix 6, in the student questionnaire which asked for the most relevant form of preparation for teaching. The overall theme for these responses was relevance to the classroom and a more practical approach. By practical, the students meant 'of practical use in the classroom'. Students included the production of teaching packages and guidance on how to conduct excursions as examples of relevant preparation. An interesting suggestion was that time is needed to collect ideas and locate resources for later use.

### 3. A SUBJECT-CENTERED COURSE.

Thirty percent of lecturers surveyed felt that the subject-centredness of the course was a limitation. It was seen to be at the expense of primary methodology [ which was 'tacked on as an after thought ' ] and opportunity for student interaction and verbalisation about cross-curricular themes. Some mentioned that the organisation of the course on a subject basis was the opposite of what primary education should be. The course was also described as having a 'haphazard child centricity'. It was felt that these factors encourage a rationalist view of knowledge in students who are reluctant to accept the view of knowledge as socially constructed. Perhaps this is why some students have difficulty in adopting a process approach to teaching during the Fourth Year Project. A number of students are not able to grasp the concept of a process approach let alone put it into practice. They can only think of knowledge within subject boundaries and have

difficulty in providing pupils with opportunities for constructing their own knowledge. Some experienced difficulty in conceptualising appropriate themes for theme teaching.

These problems relate to a particular form of subject centrality practised by those lecturers who view knowledge of subject as the entire body of factual content necessary to teach the subject. Combined with a transmission mode of teaching, this approach prevents students from acquiring a knowledge of the structure and principles of a subject [Stenhouse, 1975]. They have not learnt how to learn the subject and consequently cannot expand their knowledge independently.

An interesting facet of lecturers' views about teachers knowledge was the separation between knowledge about subject and knowledge about teaching. In a framework for teachers' knowledge, Tamir,[1989] highlights two important distinctions. The first, the distinction between propositional and procedural knowledge, was also made by lecturers in their distinction between skills and content knowledge. Tamir's second distinction is between general and subject specific pedagogical knowledge. This latter distinction is particularly important in teacher education since general pedagogy may be taught in interdisciplinary classes by experts in general pedagogy. Subject-specific pedagogy, however, must be taught by lecturers who are pedagogical experts in that particular subject.

The crux of the problem at the college would seem to be that the lecturers are subject experts rather than 'pedagogical experts' in a particular subject. This would explain the compartmentalisation of knowledge into knowledge of subject and

of teaching which pervades the course. It also provides insight to the comments by students that much of the course is not relevant to teaching and that practice teaching is not an integral part of the course.

The nature of the knowledge base for teacher education seems problematic in the literature. Amongst the developed countries there has been a demand for teachers, as members of a learned profession, to have mastery of a specialized body of knowledge [Reynolds, 1989]. Judge, [1989] maintains that little is known about what counts as relevant knowledge for educators. Basic terms such as pedagogy, philosophy, theory and subject matter do not have universal meaning. Judge proposes that the practical and conceptual difficulties associated with the knowledge base for teachers will not be resolved until answers are sought to questions such as - What is in reality taught to teachers in training in different societies? Why is it taught and with what effects? Schneider [1987] distinguishes between the study of pedagogy and the study of teaching. She describes pedagogy as a substantive knowledge area that requires students to learn the art of didactics rather than utilitarian concepts such as discipline or selection of material which tend to characterize the study of teaching.

Changes suggested by lecturers to make the course less subject-centered included modeling the course on the junior primary course in which junior primary studies plays a central, organising role. This results in the course being more child centered while still allowing specialisation in a subject of choice. Eighteen percent of the lecturers suggested the inclusion

of a subject called 'Senior Primary Studies' which could present the 'essentials' of senior primary education in a coherent fashion [a 'core curriculum' for all senior primary students?]. These lecturers questioned the necessity for students to study 2 major subjects. They felt that this time could be used for Senior Primary Studies. Another suggestion was to reorganise curriculum studies around 'relevant senior primary themes' to get away from the existing structure which is largely subject-based.

Subject-centricity was not named explicitly as a limitation of the course by the students. They were more concerned with the relevance of their studies to the classroom than whether these were integrated or subject-based. Criticism of subject-centricity might have been implicit in their identification of the need for a child-centered approach. They expressed the need to know more about the senior primary child and many commented that the child is more important than the subject. A number of the students felt that they needed to know more about the subject content taught at school rather than studying a few 'irrelevant' topics in depth. [In most cases the students used the word relevant to mean relevant to the classroom]. There was also some support amongst the students [12%] for a subject such as senior primary studies.

A child-centered approach is supposedly one of the basic tenets of primary education. Many would argue, on epistemological grounds that a subject-centered approach fragments the learning experience of children [Blenkin and Kelly, 1981, Heywood 1984, Kelly, 1989, Morrison, 1989, and Stenhouse 1975]. It is unlikely to result in the construction of knowledge in the holistic and

integrated way espoused by the proponents of child-centred education. Subject teaching occurs in most of the primary schools in Natal and probably South Africa. This is in keeping with the dominant views of curriculum as content, knowledge as subject bound and education as transmission, that prevail in Departments of Education. These same views have provided the organizing principles for the course at the college and have influenced the thinking of all involved in its presentation. They are also reflected in the structure and organisation of the college as a whole. Head of department posts do not exist for all subject departments. Some of these are quite large but do not seem to enjoy the status of traditional disciplines such as those in the mathematics and science sphere. Sub - disciplines of the creative arts share a head of department with other subjects while each of physical science and biological science has a head of department. While there is a head of department post for junior primary studies and a subject of this name on the time-table, this is not the case for senior primary studies. This has worked against senior primary studies acquiring an identity and the status of a subject and has influenced the way lecturers think about the field of study. Fifty percent of lecturers agreed that senior primary education does not enjoy the same status as secondary education at the college. Forty two percent agreed that it would be difficult to achieve academic rigour in a subject such as senior primary studies.

I am not suggesting that the course should be a totally integrated study. There are obvious strengths to disciplinary studies in providing for the personal growth of students. In areas where an integrated approach is appropriate, however, the dice seem loaded against its ever succeeding. Subject socialisation of lecturers

has meant that the integration necessary for a study of primary education has not occurred.

In looking at possible reasons for the lack of emphasis on primary education, it seems that answers to questions such as : which areas of knowledge should have subject status ? , which subjects have the status to have a head of department ? and which subjects should be allocated most time on the time-table ? determine what is taught in the college.

Morrison [1989] suggests an approach for subject study which would be suitable for teacher education and relevant to the primary classroom. It involves the construction of a framework for comparing the study of the subject by college students and by primary children. It includes consideration of methodologies and their legitimacy, criteria for epistemological validity and the constituent elements of the subject, comparison of pedagogic styles and evaluation. I think that Morrison's approach has possibilities for informing students' [ and lecturers' ] conceptions of the nature of knowledge and for linking theory and practice.

#### 4. A COURSE THAT IS TOO THEORETICAL.

This perception was held by 11% of lecturers. One view expressed was that the course includes too much educational jargon and theory that will date. Students are too poorly educated and inexperienced to benefit from such theoretical considerations.

A related issue was the futility of engaging the students in superficial explorations of academic subjects that do not relate

to teaching and which are not of sufficient depth to be challenging. A pertinent observation expressed during an interview was that university accreditation has been to the detriment of the senior primary course. In the initial negotiations for accreditation of courses, representatives from the university gave the impression that knowledge about teaching and learning does not have the academic rigour of subject disciplines. This influence has led to college courses being modelled on university courses which serve a wider purpose and do not acknowledge their vocational context [Heywood, 1984]. This would not be a problem if it applied only to one or two subjects intended for the students' personal enrichment, but it applies to most of the subjects comprising the course. Contact with the university also seems to have encouraged the feeling that some disciplines are by their very nature more demanding than others and therefore of more worth. This was revealed in comments to the effect that students should spend less time on methodology in first year and get to grips with the content of more academic subjects. I suspect that a rationalist view of knowledge which does not accept the validity of applied knowledge is responsible for this view.

There were a few lecturers who held a rather extreme view that in the first 2 years of training students should acquire teaching skills only [the tricks of the trade approach]. Once they have mastered the 'basics' of teaching the students were ready for school experience or alternatively, a more theoretical study. In identifying the limitations of the course the students did not refer to its theoretical nature explicitly. This was probably implicit in their comments of the course not being relevant.

Applicability to the primary classroom was one of the students' most important criteria of worth for the curriculum. For many

most important criteria of worth for the curriculum. For many students, practical was synonymous with good and theoretical was synonymous with bad. Very few students commented positively on the practice - theory link in their course.

Lovat[1988] suggests that many teachers belong to a philosophical tradition which under emphasizes the relationship between curriculum theory and practice. The practical component may be emphasized at the expense of theory . In such programmes, curriculum studies would consist of the practical aspects of choosing subject matter, planning teaching strategies and selecting methods of assessment. Lovat likens teachers trained in this 'job skills ' way to propelled rockets that do well after launching but as the initial store of fuel runs low, burn out as they have no internal mechanism for re-fuelling. Alternatively, in teacher training, theory may be elevated to a realm which is divorced from or irrelevant to the practical. Lovat proposes that curriculum theory should provide the 'linchpin ' in a balanced teacher education programme. It should offer guiding principles towards a praxis which includes the development of critical thinking and autonomous learning skills. Praxis would be informed and guided by theory.

'It is through praxis that we move into the future and the future becomes as much a criterion of truth as is the past. It is through the emancipatory interest, leading to critical self-reflection that we are freed to make the future present by balancing off those technical and practical interests which would tie us to the past. [Lovat,1989:210]

Curriculum theory provides the fundamental theoretical base which ties together the following three strands : a content base of specific subject matter, a methodological base through practice in curriculum design and development and a foundational base of the traditional disciplines of psychology, philosophy and sociology. Curriculum theory should provide a vital link between the insights gained in teacher education and curriculum practice.

I suspect that this vital link is missing in the senior primary course at the college. The course includes the traditional educational disciplines, some methodology and a good measure of content. These elements, however, do not unite to guide practice in the way described by Lovatt. Perhaps the lack of a tradition of critical reflection, limited knowledge of curriculum theory and a prescriptive approach to teaching practice based on a technocratic rationality preclude this.

##### 5. DECLINING STANDARDS.

Both students and lecturers were concerned about low standards. Forty-five percent of the lecturers agreed that 'standards at the college are not what they were' 36% were undecided and 19% disagreed with the statement. The senior primary course was described by many lecturers as the least demanding of all the college courses. Fifty-nine percent of the students were not satisfied with the standard of their own work. Comments by lecturers about declining academic standards were that students are able to get by with a minimum of effort and that weak students are allowed to pass. It should be noted that lecturers assess students throughout the year and the continuous assessment mark contributes to the final pass or fail mark. The relative emphasis on the exam result and the continuous assessment

mark is for lecturers to determine. In view of this it is strange that lecturers stated that there would be resistance by the college authorities to raised standards when they have the opportunity to establish appropriate standards within their own courses. The notion that exams are responsible for establishing standards in a course probably stems from the assessment driven curriculum prevalent in the schools. In response to questions about lecturers freedom, 97% of lecturers agreed that lecturers have freedom in the planning and presentation of their courses, 96% agreed that it is the lecturers responsibility to maintain an appropriate standard of work and that lecturers have freedom in assessment. Sixty-two percent agreed that there may be grounds for the complaints of students that high marks are awarded for mediocre work. It is clear that there is widespread concern amongst lecturers about standards. What is surprising is that while lecturers acknowledge explicitly that it is their responsibility to maintain standards and that they have freedom in the presentation and assessment of their courses, they do not feel empowered to improve standards.

The reason for this lack of empowerment is I feel rooted in a deeply embedded sense of hierarchy [Simons,1987]. Lecturers have not assumed or been able to assume autonomous positions despite the fact that over 90% stated that they have the freedom to do so. I think that the reality is that most lectures are not fully aware of the hierarchical structure within which they work and on which they rely. The freedom referred to is a technical one concerned with the selection of content and methods of presentation. Their notion of accountability is based on a technocratic ideology. [MacDonald,1978].

The notion of standards in education, like balance and coherence is slippery concept. In describing standards as a distillation of the past, MacDonald[1978] suggests that educators tend to be unrealistic in commonly judging the standards of past practice to be better than what is being done at present. The feeling that the standards of the past must be maintained acts as a deterrent to change as institutions are seen to be doing a poorer job than they used to. This leads to the assumption that students are not learning enough of the most important things and that there can be consensus about what these important things are. Lecturers saw the role of exams as monitoring standards of attainment in the important areas. Consequently the perception that weak students were allowed to pass by the examination system was seen to contribute to the lowering of standards in the college. This view ignored the potential for continuous assessment to contribute positively to standards in including qualitative judgements about student work. The formality of the exam procedure with its moderation and invigilation has given this method of assessment more credibility in the college than less formal methods which are probably more appropriate in many ways.

Suggestions for changes to arrest declining standards included, predictably, making the course more rigorous academically and refusing to condone poor results from 'idle disinterested students'. [ Does this suggest that poor results from hard working, interested students should be condoned ?] There was also the suggestion that attention be given to making the first year of study more challenging as this is the stage when students develop attitudes to work. The students also identified first year as a critical stage for establishing standards and developing attitudes to work. A number of students commented that

their final year at high school was mentally more challenging than their first year at the college. Some students said that they were disappointed by the lack of stimulation in first year and that they had expected the course to be more stimulating.

Student concern about standards focused on the demotivating effect of lecturers accepting poor work and giving it good marks. A student offered a perceptive explanation for possible reasons why lecturers award high marks to mediocre work. He proposed that lecturers know that students have many demands on their time and feel that they cannot be expected to produce work of quality. Low expectations become self-fulfilling prophecies and a tacit understanding about standards of work exists between lecturers and students. Thus acceptance of mediocrity becomes part of the hidden curriculum.

The quantity of work required of students seems detrimental to its quality. There is a strong case for reducing the volume of material studied and the number of assignments set and for requiring better quality.

The reasons given by students for the unsatisfactory standard of their own work related to lack of time, the unstimulating nature of the work, lack of course planning and resources and personal attributes. Lack of time was rated as the main reason for work of an unsatisfactory standard. This was exacerbated by poor planning which leads to a clustering of test dates and assignment due dates. Students said that the large number of assignments forced them into a position of just doing enough work to get by and keep up to date. Students described the unstimulating nature of much of the work as demotivating. They

often failed to see the relevancy of assignments and some of the work was repetitive. The inclusion of personal factors in reasons for low standards atests to the students' honesty. They admitted that procrastination often meant that the work was done in a rush to the detriment of the product. Some said that they were lazy about certain tasks that were not enjoyable . Others were not motivated to work for certain lecturers as they know that they can get reasonable marks with little effort. Another discouraging factor was the knowledge that some students get high marks for 'borrowed work' [ The existence of a market for assignments and essays was referred to a number of times in interviews]. It is reassuring that the students are concerned about standards and that they are honest about their culpability in producing poor work. The widespread perceptions by students that much of the work is unstimulating and that mediocre work is the norm are , however, cause for concern. Some of the senior primary students enter the college with high matric symbols and capable of outstanding work. It is alarming that some of these bright students are not motivated to realise this potential.

## 6 COURSE PRESENTATION.

Lecturers did not identify course presentation as a limitation of the course but did suggest many changes to the presentation of the course. These changes related to making the students more active, responsible participants in the learning process. They suggested that there should be fewer contact periods, less lecturing, more student interaction and the adoption of a more student-centred approach. There was support for making the fourth year different to the first three years. It was suggested that

students be involved in presenting seminars, researching and producing teaching materials in a series of integrating projects. These alternative approaches all appear to be aimed at changing the students' attitudes to learning. What seems to have been left out is the acknowledgment that lecturers' attitudes to teaching will also have to change. Lecturers will have to see themselves as co-learners or facilitators of learning in place of the source and transmitters of all knowledge.

Again, the question arises, if lecturers have freedom in the presentation of their courses, why don't they make the changes that they have identified as being desirable ? [ Unless of course, their comments are directed at the practice of other lecturers, their own being of the desired approach ] Again, I would suggest that the answer might lie in the embedded value of hierarchy, lack of professional autonomy and subscription to a view of curriculum as product. The lack of empowerment to bring about the desired changes is probably related to the fact that these values are held subconsciously. There is also the possibility that while lecturers can articulate alternative approaches of presentation , they are not confident or competent enough to implement them.

Unlike lecturers, students did identify presentation as a limitation of the course. They described some lecturers as unmotivated, inflexible and most lecturers as lacking knowledge and experience of primary education. Most students were critical of excessive use of 'chalk and talk' methods of presentation. They felt a lack of opportunity for self-study or the collection of ideas. Over 50 % of the students commented that time was wasted by the repetition of content .

Suggestions for change by students included student input in planning, greater use of outside lecturers who have recent, relevant experience of primary education and the implementation of a process approach. As reported earlier, students felt strongly that they were treated like school children. They suggested that students should be involved in the negotiation of types of assignments, deadlines and forms of assessment. If one considers that these final year students will be practicing teachers in less than a year, they should be treated more as colleagues who can make valuable contributions in the planning of the course. This sort of participation would give students a greater commitment to the course. Many students felt that there should be greater freedom of choice to cater for their interests and to give them more control of their learning.

Students included comments about assignments and assessment in limitations of the presentation of the course. Some described the assignments as irrelevant, too theoretical, too prescriptive and not catering for creative thought. There were numerous comments that methodology assignments were not appropriate and in many cases could not be used in the classroom. Most students [61%] felt that there was too much emphasis on assessment, 'we do everything for marks or to get a D.P. Nothing is done for interest.' There were also comments to the effect that assessment does not take account of student interests. Some students stated that lecturers expected their notes to be 'churned out' in tests. A different approach was marked down. There are, no doubt, weak students who are reluctant to accept that their 'alternative views' are not valid and might not comprehend a lecturer's explanation as to why this is so. The academically strong students who were

interviewed, however, maintained that certain lecturers marked work rigidly, following a model answer . Any attempt to discuss alternative interpretations were met with antagonism. Sometimes suggestions were taken personally and seemed to make the lecturer feel threatened.

## 7 OTHER CHANGES.

### Changes in Content.

Lecturers adopted two positions on course content. One position was that course content comprises a body of factual information and lecturers who held this view felt that the course should be changed so as to give their subject more time. An alternative and more informed view was that course content involves the information , skills and attitudes appropriate to students understanding the structure and principles of a subject. These lecturers felt that course content should be changed to emphasize the structure and principles of subjects rather than factual content. The former view of course content was more common than the latter view.

Twenty-eight percent of lecturers felt that the teaching of language needs greater emphasis. This was supported by students, many of whom were not confident of their abilities in the teaching of first language. Both students and lecturers supported remedial education being a compulsory subject for all students instead of an optional minor subject at present. This was echoed by past students who have been in the schools for a number of years and feel the need for further education in remedial education.

### Changes in Course Structure.

In response to first and third world needs, it was proposed that the course should comprise a 2 year basic course which would be followed by a further two years of classroom experience combined with further studies. The basic course would provide the bare essentials necessary to prepare teachers for the classroom. Large numbers of teachers could be produced in this way. This would be a practical way of addressing the desperate need for primary teachers, but whether it would be acceptable to teachers who have been excluded from a four year pre-service qualification is another matter. This was the only change proposed that involved a radical rearrangement.

Most suggestions for change were within the present structure and were relatively minor in scale. A few lecturers suggested that the students select only one major subject for indepth study and that a subject called senior primary studies replace the present second major subject. This would make the structure of the course resemble that of the junior primary course at the college. There was also the suggestion that each year of study should focus on a particular standard in the primary school as is done in the junior primary course. A few lecturers felt the need for a back to basics approach, focussing on literacy, numeracy and communicative language but did not spell out how this should be achieved. It was also proposed that the separation of junior and senior primary courses is artificial and that continuity is needed. Semesterisation and the blocking of courses were suggested as ways of compensating for a crowded timetable. An intriguing suggestion was to 'throw out a British -based post

war education system and prepare teachers for the real world'.

On the whole lecturers' responses to the items of the questionnaire asking for suggestions for change were thin. This is surprising if one considers that the college is poised on the brink of a period of change. Perhaps it is another manifestation of the expectation that change will be imposed regardless of lecturers' views.

### C. Obstacles to change.

In response to Item 5 , Appendix 2, sixteen percent of lecturers felt that there are no serious obstacles to change. The remaining 84% identified inertia, resistance, lack of an appropriate senior primary management position and various student factors as the major source of obstacles to change. Twenty-one percent of lecturers named bureaucratic inertia or resistance of college authorities as obstacles change. Forty six percent of lecturers identified staff inertia as an obstacle. It was felt that members of the lecturing staff are 'wedded' to their subjects. Their position is entrenched and any move to a more general course of applied disciplines threatens their vested interests. There is a feeling of possessiveness of students and courses that makes any co-operative approach to course presentation difficult if not impossible. One respondent expressed the observation that change is resisted because ' empires would fall '. The feeling of possession of students and courses is probably a manifestation of the institutional value of territory described by Simons[1987]. It needs to be replaced by the value of shared critical responsibility to create an ethos in an institution which is compatible with the understanding necessary for the perception of shared aims [Nias,1981] .

A few lecturers expressed the opinion that the lack of a centralised authority for the senior primary course results in decision - making becoming a buck - passing exercise. No one 'grasps the nettle' or assumes responsibility for corporate decision making. This opinion would seem to be based on the institutional value of hierarchy [Simons 1987]. It could also be a plea for a formal procedure [or structure] that Nias [1981] claims is necessary to help build a sense of shared purpose and, at the same time , to indicate that such purpose exists. I am sure that the head of department meetings held regularly at the college would qualify as suitably formal procedures, but their long agendas preclude the sort of discussion necessary to pursue shared purpose in a sensitive and meaningful way. The discussion would be limited to heads of department . Another issue that is problematic, is that senior primary studies does not have the status or bargaining power of a subject department. It is one of a number of responsibilities of the senior head of department of curriculum development. Each traditional subject discipline is represented by its' own head of department who argues for subject - centred issues. There is usually only one voice arguing for senior primary issues .

There is an appealing logic in Nias's proposal that formal procedures recognised by the bureaucracy are necessary for the establishment of trust and shared goals. However, Simon's [1987] caution that such procedures are not neutral should also be noted.

Student - related issues that were suggested as obstacles to change were resistance to increased standards and the different academic abilities of students on admission. Class size, National

Criteria, time-tabling constraints , lack of time and finance were also listed as obstacles to change.

There was only one comment which stated explicitly that the ethos of the college and the values of lecturers would be obstacles to change. The respondent felt that the only change that had a chance of success was the sort of change that met with the approval of the management of the college in spite of the democratic system of committees and meetings. The same respondent also maintained that most lecturers think in a rationalist, received, subject-centered context and would resist change.

I think that this perception of the way that many lecturers think is valid, but is not peculiar to the college. It represents a prevailing view amongst educationists in South Africa.

My own view is that these later issues constitute almost insurmountable obstacles to change. The past educational experiences of lecturers have steeped them in a tradition of authoritarianism, bureaucracy and practice which is based on a view of education as a product. As has been mentioned, values of hierarchy, territory and privacy prevail. Few know of any other way of thinking or feeling about education. At best, the scale of change that is possible under these circumstances, even in a tertiary institution , is incremental and reformist. Most lecturers come to the college with expectations of authoritarianism and bureaucracy and their expectations become self- fulfilling.

Another fundamental obstacle to change in the college is the failure to recognise the political nature of teacher education.

Beyer and Zeichner [ 1987 ] state :

' Unless we begin to think about the problem of teacher education in relation to the contexts within which it is embedded and in the light of its historical roots, we will continue to be oblivious to the ways in which our actions as teacher educators help perpetuate a culture marked by inequality, domination and exploitation.'

[328]

Most of the college lecturers regard their decisions about curricular issues as neutral and value free. For change to occur it is necessary to think of teacher education as more than learning the content and techniques of teaching. We will have to make problematic that which we have taken for granted.

In the student questionnaire, [ Appendix 4 ] I did not include an item about the obstacles to change at the college. On reflection this was probably a mistake as those that I interviewed had strong views on the issue. They saw most lecturers as obstacles to change. They described these lecturers as inflexible, disinterested and not open to negotiation . A few lectures were motivated , concerned about the students and open to negotiation. The students interviewed felt that if all lecturers were like this, there would be no obstacle to change at the college. The students also cited inflexibility of the 'administration' as an obstacle to change . Student leaders held that any change that they tried to make was blocked by the administration.

#### D. Ranking of Problematic Issues

In Item 7 [ Appendix 2] and Item 5 [ Appendix 4 ] lecturers were required to rank those issues that had emerged as problematic in the preliminary interviews and analysis of trial questionnaires . This item was included in the first questionnaire to find out whether various issues were regarded as problematic or not. It also aimed to get an idea of how problematic each item was perceived to be. It was repeated in the second questionnaire to find out if perceptions had changed at all after group discussion and reflection on the issues . The responses to items 7 and 5 are shown in Figure 5 .

The differences in the rank positions of issues in items 7 and 5 are , I feel, minimal. The issues regarded as the four most problematic were the same in each case , although the order was slightly different. I am sure that these minor differences can be accounted for by differences in the sample rather than a shift in thinking. [There was a 60 % return for the first questionnaire and a 55% return for the second one.] This result supports the conclusion that it was overly ambitious to expect any sort of change of thinking within such a short space of time. This is not to rule out the possibility that people may change their thinking in the future as a result of issues raised in questionnaires and interviews during this evaluation.

FIGURE 5. RANKING OF ISSUES THOUGHT TO BE PROBLEMATIC.

ISSUE	RANK POSITION IN QUESTIONNAIRE	1	2
The sharing of a sense of purpose amongst lecturers.		1	2
Lecturers' limited experience in primary schools.		2	3
Co-ordination of the course.		3	1
The number of subjects comprising the course.		4	4
Subject - centred teaching.		5	7
The achievement of a balance between an educational foundation subject content and primary methodology.		6	5
Separation of senior and junior primary courses		7	6
Demands of the National Criteria.		7	11
The achievement of a primary focus.		8	5
Assessment by written exams.		9	9
The amount of contact time.		10	10
Influence of the universities.		11	8
Control by the college.		12	12

During interviews I tried to find out why lecturers were or felt so unempowered to bring about change . Responses to Items 4 j and k [Appendix 4 ] indicated that lecturers feel that they have freedom in the presentation of their courses. In response to probing it emerged that lecturers felt that certain changes would not be acceptable to the management of the college. Their concept of freedom seemed to revolve around the fact that they were not given explicit instructions on how courses are to be presented at the college i.e. there were no stated rules. It did not seem to have occurred to some respondents that freedom is constrained by less obvious factors . These interviews made lecturers reflect on their perception of freedom. I got the impression that they were almost surprised and a little uneasy at having to challenge their

assumptions about freedom . As a result, I feel sure that various traditional practices at the college will be interpreted in a new light instead of being accepted as a ' given'. Walker,[1983] refers to interview questions as 'powerful tools for change, sometimes more powerful than the recommendation or the conclusion [of the evaluation].'[ 157 ]

While the analysis of items 5 and 7 shows little change in response to these issues over a short period of time it does suggest a consistency in response to issues that are problematic. The high ranking of issues such as 'the sharing of a sense of purpose' and ' co-ordination of the course ' confirm my initial premise that the course lacks unity. In a discussion of the importance of understanding in school accountability, Nias [1981] argues that formal procedures are necessary to negotiate agreed goals amongst teachers who hold pluralist values. It would seem that such opportunities have not been available for the lecturers at the college to gain understanding of each others positions and to create a shared sense of purpose about teacher education in general and about primary education in particular. Stark [1989] also stresses the importance of lecturers gaining understanding of discipline - based diversity so that conflicts can become educationally productive. She suggests that shared goals can be arrived at by discussion of mutually valued outcomes.

Limited primary school experience has emerged as an issue of serious concern to most lectures. It was mentioned frequently in interviews and questionnaires as well as being ranked the second [or third] most problematic issue in items 7 [and 5]. Only 18% of the respondents had experience of teaching in a primary school. The remaining 82% had gained their school experience in high

schools. Lecturers remarked that they cannot refer to resource materials in use in the schools with any authority as they have such limited experience of how children respond to them. They also cannot supplement lectures with relevant examples or anecdotes. Two respondents are addressing the problem by involving groups of students in specific teaching tasks in schools. This approach is proving to be very successful but is difficult to organize without disrupting the timetable.

There was a small group of respondents [11%] who did not think that the lack of primary experience was a problem at all. They felt that common sense, motivated and intelligent reading and tutoring experience made up for this supposed lack. It was interesting to note that all of the lecturers who held this view named student indifference or lack of motivation in Item 3 [Appendix 2] as a factor that prevented them from achieving their aims. Preparation for teaching in the primary school was hardly mentioned in the aims of their courses which focussed mainly on subject knowledge and academic extension of the students. Failure by lecturers to acknowledge explicitly, the teaching and learning of their subject at a primary level is a source of much of the students' unhappiness. If one considers that the students' interpretation of relevance was being related to the classroom their lack of motivation in these subjects is understandable. The view that primary methodology is common sense and putting the responsibility on students for integrating the course components and applying these to primary education is a major source of student discontent. To some extent, one must sympathise with the lecturers position on the issue of primary experience. The recruitment of graduates for lecturing posts precludes most primary teachers from getting permanent positions in the college.

Most graduates come to the college from high schools and know very little about primary education. They are uneasy about tutoring in primary schools during teaching practice. Most seem to settle in to a position of regarding the primary school as a scaled -down high school. Lecturers could make a greater effort to be more informed , but many are not aware of the need to do so.

In response to Item 5 [ Appendix 2 ], it is interesting to note that lecturers ranked the achievement of a primary focus in positions 8 and 5 whereas students regarded this issue of prime importance in achieving relevance for the course.

#### G. Analysis of Item 2, [ Appendix 4].

Responses by lecturers to this item provided an overview of how they felt about the issues and concerns that emerged in interviews and the first questionnaire and are illustrated in Figure 6. Some of these have been discussed previously and will not be dealt with again.

The apparent lack of empowerment of lecturers to bring about change was again evident in this section of the questionnaire. In response to Item 1, over 90 % of lecturers agree that they are responsible for setting appropriate standards. Yet in Item d, 65% of lecturers agree that most students are not challenged by the course and 57% feel that students are not independent learners [ in response to Item a]. The obvious question which arises is why don' t lectures do something about making students independent learners and achieve the standards to which they aspire. As discussed previously there are constraining factors which lectures

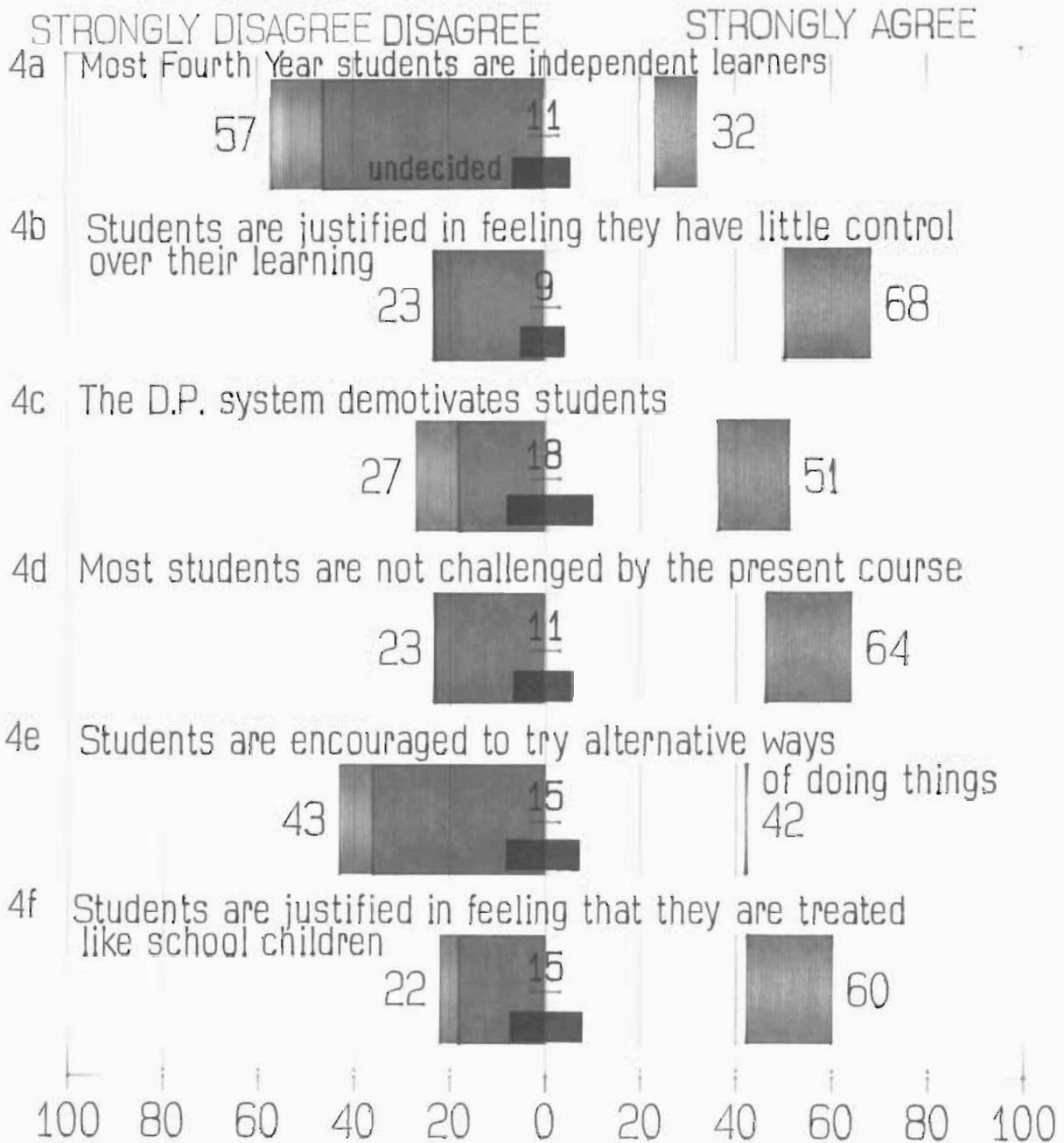
do not recognise. Perhaps conservatism plays a major role in inhibiting innovation. Item h showed that 96% of lectures think that college staff and students are conservative. Another question which arises is who is controlling the students' learning? Sixty-eight percent of lecturers agree that students are justified in feeling that they have little control over their learning. As lecturers ranked control by the college the least problematic issue, the answer must be that lecturers have control over students learning. Seventy-one percent of students indicated in response to Items 11 and 12 [ Appendix 4 ] that they have no control over their learning. They attributed this to lecturers and mentioned that alternative approaches are discouraged by lecturers awarding low marks, being very prescriptive or not accepting alternative viewpoints. The student responses included quotations to illustrate how they are given the impression that alternative approaches are not welcome. These included: 'at this college this is how it is done' and 'yes, you could approach it that way but -----'. In the latter example the student had written in for the ----- substitute 'my way is better.' Perhaps as far as the issue of control is concerned, the hidden curriculum is only hidden from the lectures. Heywood [1984] refers to the 'almost unconscious co-operation' which exists between teachers and pupils to achieve an acceptable standard of work. This 'co-operation' at the college is very conscious on the part of the students and I think that it is this pressure to 'co-operate' that they find so irksome.

In response to Item f, [ Appendix 4 ] one must ask who is treating the students like school children? Again, if control by the college is not considered to be problematic and lecturers are free to present their courses as they choose, by implication it

must be the lectures who are treating the students like school children. I was not able to acquire any further understanding of this issue in interviews with lecturers. They gave examples such as compulsory attendance at assembly and the college conference as being like school. Student interviews yielded a different perspective. They were insulted by some lectures giving them exercises to do as 'homework'. It was the term 'homework' that they objected to. More importantly, perhaps, was the comment that on the whole students are not treated as adults who are capable of thinking for themselves. They are 'spoken down to', not trusted or given responsibility to do things on their own. An interesting comment was 'as students we must be allowed to assume responsibility for our own actions - even our own failures'. In response to Item 13,[ Appendix 6] students said that all students should be treated differently, not just senior students. Seventy-five percent of students felt that, as senior students, they were not treated differently.

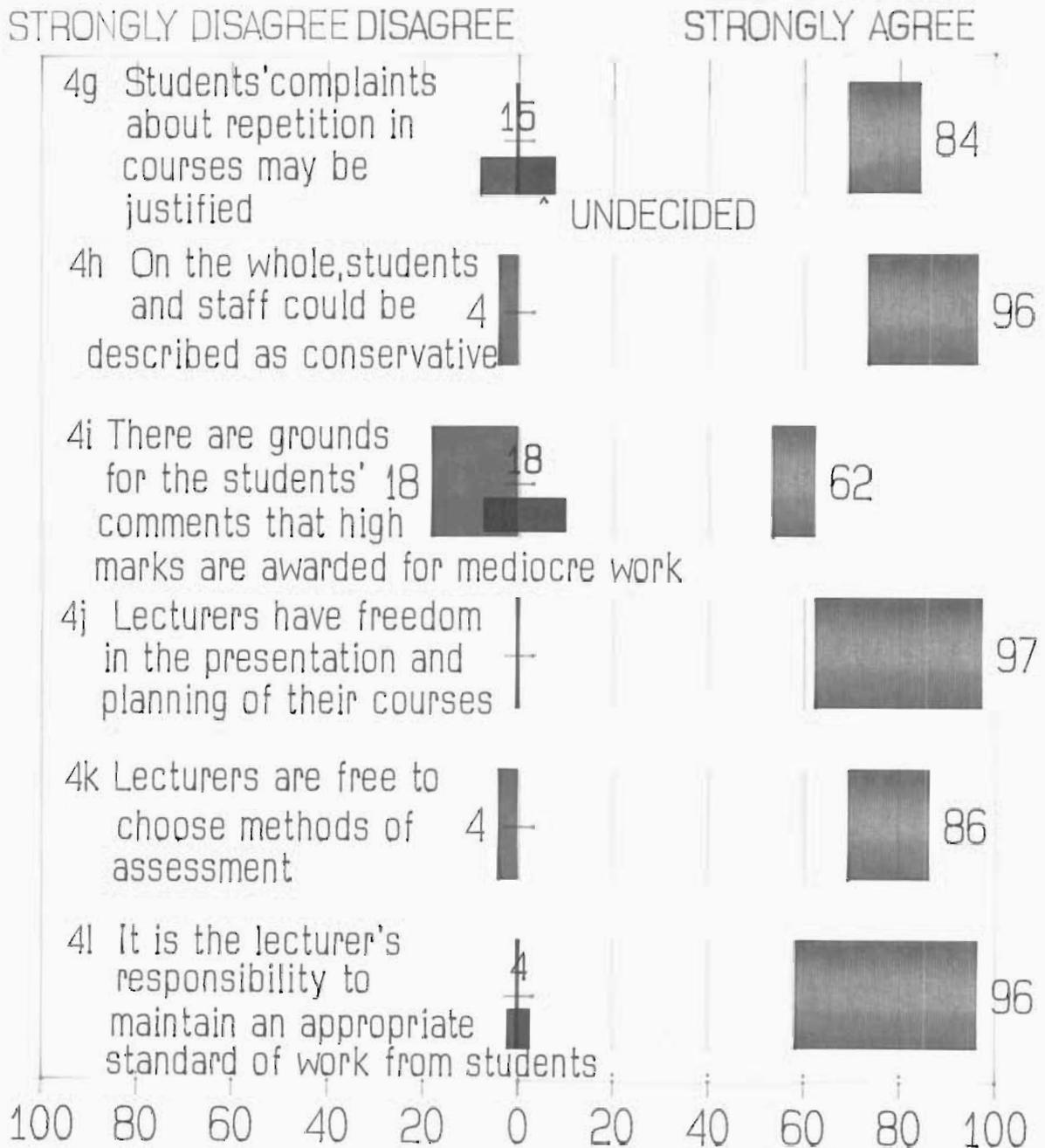
# FIGURE 6a

## ANALYSIS OF ITEM 4 APPENDIX 4



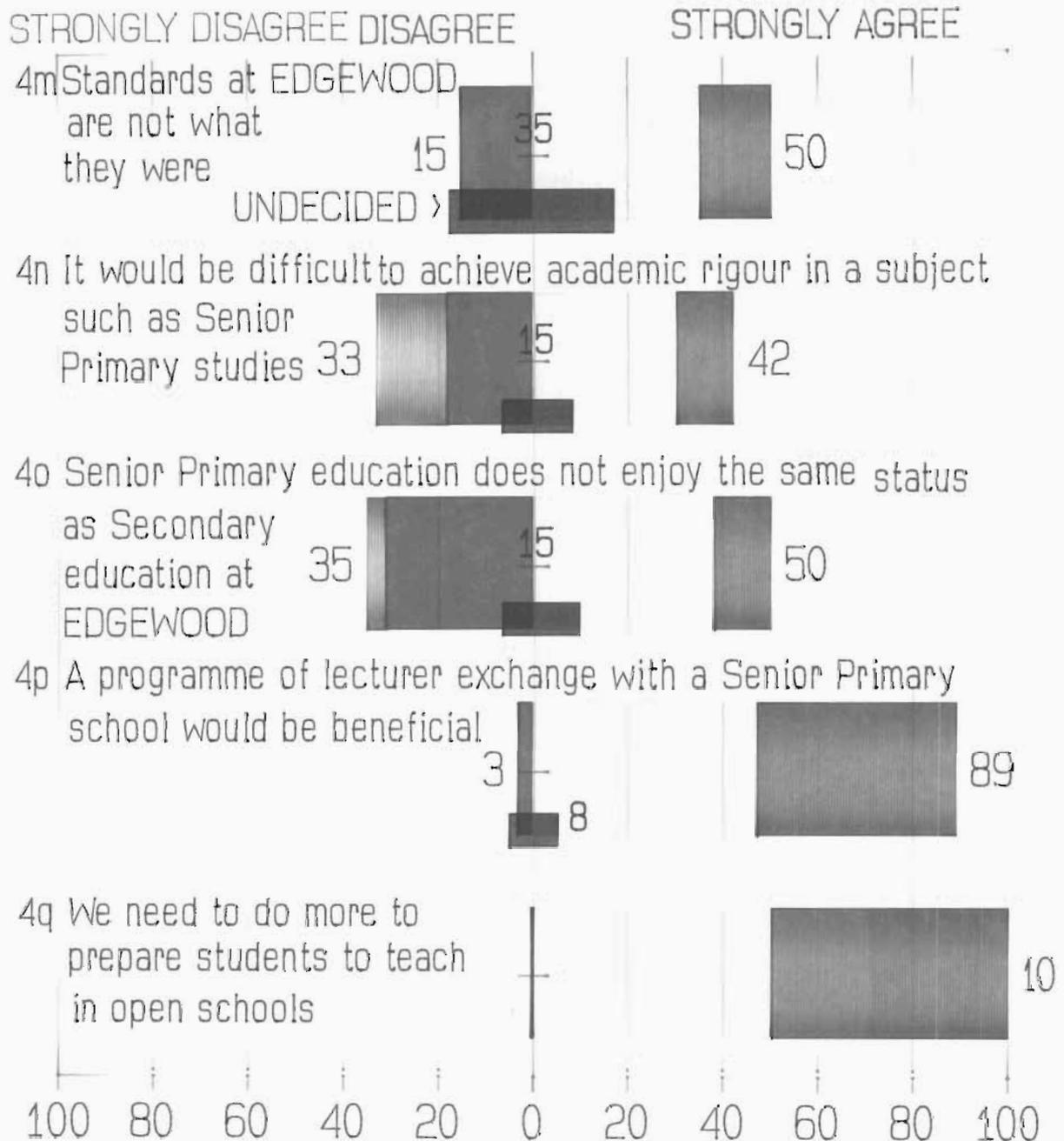
# FIGURE 6b

## ANALYSIS OF ITEM 4 APPENDIX 4



# FIGURE 6c

## ANALYSIS OF ITEM 4 APPENDIX 4



## H Conclusion

In concluding this chapter it is necessary to draw together the threads of the issues and concerns that emerged in the study .

The lack of a shared conceptual clarity in the content, structure and organisation of the course was a recurring theme amongst students and lecturers. The lack of an organising principle on which elements of the course fit together manifested itself in many of the issues and concerns cited in this chapter. Dearden [1981] suggests that the unifying thread necessary for course coherence could be vocational relevance. The obstacles to raising the consciousness of lecturers to the vocational relevance of the course centre around reluctance to accord pedagogy the same academic status as discipline studies. Even if vocational relevance is not accepted by all as a valid organising principle , the lack of any organising principle would be worse than one that has limited acceptance. This is evidenced by the secondary courses at the college which are focussed by their subject - centredness. Those lecturers who do not support a subject-centred approach for any phase of education are at least united in their opposition and have to think through the assumptions on which their opposition is based. The junior primary course at the college was often given as an example of a course that enjoys coherence. This coherence derives from the concentrated focus on the junior primary child. Each year of study of the course deals with a particular year of study in the junior primary school.

There has been some progress at the college in raising consciousness about senior primary relevance and this must be acknowledged. The course structure for first year students has been modified to include a subject called Senior Primary Studies.

It represents an amalgamation of education and curriculum studies. Some presenters of curriculum studies have transcended their subject boundaries and are presenting courses that are integrated in the real sense of the word.

Issues such as the lack of primary experience of lecturers and opportunities for lecturers to discuss primary education relate directly to the recruitment policy and organisational procedures in the college. Other issues and concerns, however are more complex. Why is it, for instance, that lecturers can identify and describe problems with the course but do not feel empowered to solve them? Have they got into the habit of objecting to things that they have no power to alter? Why are they unaware of their lack of power? Part of the answer seems to be that there are different levels of awareness of the assumptions upon which practice is based. Most lecturers seem to have expectations of authoritarianism and accept institutional practice as a given. The hegemony of bureaucracy and authoritarianism in schools and departments of education in South Africa socialises educators in values of privacy, territory and hierarchy. These values are held subconsciously and guide their thinking. Such educators do not know of any other way to think about education. They are not aware of any need to challenge institutional practice.

These attitudes and ways of thinking are not conducive to creating a climate for democratic evaluation. While this study has been valuable in bringing about greater understanding of the issues and concerns relevant to the course, I do not think that it has yet succeeded in engaging participants in critical reflection of the course and the effects of the values that are embedded in the organisation of the college. In describing the

scale of change necessary to democratise evaluation, Simons [1987] states :

'Privacy in one's teaching, assessing and curriculum planning have to give way to public documentation and analysis of theory and practice ; departmental interests have to be considered in relation to broader curriculum interests and educational critique ; working relationships have to be deduced from autonomy-based accountability rather than power-based responsibility. These values - the exposure of individual work to collective critique within a framework of professional equality - need to be underpinned by institutional processes which encourage their expression.

[245]

The study has shown that most lecturers respond to change and uncertainty by relying on authoritarian procedures. Reflection and negotiation are not part of their tradition. This had a profound effect on the study. I avoided authoritarian procedures by making participation voluntary and by inviting lecturers to attend feedback sessions. The response was a low level of participation and no-one attended the feedback meeting. A bizarre situation prevailed where I was tempted to use the authority of my hierarchical position to coerce lecturers to attend a meeting so that I could be democratic about reporting their views and opinions. My relationship with participants did not reach the stage of negotiating the release of evidence in the report. The few lecturers that I approached individually seemed surprised at the suggestion that they read my report before it was finalised. This sort of impasse raises the problem of how to break from an

authoritarian tradition to carry out a democratic evaluation. It highlights the difficulty of translating the principles of democratic evaluation into practice. Adelman [1984] notes that the form that an evaluation assumes and the role adopted by the evaluator are determined by the forms of management, lines of accountability and interpersonal politics which exist in the institution. He makes the point that the evaluator has little autonomy in these aspects.

A factor which probably contributed to the apathy of some lecturers to this study, was that they regarded it as an academic exercise conducted for an M. Ed degree and not of great relevance to the college or themselves.

While this study did not engage lecturers in democratic evaluation and critical reflection, it has succeeded in making some lecturers aware that there are other ways of doing and thinking about practices that are traditional at the college. This consciousness might well develop into more reflective practice in the future. What the study has shown is how easily and indelibly the assumptions which underpin an authoritarian system of education enter the thinking of people who perceive themselves to be free in their choice of an approach to education.

This study supports the view of Parlett and Hamilton [1972] that students do not merely respond to the content presented and the tasks assigned to them. Teaching and learning are influenced by the pressures, customs and styles of work that result from the complex interaction within the learning milieu. This is described as the network of cultural, social, institutional and psychological variables in an institution. Student learning

responds to overt and covert facets of the curriculum. This was seen in the way that lecturers aimed to make students independent learners and to produce work of a high standard. Other factors worked against these aims to produce dependent learners and students who do just enough work to get by.

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## Chapter Four.

## Questions for Reflection.

Traditionally, the final chapter of an evaluation contains recommendations. It would not be in keeping with the spirit of this evaluation, however, to conclude by recommending neat solutions for the issues and concerns which have emerged from the study. Some of these are very complex. Instead, key questions will be posed to reflect the essence of the issues which need to be addressed. It would also be presumptuous for the evaluator to decide on the most appropriate course of action. A more appropriate approach to bringing about change would seem to be by collegially explored options. Any autocratic management of change would contribute to the existing problems and not their solution.

1. How Can the College Achieve a Shared Sense of Purpose About Senior Primary Education ?

Lecturers ranked the lack of a shared sense of purpose as the most problematic issue besetting the senior primary course. Most comments by students and lecturers about the limitations of the course related to its lack of coherence. There is clearly a strong need for non-threatening opportunities for lecturers to articulate, explore and share their positions on primary education. Discipline-based diversity must be aired and understood so that mutually valued organisers for the course can be identified. At present, discussion is locked at the level of bargaining and bullying for own subject time on the time-table.

Existing forums for discussion, such as departmental meetings and heads of department meetings do not appear to be providing for this need. Subject socialisation of lecturers and the fact that some departments are staffed by as few as two lecturers means that there is unlikely to be a wide variety of opinion expressed at departmental meetings. Heads of department meetings tend to be used to discuss college business and not fundamental curriculum issues. It will not be easy to arrange forums for discussion amongst the 52 lecturers involved in the course. The existing informal staff development meetings would seem to provide suitable opportunities for discussion although they would have to be more frequent to achieve any progress on such a fundamental issue. A possible approach to provide for ongoing dialogue and the negotiation of meaning and understanding of conflict is described by Bonser and Grundy, [1988]. These authors suggest a process of reflection and deliberation in curriculum planning and action that encourages teachers to reflect individually and collectively on their practice in the light of curriculum theory. A central feature of this approach is that those affected by curriculum change have responsibility for making decisions and for evaluating the effects of the changes.

In planning a course of action to achieve a shared sense of purpose, lecturers must participate in decisions about the type of forum to be organised. Once a forum for discussion and communication is established, some of the other problems of the course, such as co-ordination of course programmes may fall away.

## 2. How can Students Be Made To Feel Responsible Partners in The Teaching And Learning Relationship At The College ?

Many students felt strongly that some lecturers treated them like school children. To some extent, this may be the result of an institutional climate that enables lecturers to treat students in the same way that they treated school pupils. Perhaps it is significant that the students 'allowed' themselves to be treated in a way that they felt was unacceptable. The process of critical review discussed later may result in these lecturers becoming aware that their relationship with students is inappropriate in a tertiary institute. Another solution might be to help students to develop negotiating skills and to make this an explicit part of their first year course.

Most students and lecturers agreed that the Duly Performed System is demotivating. There would seem to be a strong case for changing the emphasis from attendance at lectures to the satisfactory completion of assignments for senior students. Combined with a tutorial system giving students more responsibility this approach would give students more independence. It is more demanding of students and would extend the capable students while freeing lecturers to devote time to students needing more support. This form of course presentation would give students more scope to pursue their interests and discourage lecturers from being too prescriptive.

I recommend that the student body be represented on the senior primary committee and that lecturers be encouraged to involve students in the planning of courses.

### 3. How Can the College Forge Closer Links With Primary School Practice?

Both students and lecturers identified lecturers' lack of primary experience as a serious limitation. Clearly, the recruitment of lecturers must be reconsidered as the emphasis at the college moves from secondary to primary education with the admission of 200 additional students into the senior primary course. The college needs to facilitate the establishment of ways of working with schools to trial teaching materials produced by students and to team-teach particular sections of the school syllabus. To compensate for lecturers lack of primary experience, greater use could be made of visiting lecturers from nearby primary schools. Local teachers could be approached to act as tutors in a teacher/tutor programme. Eighty-nine percent of lecturers agreed that a programme of lecturer exchange with senior primary schools would be beneficial. The feasibility of such a programme must be investigated. The possibility of accommodating a senior primary school on campus should also be investigated, although the danger of such a school being regarded as 'the model' primary school should be born in mind. Less ambitious ways of forging links with primary practitioners would be the inclusion of teachers on committees concerned with the senior primary course and the fourth year project.

#### 4. How can Lecturers Be Encouraged to Move Away From Subject Centricity?

The study revealed that many lecturers have adopted a particular form of subject-centricity. These lecturers see their role to be the transmission of large amounts of information about their subject to students. They hold themselves responsible for providing all the information that students will need to teach their subjects. Lecturers who operate in this way need to be influenced by other lecturers at the college who select topics and use these to introduce students to the structure and principles of their subjects. In this way they help students to learn how to learn by giving them the resources to build on their existing knowledge once they are in the schools. It will be difficult to change lecturers' attitudes to the presentation of their courses. Traditional approaches become deeply entrenched and are based on particular values and views of knowledge. An optimistic view is that with the establishment of a non-threatening forum for ongoing dialogue, attitudes may change.

Another need to be addressed is the inclusion of more integrated areas of study in the course. The study of academic majors provides for in depth study of 2 subjects. This needs to be balanced by knowledge areas in which lecturers go beyond the confines of their disciplines in dealing with the way that primary children learn and construct knowledge.

Encouraging lecturers to be less subject-bound and more receptive to new 'subjects' such as Craft, Design and Technology is an enormous challenge. It requires a shift in thinking and the ability to cope with uncertainty, both of which are potentially very threatening. What is required initially is to get lecturers to comprehend the extent of their subject socialisation, and that there are other ways of viewing knowledge. It will not be a simple or easy task to overcome the effects of years of subject socialisation. This will have to be a long term goal.

#### 5. How Can Lecturers Be Empowered To Bring About The Changes That They Want ?

This study has shown that lecturers do not feel empowered to bring about changes in areas that are under their control.

A classic example was in the presentation of their courses. Lecturers felt that the courses should be more student-centred and emphasise teaching and learning to a greater extent. Students are supportive of these changes and yet they have not been implemented. Lecturers need to identify and reflect on those factors which constrain their freedom of choice at a personal and institutional level. I have suggested that the lack of empowerment may be the legacy of an educational system in which authoritarianism and bureaucracy prevail to deskill, demotivate and create a lack of confidence. It may also be that people cannot change for the better, things that they do not fully understand.

There may well be other factors preventing lecturers from feeling empowered.

It is imperative for the college that these factors be identified and that lecturers reflect on them critically to gain understanding of their own positions and of the culture of the college. Perhaps the starting point is to view the college in its wider socio-political context and to interpret the day-to-day pattern of college life in this wider context. We need to question whose interests particular procedures serve and upon what values official knowledge and practice are based.

We need to seek greater understanding of curriculum issues to make people feel more empowered and informed in their approaches to curriculum design. Implicit in each approach are ideologies, values and assumptions about the nature of knowledge and the purposes of education. In decisions about curriculum, it is not sufficient to simply decide what is appropriate in a technical and non-problematic way. The assumptions upon which decisions are made must be recognised. This sort of critical review would be fostered if curriculum evaluation were to be integrated into routine procedures of curriculum planning.

At present, most curriculum planning and review is done individually or within subject departments and does not adequately consider the ways that institutional organisation influences the lecturer-student relationship. The hidden curriculum remains hidden. The college needs to engage in collective deliberation and reflection to create a collegial concept of curriculum evaluation.

Three questions posed by Simons [1987] would provide an appropriate focus for such collective deliberation.

These are:

' To whose needs and interests does this school respond ?

What values are embodied in its curriculum and organisational arrangements and in its relationship to the world outside ?

Whose answers to these questions are to count ? '

[ 240 ]

Collective self-review will reveal conflicts arising from a plurality of values and beliefs. It is important that these conflicts are aired and options for change are explored that will take account of value pluralism. Any attempts to reach a consensus of values will fail.

A crucial question that cannot be avoided is how can a process of democratic self-evaluation be initiated in a college whose ethos was not conducive to the attempts at democratic evaluation in this study ? The answer would appear to be :- with great difficulty, if at all. Seriously, I think that there is reason for more optimism. The college will be admitting 200 students from Kwa-Zulu and this event is forcing everyone to re-evaluate what they are doing. A series of staff talk-shops has been planned to consider issues such as the college ethos, 'value system' and decision - making procedures .

I am hopeful that a process of institutional self-evaluation could grow out of these discussions and be sustained by the uncertainty that we will experience in adapting to a different student body. Such adaptation is forcing lecturers to 'problematise' issues that were regarded as non-problematic in the past. Thus the change in the nature of the student body may be a catalyst for fundamental change in the way that the people of the college think about the issues and concerns identified in this study.

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APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1

## Introductory Letter to Lecturers.

52 Ronalds Rd

Kloof

3610

26 April

Dear

As you know I am studying for an M Ed. and have chosen the Senior Primary Curriculum at the college for my research topic. I have chosen this area of the college curriculum for study as it is the area most likely to be affected by change in the future. Another reason for researching this course is that it is difficult for individual lecturers to get an overview of the whole SP course. Our involvement is usually limited to our own subjects and the only people who have an experience of the course as a whole are the students. My study aims to develop an understanding of the SP course in its entirety and to guide decisions about curriculum change.

As a lecturer/HOD involved in the SP course I invite you to participate in the research by sharing your views about the strengths and weaknesses of this course. Participation will involve:

1. Filling in a short questionnaire,
2. Meeting briefly with other members of your department to raise or discuss issues relevant to the SP course,

### 3. Filling in a final questionnaire.

The research will also involve 2nd and 4th year SP students. During the research, I plan to have report-back sessions to inform interested participants of progress and preliminary findings.

I am doing this research in my capacity as a higher degree student at the University of Natal and not as a Senior Head of Department at the college. Your participation is voluntary and participants are assured of confidentiality and anonymity. [In the write-up subjects will be referred to as subject A, B etc if necessary]

Please consider sharing your expertise and ideas by participating in this research. I am sure that the knowledge and understanding gained during the evaluation will be of use to all of us.

Sincerely,

Ann Todd

APPENDIX 2

Follow up Letter and Questionnaire for Lecturers.

52 Ronalds Rd

Kloof

17 June 1991.

Dear Colleagues,

Now that we know that there is going to be a next year for the college, I would like to continue with my research. Please be so kind as to fill in this questionnaire and return it to my post pigeon hole .

Later in the week I will send out some questions for group discussion and next week I will ask you to complete the final questionnaire.

I really do appreciate your assistance . Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Ann Todd.



SECTION B. THE SENIOR PRIMARY COURSE AS A WHOLE.

1. Are you familiar with the structure of the Senior Primary

Course ? YES [ ]

NO [ ]

2. In your opinion what are the strengths of the present course ?

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3. In your opinion, what are the weaknesses of the present course ?

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4. What major changes in either the structure, or the organisation, or the presentation of the course would you recommend ?

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5. What **difficulties** would you anticipate in bringing about these changes ? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Are there any aspects of teacher training that you consider **essential preparation** for teaching Senior Primary children that are **omitted** from the present course ?

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7. Please **select** those issues that you feel are **problematic** within the present course from the following list. Please **RANK** the issues selected by assigning them a number. 1 should be assigned to the issue that is most problematic. Please **elaborate** on the reasons for your response.

ISSUE	RANK	ELABORATION
a. Lecturers with limited experience in primary schools.		
b. The number of subjects comprising the course.		
c. The amount of contact time.		
d. Co-ordination of the course.		

- e. The achievement of a primary school focus for the course.
- f. Subject-centered teaching.
- g. Total separation of senior and junior primary courses.
- h. The sharing of a sense of purpose amongst lecturers.
- i. Assessment by written exams.
- j. Influence of universities
- k. Demands of National criteria.
- l. Control exercised by the college
- m. The achievement of a balance between:  
  
an educational foundation,  
subject content  
and primary methodology.

**SECTION C. THE CONTRIBUTION OF YOUR SUBJECT TO THE COURSE.**

1a. What do you aim to achieve through the courses that you offer to students majoring in your subject ?

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1b. To what extent do you feel that these aims are being achieved ?

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2a. What do you aim to achieve through the courses that you offer to students taking your subject as a 'non-major' ?

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2b. To what extent do you feel that these aims are being achieved ?

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3. What do you consider to be the inhibiting factors which may be preventing you from achieving any of these aims ?

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4. Any other comments ?

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THANK YOU.

## APPENDIX 3.

## Letter About Group Discussions.

52 Ronalds Rd

Kloof

20 June 1991

Dear Colleague,

Thank you for completing the first questionnaire about our Senior Primary curriculum. The next stage of the research involves the sharing of views and perspective. Please meet with another or other members of your department to discuss and reflect on the following issues :-

- 1] What should the college aim for in the education of teachers for the Senior Primary phase ?
- 2] To what extent does your department contribute to these aims at present ? In what way?
- 3] In the presentation of your course, what approaches seem to be most appropriate to achieving these aims ?
- 4] What changes would make it easier for your department to achieve these aims ?

The purpose of this discussion is to encourage reflection on our Senior Primary curriculum and to heighten awareness of the relevant issues. It is not intended that the discussions should result in consensus or that they last longer than 20-30 minutes. As I do not require any formal feedback from these discussions an informal chat over a cup of tea would

suffice. Feedback will be obtained in the final questionnaire to be sent out next week.

Thank you for your participation,

Sincerely,

Ann Todd.

P.S. Yes, I DO remember how frantic the end of term is and how stretched everyone is. If you cannot fit this discussion in this term, please try to get the final questionnaire to me by 25 July if you can.

APPENDIX 4

Letter and Final Questionnaire.

52 Ronalds Rd

Kloof

25 June 1991

Dear Colleague,

Here is the final questionnaire for my research on the Senior Primary curriculum. It includes some of the issues that arose from the student questionnaire. Please complete it after you have discussed and reflected on the 4 questions contained in my previous letter written on 20 June. Please put the completed questionnaire in my post pigeon hole by 25 July.

Thank you for your help and friendship in supporting me in this research. You have all been so pleasant when I have badgered you for interviews or to fill in my 'dumb questionnaires' [Lyons, 1991].

Enjoy your well-deserved holiday.

Regards,

Ann Todd.



## SECTION B

1. Which methods of presentation occupy **MORE** [M] or **LESS** [L] time in your course?

- a] Lecturing [ ]  
 b] Individual self-study [ ]  
 c] Group self-study [ ]  
 d] Guided reading [ ]

2. Please indicate which of the following **methods of assessment** you use. Rank them according to the **frequency of use**.

	USE	RANK
a] Traditional tests	[ ]	[ ]
b] Open book tests	[ ]	[ ]
c] Orals	[ ]	[ ]
d] Seminars	[ ]	[ ]
e] Preparation of teaching materials.	[ ]	[ ]
f] Preparation of posters	[ ]	[ ]
g] Other [name] _____	[ ]	[ ]

3. Would you agree that the following should receive **equal emphasis** in the Senior Primary course ?

- a] personal growth of the student  
 b] primary methodology  
 c] specialised subject knowledge

YES [ ] NO [ ]

If you answered **NO** please indicate which aspects you feel should receive :

MOST EMPHASIS \_\_\_\_\_ LEAST EMPHASIS \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4a	Most Fourth Year students are independent learners.					
b	Students are justified in feeling that they little control over their learning.					
c	The D.P. system demotivates students.					
d	Most students are not challenged by the present course.					
e	Students are encouraged to try alternative ways of doing things					
f	Students are justified in feeling that they are treated like school children.					
g	Students' complaints about repetition in courses may be justified					
h	On the whole, students and staff could be described as conservative					
i	There are grounds for students' comments that high marks are awarded for mediocre work					
j	Lecturers have freedom in the planning and presentation of their courses					
k	Lecturers are free to choose methods of assessment					
l	It is the lecturer's responsibility to maintain an appropriate standard of work from students					
m	Standards at Edgewood are not what they used to be					
n	It would be difficult to achieve academic rigour in a subject such as Senior Primary studies					
o	Senior Primary education does not enjoy the same status as Secondary education at Edgewood					
p	A programme of lecturer exchange with a Senior Primary school would be beneficial					
q	We need to do more to prepare students to teach in open schools					

5. Please **RANK** the issues that you feel are problematic within the present course. [ 1 - most problematic]  
[ 13 -least problematic]

		Rank
a	Lecturers' limited experience in primary schools	
b	The number of subjects in the course	
c	The amount of contact time	
d	Co-ordination of the course	
e	The achievement of a primary school focus in the course	
f	Traditional subject-centered teaching	
g	Separation of senior and junior primary courses	
h	A shared sense of purpose amongst lecturers	
i	Assessment by written exams	
j	Influence of universities	
k	Demands of National Criteria	
l	Control exercised by the college	
m	The achievement of a balance between : an educational background subject content and primary methodology.	

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

Ann Todd

25/06/91

## APPENDIX 5

## Follow up Letter.

52 Ronalds Rd  
Kloof  
4 August 1991.

Dear Colleague,

I have reached a stage in my research on the Senior Primary Curriculum of:-

- 1] being desperate to get more of questionnaire 2 returned, and
- 2] being in a position to provide some feedback from questionnaire 1 [for lecturers] and from the student questionnaire .

If you are interested in the feedback I will be in the staffroom on Thursday, 8 August at 8.30 before the meeting with school principals. I would welcome your comments and discussion.

I have received 53% of the 1st questionnaire back and only 40% of the second one so PLEASE return those that are outstanding. [The student return is 60% !] There are spare copies of the questionnaires on top of the cupboard next to the staff post boxes if you have mislaid yours.

Sincerely,

Ann Todd.

## APPENDIX 6

Letter and Questionnaire for Students.

52 Ronalds Rd

Kloof

17 June 1991

Dear Fourth Year Student,

I am doing an M.Ed. degree and have chosen to research the Senior Primary Curriculum at the college for my dissertation. The insight gained from such a study will, I feel, be helpful in making decisions about curriculum changes in the near future.

You have experienced four years of the present curriculum and your knowledge will be invaluable to me. I am particularly keen to know what you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of the course and what changes you would recommend.

Would you be prepared to share your knowledge and views on the course by filling in a questionnaire on Thursday, 20 June, after Mrs S.Ballard's talk? It will take 15 minutes of your time. Please consider participating as you are the only people who have experienced the course as a whole and your input will be an important part of the research. You are assured of confidentiality and anonymity and your participation is voluntary.

Yours sincerely,

Ann Todd.

CONFIDENTIAL

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FOURTH YEAR STUDENTS  
THE SENIOR PRIMARY COURSE.

Please assist with my research on the **The Senior Primary Course** by filling in this questionnaire.  
Please record your responses by placing a / in the appropriate space.

FEMALE [ ]                      MALE [ ]

1. What do you consider to be the **strengths** of the present course?

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-----  
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2. What do you consider to be the **limitations** of the present course?

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-----  
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3. What **changes** would you suggest to overcome these limitations?

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4a. In your opinion do the following aspects receive equal emphasis in the present course?

SUBJECT CONTENT	PRIMARY METHODOLOGY	THEORETICAL FOUNDATION IN EDUCATION
--------------------	------------------------	--

YES [ ]

NO [ ]

4b. If you answered NO please rank the 3 aspects according to the degree of emphasis given to them in the present course.

most emphasis \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 least emphasis \_\_\_\_\_

5. What forms of preparation do you feel would be most relevant to you in preparation for teaching in a primary school?

-----  
 -----  
 -----

To what extent were these included in your course ?

most were included [ ]  
 some were included [ ]  
 hardly any were included [ ]

6. What do you think should be emphasised in the aims of the present course ?

-----  
 -----  
 -----

7. Please indicate which of the following activities occupy

[M] MORE, [L] LESS time at college during a typical day:

- a. Listening to the lecturer and taking notes [ ]
- b. Individual self-study [ ]
- c. Whole group discussions with the lecturer [ ]
- d. Group activities [ ]
- e. Any other activity \_\_\_\_\_ [ ]

8. Please indicate which of the following activities occupy

[M] MORE, [L] LESS time after college :

- a. Preparing for tests [ ]
- b. Preparing essays [ ]
- c. Preparing teaching materials [ ]
- d. Preparing seminars [ ]
- e. Reading to supplement lectures [ ]
- f. Any other activity? \_\_\_\_\_ [ ]

9. Are you able to keep up to date with your college commitments ?

YES [ ]

NO [ ]

What factors make it difficult for you to keep up to date?

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-----  
-----  
-----

10. Are you usually satisfied with the **standard** of your work?

YES [ ]

NO [ ]

If you answered **no**, what factors interfere with the quality of your work?

-----  
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-----

11. Do you feel that you have any **control** over your learning in this course? YES [ ] NO [ ] Why do you feel this way?

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-----  
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12. Are you ever given the impression that there is **one particular way** of doing things and that different approaches are not welcomed?

YES [ ]

NO [ ]

If you answered **YES**, does this happen: [select one response only]

OFTEN ? [ ]

ABOUT HALF OF THE TIME ? [ ]

OCCASIONALLY ? [ ]

How are you given the impression that alternative approaches are not welcome?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. As a senior student do you feel that you have been given more independence ? YES [ ]

NO [ ]

In your opinion, should senior students be treated differently ? YES [ ]

NO [ ]

If so, in what way?

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14 As a result of your four-year course do you feel adequately prepared to teach next year ? YES [ ]

NO [ ]

Please give reasons for your response.

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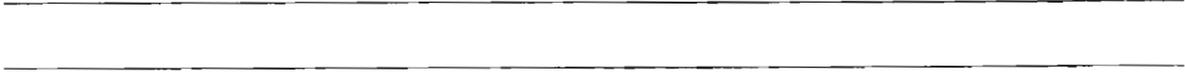
15. As a result of your course do you feel that you have matured as a person ? YES [ ] NO [ ]

Please give reasons for your response.

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Any other comments?

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.

A. Todd

17/06/91.