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CORRESPONDENCE EDUCATION FOR TEACHERS:
A SURVEY OF TEACHERS STUDYING WITH THE
ADVANCED STUDIES FOR TEACHERS UNIT

*A thesis presented to fulfil the
requirements for the degree in
Master in Education at Massey
University.*

*J. E. McLellan
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines reasons for student persistence in and withdrawal from correspondence courses offered by the Department of Education Advanced Studies for Teachers Unit.

The 1979 course members who completed a mailed questionnaire provided demographic, educational and attitudinal data. Student reaction to the A.S.T. Unit programme and Continuing Teacher Education were investigated. Reported advantages and disadvantages of this form of teacher training were analysed and the relationships between demands of work and study commitments were examined.

The findings tended to indicate four variables that contributed to the probability of persistence. They were: (i) prior educational experience; (ii) the amount of support given; (iii) the number of papers taken; and (iv) the present teaching position.

Although factors related to job circumstances and characteristics of teachers caused students to withdraw, many course members withdrew because of reasons that the A.S.T. Unit might have been able to counter. Course members attributed reasons for withdrawal to insufficient communication, a restrictive teaching method and insufficient time to meet assignment dates.

A general conclusion was that A.S.T. course members were seeking a more open form of learning able to provide a freedom of pace and an element of control by the learner over the learning process.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been a growing recognition of the need for increased provision of educational courses which would enable practising teachers to continue their professional study beyond the point provided by the standard teachers college programme.

Admittedly, local, regional and national inservice courses; mostly from one to five days' duration and organised in conjunction with various educational bodies, have been playing a considerable part in providing Continuing Teacher Education. Such courses have constituted an ongoing programme that has permitted the introduction of new strategies in curriculum development and in classroom management. However, by their very nature they cannot accommodate teachers who wish to undertake protracted and intensive specialised study. In the past the main recourse open to such people was university work either internal or extramural - usually towards a degree or diploma.

Following several committees of enquiry, namely *The Continuing Education of Teachers* (1973), *The Certification of Teachers* (1976) and *The Review of Teacher Training* (1979); and overtures from the New Zealand Education Institute, the Department of Education has recently extended its inservice training programme to provide correspondence courses somewhat similar to some university programmes.

The Department's Advanced Studies for Teachers Unit, an out-growth of the Correspondence School, now offers some 98 papers from 20 subject areas. The Department of Education's expressed intention is to expand and develop the A.S.T. Unit and offer a greater range of courses for teachers.

However over the past six years the rate of withdrawal from existing courses has increased to the extent that in 1978, 58 percent of the A.S.T. Diploma in Teaching students withdrew before completion. Clearly, if the A.S.T. Unit's work is to be turned to good (and economical) effect, the smaller the withdrawal rate the better. Equally clearly, any attempt to reduce the rate of withdrawal is likely to be more effective if it is directed at the causes of withdrawal.

With the exception of a small scale study conducted at the end of 1977 by Wagner (the then Supervisor of the Unit) there has been no systematic research carried out that explains the withdrawal phenomenon.

The present study then, attempts to discover why teachers who study at a distance tend to withdraw from Advanced Studies for Teachers Diploma in Teaching courses. In doing so, it sets out to identify:

- (i) what hindered course members in 1979 from completing Diploma in Teaching studies; and

- (ii) what their attitudes towards Continuing Teacher Education were.

A questionnaire was prepared and posted to everyone enrolled in the Unit's Diploma in Teaching courses in 1979. In total 1,054 (80.3 percent) of the 1,312 course members surveyed, completed and returned questionnaires.

The study which was commissioned by the Department of Education is predicated on the assumption that information provided by participants in courses may be useful in improving retention rates. However it is not the purpose of the study to test this thesis - rather it attempts to establish an information base (derived from perceptions of course members) that might be appropriate for doing so.

This report of the study has been arranged in five chapters. The first chapter attempts to inform the reader:

- (i) of the emergence of the A.S.T. Unit;
- (ii) its existing organisation; and
- (iii) the withdrawal problem.

Chapter Two reviews the literature on withdrawal. Chapter Three gives an account of the research procedures used. This is followed by Chapter Four with the results of the survey. To end, Chapter Five reviews the findings and makes some speculations on changes.

CHAPTER ONE

This chapter outlines the changing nature of Continuing Teacher Education and the effects changes have had on the A.S.T. Unit. This is followed by an account of the workings of the A.S.T. Unit, the courses that are offered, the method of course presentation and the system of communication used. Finally, the chapter provides a description of the problem of withdrawal, and compares the A.S.T. Unit withdrawal problem with that of other distance education institutions.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF CONTINUING TEACHER EDUCATION

The Correspondence School's part-time courses for the Diploma in Teaching provide teachers with an opportunity to improve their professional competence and their understanding of educational principles and techniques. The courses were first introduced in 1962 at a time when there were few opportunities available for teachers to undertake extra-mural classroom-relevant study.

Continuing Teacher Education courses that had been provided were mainly on-campus, inservice training courses and did not provide formal qualifications.

It was not until the early 1960s that Massey University offered extra-mural courses able to be credited towards a recognised qualification. At the same time however, the Correspondence School began to provide the Diploma in Teaching courses. In recent years, the latest development in this field has been the introduction, by Teachers Colleges, of part-time courses for teachers. This most recent provision represented a break with convention because until 1977, teachers colleges had been precluded from such activities.

Following proposals contained in the Advisory Council's report on *The Continuing Education of Teachers* (1973), the Hill Report on *The Certification of Teachers* (1976) and *The Review of Teacher Training* (1979), the Correspondence School is changing its practices in line with some of the recommendations made. Old courses are being revised and new courses are being implemented. The new courses vary: including papers such as 'Planning the School Library' and 'Evaluation and the Classroom Teacher'. All recently introduced courses have been designed to integrate theory and practice rather than keep them separate as was the case with the earlier subject based courses. In addition, some of the new courses, for example, on adult education ('The Adult Learner', 'The Adult Learning Experience' and 'The Adult Teaching and Learning Process') may have more appeal to Polytechnic and Community College teachers.

Change has also taken place in the administration and the naming of the organisation. The new courses are now administered by

The Advanced Studies for Teachers Unit. Although funded through the Correspondence School the A.S.T. Unit is in all other respects considered to be an independent body. Thus it has some degree of autonomy to develop, administer and tutor for the following: 'Diploma in Teaching', 'External Trained Teachers Certificate', 'Early Childhood Education Certificate', 'Certificate of Social Education and Training of the Handicapped', 'Qualification Courses for Secondary Teachers of Art, Physical Education, Music and Limited Educational Achievers', and 'Service Increment' courses.

THE ADVANCED STUDIES FOR TEACHERS UNIT

CHARACTERISTICS AND ORGANISATION

The Unit, situated on the campus of Wellington Teachers College is staffed by one supervisor, eleven full-time internal tutors and three clerical assistants. As well the Unit employs a network of over 90 part-time external tutors for Diploma in Teaching courses - a network that extends throughout the country. Most of the external tutoring undertaken is done by Teachers' College staff as part of their teaching duties.

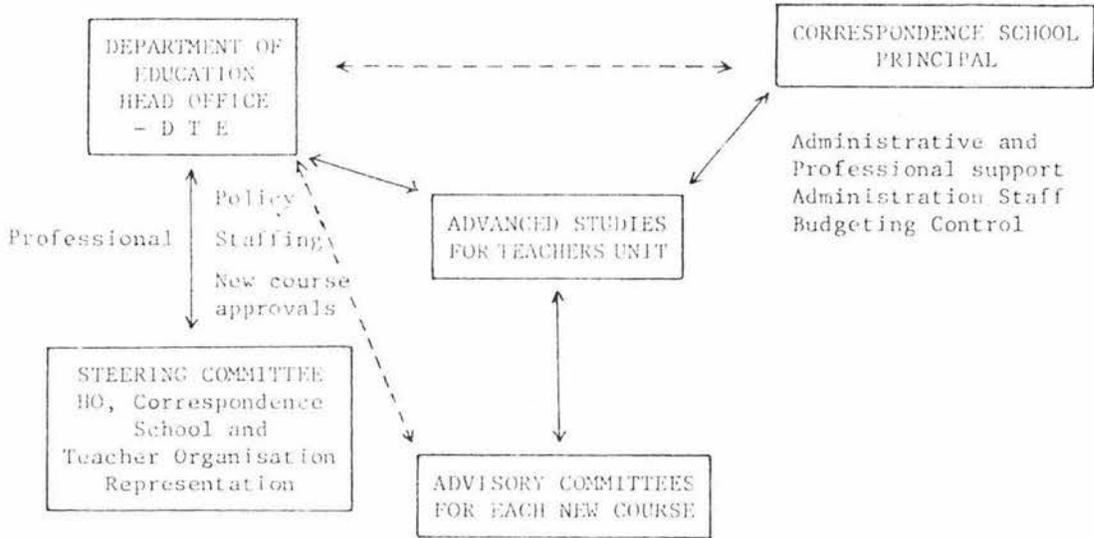
The Unit's eleven internal tutors not only teach but spend a large part of their time carrying out course administration and initiating the development of new courses.

However the Teacher Education Division of the Department of Education plays the major role in determining new courses. Policy guidelines are established through a Steering Committee set up for this purpose. The Steering Committee consisting of representatives of the Department of Education and various teaching organisations meet together to direct the development of new courses.

Once a new course has been recommended, an Advisory Committee is then set up to advise on the content and structure of new courses. Evaluation procedures, text books, writers and any other matters pertinent to the managing of the new course all become part of the Advisory Committee's responsibility. The Department's Teacher Education Division also has responsibility for the administration and staffing of the Unit.

The Correspondence School provides the funding for the Unit and exercises control over financial matters. The Correspondence School also provides support for typing and printing. Figure 1 below outlines the formal (solid line) and informal (dotted line) communication links between the various institutional bodies, committees and the A.S.T. Unit.

FIGURE 1: FORMAL AND INFORMAL COMMUNICATION LINKS BETWEEN THE A.S.T. UNIT AND OTHER BODIES*



* Source: *A.S.T. Unit Tutors Handbook*, page 9.

COURSE PREPARATION

Originally, Diploma in Teaching courses or units as they were then known, were made up of two papers. Paper A was related to theory and Paper B to the practice and application of the theory. Students were required to enrol for both papers at the same time in order to complete the unit.

With the revising of these earlier courses all 98 papers can now be taken independently. This means that there are no pre-requisites for any paper. Each paper remains a course of study in itself. Although this makes some difficulties for course writers, it does allow prospective students to choose from a wider range of papers.

Writers recommended by the Advisory Committee are employed on a contract basis and are required to follow the guidelines given in the A.S.T. Tutors' Handbook. The guidelines require that each course (paper) shall consist of an introductory booklet, six study guides and a list of assignment topics. Guidelines are also given on the mode of presentation. Writers are encouraged to use cartoons, diagrams, illustrations and photos where appropriate. Tapes are also recommended. Several of the newer courses have taped commentaries that supplement the study guide material.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The requirements laid out in the A.S.T. Unit Calendar state that in order to qualify for the award of a Diploma in Teaching a

teacher must:

- (a) Hold a New Zealand Trained Teachers Certificate or have completed the requirements for the issue of that certificate and either:
 - (b) (i)) Have been credited with not less than two-thirds of a recognised university degree or university diploma which has a course of three or more years; or
 - (ii)) Have been credited with not less than one-third of a recognised university degree or university diploma which has a course of three or more years plus such other papers and credits in other examinations, courses and assignments approved for the purpose as, in the opinion of the Director-General, when taken together with the university credits are the equivalent of (b) (i); or
 - (iii)) Have been credited with not less than five units of any recognised eight unit university degree.
- (3) A university degree or university diploma classified in qualification groups IIIa/Q3/H3 is recognised for Diploma in Teaching purposes under sub-paragraphs (2) (b) (i) and (ii) above. The eight unit degree courses currently offered in New Zealand and recognised for the purpose of sub-paragraph (2) (b) (iii) are the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees at the University of Otago. Other university qualifications must be referred to Head Office for a decision.
- (4) Seven approved papers taken through the Advanced Studies for Teachers Unit are regarded as equivalent to one-third of a three year university degree for the purpose of the award of a Diploma in Teaching.
- (5) Qualifications other than Advanced Studies for teachers papers may be acceptable, but each qualification is considered individually. The general requirement of equivalence to (2) (b) (i) applies.
- (6) Applications for the award of a Diploma in Teaching under the provisions outlined above are made to the appropriate regional office of the department and must be supported by a transcript of the teacher's academic record at the University showing the credits granted towards the degree or diploma and evidence of other credits including papers taken through the Advanced Studies for Teachers Unit.
- (7) The salary provisions are unchanged. However, a

certificated teacher who has been credited with six-ninths of a degree and who, including credits obtained other than by university examination, qualifies on that basis for group ii/Q2/H2 salary will now be eligible for a Diploma in Teaching without meeting additional requirements. A secondary teacher with five units of an eight unit degree still qualifies for group (ii) either from the date of the award of a Diploma in Teaching, or, if uncertificated, on completion of six-ninths of a degree in terms of the salary determination.

More specifically, Table 1 below shows the possible combinations of university and A.S.T. Unit papers that combine for a Diploma in Teaching.

TABLE 1: DIPLOMA IN TEACHING COMPONENTS FROM 9 AUGUST 1979*
Evidence of Credits Required

Three year degree consisting of:	Credit for $\frac{3}{4}$ of university degree of three or more years	=	University degree papers A minimum credit of $\frac{1}{2}$ of a degree of three or more years is required	+	Advanced Studies for teachers' papers or equivalent
21 papers e.g. Bachelor of Education (Massey)	14 papers	=	7 papers	+	7
			8		6
			9		5
			10		4
			11		3
			12		2
			13		1
22 papers e.g. Bachelor of Arts (Auckland)	15 papers	=	8 papers	+	7
			9		6
			10		5
			11		4
			12		3
			13		2
			14		1
25 papers e.g. Bachelor Degree (Waikato)	17 courses	=	9 courses	+	7
			10		7
			11		6
			12		5
			13		4
			14		3
			15		2
16	1				
27 papers e.g. Bachelor of Education (Otago)	18 papers	=	9 papers	+	7
			10		7
			11		6
			12		6
			13		5
			14		4
			15		3
16	2				
17	1				
Courses totalling 108 credits e.g. Bachelor of Arts (Victoria)	Courses totalling 72 credits	=	Courses totalling 36 credits	+	7
			40		6
			42		5
			48		4
			54		3
			60		2
			66		1

* Source: A.S.T. Calendar, 1981, pages 29-30.

METHOD OF INSTRUCTION

All A.S.T. Unit Diploma in Teaching courses observe the same organisational procedure. Courses start with enrolment on or before 20 February and conclude in late October of the same year with an external exam taken. For each paper in which the student is enrolled, he receives six study guides and is required to write four assignments over the thirty week period of study. To qualify for 'terms', the student must complete all assignments before the external examination can be sat.

The method of instruction is essentially didactic. Content material is divided into parts to suit the six study guides. An introductory booklet describes the course and informs the reader on the content, the mode of presentation and the order of topics. A list of assignment topics is sent along with the introductory booklet.

Activities during the study year follow the set pattern shown in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2: DIPLOMA IN TEACHING CALENDAR 1981*

20 February	Enrolment closes	Students are sent two postings of study material. The first is on enrolment. The second posting of study material will be made during the weeks 11-22 May.
20		
27		
6 March		
13		
20		
27	Notified of tutor's name and address	
3 April	First Assignment due	
10		
17		
24		
1 May		
8		
15		
22	Second Assignment due	Second posting
29		
5 June		
12		
19		
26		
2 July		
10	Third Assignment due	
17		
24		
31		
7 August		
14		
21		
28	August Vacation Seminars	
4 September	Fourth Assignment due	
1 October	Terms Determined	
14 October	Examinations Begin	

* Source: A.S.T. Calendar, 1981.

Each study guide is considered by the A.S.T. Unit to entail approximately twenty-five hours of student work - usually spread over five weeks. The level of difficulty for each paper is considered by the Unit to be equivalent to a 100 level or first year university paper.

Most courses contain an element of classroom observation and practice. Thus in order to meet the practical requirements of an assignment, access to a classroom is virtually necessary. Course members are also encouraged to attend seminars arranged in local Teachers Colleges. A minimum of six course members is required before the seminars (mostly of three days' duration) can be organised.

COURSE CONTENT

Diploma in Teaching courses cover many subject areas in the primary and secondary school curriculum and include among them others on aspects of teaching deemed to be important for inclusion by the Steering Committee. The total number offered to date is 98. Titles and Codes of 1981 A.S.T. Diploma in Teaching courses are as listed in the 1981 Calendar published by the Unit (see Appendix 1). Some general flavour of their character can be gained from the section headings listed below:

Mathematics Education	Science Education
Reading	Special Education
Language and Literature Studies	Music Education
Social Studies	Physical Education
Maori	Professional Education
Evaluation	Adult Education
Home Economics	Library Studies
Technical Subjects	Educational Administration
Commercial Subjects	Education Outside the Classroom
Art Education	Health Education

Diploma in Teaching courses are advertised in the *New Zealand Education Gazette*. Course information is also given in *National Education*, the *Journal of the New Zealand Primary Teachers Educational Institute*, the *Journal of the Post Primary Teachers Association* and an A.S.T. course brochure. From 1981 a Course Calendar will also be sent to every school in the country.

PROCEDURES

COMMUNICATIONS

Once students have enrolled, the Unit sends an introductory

booklet, three or more study guides, a list of assignment topics and other information (if any) to assist the course member to cope with studying at a distance. The intending student is also given the name of his tutor.

At the close of enrolment, a list of course members is sent to each tutor. It then becomes the tutor's responsibility to make contact with each course member assigned to him.

Assignments marked by the external tutors are then sent to the A.S.T. Unit which records details and returns them to the student.

WITHDRAWAL

Students may, for one reason or another, withdraw, either partially or completely. A.S.T. policy stipulates that the maximum number of papers taken must not exceed four. Thus a student could conceivably drop three and still continue with the remaining paper.

For the purposes of the present study, the term 'complete withdrawers' applies to students who have dropped all papers taken. On past evidence, the incidence of complete withdrawal is considerably greater than the incidence of partial withdrawal. Students who are not able to continue with papers may take the initiative and notify this decision to their tutor or to the A.S.T. Unit. On the other hand the A.S.T. Unit has adopted a policy of itself 'withdrawing' students either because of insufficient work completed or no response since enrolment. Compulsory withdrawal, initiated by the Unit, can be either partial or complete.

In short, student withdrawal from A.S.T. studies can be partial or complete, initiated by the student or by the Unit.

THE PROBLEM

INCIDENCE OF WITHDRAWAL

Table 2 (over) sets out the incidence of student withdrawals (of both types) from the A.S.T. Diploma in Teaching courses during the period 1969 to 1978 inclusive. The table shows:

- (i) over the years the number of courses available has gradually increased; and
- (ii) the withdrawal rate has also increased gradually, particularly over the past three years.

A further examination of previous A.S.T. Unit patterns of withdrawal reveals that there are predictable times when students drop out. Course members who withdraw mainly do so early in the

TABLE 2: PERCENTAGE INCREASE OF A.S.T. DIPLOMA IN TEACHING WITHDRAWALS IN THE YEARS 1969 to 1978*

Year	Number of Courses Offered	Withdrawals as a Percentage of Enrolments
1969	9	27
1970	10	35
1971	12	41
1972	12	36
1973	14	43
1974	14	41
1975	14	46
1976	14	48
1977	18	52
1978	19	58

* Source: A.S.T. Unit annual reports.

first term. In 1978, 37 percent of the students who enrolled withdrew by the end of April. Approximately half of these, 20.1 percent, simply did not communicate with the Unit any further. However the rate of withdrawal tends to diminish as the year progresses. There is one exception. A slight increase starts to occur at the June/July period. By August virtually all those who are going to withdraw have done so.

The increasing incidence of withdrawal with its wasteful consequences is the problem that the present study will address.

COMPARISONS WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS

The incidence of withdrawal has always been a matter of concern to correspondence education institutions. The issue is complex, partly because of the way institutions define and therefore measure withdrawal and partly because of differences between them. Nevertheless an attempt has been made below to compare other distance education provisions within New Zealand to see how they fare in regard to the matter of withdrawal.

Two such institutions able to provide comparable information are Massey University's Centre for University Extramural Study (C.U.E.S.) and The Department of Education's Correspondence School.

Students who enrol through Massey generally have a higher level of educational attainment prior to enrolment than do those entering the Correspondence School. They must have university entrance, or similar qualifications or be 'provisionally admitted'.

An entrance pre-requisite also exists for A.S.T. study. Students must have a Trained Teachers Certificate in order to enrol for Diploma in Teaching courses. On the other hand the Correspondence School has adopted a policy of 'open door' admission. Adults who study through the Correspondence School are not required to have entrance 'qualifications'. Many however, are undertaking work at secondary rather than tertiary level and enrol for school certificate and university entrance courses.

The institutions differ then in regard to the variety of courses offered and the people they serve. In so far as Massey's C.U.E.S. and the Correspondence School cater for a wide clientele and are of a general nature, A.S.T. Diploma in Teaching courses are specialised. They are provided specifically for teachers.

Any comparisons made then must be qualified in light of such institutional differences. What may cause students to withdraw from one may not be the cause of withdrawal in another.

As shown in Table 3 below, the withdrawal rate for the Correspondence School and A.S.T. Unit is proportionally much higher than for Massey. The 1978 withdrawal rate shows about one-fifth of Massey's Extramural students to have withdrawn compared with over one half of both the Correspondence School and A.S.T. Unit students.

TABLE 3: PERCENTAGES OF STUDENTS WHO WITHDREW FROM C.U.E.S., CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL AND A.S.T. UNIT IN 1977 AND 1978*

	1977	1978
C.U.E.S. Massey	24.4%	20.6%
Correspondence School (adult students)	50.8%	52.5%
A.S.T. Unit (Diploma in Teaching students)	52.0%	57.8%

* Figures for C.U.E.S. and Correspondence School obtained from Tremaine and Cavanagh's study on 'Why Students Withdraw' (1979), page 8, Table 4.

The rates were respectively 20.6 percent and 57.8 percent. In the same year (1978) Correspondence School adult student rate of withdrawal and the A.S.T. Diploma in Teaching rate were relatively similar: viz. 52.5 percent and 57.8 percent.

POSSIBLE REASONS FOR WITHDRAWAL

Identifying the actual 'causes' of withdrawal is difficult because of the complexity of the situation. Cause may be attributable to personal, social, economic, pedagogical, political or any one of a number of 'reasons'.

In attempting to locate causes of withdrawal Glatter and Wedell (1971) made a useful distinction between student and course related factors. Following their lead it is convenient in the present study to make a similar distinction.

Student Related Factors

The A.S.T. Unit has some evidence that bears on the vexed question of 'causes' of withdrawal.

Letters of withdrawal sent to the Unit by some 250 course members in 1978 indicated that many found the strain of combining work with study too great. Therefore it does seem reasonable to conjecture whether or not withdrawal is related to the amount of spare time available. For most students study has to be a 'free time' activity, consuming the time left over from jobs and family commitments.

Again and for fundamentally the same reasons withdrawal may be related to marital status in that married students may be expected to have more family commitments and thus less available time than single students.

A difference in age could have a bearing on withdrawal. Assuming that younger teachers do not have the added administrative responsibilities of their older colleagues it is possible that young teachers are in a better position to accommodate work and study. The argument could also be mounted that younger teachers, because of their recent Teachers College experience are to some extent likely to be familiar with current ideas in education and perhaps more likely to adapt to the demands of further study. Older and more senior teachers without these apparent 'advantages' and realising that study has to be a 'spare time' pursuit could find A.S.T. study too burdensome a task.

In a similar vein, students who have studied recently might be expected to have more realistic expectations about learning and be better skilled at it. Students who have prior experience of A.S.T. or Massey extramural courses may be arguably better able to complete than those who have never studied by correspondence.

Course Related Factors

Glatter and Wedell asked:

"What part of withdrawal is due to the methods of delivery and instruction the institution use, and what part is due to factors any part-time student might meet whatever his method of study?"

Therefore does withdrawal have something to do with the particular nature of A.S.T. study such as student workload or course timing?

Distance education as the A.S.T. Unit conducts it, is essentially a two part process. The first part, the delivery, is carried by the study guide, notes and administrative detail. It is designed to establish objectives, indicate the instructional material to be used and set up conditions under which learning may occur.

The second part of the process begins when the student returns his assignment. The tutor evaluates it and provides feedback to the student. This usually entails various degrees of 'reteaching' in an effort to direct the student towards course goals.

Problems can occur at any point throughout this instructional process. They can be of two kinds - general or specific. For example, a rather rigid system of instruction, which does not allow student input in its design, tends to carry all students through the same set of learning procedures irrespective of their previous experiences, capacity to learn or learning style. Such a general strategy may be inappropriate for a number of students. Similarly, strategies of presentation, explanation, illustration, description, etc., adopted at any point in the process may be out of place with the learning styles or expectation sets of the students. How the written message is received and understood is dependent on the clarity of the printed word. Information has to be presented in a mode appropriate to the audience. Therefore it seems reasonable to conjecture decisions to withdraw are influenced by misinformation, lack of communication, slow feedback or any other communication 'noise' in the system.

Continuing Teacher Education

Finally there is a more general issue relating that may also bear on the withdrawal question, viz., Continuing Teacher Education itself. Are teacher needs met through the present A.S.T. provision of Continuing Teacher Education itself? What are the consequences of completing A.S.T. study? Is a Diploma in Teaching given due recognition in regard to salary remuneration and to promotion?

The main concern of the present study then can be summarised in six questions.

1. Are A.S.T. courses meeting the Continuing Education needs of practising teachers?
2. What possible factors would seem to explain the withdrawal rate?
3. How might the A.S.T. Unit improve and further enhance their assistance to course members?
4. What kind of information is required by intending course members?

5. How can A.S.T. courses contribute to the professional development of practising teachers?
6. To what degree is the demand for the personal and professional growth among teachers satisfied by the existing structure?

CHAPTER TWO

This chapter sets out to review the literature on student withdrawal as it relates to distance education and to the teaching of adults. An effort has been made to draw upon distance education research done in New Zealand because of the direct relevance to the present study. In doing so the problem of student withdrawal will be considered under the two headings 'student related' and 'course related' employed by Glatter and Wedell (1971).

STUDENT RELATED FACTORS

Personality

Boshier (1972) researching the dropout ratio amongst New Zealand adult students concluded that people enrol for courses for reasons to do with how they see themselves in relation to others and to learning. By using a Personality and Educational Environmental Rating Scale, Boshier concluded that people tended to enrol for Continuing Education courses for 'growth', or for 'deficiency' motivated reasons. Those who see themselves as 'growth motivated' go into a course of study because they want to enrich themselves intellectually. 'Growth motivated' people, according to Boshier are 'inner directed' and appear open to new experiences. They have reached the Maslow apex of self actualisation and supposedly have the confidence to reach out for some activity that will 'fulfil their creative urge'. They are secure in the knowledge that they will be able to build onto and extend what they already know.

On the other hand, 'deficiency motivated' people approach a new learning experience for different reasons. They appear to sense a void in their learning background. Their main reason for taking on a course of study is largely to overcome a deficiency they see within themselves. Boshier argues that 'deficiency motivated' people enrol for courses of study almost at a disadvantage. They believe that there is little from their own experience that they can contribute to the course and so start with a feeling of inadequacy as opposed to the positiveness of 'growth motivated' people.

Boshier's investigations point out that 'deficiency motivated' adults who have enrolled voluntarily for study courses are more likely to withdraw before completion than are people who enrol for 'growth motivated' reasons. In a later study (1978) Boshier concluded that the starting point of the programme planning process should begin with an assessment of learner needs. By determining for instance, the needs of 'growth, security, recognition and self actualisation' it is possible to identify those learners who are as it were, 'at risk'. Furthermore if the assessment of the learner's needs can be translated into

programme goals, methods of instruction and assessment can then be related to these learner based goals. Boshier's studies have applied an interesting qualitative argument to the problem of withdrawal.

However studies of the characteristics of withdrawal prone students are comparatively rare. Most research on dropout rates tends to examine the organisational or environmental aspects, apparently making the assumption that if conditions of study can be modified appropriately there is a greater chance that students will complete.

Communication Between Student and Tutor

Student anxiety has also been a focus of attention in a number of studies on student withdrawal. Rogers (1977) and Holmberg (1977) have written on the loneliness of distance education students and how their hopes are sometimes shattered by the thoughtlessness or ignorance of tutors. Learning through correspondence is different from face to face instruction. One of the disadvantages of working alone is that it tends to allow, even encourage, anxious students to become more anxious. (Discussions that took place in the initial stages of this investigation with A.S.T. Unit students showed that teachers are not excepted from this problem of anxiety.)

Communicational aspects that add to the richness of a statement given verbally are lacking in distance education study. There is rarely the opportunity for the usually brief, sometimes vague and critical statements made on papers, to be explained adequately (Rogers, 1977).

Bååth cited in Holmberg (1977), studied 34 distance education institutions and showed that giving course members effective feedback helping them correct their mistakes and control their progress was the most important factor, given by respondents, in allaying withdrawal.

For this work and others Holmberg concluded that the student and tutor should engage in a form of written dialogue. Moreover, for the distance education teaching process to be efficient, the tutor should initiate effective and rapid feedback that has clarity and can be positively responded to by the student. Holmberg concluded that there is almost universal agreement about the necessary elements of tutor initiated, didactic communication. In order to do this well tutors need to be trained in using the written word for motivational reinforcement and evaluation. Tutor training in didactic communication was strongly recommended in the National Council of Adult Education Working Party's Report on *The Training of Continuing Educators* (1977).

Open Learning and Learner Controlled Programming

Consideration of learner personality and timetable flexibility

has led researchers to explore 'open learning' systems as an alternative to the more formal methods of correspondence education. However there are many different opinions about what constitutes open learning. Bebb (1978), makes the point that open learning methods are based on the premise that the time to learn, the learner and the learning process are variables and only the objectives remain constant. Bebb asserts in his study on open learning correspondence programmes for business personnel, that open learning systems should attempt to emphasise the learner needs rather than allow perceived administrative restraints to dictate how the learner must learn. In relation then to distance education; individualised content, pace and method and self directed learning could be seen as the axioms on which open learning is based. The stress is on the dynamics rather than the mechanics of the system. Focus therefore is very much upon the learner. Recognition is given to the autonomy of the adult learner in learner controlled programming. Penland's study of Self Initiated Learning (1979) adds empirical support to this concept of learner autonomy. The three highest ranked reasons favouring self initiated learning, given by respondents in Penland's survey were:

- (1) Desire to set own learning pace.
- (2) Desire to use own style of learning.
- (3) Learner wanted to keep the learning strategy flexible and easy to change.

These findings appear to indicate that many adult learners are concerned about setting their own learning pace and exploring their own style of learning rather than submitting to formal course orientated experiences.

In a recent Department of Education Working Party Report on *Continuing Education at a Distance* (1979), open learning methods have been recommended as viable for Continuing Education for adults. The Report concludes that distance education institutions are moving away from directed methods of instruction towards an acceptance of individual differences among adult learners. To quote Paterson in his synopsis of the Report:

"The drift of the Report is towards a new view of learning for adults - the key to such change lies in the area of individualised programmes: modules, contracts, combinations of formal and informal methods. That is, the adult learner is no longer to be seen as some form of elderly child whose needs are to be met through the extension and modification of primary and secondary school method. Rather, continuing education does not belong in the 'loco parentis' category (as has been the tradition), but must assume a role akin to that of the supermarket. Distance continuing education is not only of value in terms of what it can do for the student, it also has a potentiality for making a major

contribution to the development of a new freedom in adult learning."

It seems possible that different methods of learning may be needed to cater for adult learners but there has been surprisingly little systematic research into the effects of open learning at a distance.

COURSE RELATED FACTORS

Course Presentation

Research has been going on in the area of course presentation as applied to distance education, Rogers (1977); Holmberg (1977).

The Open University in Britain employ a production team to present course materials. Study materials are colourfully and artistically set via the use of posters, illustrations and the apportioning of print on each page. Audio visual materials are used where, no doubt, thought educationally viable.

Cause and effect was demonstrated through this high quality, multi presentation of information. The Open University in 1974 whittled down the withdrawal rate of its foundation level students to 13.7 percent in Humanities and 31.7 percent in Mathematics, Perry (1976).

It would seem reasonable to assume that adult students usually turn to study in the evenings. Therefore topics should be directive, eye catching and presented in such a way that the student finds some enjoyment in the task of learning.

Readability of Study Guide Materials

Studies are being conducted at Massey University Centre for Extramural Studies and at The Technical Correspondence Institute on the readability of the study guide materials. Both studies are using a Cloze Procedure as a measurement to assess the difficulty of the written material sent to students. Preliminary findings have revealed that both institutions are sending out some material written at a level of readability too difficult for the target audience.

The T.C.I. study (Wagner and Holmes, 1980) has emphasised the need for course writers to:

- (1) use words that are more familiar to the students;
- (2) avoid unnecessary subordinate clauses starting with *that* or *which*;
- (3) avoid overlong sentences where there are too many complex ideas and where the meaning is confused;
- (4) avoid passive tenses and, if possible, personalise the writing;

- (5) avoid too many prepositions and adverbs.

Wagner and Holmes conclude that if the above rules are followed by course writers, clearer, understandable writing should result.

Course Standards

A study in Britain undertaken by Glynn and Jones (1967), cited by Hibbert (1978), asking adult students why they had left, produced an illuminating reaction to course standards. The findings showed that setting a low standard is more likely to drive people away than setting it too high. The general agreement was that a rigorous course was more acceptable to them than a 'fun and games approach' involving little effort on the part of the student. Glynn and Jones concluded that a feeling of achievement by the student came through accomplishing a course that retains a high standard of excellence.

The Inevitability of Withdrawal

The consensus from a number of studies, Harris (1972); Glatter and Wedell (1971) is that in the average adult education class, approximately two-thirds of those who enrol complete the course, Hibbert (1978). Hibbert comments that this level of 'student wastage' is expected and even planned for. Those who drop out allow more time for tutors to concentrate on the stayers who, according to Boshier are 'growth motivated' individuals anyway and provide more reinforcement to tutors.

Hibbert concludes that one way of allaying withdrawal is by maintaining a flexible timetable and that this may avert withdrawal for reasons that are not connected with the course content. Offering alternative times for the same course or alternative starting times in the academic year are examples of the flexibility that Hibbert suggests in his study.

There has been some investigation of when teachers prefer to take part in in-service courses and long term study. Courtney (1972), using a sample of teachers from the Canterbury province, found February, March, June, July, November and December inappropriate times for in-service courses to be held. Respondents indicated that heavy teaching loadings - particularly at the beginning of the year when classroom routines and class plans are being established and again in June when reporting and forms of pupil assessment feature strongly - were not conducive to study. There are other busy periods throughout the year too that cause teachers to regard the demands of teaching as paramount. In an unpublished study, McLellan (1978) reports on a survey sent to a randomly selected group of teachers. A statistically significant number indicated that the first two terms were more favoured than the last term. It is reasonable to conclude that if teacher work patterns can be predicted, it may be possible to accommodate course timetabling to them.

Study Adjustments and Difficulties

Although there have been a number of overseas studies written on the problem of student withdrawal from correspondence courses there has been only one notable study of this kind in New Zealand. Tremaine and Cavanagh (1979) examined the reasons why students withdraw from Massey University Extramural courses.

The conclusion they reached was that selective information was needed to cater for the range of communicational requests from students. The investigation stressed the need to give students the kind of information that would 'enable them to make choices or cope with different situations'. The study showed that if information had been available to those who withdraw, at least 50 percent might have made decisions to complete their courses.

To involve oneself in a course of study requires a marked period of adjustment. Houle (1964) in his survey on the study difficulties of adult students found that course members initially did not give much thought to how to organise their life in accommodating study and developing study habits. The conclusion reached by Houle was that students might be better prepared for correspondence study if they were presented with introductory materials outlining the problems as well as the advantages of learning by this method. Tremaine and Cavanagh's study produced a similar result and prompted Massey University Extramural Department to send to every extramural student on enrolment a thought-provoking pamphlet entitled 'How to Survive as an Extramural Student'.

Research Implications

Withdrawal remains a crucial problem and, according to Harris (1972) is probably the most researched aspect of distance education. While there is no shortage of information about the numbers who withdraw from distance education courses, there appears to be a shortage of meaningful information which might lead to an understanding of the underlying reasons. Boshier (1972) and others claim that the largest obstacle to uncovering the reasons for withdrawal, remains the lack of a clear methodology. All that can be said with any real confidence is that withdrawal from distance education courses is a function of a number of student and course related factors.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The preceding pages of this study have served to provide background information on the functioning of the A.S.T. Unit and to outline the principle concern of the study - to determine the reasons why course members withdraw before completing their Diploma in Teaching studies.

The purpose of this present chapter is to inform the reader of the subjects who provided the information, the method and procedures by which the information was collected and the method of analysis used.

Subjects

Due to the nature of the records kept by the A.S.T. Unit and because of a desire to obtain as recent information on student involvement as possible, the most feasible proposition was to survey the total 1979 Diploma in Teaching intake, a population of 1,312.

The subjects who eventually provided the data for the present study comprised the 1,054 course members (80.3% of the population) who completed and returned mailed questionnaires. These subjects were spread throughout New Zealand. In the main they consisted of primary and secondary school teachers although small groups of dental nurses, librarians, ancillary staff associated with schools, teachers college students, technical training tutors and teacher training personnel were also included.

Choice of Research Methods

In the course of formulating a design for the study attention was given to; A.S.T. annual reports and policy statements, views and opinions of A.S.T. Unit tutors, the information contained in letters from 250 course members who withdrew in 1978, and literature on the problem of withdrawal.

Clearly to accomplish the purposes of the present study a direct approach to 'customers' of the A.S.T. Unit was needed. Clearly too, there were logistical problems (time, access, contacting personnel) to be taken into account in deciding what methods to use.

In the event, two methods were chosen; the semi structured group interview and mailed questionnaire.

Each method had its limitations. Questionnaires by their nature prescribe the mental set of respondents. Answers given are necessarily limited by the hypotheses the researcher formulated before the questionnaire was designed, Walley (1978).

The semi-structured group interview though itself circumscribed in somewhat similar ways does provide scope for pursuing unanticipated leads.

According to Burton and Cherry (1970) there is a richness of response obtainable through interviewing that may allow the researcher a greater awareness of the problem than when other procedures are used. On the other hand, group interviews can yield information distorted by the views of dominating members or by the respondents' conformity with social norms. For example Berdie and Anderson (1974) arguing in favour of mailed questionnaires point out that they are largely free from any social coercions 'to please'. In the event, the use of both techniques seemed the way to make the best of both worlds.

Instruments

Semi-Structured Group Interviews: In the first instance, interviews were conducted with selected groups of 1978 A.S.T. course participants from Wellington and Manawatu. They comprised eleven members who had withdrawn before completing their A.S.T. courses and six who had completed them. Although it was intended to include between eight and ten people with an equal number of men and women in each interview, because of school commitments, the first two interviews consisted totally of women, six in the first group and five in the second. The final interview involved five men and one woman.

Questions used in the interviews were listed under five broad areas. They were:

- (i) Reasons for taking A.S.T. courses;
- (ii) Status of Diploma in Teaching;
- (iii) Information about A.S.T. courses;
- (iv) Withdrawal from courses;
- (v) Organisation of the A.S.T. method of study.

The introductory question for each area was designed to open discussion. Further probe questions could be used if required. The purpose was to generate further issues and views rather than obtain specific answers to each question. (See Appendix 2.) Three interviewers were used. They were chosen because of their knowledge of distance education and their ability to establish rapport with the interviewees. In each interview the group was given an explanation of the purpose of the research and was assured that replies would be treated with confidence. In order to examine data at a later date each interview was taped. An independent observer also sat in during the interviews in order to get a 'feel' for what was being said. The interviews lasted an average of two hours and appeared to be conducted in a relatively frank manner.

Interview Outcomes

Below is to be found a general interpretation of the main points that emerged from transcripts of the interviews.

(i) Reasons for Taking A.S.T. Courses

There appeared to be a general belief among interviewees that in retrospect an A.S.T. course of study provides a fresh input of ideas and so allows teachers the opportunity to keep abreast of changes in classroom procedures. One respondent remarked that she had not studied since leaving Teachers College in 1950. She thought that others who had been teaching for some time and who had done no university work now wanted to do something, but it seemed too big a step to undertake university study, hence the interest in A.S.T. courses.

Each group emphasised the practical nature of A.S.T. study. The opinion was that university courses were too theoretical and that many teachers, themselves included, lacked confidence to tackle university work after being away from formal study for some time.

Several teachers made the comment that the A.S.T. Unit offered the only courses available to teachers outside Teachers College in teaching of music, outdoor education and library studies. However there was only one interviewee who had chosen A.S.T. study for this reason. Another strongly emphasised reason which caused these teachers (and it was through others) to look towards A.S.T. study was the factor of convenience. Interviewees remarked that it was possible to study after work, or in their own time, which is useful to those who are involved with school commitments. In short the reasons given why interview subjects chose A.S.T. study was because (i) it appeared to be convenient as self pacing study; (ii) they considered it kept them up-to-date with teaching practice; (iii) it was considered more practical and less formidable than university study; and (iv) was the only channel that offered certain courses that teachers required.

(ii) Status and Value of Diploma in Teaching

Many opinions were expressed about the status of the Diploma in Teaching. Several teachers felt strongly that the general looseness in the cross-crediting of university units downgraded the purpose of the Diploma in Teaching. Simply to add university units regardless of content in order to make up the number of papers required, was thought to detract from the professional standing a Teaching Diploma was supposed to have. Several of the men in the final interview saw a problem with regard to courses of study being professionally oriented. The more courses

were related to the practicalities of the classroom the less status was likely to be subscribed to them. One respondent commented that it is a "fact of life" that A.S.T. courses are given less status than a degree course even though they may be more practical, more relevant and more demanding.

The value of Diploma in Teaching study was a topic of concern for interviewees. Several teachers personally experienced negative reactions from friends and colleagues. One teacher mentioned that an inspector had asked him what he was doing to improve his qualifications. When he replied he was doing some work with the A.S.T. Unit the inspector asked whether he had ever thought of doing anything through Massey.

The colleagues of several interview group members were critical of "Correspondence School study", as they termed it. Rather than showing interest in a teacher who had taken on an A.S.T. course some respondents believed that colleagues treated them with suspicion. There was a noticeable difference in staffroom atmosphere. There were sly remarks about intellectuals and their ability to cope with the difficulties other teachers preferred not to handle. These interviewees also felt that some older teachers saw them as a threat to their position. Such responses raise the question whether the value of A.S.T. study was being undermined by associates with whom the course participants worked and whether teachers were "turned off" A.S.T. study because it invoked a measure of peer hostility.

(iii) Information about A.S.T. Courses

There are two ways of finding out about A.S.T. courses - to read about them in literature distributed by the Unit to schools and word of mouth. It appeared that most interviewees had been introduced to the courses through the latter, mainly the influence of another teacher.

This information gave rise to two A.S.T. communication issues to be considered for further analysis. First the ways by which people come to know about A.S.T. courses and second the amount of information people needed in order to know what was required before they enrolled.

(iv) Withdrawal from Courses

Of the 17 subjects involved in the group discussions 11 had withdrawn from their course of study that year. It seemed from the discussions that three related factors affected persistence. They can be summarised as, "encouragement", "supportiveness" and "expectations". If there was

a matching of these elements with a fourth, "student confidence", the chances of completing the course were greater. One respondent stated that she was lacking in confidence having been away from study for a while. The "significant others" in her life failed to give her the support and encouragement she needed to complete her studies. Those who heard about A.S.T. study did not always realise what the course entailed. One respondent who dropped out, stated that he had no overview of the course and did not know whether his specific interests would be catered for in the general scheme of things.

The varied responses to the question of "why did you withdraw from the course", drew attention to areas that might profit from further investigation. Teachers may find themselves having to change class levels or move to another school. Work pressures may build up, (predictable at certain times of the year). Personal reasons to do with family, illness and over anxiety can cause teachers to drop out.

(v) Organisation of the A.S.T. Course

Concern was expressed about the unremitting grind of correspondence study, a concern heightened by having to meet deadlines. Teachers remarked on pressures occurring during the year that caused them to "forfeit all else" in order to keep up with teaching demands.

The inflexibility of assignment deadlines was another point which brought about a lot of discussion. There seemed to be a crisis point for several respondents at the beginning of the year. To quote one subject - "... in the beginning you get this awful sinking feeling of not really knowing whether you're on the right track. You don't know who's sending study guides to you. There's not even anyone you could possibly ring", and another - "You really need time at the beginning of the year. It's a hard time for teachers setting up classes, units of work, systems and things. That's when most of the A.S.T. study materials seemed to be arriving". This "crisis point" appears to be borne out by an examination of A.S.T. Diploma in Teaching student withdrawal figures for 1978. Of the total enrolments, 37 percent dropped out within the first three months. One respondent stressed the need for more control by the learner over course pacing. He commented on the satisfaction of learning without being confronted with the pressure of meeting deadlines. Meeting an assignment date detracted from the enjoyment he gained from mastering the learning in his own time.

There were three issues that arose in discussion on course organisation. The existing course timetable was criticised as being inappropriate to the "seasons" of a teacher's year. Another issue related to course assessment. One group consisting of five men, three of them principals, questioned the need for traditional evaluation measures. The third issue, was to do with access to feedback. Telephone contact was considered. Several interviewees took the initiative

to find out their tutors phone numbers and then contacted them. The immediacy of response, they considered, was worth the cost.

Respondents mentioned other pertinent factors such as the problem of loneliness, the unavailability of text books and the fact that names and addresses of tutors were not made available to students so the opportunity for communication was not possible until after the first assignment had been sent in.

The wealth of information that came through the group interviews influenced the final shape of the questionnaire.

Questionnaire Design

The interviews gave much assistance to the design of the questionnaire; those questions most useful in eliciting the desired information, the ordering of sections and the selection and sequence of questions under each section. Arising also from the interviews was a decision to have two parts to the questionnaire. A main part all course members would receive and a supplementary part included with the main that would be sent only to course members who had withdrawn. The two part questionnaire would also enable sending the supplementary part separately to early partial withdrawers (from enrolment through to beginning of July) and late withdrawers (after the end of July). The questionnaire is enclosed in Appendix 3.

Following suggestions on formulation of questions, Berdie and Anderson (1974), a variety of open and closed types were given. Although most questions were of a closed order type, within each section there was a number of open ended questions enabling respondents to express opinions and attitudes where they felt led to do so.

The questionnaire employed the following sections:

- (i) Teaching service
- (ii) Study patterns
- (iii) Information about A.S.T. courses
- (iv) Organisation of A.S.T. courses
- (v) Continuing educational opportunities
- (vi) Future prospects
- (vii) General information
- (viii) Reasons for withdrawal (supplementary section)

Following consultation with Mr Ian Livingstone, Principal Researcher N.Z.C.E.R. and Mr Athol Forrest, Senior Education Officer, Department

of Education, it was decided to produce a visually attractive document that would be easy to read, to respond to and (subsequently) analyse.¹

Procedures Used in Collecting Data

Schedule followed:

Phase One: December 1978 to March 1979

The period was used to chrySTALLISE the problem, prepare and conduct the semi structured group interviews, formulate the questionnaire and organise its printing.

Phase Two: April to September 1979

The phase encompassed the distribution and collection of the (main and supplementary) questionnaire. A staggered mailing procedure was used (Figure 3). It extended from the end of April through to early September 1979 so that course members would receive the questionnaire at the most appropriate time. "Appropriate" in the case of the supplementary part of the questionnaire meant on hand at the time of withdrawal in order for the respondent to record reasons for withdrawing. At that time, reasons are still likely to be fresh in mind.

The persisters received only the main part of the questionnaire and this was not sent to them until the end of July, because it was hoped that by then they would have experienced enough of the course to respond with some accuracy.

The appropriate sections of the questionnaire were forwarded to each respondent with a supporting statement from Mr Basil Kings, Director of Teacher Education. An introductory letter explaining the purpose of the survey and a stamped addressed envelope completed the information kits. (Refer to Appendix 4 for letters.)

Every effort was made to personalise the contact. Introductory letters (addressed by Service/Labelmaker) were signed and a hand written message was added to the letter sent to respondents who withdrew. There were cases in which respondents received the main questionnaire or the supplement some months apart. Those who returned one or other part of the questionnaire were thanked for doing so at the time the remaining part was sent to them.

Follow-up: About three weeks after the final date given in the introductory letter a follow-up letter and questionnaire were sent. The final date for the return of questionnaires was set at 19 October 1979. At this point the survey was closed off, no further returns were included in the analysis and the results were computerised.

¹ Deslandes (Wellington) printed the questionnaire. Production and mailing cost were met by the Correspondence School with a supplementary grant of \$366 from N.Z.E.I.

FIGURE 3: MAILING SCHEDULE FOR A.S.T. UNIT SURVEY

	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	
VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWALS	Sending out Main and Supplementary Questionnaire as students became known		Follow-up letters sent	→	→	→	
PARTIAL WITHDRAWALS	Received Supplementary Questionnaire		Follow-up letters sent	Sending out of Main Questionnaire	Follow-up letters sent		
COMPULSORY WITHDRAWALS	Received Main and Supplementary Questionnaire			Follow-up letters sent			
PERSISTERS					Sending out of Main Questionnaire	Follow-up letters sent	Supplementary questionnaire forwarded to students who withdrew since receiving Main Questionnaire

Phase Three: September 1979 to March 1981

This phase encompassed (i) the writing of a coding manual; (ii) coding, collating and transference on to computer disks; (iii) the writing and punching of a computer command deck using the standard Statistical Package for the Social Sciences; and (iv) the writing and printing of the completed study.

Computer Analysis of Questionnaire Information

The coded questionnaires were key punched on the disks by the staff of the Computer Centre, Massey University. At the same time, under the direction of Dr Graham Hunt, Senior Lecturer in Education, Massey University, a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (S.P.S.S.) computer programme was used for the analysis of the data from the questionnaires. The choice of an S.P.S.S. system was made because it provided the comprehensiveness that was needed. Different types of data analysis could be performed in a simple and convenient manner. As well, S.P.S.S. provided the flexibility in the format of data. The ability to manipulate the file into subfiles in order to use other statistical procedures available from this programme was an added advantage.

By late November the first Trial Run was successfully completed. At this stage it was possible to use frequencies to check on the accuracy of data punching. Any errors discovered were corrected, enabling further use of statistical procedures.

S.P.S.S. was used in the present study mainly for obtaining frequency distributions, although other procedures such as subfiles, crosstabulations and discriminate analysis were used. Subfiles enabled the creation of "withdrawer" and "persister" categories. Crosstabulations were used, for example, in comparison of "designated teaching position" or "years of service" with the rate of withdrawal and a discriminate analysis procedure was used to determine the "best" set of discriminating variables related to withdrawal.

The results of the survey were then written up during 1980 which completed the third and final phase of this investigation.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This chapter provides (i) details of the mailed survey response rates; and (ii) presents the results of the subsequent analysis under six sub-headings:

- (a) Characteristics of Respondents
- (b) Educational Background
- (c) Communication Aspects
- (d) Persistence or Withdrawal
- (e) Appropriateness of A.S.T. Course Organisation
- (f) Continuing Teacher Education Considerations

Where useful, a distinction has been made between persisters and withdrawers. An interpretation of data is given with each table or figure used.

Results of Mailed Questionnaire Survey

The total population of A.S.T. students in 1979 numbered 1,312. All were canvassed. Of these 1,054 returned completed questionnaires. A further 17 returned uncompleted ones for the following reasons: three respondents indicated that their comments would not be helpful; six were incorrectly addressed and were returned unclaimed; two respondents stated they were not enrolled with A.S.T. Unit this year; six respondents had either resigned and/or left their districts or travelled overseas.

Table 4 summarises the details.

TABLE 4: QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE

<i>Questionnaire Return</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Questionnaires returned completed	1,054	80.3
Questionnaires returned uncompleted	17	1.3
Questionnaires not returned	241	18.4
Total	1,312	100.00

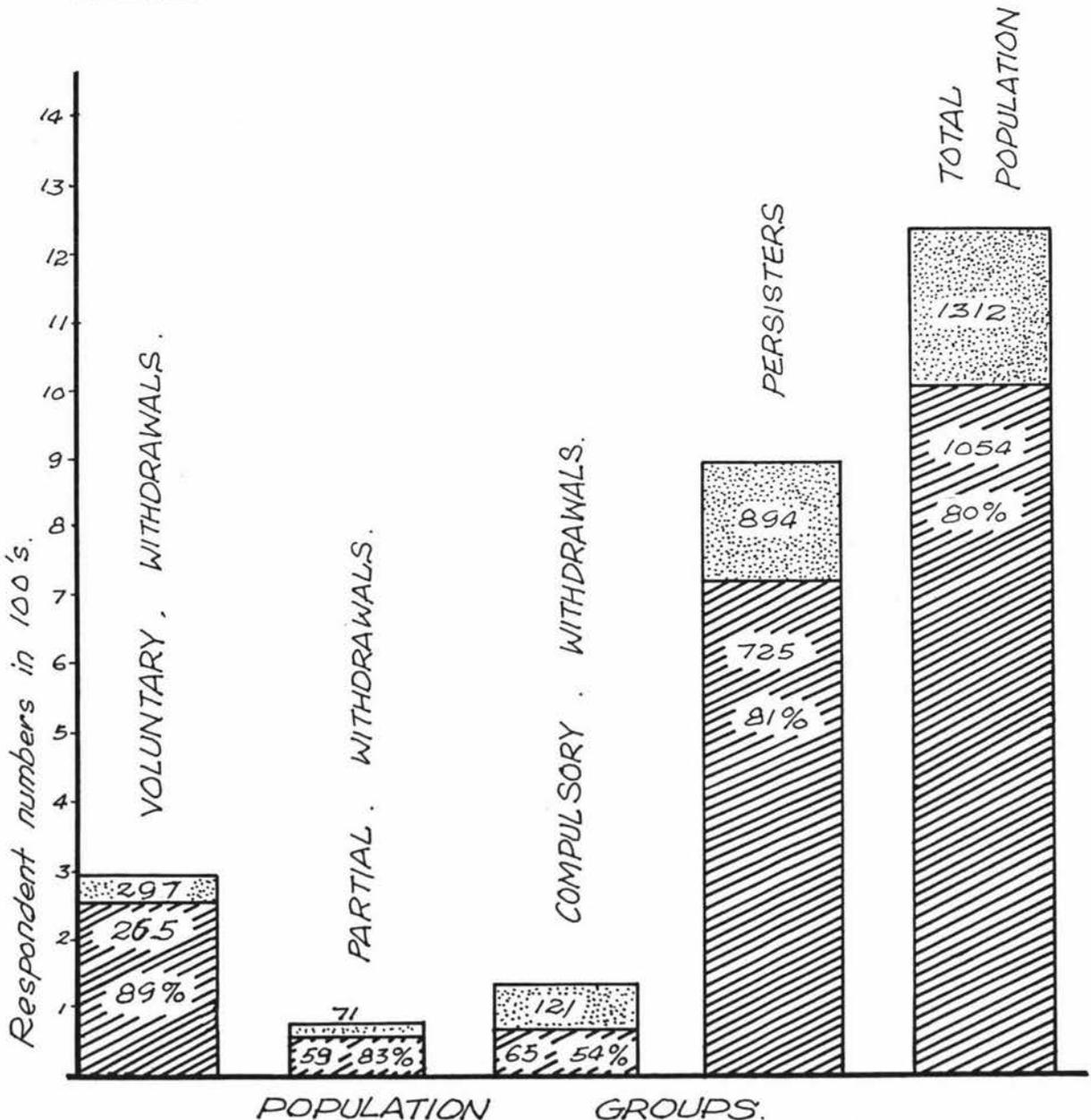
Speed of Reply

About 60 percent returned their questionnaire within the time limit of three weeks specified in the introductory letter. Follow-up letters resulted in a return of an additional 20 percent of the original population. The main reason given for the delay by the follow-up group was simply "oversight".

In general, respondents apparently took the filling in of their questionnaires seriously. Several expressed interest in the study and were keen to obtain information on the results when they came to hand. Some respondents wrote detailed comments in response to the open questions while others chose to write about more general teacher concerns and the wider field of Continuing Education.

The response from the mailed questionnaire resulted in an overall return rate of 80.3 percent. Population subgroups are shown in the bar graph in Figure 4. The return rate varied from group to group. There was a marked difference between voluntary withdrawals (89 percent) and compulsory withdrawals (54 percent).

FIGURE 4: RETURN RATES: PERSISTERS AND WITHDRAWER TYPES



CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

The following section dealing with the characteristics of respondents covers: sex and marital status, type of employment, geographical distribution, responsibilities and interests, years of teaching experience, teaching task and where and when people study.

Sex: Of the respondents, 640 (60.7 percent) were female and 414 (39.3 percent) male. The sex distribution of all canvassed A.S.T. course members was 781 (60.5 percent) female and 531 (39.5 percent) male.

Marital Status: Married respondents totalled 778 (75.8 percent); single respondents totalled 185 (18.0 percent) and widowed, separated or divorced respondents totalled 64 (6.2 percent). (See Table 5.) Of those respondents who were married 533 (68.5 percent) were persisters and 245 (31.5 percent) withdrawers. Results from the single respondents were proportionately similar - 128 (69 percent) were persisters and 57 (30.8 percent) withdrawers. However persister and withdrawer proportions changed slightly in the case of respondents who were widowed, separated or divorced; 50 (78.1 percent) were persisters and 14 (21.9 percent) withdrawers. (See Table 5 over.)

By making further distinction between persisters and withdrawers and comparing sex with marital status certain patterns emerge. There is a marked similarity in the proportion of male (68.8 percent) and female (70.6 percent) persisters and withdrawers - male (31.2 percent) and female (27.4 percent). But as shown in Table 5, a higher percentage of single men (77.8 percent) were persisters than were single women (65.6 percent). There is, however, a slight change in this trend for married men persisters (67.2 percent) and married women persisters (69.5 percent).

Type of Employment

The proportion of respondents from the primary, secondary and tertiary services is shown in Table 6.

TABLE 6: TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT: PERSISTERS AND WITHDRAWERS*

	<i>Persisters</i>		<i>Withdrawers</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Non-teaching	66	(78.6)	18	(21.4)	84	(100.0)
Primary	598	(68.7)	272	(31.3)	870	(100.0)
Secondary and Tertiary Teachers	60	(60.0)	40	(40.0)	100	(100.0)
Total	724	(68.7)	330	(31.3)	1054	(100.0)

* Question 5 (a, b and c) in the main questionnaire.

TABLE 5 : MARITAL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS: PERSISTERS AND WITHDRAWERS*

	MALES				FEMALES				TOTAL			
	Persisters		Withdrawers		Persisters		Withdrawers		Persisters		Withdrawers	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Single	42	(77.8)	12	(22.2)	86	(65.6)	45	(34.4)	128	(69.2)	57	(30.8)
Married	227	(67.2)	111	(32.8)	306	(69.5)	134	(30.5)	533	(68.5)	245	(31.5)
Widowed/Separated or Divorced	5	(83.3)	1	(16.7)	45	(77.6)	13	(22.4)	50	(78.1)	14	(21.9)
Total	274	(68.8)	124	(31.2)	437	(70.6)	192	(27.4)	711	(69.2) **	316	(30.8)

* Question 48 in the main questionnaire.

** 27 did not respond to this question.

By far the majority of those involved in Diploma in Teaching study through the A.S.T. Unit were practising teachers; 970 (91.6 percent) in all.

Of the remaining 84 (8.4 percent) in the non teaching group 16 were; ancillaries in school libraries, teacher aids, clerical assistants or dental nurses. A further eight had social service jobs; five were student trainees at Christchurch Teachers College and 47 were housewives.

Full-time, Relieving and Part-time Positions

A further distinction has been made in the analysis of the employment figures between full-time/permanent and part-time/relieving positions for primary and secondary teachers. As shown in Table 7, respondents who held full-time teaching positions totalled 832 (86.9 percent) whereas 125 (13.1 percent) held part-time or relieving teaching positions. There was a tendency for primary teachers with part-time or relieving positions to persist in their A.S.T. studies, more than teachers with full-time or permanent positions. (See Table 7.) The findings show that 75.5 percent of the part-time primary teachers were persisters as compared with 68.5 percent in the full-time, permanent category.

TABLE 7: PERMANENT AND TEMPORARY TEACHING

	<i>Persisters</i>		<i>Withdrawers</i>		<i>Total</i>
	#	%**	#	%**	#
<u>Primary</u>					
(a) Full-time/permanent	525	(68.5)	241	(31.5)	766
(b) Part-time/relieving	77	(75.5)	25	(24.5)	102
<u>Secondary</u>					
(a) Full-time/permanent	43	(65.2)	23	(34.8)	66
(b) Part-time/relieving	14	(60.9)	9	(39.1)	23
Total	659	(68.9)	298	(31.1)	957

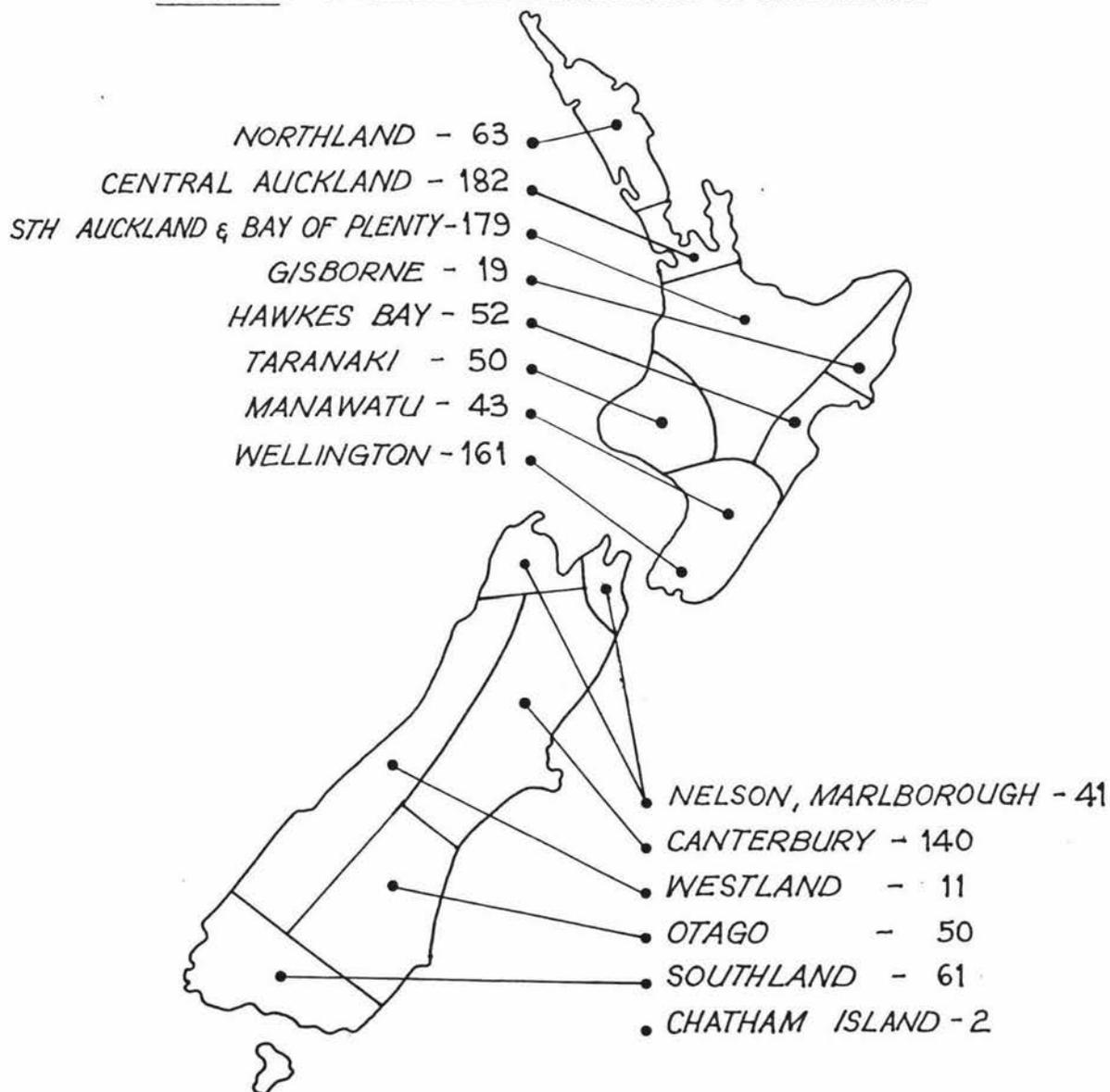
* Question 5(b) in the main questionnaire.

** These give the percentage of the total in each employment category who have persisted or withdrawn.

The same finding did not emerge for secondary teachers however. Part-time secondary teachers were more inclined to drop out of A.S.T. courses than were their full-time, permanently employed colleagues.

The geographical distribution of A.S.T. respondents is shown in Figure 5. The A.S.T. Unit operates in the less populated areas such as Northland (63), Taranaki (50), Hawke's Bay (52), Nelson and Marlborough (41), and Southland (61) - areas that do not have local universities or Teachers Colleges. The suggestion is there could be less opportunity in these areas for teachers to attend part-time Continuing Teacher Education Courses.

FIGURE 5: GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS



Before the data were analysed it was thought that a greater proportion of withdrawers would be found in the less populated areas. In fact the reverse proved to be true. Students located in rural areas were more likely to be persisters, particularly if male. However, as Table 8 also shows, there is a predominance of male A.S.T. students in the rural areas. This stands in marked contrast to the overall sex ratio. Why rural teachers, in particular males, are more likely to persist is open to speculation.

However, other findings rule out the probability that this might be due to their having more "spare time".

TABLE 8 : LOCALITY OF RESIDENCE *

	MALES				FEMALES				TOTAL
	Persisters		Withdrawers		Persisters		Withdrawers		
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
University city	55	(57.9)	40	(42.1)	185	(68.3)	86	(31.7)	366 (34.7)
Non-university city	43	(67.2)	21	(32.8)	79	(66.4)	40	(33.6)	183 (17.4)
Rural	181	(72.7)	68	(27.3)	177	(72.8)	66	(27.2)	492 (46.7)
Non-respondents									13 (1.2)
Total	279	(68.4)	129	(31.6)	441	(69.7)	192	(30.3)	1054 (100.0)

* Question 50 in the main questionnaire.

Responsibilities and Interests

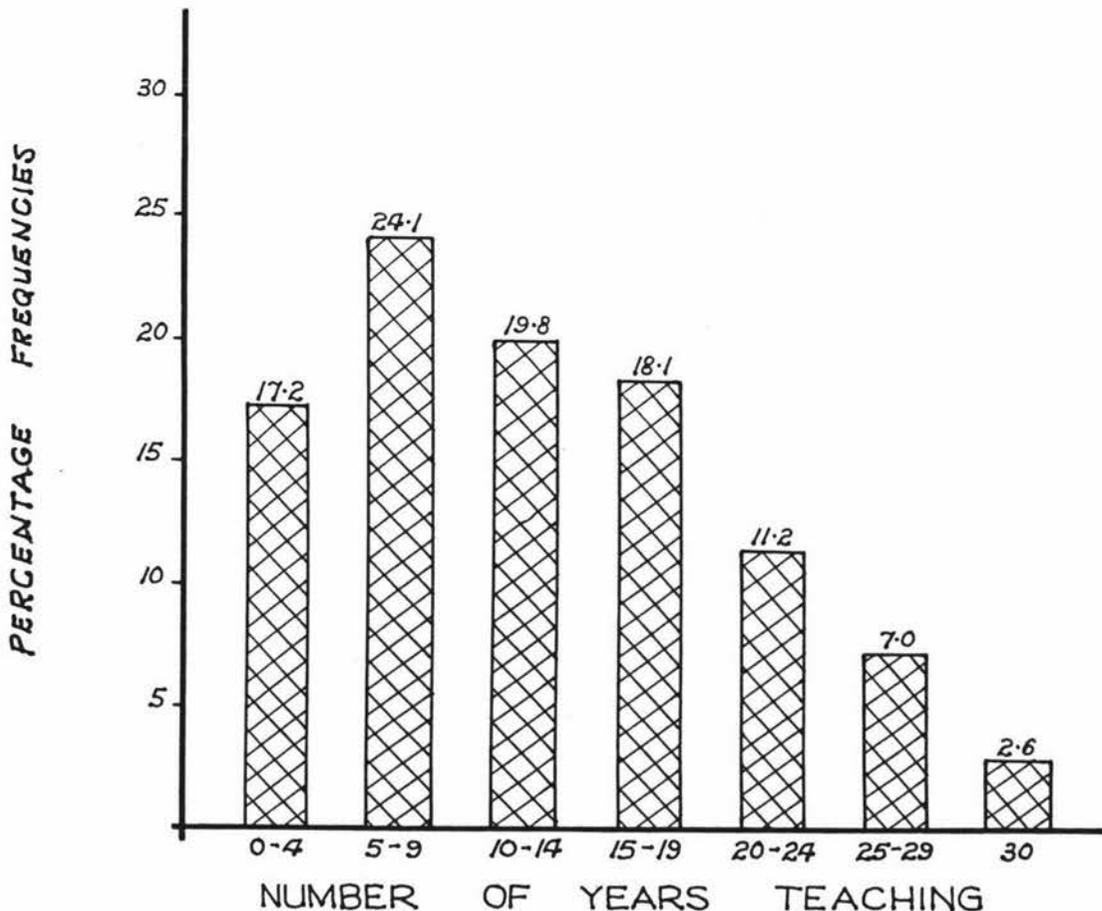
Evidence on responsibility and interest taken in and outside the job, showed a similar loading for both rural and urban respondents. Some differences however could be seen within the patterns of involvement displayed. Rural teachers reported on average a greater involvement in school administration and teacher organisations, while teachers in urban centres reportedly involved themselves more in sporting activities both in and outside the school and showed a greater preference for cultural activities. Given that the withdrawal rate of urban teachers is greater a tentative conclusion may be reached that urban teachers more involved in activities "vicarious" to teaching, find themselves with a burgeoning workload, and a consequent need to withdraw.

Teaching Experience

Figure 6 shows the number of years (grouped in five year periods) respondents had been teaching. The greatest number 246 (24.1 percent) fall within the five to nine year category while the average length of service was thirteen years.

The average age of students who enrol in A.S.T. study was about the mid thirties and the age range was from twenty to sixty-three years of age.

FIGURE 6: YEARS OF TEACHING



Teaching Task

Table 9 shows a breakdown of designated teaching tasks in primary and secondary schools. The three main areas were Teacher; Senior Teacher or Specialist; and Deputy Principal or Principal. If it can be assumed that teachers who hold positions of senior teacher, deputy principal or principal have greater responsibility than that of the classroom teacher some interesting results emerge. When looking at people enrolled with the A.S.T. Unit for Diploma in Teaching courses who were holding teaching positions approximately half (46.3 percent) were holding posts involving some responsibility; one in five (21.8 percent) actually held deputy principal or principal positions.

See Table 9 over.

The proportions of persisters and withdrawers according to teaching task in Table 9, provide some basis for making predictions of the chances of completing a course of study. Teachers holding administrative positions, were more likely to withdraw (35.8 percent) than those in any other designated teaching area (29.2 percent). In the general teaching positions men (73.2 percent) showed a greater propensity to persist than did women (67.8 percent) holding similar positions.

Where and When People Study

Having a place set aside for study may be a problem for people studying at a distance. All work required by A.S.T. courses (with the possible exception of a two or three day seminar) presumes that individuals will find their own places to work.

The nine categories shown in Table 10 were derived from responses to an open ended question "What do you consider to be the best conditions for you to study under?" The most general comment from course members was that they preferred a place to study without the interruptions of television, telephone and household tasks. As shown in Table 10, 55.9 percent indicated a preference for a distraction free, isolated place to study.

TABLE 9: DESIGNATED TEACHING TASK*

	MALES				FEMALES				TOTAL
	Persisters		Withdrawers		Persisters		Withdrawers		
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Teacher	101	(73.2)	37	(26.8)	255	(67.8)	121	(32.2)	514 (53.7)**
Senior Teacher/ Specialist	63	(72.4)	24	(27.6)	105	(71.4)	42	(28.6)	234 (24.5)
Deputy Principal/ Principal	113	(64.2)	63	(35.8)	21	(63.6)	12	(34.4)	209 (21.8)
Total	277	(70.8)	124	(29.2)	381	(68.5)	175	(31.5)	957 (100.0)

* Question 5(d) in the main questionnaire.

** Percentages are given as part of the total group.

TABLE 10: CONDITIONS PREFERRED FOR STUDY

* Response Categories	Persisters		Withdrawers		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1. No distractions, separate room	425	(58.7)	164	(49.7)	589	(55.9)
2. Study at night	71	(9.8)	15	(4.6)	86	(8.2)
3. Group study	35	(4.8)	15	(4.6)	50	(4.7)
4. Study in the morning	32	(4.4)	14	(4.2)	46	(4.4)
5. Leave from teaching	23	(3.2)	20	(6.1)	43	(4.1)
6. Deadline to keep	28	(3.9)	1	(0.3)	29	(2.7)
7. Holiday/weekend study	24	(3.3)	5	(1.5)	29	(2.7)
8. Study during the day	19	(2.6)	6	(1.8)	25	(2.4)
9. Access to books	16	(2.2)	7	(2.1)	23	(2.2)
No response	51	(7.1)	83	(25.1)	134	(12.7)
Total	724	(100.0)	330	(100.0)	1054	(100.0)

* Question 16 in main questionnaire.

Finding time to study is another consideration for the part-time student. Respondents who preferred "study at night" made the general comment that it was when the evening meal was over, the children in bed and the house in order that they could then turn their minds to study. Other factors that respondents stated as conducive to optimal study conditions were: (i) the opportunity to study with a group; (ii) "time out" from the classroom, particularly by withdrawers; (iii) access to required books; and (iv) when there is a deadline to keep. The last category reflects the need felt by some respondents, particularly persisters, to work under the pressure of due-date for assignments as a necessary stimulus to get the job done.

Next the investigation turns to an examination of the experience and educational background of A.S.T. students.

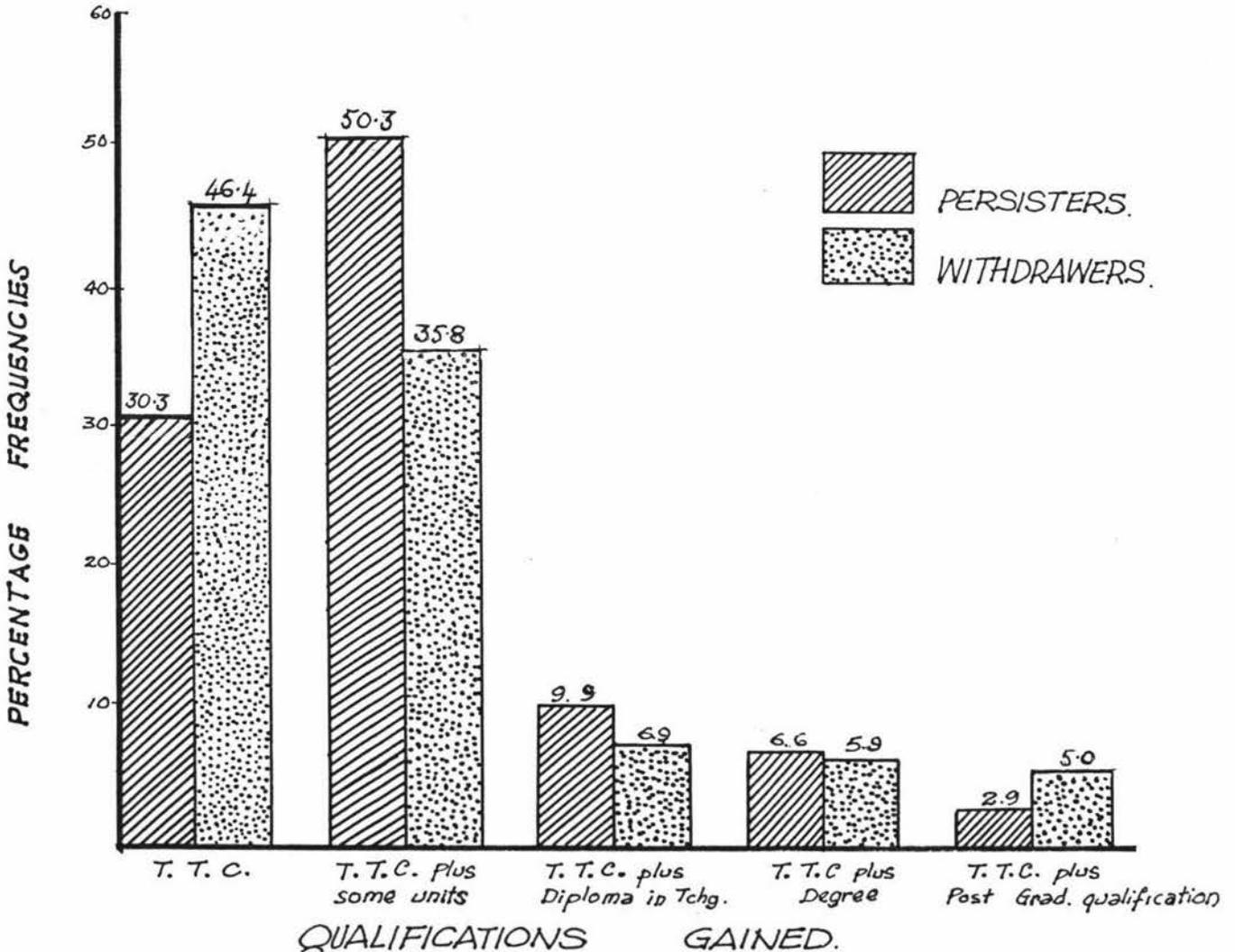
EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

The findings from this survey about the relationship between prior educational experience and A.S.T. study appear to support what has been reported in other studies - a positive correlation between the inclination to participate and previous levels of educational attainment (Lowe, 1977; Nolan, 1979).

Qualifications Held on Entry

The minimum qualification level of any respondent, (with the exception of five Christchurch Teachers College students) was the Trained Teachers Certificate. As Figure 7 indicates, most course members on entry held a Trained Teachers Certificate, (35.5 percent) or a Trained Teachers Certificate plus some units, (45.6 percent) a total of 81.1 percent.

FIGURE 7: QUALIFICATIONS FOR PERSISTERS AND WITHDRAWERS*



* Question 18 in main questionnaire.
17 did not respond to this question.

A comparison made of persisters and withdrawers showed withdrawers to have experienced less post basic study since the time they spent at Teachers College. Withdrawers also are more likely to be at a minimum qualification level: 46.4 percent of the withdrawers held only Trained Teachers Certificate compared with 30.3 percent of the persisters. Given these results, not surprisingly, the persisters proportionately exceed withdrawers in the next three qualification levels: 50.3 percent of persisters and only 35.8 percent of withdrawers have Trained Teachers Certificate plus additional credits towards Diploma in Teaching; 9.9 percent of persisters and 6.9 percent of withdrawers had Trained Teachers Certificate and a Diploma in Teaching and 6.6 percent of persisters and 5.9 percent of withdrawers had Trained Teachers Certificate and a degree.

There is a reversal however at the next qualification level of Trained Teachers Certificate plus a post graduate qualification. There are on average more withdrawers (5.0 percent) than persisters (2.9 percent) in this advanced qualification category. Several respondents in this group mentioned that interest in the subject was the reason for enrolling. From comments received, this group appeared to drop out when assignment feedback or the organisation did not match with what they had previously experienced in their tertiary studies.

Prior Correspondence Study

When respondents were asked whether they had studied by correspondence before, 597 (56.6 percent) indicated they had. (See Table 11.) By taking those who had done prior correspondence study and comparing persister and withdrawer categories the proportion was 60.4 and 48.9 percent respectively.

TABLE 11: PREVIOUS CORRESPONDENCE STUDY EXPERIENCE

	<i>Persisters</i>		<i>Withdrawers</i>		<i>Total</i>
	#	%	#	%	
Yes	437	(60.4)	160	(48.9)	597 (56.6)
No	283	(39.1)	160	(48.9)	443 (42.1)
No response	4	(0.5)	10	(3.2)	14 (1.3)
Total	724	(100.0)	330	(100.0)	1054 (100.0)

* Question 20 in main questionnaire.

An examination of the correspondence institutions through which both persisters and withdrawers had previously studied revealed that proportionately more students who had undertaken previous A.S.T. study persisted with subsequent A.S.T. courses than students who had undertaken correspondence study elsewhere. (See Table 12.) The reason for this remains unclear and it would be fallacious on this evidence to make the assertion that A.S.T. course members who were persisting were persisters because of their A.S.T. experience. The real cause may be attributable to entirely different reasons. In total 597 (56.6 percent) of those who responded indicated they had experienced some form of correspondence study and of this total, 15 percent had previous study experience with more than one institution. (See Table 12.) It is noteworthy that the findings in Table 12 show withdrawers on average to be more likely to have studied through other institutions, in particular Massey University (35.9 percent) when compared with persisters (26.8 percent). It seemed from this evidence that prior correspondence study through other institutions did not necessarily ensure persistence with A.S.T. study.

TABLE 12: INSTITUTIONS STUDIED THROUGH*

	<i>Persisters</i>		<i>Withdrawers</i>		<i>Total</i>
	#	%	#	%	
Massey	135	(26.8)	66	(35.9)	201 (29.3)
T.C.I.	21	(4.2)	11	(6.0)	32 (4.7)
A.S.T. Unit	295	(58.6)	87	(47.3)	382 (55.6)
Correspondence School	52	(10.4)	20	(10.8)	72 (10.4)
Total	503	(100.0)	184	(100.0)	687 (100.0)

* Question 21 in main questionnaire.

There seemed to be some relationship between ending formal study and beginning an A.S.T. course. Withdrawers as a group showed on the average a greater gap between the time last involved in formal study and re-entry into formal study. Only 37.9 percent of the withdrawers had studied within the past two years as against 53.4 percent in the persister category.

To summarise - although inconclusive, certain relationships can be seen between prior educational experience and the chances of persisting or withdrawing from an A.S.T. course. The findings did show that on average, half the respondents had prior

knowledge of what it is to study by correspondence and that this was slightly higher for persisters than for withdrawers. There seems however to be a relationship between the particular type of distance learning that had been experienced and the time since previous formal learning had taken place.

The next section is concerned with the sufficiency of information about A.S.T. courses. For example "How much do A.S.T. students know about course requirements and about correspondence study through the A.S.T. Unit before they enrol?" What help can they expect to get and who they know that could provide knowledgeable support.

COMMUNICATION ASPECTS

An examination of the way respondents learned of A.S.T. courses gave some indication of the relevant potency of different channels of communication.

Question 24 in the survey asked respondents (i) how they were introduced to A.S.T. courses; and (ii) to indicate their initial introduction.

TABLE 13: FIRST INTRODUCTION TO A.S.T. COURSES*

Source of Introduction	Persisters		Withdrawers		Total
	#	%	#	%	
Another teacher	247	(34.1)	102	(30.9)	349 (33.2)
Inspector, principal or senior colleague	105	(14.5)	41	(12.4)	146 (13.8)
Professional journal	30	(4.1)	23	(7.0)	53 (5.1)
The supplement to the Gazette	233	(32.2)	100	(30.3)	333 (31.7)
The A.S.T. Unit brochure	96	(13.3)	46	(13.9)	140 (13.3)
No response	13	(1.8)	18	(5.5)	31 (2.9)
Total	724	(100.0)	330	(100.0)	1054 (100.0)

* Question 24 in main questionnaire.

According to the findings, two of the five categories shown in Table 13 attracted 64.9 percent of the responses. They were (i) information given by another teacher (33.2 percent); and (ii) reading the A.S.T. information supplement to the November issue of the Education Gazette (31.7 percent). This result revealed an earlier indication that came through from the group interviews - that initial attraction to the course is as much through the suggestion of another teacher as through other sources. Senior colleagues (13.8 percent) by comparison were shown to be a lesser source of introduction. Apart from advertising courses through the Education Gazette other forms of written dissemination were the A.S.T. Unit Brochure (13.3 percent) and professional

journals such as *The New Zealand Post-Primary Teachers Association Journal* and the *Journal of the New Zealand Educational Institute*, (5.3 percent).

There was a high level of similarity between the responses of persisters and withdrawers to the question of course introduction.

Question 26 asked respondents "Do you think A.S.T. courses should be more widely advertised?" A total of 671 (63.7 percent) indicated that courses should be advertised more widely. The principals among the respondents were generally satisfied with present advertising: 75 (54.3 percent) stated that existing advertising was sufficient. A number of respondents in answering the open ended question "Can you suggest other ways of promoting A.S.T. courses for teachers?" made suggestions that information within the school setting appeared to be reaching only a proportion of those who could undertake A.S.T. study. Linking this with an earlier finding (Table 13) senior colleagues in comparison with fellow teachers appeared to be a limited source of introduction. The reasons for this apparent lack of information experienced by respondents could be attributed to many causes. It might be just as logical to suggest that teachers choose not to receive information as to suggest that principals do not hand A.S.T. information on.

However it could be that the communication breakdown as seen by respondents may lie to a certain extent within the school as well as the source of supply, the A.S.T. Unit.

People Studying Who are Outside the School Setting

Communication about A.S.T. courses is channelled almost totally through the schools. The present study has revealed that certain people outside the school setting may value the opportunity to continue with professional courses in teaching. Women who have left teaching for domestic reasons but who intend to re-enter the work force constitute one such group. From 47 in this category (see Table 14) who took A.S.T. courses, 35 (74.6 percent) indicated that they were going on to complete - a relatively high proportion when compared with the overall completion rate of 42 percent in 1978.

TABLE 14: NON-TEACHER RESPONDENTS*

	<i>Persisters</i>		<i>Withdrawers</i>		<i>Total</i>
	#	%	#	%	
Housewives	35	(74.6)	12	(25.4)	47 (56.0)
School related	13	(81.3)	3	(18.7)	16 (19.0)
Other job	6	(37.5)	10	(62.5)	16 (19.0)
Teachers' College Student	5	(100.0)	0	(-)	5 (6.0)
Total	59	(70.2)	25	(29.8)	84 (100.0)

* Question 5(c) in main questionnaire.

Although there were only 16 people employed in teacher related jobs their anticipated retention rate was also high: 13 (81.3 percent).

Course members, studying outside the school setting, commented on how A.S.T. courses could be promoted. Advertising on radio and in magazines that have wide appeal such as Womens Weekly and Listener was suggested.

The evidence from this limited group numberwise implies that there may be more people not connected with schools who might wish to take A.S.T. Unit study but who at present have little way of learning about courses.

The Adequacy of Information

The present study attempted to establish whether the A.S.T. Unit provides sufficient information about the organisation, what it offers and its relationship to the wider sphere of Continuing Teacher Education, for example; detailed descriptions of each subject, the number of papers that could be linked to a particular area of interest, how to become and (equally important) how to survive as a correspondent student. Past A.S.T. records tend to imply that teachers enrol, reconsider their decisions and withdraw, for example in 1979, 141 (10.3 percent) withdrew immediately after enrolment. In an attempt to identify respondents' reasons for withdrawal question 25 asked: "How would you rate the information available about A.S.T. courses?" In total 68.9 percent stated that information about A.S.T. courses was adequate. (See Table 15.)

TABLE 15: QUALITY OF INFORMATION

	<i>Persisters</i>		<i>Withdrawers</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Excellent	111	(15.3)	51	(15.5)	162	(15.4)
Adequate	516	(71.3)	210	(63.6)	726	(68.9)
Unsatisfactory	77	(10.6)	48	(14.5)	125	(11.9)
Non respondents	20	(2.8)	21	(6.4)	41	(3.8)
Total	724	(100.0)	330	(100.0)	1054	(100.0)

* Question 25 in the main questionnaire.

However further probing questions revealed that the paucity of information about the objectives and requirements of A.S.T. courses available before enrolment appears to be inadequate for many course members.

In response to question 27 "Would you have liked to see a set of objectives and requirements of the A.S.T. courses available *before* you enrolled?" a significant number, both persisters (80.4 percent) and withdrawers (80.6 percent) indicated that they considered there was not enough information of a specific nature before enrolment. (See Table 16.)

TABLE 16: COURSE OUTLINE REQUIREMENTS*

	<i>Persisters</i>		<i>Withdrawers</i>		<i>Total</i>
	#	%	#	%	
Yes	582	(80.4)	266	(80.6)	848 (80.5)
No	123	(17.0)	41	(12.4)	164 (15.6)
No Response	19	(2.6)	23	(7.0)	42 (3.9)
Total	724	(100.0)	330	(100.0)	1054 (100.0)

* Question 27 in main questionnaire.

For a number of respondents, what information there was, appeared either unclear or insufficient to give an accurate assessment of what to expect, for example; 97 respondents stated that details about their chosen courses could have been clearer, 133 indicated that the course was not what was expected and 52 quoted that specific help with how to study would have been valued. Like any investment that involves effort, a large amount of time and some financial outlay, the goal needs to be clearly defined. Teachers might well benefit from knowing the consequence of an A.S.T. investment. In total, 412 respondents took the opportunity to comment under the open question "Can you suggest any other ways of promoting A.S.T. courses for teachers?" Of this group 198 stated that whatever the gains A.S.T. study may provide, qualification, vocation and salary remuneration terms should be elaborated. Such information would allow potential students to weigh before enrolling, benefits against the "costs" and demands of A.S.T. study. Although respondents were generally satisfied that course advertising was adequate, this in itself was not sufficient. Information was said to be of too general a nature and thus did not give the content description desired. A total of 133 (40.0 percent) of the withdrawers indicated that the course was not what they expected it to be; 53 (15.3 percent) rated this factor as "highly significant" in causing them to drop out.

Available Information on Continuing Teacher Education

An overwhelming majority requested that some co-ordinated information about Continuing Teacher Education should be made available. Courses offered at teachers colleges, technical institutes, community colleges, university and A.S.T. Unit as well as long term inservice training could be listed. (See Table 17 below.)

TABLE 17: THE NEED FOR COURSE DIRECTORY*

	<i>Persisters</i>		<i>Withdrawers</i>		<i>Total</i>
	#	%	#	%	
Yes	671	(92.7)	275	(83.3)	946 (89.8)
No	29	(4.0)	26	(7.9)	55 (5.2)
No response	24	(3.3)	29	(8.8)	53 (5.0)
Total	724	(100.0)	330	(100.0)	1054 (100.0)

* Question 42 in main questionnaire.

An important point drawn from this finding is that persisters are almost in total agreement (92.7 percent) that this information should be available. Respondents generally felt the need for precise factual information. One said that she still did not know the requirements for a Diploma in Teaching or the significance of a numeral preceding the university course with which the A.S.T. courses are equated. This respondent expressed what many teachers were asking for. They wanted to know more about the possible gains, course combinations, alternatives and opportunities available in Continuing Teacher Education. Without knowledge of alternative study possibilities the implication of this finding is that many respondents might see A.S.T. courses as the only available Continuing Teacher Education avenue open to them and therefore be doing A.S.T. study by default.

The Consequence of Communication

Change of attitude can also be related to lack of information. The question might be raised of what sort of attitude change could be predicted if course members were largely unaware of what to expect. Persisters and withdrawers were remarkably similar in response to question 28 (i) "Has your view about A.S.T. courses changed since enrolling?"; and (ii) "In what way?" Replying to the first part of the question, altogether 40 percent had changed their attitude towards A.S.T. study. After being involved in the course, respondents, to the second part of question 28, indicated change of attitude ranging from negative comments such as "more complicated than anticipated",

64 (5.8 percent); "greater workload than expected", 74 (6.7 percent); and "more details should be provided", 119 (10.7 percent) - to positive statements such as "good organisation" and "helpful tutoring", 126 (11.3 percent).

A.S.T. Course Promotion

Finally, when asked for suggestions of ways to promote A.S.T. courses, over one-third of the respondents took the opportunity to express their opinions. (See Table 18 below.)

Personal contact was expressed as being the best way to tell people about A.S.T. study, 139 (13.2 percent). Many respondents believed that real benefit could result if those who had completed A.S.T. study could be encouraged to tell others about it. A fellow teacher is able to articulate the consequences of further study and so may be able to allay fears.

Two other popular suggestions were "wider advertising" and "making course descriptions available", 114 (10.8 percent).

TABLE 18: SUGGESTIONS FOR COURSE PROMOTION

Categories	Persisters		Withdrawers		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1. Through personal contact	109	(15.0)	30	(9.1)	139	(13.2)
2. Through wider advertising	82	(11.3)	32	(9.7)	114	(10.8)
3. Through having salary increments	37	(5.1)	10	(3.1)	47	(4.5)
4. Greater development of Teachers College Continuing Education Courses in connection with A.S.T.U.	24	(3.3)	7	(2.1)	31	(2.9)
5. Linking A.S.T.U. Courses and In-Service Courses	20	(2.8)	9	(2.7)	29	(2.8)
6. Release time for study	20	(2.8)	8	(2.4)	28	(2.7)
7. Satisfied with present promotion	20	(2.8)	3	(0.9)	23	(2.2)
No response	412	(56.9)	230	(70.0)	642	(60.9)
Total	724	(100.0)	330	(100.0)	1054	(100.0)

* Question 29 in main questionnaire.

One finding that has come from this investigation is that people who take on study again after some time appear to have a high level of anxiety about their ability to study again. The fact that A.S.T. study is via correspondence only adds to this anxiety. Adult learners who study alone are uncertain as to how to allot time, how to write assignments and so on.

One general conclusion that seems warranted is that "communication" might be regarded as insufficient to achieve the purpose desired. Information does not appear to be detailed enough and many people who might be interested in A.S.T. courses are not being reached. Information, sufficiently detailed, readily available and quickly relayed is essential if communication about A.S.T. courses is to be effective.

PERSISTENCE OR WITHDRAWAL

Factors that Favour Persisters

Mention was made earlier of certain factors likely to increase the chances that students will complete their courses. The present study has shown educational experience to be an important factor. The chances of completing a course of study are greatest if the course member is near to the completion of a Diploma in Teaching or to achieving a Service Increment. The possibility of attaining a qualification within the immediate future apparently constitutes strong motivation to persist. Linked with this factor is recent study experience and the kind of study experienced. If study has been undertaken (i) within the past three years; and (ii) through the A.S.T. Unit, chances are high that the course will be completed.

Course completion also appears to be a function of the demands and responsibilities associated with a teachers job. The more activities in which the classroom teacher is involved (both in and outside the school setting) the less likelihood there is of his completing. There seems to be greater tendency for rurally placed teachers to complete courses. It might be argued that teachers in country areas have fewer distractions to contend with. However, there was little evidence from the study to indicate this was the case.

The survey did show that course completion is greatly enhanced if course members are *not* employed as practising teachers. Housewives, library assistants, ancillary staff and people in teacher related occupations fit into this category. The demands of daily classroom teaching were not theirs. Therefore presumably the day could be more flexibly arranged to fit in with study and assignment deadlines. However, other problems arise for the non-teacher. Two remarks reflect the prevailing situation: "... as a person taking an A.S.T. course and currently not teaching I feel very isolated from the situation", "... not being a practising teacher, I felt cut off from the practical applications of what I was reading and studying".

Numbers of Papers Taken

As shown in Table 19 three quarters (75.7 percent) of all respondents in 1979 took two papers with fewer members taking one (14.7 percent), three (5.0 percent) or four (4.6 percent) papers.

TABLE 19: NUMBER OF PAPERS TAKEN IN 1979: PERSISTERS AND WITHDRAWERS*

<i>Papers Taken</i>	<i>Persisters</i>		<i>Withdrawers</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1	130	(18.1)	25	(7.5)	155	(14.7)
2	538	(74.3)	260	(78.9)	798	(75.7)
3	22	(3.0)	30	(9.0)	52	(5.0)
4	34	(4.6)	15	(4.6)	49	(4.6)
Total	724	(100.0)	330	(100.0)	1054	(100.0)

* Question 8 in the main questionnaire.

Course members who took no more than two papers tended to persist. The mean number of papers taken by persisters and withdrawers was respectively 1.95 and 2.13. Persisters were more likely to take one (18.1 percent) or two (74.3 percent) papers than withdrawers who showed greater tendency to enrol for two (78.9 percent) or three (9.0 percent) papers.

The Kind of Support Given

Persisters reported receiving slightly more positive support and slightly less negative support than did withdrawers. Table 20 shows the effect that the support of senior colleagues, fellow teachers, spouse and family had on the course member's probability of completing.

CASE STUDY

PERSISTER A

'I have nothing but praise for the tutors I've had. They've shown sympathy, constructive criticism, encouragement and a real desire to help,' says Mrs A. who has been an A.S.T. course member now for three years. She is an assistant teacher who values the opportunity to study through the A.S.T.U. She puts much time into her study and sympathises with those who have heavy teaching commitments.

Her husband and two children are very encouraging, more so than her colleagues, and take over certain household duties so that she can devote time to study.

She finds prevailing attitudes of university tutors and students place the Diploma in Teaching as the 'lowliest of achievements'. However she sees A.S.T. courses as far more relevant to classroom teaching than any other type of university course. She would like to see the continuation of A.S.T. courses but would like to see the Diploma be made up of 12 A.S.T. papers rather than the present university, A.S.T. mix. She feels this may encourage a little more respect for the professional nature of Diploma in Teaching study.

TABLE 20: DEGREE OF SUPPORT*

	Senior Colleague		Fellow Teacher		Spouse		Family	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<u>Persisters</u>								
Positive support	415	(57.3)	323	(44.6)	419	(57.9)	416	(57.5)
Neutral	221	(30.5)	334	(46.1)	109	(15.1)	210	(29.0)
Negative support	7	(1.0)	16	(2.2)	17	(2.4)	12	(1.7)
No response	81	(11.2)	51	(7.1)	179	(24.6)	86	(11.8)
	724	(100.0)	724	(100.0)	724	(100.0)	724	(100.0)
<u>Withdrawers</u>								
Positive support	166	(50.3)	128	(38.8)	144	(43.6)	127	(38.5)
Neutral	107	(32.4)	135	(40.9)	64	(19.4)	107	(32.4)
Negative support	7	(2.1)	24	(7.3)	23	(7.0)	15	(4.6)
No response	50	(15.2)	43	(13.0)	99	(30.0)	81	(24.5)
	330	(100.0)	330	(100.0)	330	(100.0)	330	(100.0)

* Question 9 in main questionnaire.

From all four sources, persisters reported they had more positive support. Of particular interest is the difference between persisters and withdrawers in the amount of support received at home. Persisters had more positive support from spouse and family compared with withdrawers. The difference was 14.3 percent and 19.0 percent respectively.

Respondents reported on how they thought A.S.T. study affected family life. The responses of those who commented were categorised under four headings: (i) Increased work load; (ii) Created tension; (iii) Not able (or willing) to give time to study; (iv) Provided benefits. (See Table 21.)

CASE STUDY

PERSISTER B

Mr B. is a principal of a Grade IVB school. He completed his college training in 1959 and since then, after six years correspondence study through Massey University and A.S.T.U. completed a Diploma in Teaching in 1976. This year he has chosen Outdoor Education papers A and B which he sees as his last to be credited towards a Service Increment.

The price to pay for correspondence study is often seen in the inability to give time to family and friends. Mr B. has two children who are teenagers. He feels that families are often neglected at an important stage of development because of study.

He has had little support from colleagues or superiors to furthering his qualifications and voices the difficulty of studying completely on ones own. The support he most valued was from a previous understanding tutor. This year he has not been so lucky and wonders about the skills tutors need to have to be able to communicate with students. He realises that for tutors, learning at a distance isn't as easy as one would think teaching someone you never see and questions whether the A.S.T.U. tutors are taught to 'communicate' by correspondence.

TABLE 21: EFFECT OF A.S.T. STUDY ON FAMILY LIFE*

Categories	Persisters		Withdrawers		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1. Increased work load	211	(29.1)	80	(24.2)	291	(27.6)
2. Created tension	67	(9.2)	30	(9.1)	97	(9.2)
3. Not able to give time to study	68	(9.4)	30	(9.1)	98	(9.3)
4. Provided benefits	145	(20.0)	17	(5.2)	162	(15.4)
No response	233	(32.3)	173	(52.4)	406	(38.5)
Total	724	(100.0)	330	(100.0)	1054	(100.0)

* Question 12 in main questionnaire.

Although 38.5 percent of respondents (52.4 percent of withdrawers) gave no answers to this question, for those who did reply the three "negative" categories outweighed the "positive" one by a ratio of approximately 3:1. Predictably, proportionately fewer withdrawers reported benefits than did persisters (5.2 percent to 20 percent). In explanation, apparently strain was created when assignments were due and family demands clashed. Many commented that they had no time to enjoy the family, that the family had to forego outings and that family life suffered. The principal of a large school commented: "When my son was about 10 he said, 'When will you be finished your homework because then we can do things.' I feel families are often neglected at an important stage of development. This is my last unit this year and now my children are more interested in other teenagers. I have gained a Diploma in Teaching but what did I lose?" If the first two categories "increased workload" and "created tension" in Table 21 are grouped, persisters and withdrawers show a response rating of 38.4 percent and 33.3 percent respectively. However, not all responses reflected this sentiment. Category three respondents reporting that "they weren't able to give time to study", also stated that "they placed study commitments below family, school or personal interests". Respondents in this category might be considered to have a more relaxed attitude towards study and could be closer to Boshier's idea of growth motivated learners. They were prepared to learn but said not at the expense of giving up other important commitments in their lives.

CASE STUDY

PERSISTER C

Mrs C. has two young children which necessitates her to be out of the classroom at the present. She has completed two A.S.T. 'Reading' papers in 1978 and this year is working through Education in the Junior School paper A. She finds that studies have a positive spin-off to the way she can assist with the instruction of her preschoolers as well as keeping her in touch with modern teaching methods.

Because of not having studied since leaving Teachers College in 1964 she was relieved to discover that A.S.T. courses were not as theoretical as originally feared. She believes many who could benefit don't because they have the idea it is all theory and only for the 'brains'.

She is keen to continue with her studies and take other courses in the future. As a non-teaching person she would like to have alternative assignments which do not necessitate classroom work and makes a further plea for more information to be made available to first timers on what the course entails, such as 'purchases necessary, time needed, practical work necessary - any practical information to better prepare oneself'.

Fourth category respondents reported benefits in A.S.T. study. Many seemed surprised at the benefits organised learning had for them and their families. This was reflected in remarks such as; study had "boosted confidence", "helped organise themselves more effectively", "was a stimulus", and "made them think and read more". They also stated it "boosted self esteem" and helped "make him a more positive person".

Time Involved in Study

Information contained in the A.S.T. Unit brochure states that between four and five hours study per week for each paper is required. Replies from 951 respondents suggested their time was, on average, nearer six to eight hours per paper per week. (See Table 22.)

TABLE 22: AVERAGE TIME SPENT PER WEEK ON ONE A.S.T. PAPER*

	<i>Persisters</i>		<i>Withdrawers</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
0 - 4 hours	340	(46.9)	106	(32.1)	446	(42.3)
5 - 8 hours	310	(42.8)	105	(31.8)	415	(39.4)
9 - 12 hours	56	(7.7)	18	(5.5)	74	(7.0)
More than 12 hours	9	(1.3)	7	(2.1)	16	(1.5)
No response	9	(1.3)	94	(28.5)	103	(9.8)
Total	724	(100.0)	330	(100.0)	1054	(100.0)

* Question 15 in main questionnaire.

If a student were taking two papers (as 798 did in 1979) that would imply somewhere between 12 and 14 hours study per week. For participating students, weekend time was often entailed: 557 (76.9 percent) of the persisters and 188 (57.0 percent) of the withdrawers used on average 4.1 hours for study each weekend. (See Table 23.)

TABLE 23: USE OF WEEKENDS FOR STUDY*

	<i>Persisters</i>		<i>Withdrawers</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	557	(76.9)	188	(57.0)	745	(70.7)
No	145	(20.1)	84	(25.4)	229	(21.7)
No response	22	(3.0)	58	(17.6)	80	(7.6)
Total	724	(100.0)	330	(100.0)	1054	(100.0)

* Question 14 in main questionnaire.

To be a successful student it is necessary to devote time to study. However, time in itself is not a sufficient condition. One has to be a skilled learner, a person who can assimilate information, interpret problems and write assignments.

The present investigation has shown that many learners come back to study after a period of absence. Also 442 (42.6 percent) have never studied through correspondence before. Hence, for many, an entirely new system of learning is encountered.

However those who have satisfactory study techniques and who are familiar with learning at a distance will, it seems, have a greater chance of succeeding.

Factors That Hinder Completion

Glatter and Wedell (1971), Harris (1972) and more recently Hibbert (1978) and Tremaine and Cavanagh (1979) have all suggested that the main reason hindering completion was overcommitment. However, what may be overcommitment for one, may not be for another.

Accordingly in this investigation questions were designed to examine areas to test possible discrepancies between what students stated were their experiences and what the A.S.T. Unit's intention was. Using Glatter and Wedell's model for determining weaknesses within the organisation, the aim was to find what part of student withdrawal was due to factors intrinsic to the correspondence method and what part was due to extrinsic factors. In an endeavour to probe the former, course members who had withdrawn were asked an open ended question. The question was "In your opinion why do you think teachers withdraw before completing an A.S.T. course?" The 330 replies were classified under six main headings (in descending order); (i) overcommitment (66.3 percent); (ii) workload too heavy (10.0 percent); (iii) family reasons or sudden change of plans (6.8 percent); (iv) inability to organise oneself to study (6.8 percent); (v) dissatisfaction with course (6.2 percent); and (vi) communication problems with the A.S.T. Unit (2.9 percent). (See Table 24.)

TABLE 24: REASONS FOR WITHDRAWAL*

<i>Categories</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>
1. Overcommitment	219	(66.3)
2. A.S.T. Unit workload too heavy	34	(10.0)
3. Family reasons, sudden change of plans	23	(6.8)
4. Inability to organise oneself to study	23	(6.8)
5. Dissatisfaction with course	21	(6.2)
6. Communication problems with the A.S.T. Unit	10	(2.9)
Total	330	(100.0)

* Question 1 in supplementary questionnaire.

CASE STUDY

VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWER A

Mrs A. first began teaching in 1952. After a break of 15 years in which she raised her family of six children she returned to the classroom and now holds a position of principal in a Grade IV school.

Managing a school requires a great deal of time and expertise. She enrolled for School Administration papers A and B in order to be better equipped for her job. She had not undertaken any formal study since college and found real difficulties in organising herself to accommodate study and the demands of her job and family. She therefore withdrew from both papers in August.

She realises the value of A.S.T. courses but maintains that they are better suited for classroom teachers than teachers in more senior positions. She is of the opinion that a concentrated period of study away from the classroom would be more pertinent for those people who generally wish to better their qualifications and upgrade their knowledge. She realises that such a plan would put pressures on the present teaching structure but would ultimately benefit the teaching profession.

Her own wish is to enrol at a university in order to give full-time commitment to the studies required to become a more competent teacher.

As predicted, overcommitment was by far the most frequent reason.*

A more detailed analysis of reasons is given in Table 25 to the question "Why did you withdraw from your A.S.T. course this year?"

TABLE 25: 1979 WITHDRAWAL REASONS*

<i>Categories</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>
1. Initial school workload	130	(33.7)
2. Personal reasons	107	(28.0)
3. Change of plans; travel, job or resigned	47	(12.2)
4. Study guides/textbooks late in arriving	26	(6.7)
5. School difficulties	24	(6.2)
6. Course did not match teaching level	18	(4.7)
7. Irrelevant study	18	(4.7)
8. Little help from tutor	7	(1.8)
Total	382**	(100.0)

* *Question 3 in supplementary questionnaire.*

** *Included in this table are 52 partial withdrawers.*

Comments added on the question have permitted fuller explanation. Illness, job transfer, an impending grading visit, family crises, a new school library to organise, were among the reasons given. A crisis such as the death of a parent meant a student missed perhaps a month's work. With the possibility of an overdue assignment to add to the strain it is understandable that such students withdrew.

When respondents wrote comments about their overcommitment, it seemed apparent that there could have been a lack of foreknowledge about the course requirements. Some courses required access to equipment, classrooms and children which were not available - particularly to those who were not teachers. These people had apparently enrolled without this having being made clear to them.

The Problem of Getting Behind

For a number of reasons, students can get behind with their work (a phenomenon not exclusive to A.S.T. study). There are occasions when students have to give up study in order to attend to urgent personal concerns or a school activity can absorb time normally set aside for study.

* *NOTE: Although each comment was placed in only one category several responses could have fitted into more than one.*

CASE STUDY

VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWER B

Mrs B. is a secondary teacher with a P.R. for form 3 - 5 English. Her qualifications include an M.A. (Hons) Dip. Ed. and a T.T.C.

The reason for taking an A.S.T. course (The Teaching of English as a Second Language) was primarily because of relevancy to her task. She considered the course to be well organised but would value the opportunity for study to be more learner controlled.

"I can't teach, look after a young family, do an A.S.T. course and stay sane at the same time. Over the Christmas holidays I could study provided study guides were sent out one to two months before Christmas so I could organise materials from pupils for study when necessary."

The problem was not the A.S.T. course which she valued. It was trying to combine workload and family life which was the cause of her having to withdraw late in the year.

She considered teachers should be granted sabbatical leave to further their professional growth at the teachers colleges.

Furthermore, it is inevitable with correspondence study that there is a communication lag between institution and student. Although this problem has been reduced by the A.S.T. Unit over recent years, it is impossible to eradicate completely. The present study revealed that of the withdrawers 26 (6.7 percent) reported late arrival of study materials. Some stated that the tape for the first assignment had not arrived by the time the second assignment was due or that their first study guide arrived after the first assignment was due.

In order to examine the various issues of why students fall behind with their study withdrawers were asked the question "Prior to withdrawing what circumstance regarding A.S.T. study gave you most trouble?" A significant number 176 (53.3 percent) gave as their reason, the inability to meet an assignment date through lack of time for preparation. (See Table 26.)

TABLE 26: STUDY DIFFICULTIES

<i>Categories</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>
1. Not enough preparation time for assignments	176	(53.3)
2. Personal inability to organise study	42	(12.7)
3. Problem external to the A.S.T.U.	39	(11.8)
4. Study unrelated to job	25	(7.6)
5. Too much study material sent out initially	19	(5.8)
6. Little tutor support	15	(4.6)
7. Low motivation	14	(4.2)
Total	330	(100.0)

* Question 5 in supplementary questionnaire.

Study difficulties most frequently reported by withdrawers were: not being able to get text books; study patterns not established; failure to understand what was required in the assignment; difficulty in trying to gauge the amount of written work required in an assignment and time factor weighing heavily.

Although the intention of the A.S.T. Unit is that some flexibility be allowed for the student to complete work at a later date, students themselves apparently had difficulty in seeing themselves able to "drop out" and then "drop in" again. Many withdrawers 210 (63.6 percent) attributed their withdrawing to factors internal to the A.S.T. Unit. However a number of respondents 39 (11.8 percent) did not.

Assignment Due Dates Not Preferred

Since the question of the pressure in trying to meet assignment deadlines had arisen in the early semi-structured group interviews, the present investigation sought to establish the months in which course members preferred *not* to have assignments due. Figure 8 illustrates the yearly "pressure points" for both persisters and withdrawers. Withdrawers wish not to have to write assignments in March and April. It seemed that this time of the year was needed to adjust to study again. July and August were also seen as pressure times - surprisingly enough even more so for persisters than for withdrawers.

Respondents stated that school demands, e.g. mid year assessment of pupil progress, appraisal of programmes and administrative returns, cause teachers to exhaust much of the time available. Again, in the third term, pressure builds up because of examination preparation work. Such pressure points in the school year appear to be generally acknowledged by A.S.T. students who are teachers. These findings imply that inconvenient timing of assignments could have placed a proportion of students in difficulties, the resolution of which might have been reflected in the withdrawer figures.

Exemptions or Extensions

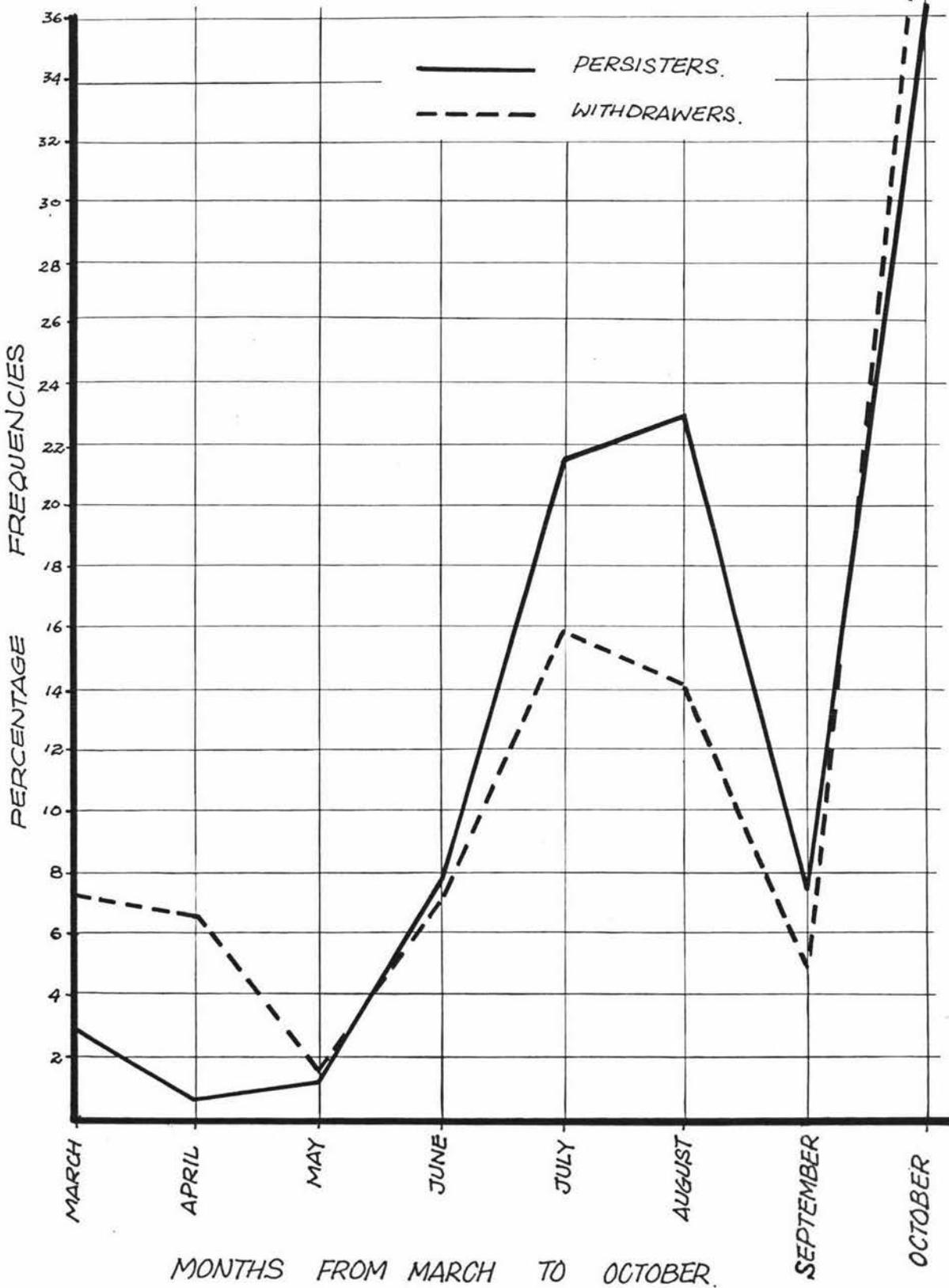
There seems to be a gap between what the A.S.T. Unit endeavours to provide and what the students believe is provided. The supplement in the November issue of the Education Gazette states that "... allowance is made for illness or special circumstances of which the tutor is informed".* Yet students are either unaware of this or the "allowance" is not sufficient to meet their circumstances. Many students therefore see assignment dates as restrictive.

When responses to the precoded sections in question 6 in the supplementary part of the questionnaire were placed beside the responses to the open questions 1, 3 and 5 a similar response pattern emerged.

The one notable exception was in the response to the statement "There was nobody you could discuss the work with". In total, 114 (41.0 percent) rated this as being of some significance or greater. In fact, 41 (14.7 percent) marked this statement as highly significant in causing them to drop out. It has not been A.S.T. Unit policy to send out lists of course members but as this investigation reveals some advantage might result if students knew of other students in their areas. Both persisters and withdrawers made a plea for area lists of students to be circulated early in the study year - to enable them to set up their own study groups.

* Page 4 *Education Gazette*, November 1978

FIGURE 8: ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES NOT PREFERRED*



* Question 32 in main questionnaire.

CASE STUDY

COMPULSORY WITHDRAWER C

Mr C. is an assistant teacher who has been teaching for ten years. He has the overall responsibility of physical education in the school. He is the teachers representative on the Home and School and is on the local N.Z.E.I. committee of management. He is involved in Jaycees, a local Playcentre committee and for these reasons plus the fact that he is helping to build his own home, placed him so far behind with his studies that he was compulsorily withdrawn by the A.S.T.U. early in the year.

Understandably the reason given was overcommitment. He was strongly in favour of learner paced courses and of short-term courses that could be held in the school holidays. He believes time spent in study during the working term could be detrimental rather than of benefit to the children he is teaching. The planning of programmes, the provision of enrichment activities and the evaluation steps used in his teaching would be short changed in order to spend time in study.

He intends to enrol with the A.S.T.U. next year but at this stage he is unsure as to the papers he is taking.

TABLE 27: A.S.T. UNIT'S ROLE AND CONTINUING TEACHER EDUCATION*

Ranked Categories	%
1. Press for an improvement of student-student, tutor-student relationships. Need for inservice seminars and sharing of ideas.	37.6
2. Generally satisfied with A.S.T. Courses	12.6
3. Dissatisfaction over A.S.T. study because of inconsistencies.	10.0
4. Concern over existing structure of Continuing Teacher Education.	9.9
5. The desire for courses to fit teacher needs.	9.7
6. Demanding nature of A.S.T. study.	9.5
7. Slow feedback, lack of communication.	5.8
8. A.S.T. Unit only provision through which courses are available.	2.6
9. A.S.T. study not encouraged by senior colleagues.	2.3
Total	100.0

* Questions 38, 41 and 45 in main questionnaire.

Students made reference to the lack of student-student and student-tutor relationships. (See Table 27.) The possibility of sharing a problem with someone who understands - preferably in a face to face rather than a correspondence situation could be instrumental in allowing some people to complete.

Tutor Support

Ideally, correspondence tutors should be specialists in their subjects and possess counselling and evaluation skills as well. Furthermore they should be able to display their skill in written form. The unhelpful remarks some tutors made on assignments of the withdrawers "caused" 52 (15.8 percent) to drop out. The withdrawers stated they were not adverse to criticism, however, what was wanted was constructive and corrective feedback.

Comments on communication (Table 27) indicated that many considered tutoring to be inadequate, e.g. "slow feedback", "lack of comments", "tutor comments were ambiguous" and "open to interpretation". Some respondents received assignments with nothing but a grade. When tutors justified the grades they gave, students considered their remarks to be valuable, for example "I had one tutor who obviously read my work thoroughly. His comments were of depth. I've forgotten his name but I remember his comments."

Some adults coming back to organised study again after some absence seemed unsure of their learning capability; some apparently felt inadequate and disheartened when assignment marks were low.

Reduction of Study Load

Most respondents who withdrew, did so completely - 330 (31.3 percent) of the total who responded dropped all courses as compared with 52 (5.0 percent) who partially withdrew. The tendency is therefore for A.S.T. course members to release themselves totally from study obligations rather than reduce their study load partially.

Of the course members who withdrew in 1979, over one in three (36.2 percent) had also withdrawn in previous years. The difference between withdrawers and persisters appears to be determined more by the stage the student is at. The student is "at risk" if he/she is in the initial stages of taking Diploma in Teaching courses. This risk is heightened if organised learning has not been experienced within recent years. The more advanced the student is the greater the likelihood that he will continue.

At the point of withdrawing, many withdrawers were uncertain about future study plans. However two-thirds (66.7 percent) reported that they wanted to enrol with the A.S.T. Unit again. (See Table 28.)

TABLE 28: CHOICE OF INSTITUTION FOR 1980*

<i>Institution</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>
A.S.T. Unit	272	(66.7)
Centre for University Extramural Study Massey University	81	(19.8)
Teachers' College	40	(9.8)
Other institutions - T.C.I. - Part-time University - Community College, etc.	15	(3.7)
Total	408**	(100.0)

* Question 9 in the supplementary questionnaire.

** Students opted for enrolment in more than one institution. There were 21 who did not respond from a total of 382 in this category.

Other choices were: Centre for Extramural Study, Massey University (19.8 percent) and Teachers College Continuing Education Courses (9.8 percent).

One conclusion reached so far in this study is that there are many reasons for student withdrawal. There is probably little that the A.S.T. Unit can do to ameliorate some of the problems identified. However other reasons given for withdrawal might be susceptible to A.S.T. Unit intervention viz; the timing of assignments and styles of tutoring.

APPROPRIATENESS OF A.S.T. COURSE ORGANISATION

One of the possibly counter-productive aspects of the present A.S.T. system is that it is time based rather than convenience or competency based. As in universities, enrolment, assignments and exams are tied to a standardised academic year. Course members must start in February whether or not they are ready. After a period of time the instruction ceases whether or not the course has been mastered.

If A.S.T. Unit is concerned to optimise its operation and cater successfully for as many students as possible then it is reasonable to ask whether the work might not be scheduled and apportioned differently - to take into account the circumstances and conditions of the clients. There are, of course, all sorts of organisational, logistic, cost and human (tutor) problems entailed in such a suggestion, however ideally the course member should have the assurance that time is allowed in order to read, ponder, apply studies to classroom situations, work out difficulties, look at other explanations and talk with other colleagues - in short do whatever is needed to undertake the task effectively.

Findings from the present investigation clearly show that many see the existing A.S.T. Unit timetable to be inappropriate for them. (See Table 29, page 73.) Question 30 asked respondents to indicate their preference from the alternatives listed in Table 29.

Among the preferences, they expressed, "course pacing" first (40.9 percent), "completing before the end of the second term", second (24.2 percent) and "maintaining the present system", third (16.1 percent). Understandably, withdrawers expressed less preference for the existing timetable than for other alternatives offered. A surprising result however came from the persisters. Although the "existing structure" was preferred by 43.2 percent, "completion before the end of the second term", and "course pacing" preferences were favoured by 23.3 percent and 23.2 percent respectively. In total the present system was favoured by one person in three (34.7 percent). Most respondents (59.6 percent) showed a preference for other alternatives.

A significant number of respondents favoured shorter term courses. Preference for half year or term courses is shown in Table 30.

TABLE 30: HALF YEAR OR TERM COURSES*

	<i>Persisters</i>		<i>Withdrawers</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	302	(41.7)	182	(55.2)	484	(45.9)
No	362	(50.0)	97	(29.4)	459	(43.6)
No Response	60	(8.3)	51	(15.4)	111	(10.5)
Total	724	(100.0)	330	(100.0)	1054	(100.0)

* Question 31 in main questionnaire.

TABLE 29: COURSE TIMETABLE PREFERENCES*

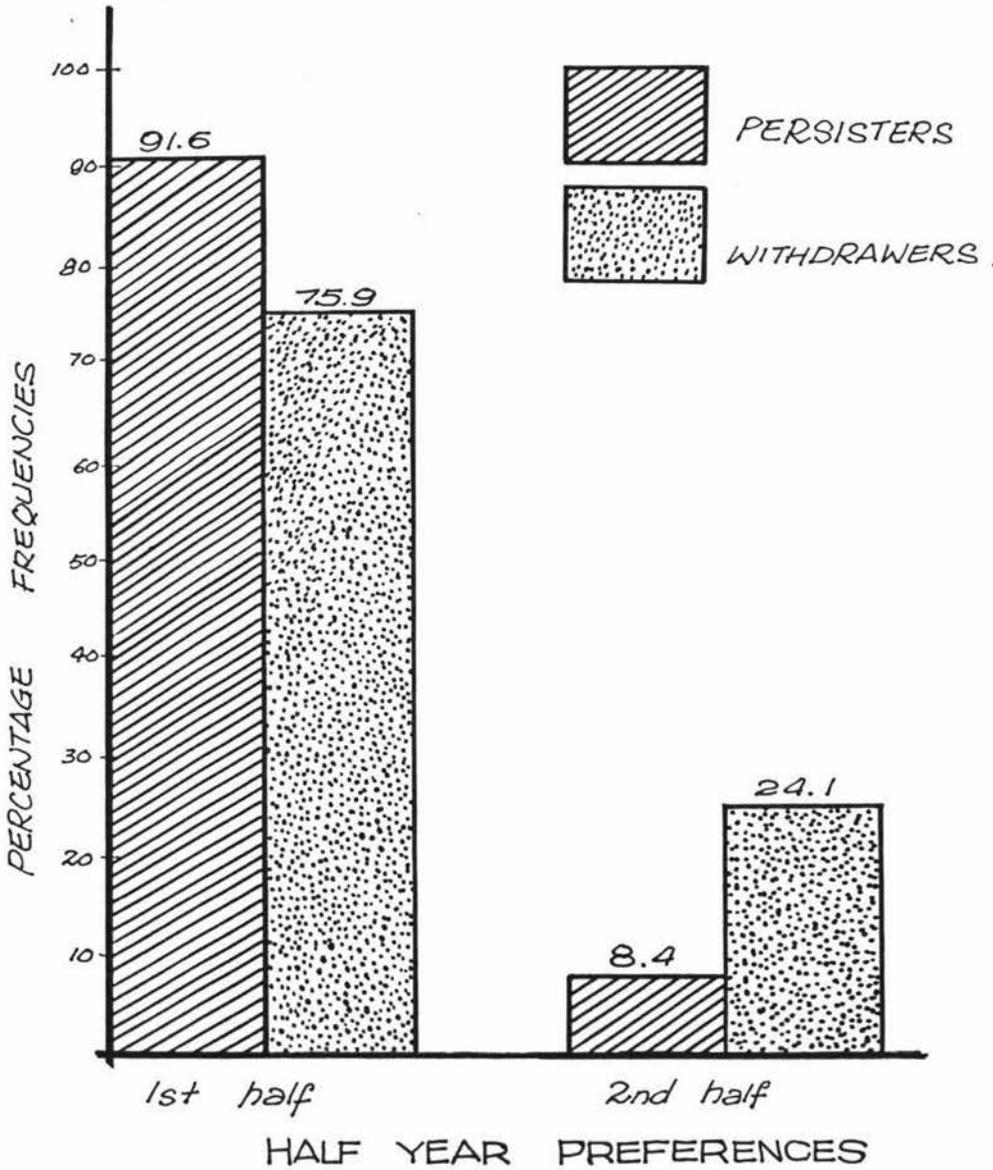
	<i>Persisters</i>		<i>Withdrawers</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1. The present A.S.T.U. academic year from February to November should continue to operate	313	(43.2)	53	(16.1)	366	(34.7)
2. The course could be arranged to run on an individual basis. Students would work at their own pace, and when they complete the course requirements they would sit the external exam	168	(23.2)	135	(40.9)	303	(28.7)
3. The course should be completed by the end of the second term. Study could be undertaken in the first two terms; possibly the first study materials could be despatched before Christmas, and part of the course requirement completed prior to the start of the school year	169	(23.3)	80	(24.2)	249	(23.6)
4. The A.S.T.U. academic year could begin in May and finish in May of the following year	46	(6.4)	31	(9.1)	77	(7.3)
No response	27	(3.9)	32	(9.7)	59	(5.7)
Total	724	(100.0)	330	(100.0)	1054	(100.0)

* Question 30 in main questionnaire.

In total 484 (45.9 percent) stated a preference for shorter term courses with the difference between withdrawers and persisters about 14 percent (55.2 percent to 41.7 percent).

Figure 9 shows when course members preferred to be involved in study. The persisters were strongly in favour of the first half of the year. Remarks such as "I think summer vacation would be perfect for starting a course" and "I prefer all my work to be holiday full-time intensive study with classroom follow-up" were typical of this group.

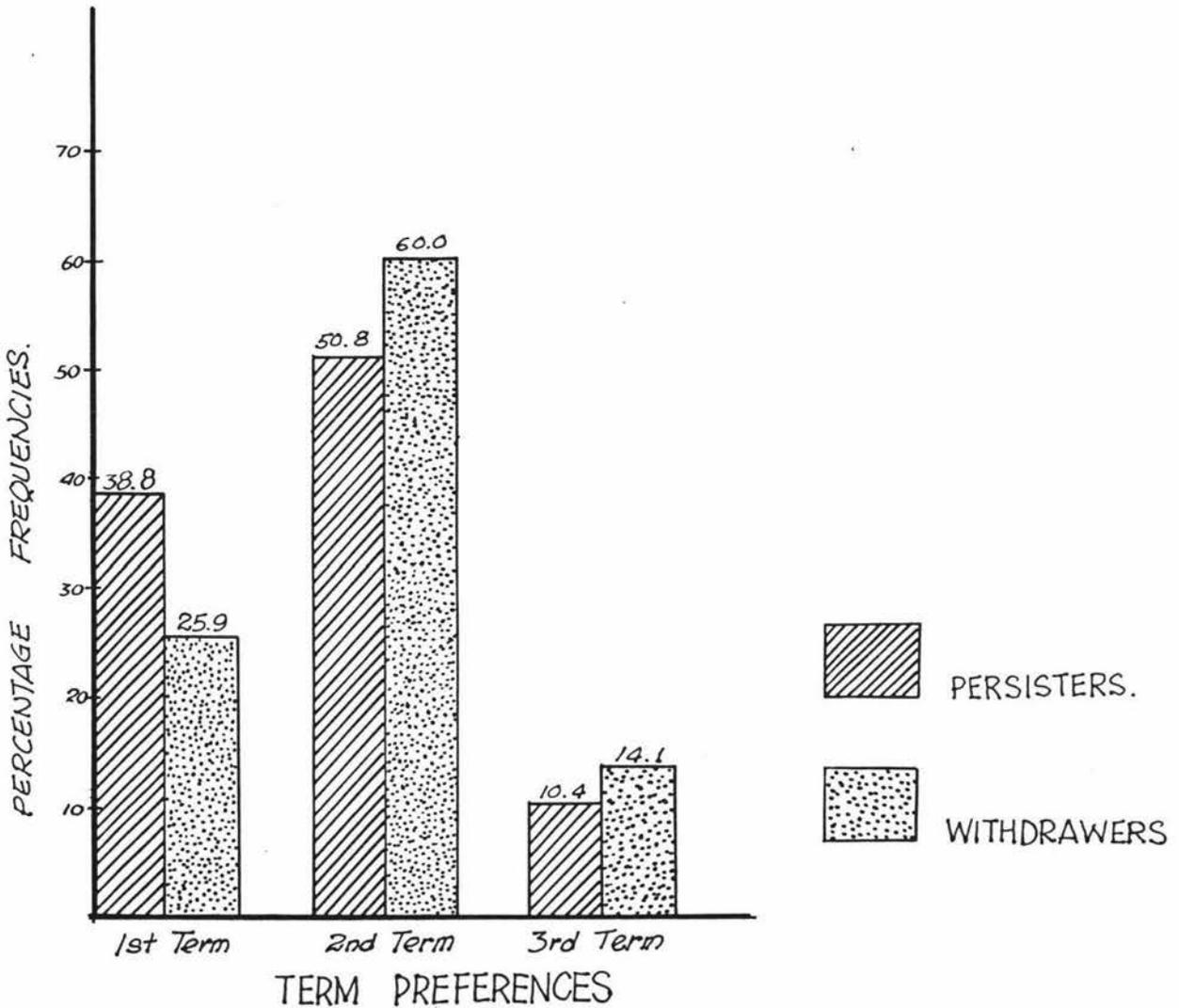
FIGURE 9 : PREFERRED TIME OF STUDY*



* Question 31 in main questionnaire.

Both persisters and withdrawers favoured the middle term, (see Figure 10) with the latter part of the year out of favour. Similar findings have been recorded in other investigations Courtney (1972) and McLellan (1978). Courtney's inservice education study showed that teachers preferred certain times throughout the school year for vocational training.

FIGURE 10: PREFERRED TERM STUDY*



* Question 31 in main questionnaire.

Course Assessment

Table 31 illustrates that although there was a leaning towards greater internal evaluation, the majority of respondents still found the present system of assessment to be acceptable. In total 115 (10.9 percent) stated that they were not in favour of

the procedure - where 60 percent of the total marks come from assignments and 40 percent from an external examination. In attempting to bring A.S.T. course standards in line with university courses, academic assessment of an external kind is called for. The question implicit in the objections is whether standards of excellence can only be achieved through an examination.

TABLE 31: EXISTING COURSE ASSESSMENT*

	<i>Persisters</i>		<i>Withdrawers</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	617	(85.2)	265	(80.3)	882	(83.7)
No	83	(11.5)	32	(9.7)	115	(10.9)
No response	24	(3.3)	33	(10.0)	57	(5.4)
Total	724	(100.0)	330	(100.0)	1054	(100.0)

* Question 33 in main questionnaire.

To summarise: respondents have favoured greater timetable flexibility and the apportioning of courses (of varying duration) at certain times of the year. Implicit in this discussion has been a desire by course members to experience an openness, without lessening standards of excellence, in the way they can be involved in Continuing Teacher Education.

CONTINUING TEACHER EDUCATION CONSIDERATIONS

The semi structured group interviews held in the initial stage of this investigation gave rise to the ordering of questions under the heading Continuing Educational Opportunities in the main questionnaire.

To the interviewees the question was; "Why did you choose to study through the A.S.T. Unit?" The most frequently given comments generated ten categories listed in survey question 39. These categories were then differentially rated - "highly significant", "significant", "of some significance", "of no significance".

The survey question read "You chose to study through the A.S.T. Unit. Would you please indicate how significant were the following reasons for prompting you to study through this method". Respondents were asked to tick one of the differentials in each category.

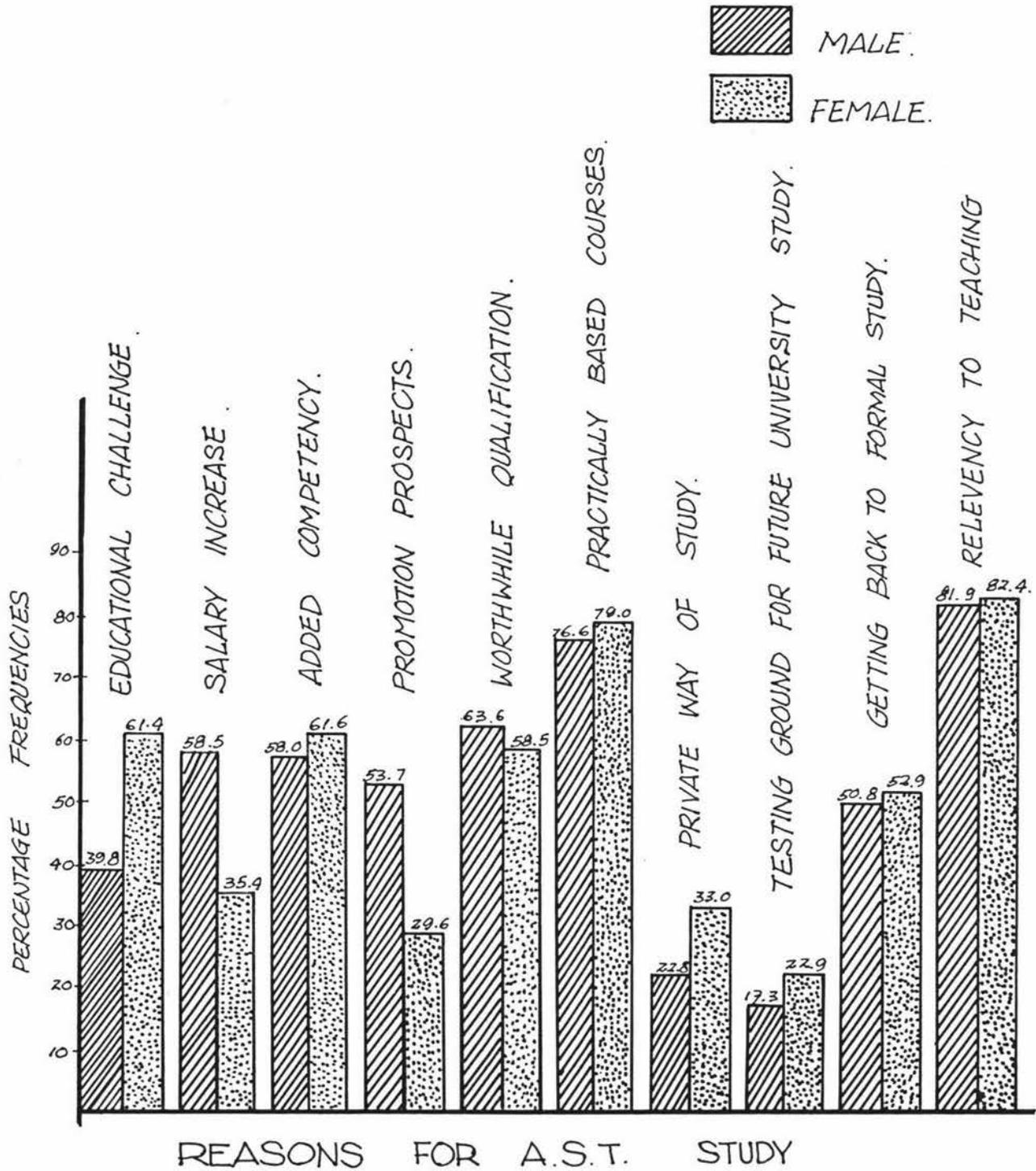
In the answers to this question, certain goal seeking behaviour patterns emerged that permitted some differentiation of male and female respondents. In Figure 11, the 394 male and 593 female responses are compared. To make percentage comparisons between male and female, the mean was found from the differentials - "of some significance", "significant" and "highly significant" for each category, each given a weighting of 1, 2 and 3 respectively.

There was marked similarity shown in Figure 11 of response between males and females when it came to the categories "You wanted to handle a new task more competently", "You are of the opinion that a Diploma in Teaching is a worthwhile qualification to have", "You see the courses as having a strong practical orientation" and "You chose the courses because they have direct relevance to classroom teaching".

There was general agreement in the answers that a major reason for involvement in Continuing Teacher Education through the A.S.T. Unit was the seemingly practical orientation of courses and the fact that they appeared to be directly relevant to classroom teaching. Over half the respondents (51.4 percent) rated relevancy to their job as "highly significant".

However differences between male and female respondents did surface. Women showed statistically higher ratings for the categories, "You wanted to experience an educational challenge" ($\chi^2 = 44.0$), and "You see A.S.T. correspondence courses providing a private and anonymous way for you to study" ($\chi^2 = 11.8$). Men rated statistically higher the categories "You wanted to gain the service increment and/or Diploma in Teaching salary increase" ($\chi^2 = 50.6$); and "enrolling for A.S.T. courses would enhance your promotion prospects" ($\chi^2 = 58.0$).

FIGURE 11: MALE/FEMALE COMPARISONS OF REASONS FOR A.S.T. STUDY*



* Question 39 in main questionnaire.

Comparatively more women than men rated "educational challenge" as highly significant" 124 (17.8 percent) to 34 (8.4 percent). From this evidence and from open ended responses given elsewhere in the questionnaire women appear to value the availability of correspondence study and the chance to re-enter the field of formal learning again.

Job competency was also rated more highly by women. The desire to handle a new task more competently was rated "highly significant" by 137 (21.9 percent) women and 53 (12.9 percent) men. Women appear to seek the stimulus of learning. As one woman illustratively quoted, "The A.S.T. courses which I am currently following have been a shot in the arm. They are intellectually stimulating, thorough and of immense practical value."

Men appeared to take on further study for reasons to do with career. Men rated more highly than women the need to gain A.S.T. credentials for salary and promotional reasons. Other findings in the present study show that about one person in five taking A.S.T. courses is holding a position as deputy principal or principal. A significant proportion of men involved in A.S.T. courses in 1979 were already in positions of seniority but nevertheless they saw Diploma in Teaching qualifications as a means of carrying them on into more favoured positions however remote the actual possibility. The remarks of one male principal, reflected the views of teachers in this respect;

"I am 42, an average teacher, keen to get to the top, but knowing that that will be a step-by-step process. Along comes the inspectorate, chats you up, says how few promotional chances there are, and as the crunch-line says 'You should do some extra study'. You work hard, paying out more for pads, stamps and reference books, get your papers, feel content and then along come the officials again, saying how few promotional chances there are ... etc. You are off again on the treadmill. I enjoy the work, but wonder what is the point of it all. Financially, some of my pupils make more 'possum trapping. Promotion-wise your increasing senility is a top criterion. Knowledge-wise you're wasted. The powers that be say 'No school librarians' and then allow you to use an unemployed person in your library whose expertise mainly consists of being able to shelve books alphabetically. To sum up, what real motivation is there? What real rewards are there? Who really cares anyway? I happen to believe that the A.S.T. Unit does. I suppose that's some consolation!"

He succinctly signed his comment "*Another Senile Teacher Unwinding*".

It was noteworthy that a reward such as salary, or promotion was seen as a good reason for completing the course. Persisters rated these career reasons higher than did withdrawers.

What Respondents Would Like to See A.S.T. Unit Offer

Over 200 respondents indicated courses they would like to see offered. (See Table 32.) High on the list was special education, arts/drama and shorter term courses.

TABLE 32: SUGGESTED NEW COURSES*

<i>Suggested Courses</i>	#	%
1. Special education; gifted children teaching backward children	32	(13.9)
2. Arts/drama course	30	(13.0)
3. Shorter term or semester courses	28	(12.2)
4. School management and staff relations	21	(9.1)
5. Class management	19	(8.3)
6. 'How Adults Learn' courses	15	(6.5)
7. Counselling/child psychology	15	(6.5)
8. Multi class/open plan teaching	15	(6.5)
9. Audio visual and educational technology	12	(5.2)
10. Polynesian/Maori studies	10	(4.3)
11. Language experience courses	9	(3.9)
12. Special research topic/advanced courses	6	(2.6)
13. The teaching of health	5	(2.2)
Total	230	(100.0)

* Question 43 in main questionnaire.

A number of respondents 96 (9.2 percent) stated, when asked in question 43, "Do you have any suggestions for any further new courses of study through the A.S.T. Unit?" that the courses offered were not relevant to the present teaching situation.

The concerns of this group were exemplified in such comments as, "classroom management courses might be more suited to present day teacher needs than conventional subject oriented courses", "Survey experienced teachers to find out what they would like to study. Courses could then be produced to fill their needs rather than having needs dictated to them", and "provide package of courses where a course could be made up of a selection of topics each lasting perhaps for one term".

The Importance of Continuing Teacher Education

There was a general desire for course members, reflected in the findings, to undertake further vocational training. A total of 477 responded to question 41 - "Do you have any comments you wish to make on the usefulness of A.S.T. courses and other Continuing Teacher Education alternatives?". Of this group 177 considered A.S.T. study when compared with inservice courses to be in depth and reflective and concerned with the wider issues in the curriculum. Other means, such as short term inservice courses were considered to have more immediate application: 61 suggested that inservice courses should be increased. The general feeling is that teachers want a variety, rather than an either/or choice and that there should be a complementary element between the alternatives available.

Respondents in question 40 were asked to rank the "3 most important means of up-dating and gaining further knowledge in their teaching". Table 33 provides the alternatives given and respondents' judgments of the relative importance of the methods available. Female and male responses are given as well as totals for each alternative.

High on the list of alternatives were local (20.7 percent) and school based (20.6 percent) inservice courses. One reason, supported by the data, is that teachers favour inservice courses because "leave" is granted from the classroom.

A.S.T. courses were ranked third overall (15.1 percent). In comparison to men, women appear to favour correspondence study. This preference by women can be related to earlier discussion on the reasons for A.S.T. study. Women value the availability of learning by correspondence. From comments received, the decision to study through the A.S.T. Unit is a personal one whereas one has to be chosen to attend inservice training on a local or national level. Also for women out of the classroom the findings have shown that A.S.T. study provides one of the few opportunities for Continuing Teacher Education.

A Professional Qualification

The study courses that are seen to be of most value at present are those that can be directly cross-credited to other qualifications and counted paper for paper. Comments of this nature offered at the group interviews were given support in the survey. In response to question 38 "Do you have any further comment on the value and status of A.S.T. papers 71 (6.7 percent) made specific mention of the problems of cross-crediting. These respondents were critical of the fact that if they decide to continue to a full degree course two A.S.T. papers are given the relative status of only one degree paper. Another suggestion given by 39 respondents was that if a Diploma in Teaching were considered a separate professional qualification to be obtained solely through the A.S.T. Unit without the present compulsory addition of six university degree papers, dissatisfaction over cross-crediting and the problem of relative status with degree qualifications would be greatly reduced. A comment offered by 19

TABLE 33: RANKING OF CONTINUING TEACHER EDUCATION PREFERENCES*

<i>Ranking of Preferences</i>	<i>Females</i>		<i>Males</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>#</i>	<i>%</i>
1. Local inservice courses	117	(53.7)	101	(46.3)	218	(20.7)
2. School based inservice courses	139	(64.1)	78	(35.9)	217	(20.6)
3. A.S.T. courses	118	(74.2)	41	(25.8)	159	(15.1)
4. Teachers refresher courses	63	(54.8)	52	(45.2)	115	(10.9)
5. National inservice courses	58	(52.7)	52	(47.3)	110	(10.4)
6. Visiting other schools	31	(53.4)	27	(46.6)	58	(5.5)
7. Reading textbooks, journals, etc.	28	(70.0)	12	(30.0)	40	(3.8)
8. Adviser visits	13	(36.1)	23	(63.7)	36	(3.4)
9. Teachers' College Continuing Education courses	13	(39.4)	20	(60.6)	33	(3.1)
No response	60	(88.2)	8	(11.8)	68	(6.5)
Total	640	(60.7)	414	(39.3)	1054	(100.0)

* Question 40 in main questionnaire.

respondents was that a Diploma in Teaching was given too easily to those holding degrees. When teachers complete a degree they can be credited at the same time with a Diploma in Teaching regardless of the degree subjects taken. A Diploma in Teaching was considered by 129 respondents as being a valuable qualification but, in the case of 49 respondents, with scant recognition towards status or salary. Respondents from this group commented that - "there is absolutely no recognition of satisfactory completion of the courses by the employing agent, the Education Board or by other senior staff members", "that it is necessary to *apply* for the Service Increment even after many years of teaching", and "that university course work is recognized by the community in which a teacher is employed but A.S.T. papers are just an unknown quantity".

When presented with question 37 "How would you like to obtain a Diploma in Teaching?", and a range of possible alternatives, (see Table 34) almost half, 499 (47.3 percent) of the respondents ranked the A.S.T. Unit as the only channel through which a Diploma in Teaching should be obtained. One-third, 340 (32.3 percent) were content with the present system of combining A.S.T. Unit and university courses and 125 (11.9 percent) opted for teachers' college involvement. This last choice seems to reflect a growing interest in the Continuing Education courses being offered through the teachers' colleges. Only 53 (5.0 percent) wanted a Diploma in Teaching to be the responsibility solely of universities.

TABLE 34: DIPLOMA IN TEACHING CHANNEL*

<i>Alternatives</i>	#	%
1. Entirely through A.S.T. type courses	499	(47.3)
2. Through a combination of A.S.T. and university courses	340	(32.3)
3. Entirely through Teachers' College Continuing Teacher Education courses	125	(11.9)
4. Entirely through university	53	(5.0)
No response	37	(3.5)
Total	1054	(100.0)

* Question 37 in main questionnaire.

Finally, respondents were asked the question "Would you like to see the continuation of A.S.T. courses as presently organised?" Overall 54.7 percent were in favour; 37.3 percent indicated that they were "not sure", while 3.8 percent gave a negative vote (see

Table 35). As expected persisters (63.0 percent) were more enthusiastic about the continued provision of A.S.T. courses than were withdrawers (36.7 percent).

*TABLE 35: ACCEPTANCE OF A.S.T. PROVISION**

	<i>Persisters</i>		<i>Withdrawers</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Yes	456	(63.0)	121	(36.7)	577	(54.7)
Not sure	233	(32.2)	160	(48.5)	393	(37.3)
No	18	(2.5)	22	(6.7)	40	(3.8)
No response	17	(2.3)	27	(8.1)	44	(4.2)
Total	724	(100.0)	330	(100.0)	1054	(100.0)

* *Question 44 in main questionnaire.*

Throughout this investigation some respondents expressed doubt about long term A.S.T. study as a form of Continuing Teacher Education. Doubts seem to centre around the issue that concurrent study increases rather than lessens the burden of teachers: 57 respondents considered that good teachers should be given time off for in-depth study and that if they were, teacher morale might receive a much needed boost.

The findings from the present study appear to imply that the stress of taking on long term courses of study concurrently with doing a teaching job, will not necessarily be reduced appreciably by maintaining the status quo or by making stop gap adjustments to the present system. Often respondents' comments reflected their belief that the workload of teachers today is excessive. Accordingly there may be some profit in examining the wider field of Continuing Teacher Education, (of which A.S.T. Unit is a part), and consider alternatives that could provide a quality of further education without such perceived disadvantages.

The continuing educational possibilities for respondents is the final section to be summarised. It is now possible to turn to the results of the investigation as a whole.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

Basically this study has been a survey of people taking A.S.T. courses during one specific year (1979). Because it has been relatively wide ranging; the nature and amount of data resulting creates its own difficulties for interpretation. For example, open ended questions while providing the opportunity for extensive comment nevertheless pose difficulties for analysis. The issue of whether a particular response (though dramatic) is idiosyncratic or representative, remains inevitably a vexed one.

In order to cater for the degree of uncertainty inherent in such an approach, in this final chapter the discussion has been grouped round a number of propositions. These propositions are:

- (i) That Continuing Teacher Education in the form of A.S.T. study is beneficial for teachers;
- (ii) That it should be made available to teachers who want to continue their professional education via correspondence;
- (iii) That the provision of A.S.T. study should be made so that it is most convenient (least inconvenient) for course members.

It is not the intention of this study to examine whether the A.S.T. Continuing Teacher Education operation is effective or efficient per se or not, viz: (i) the quality of the courses; (ii) the quality of the work done by students; (iii) the effects of taking A.S.T. courses; (iv) quality controls within the courses; (v) selection, quality and quantity of staff relative to task; and (vi) organisational procedures of the A.S.T. Unit. Also this study has not taken a wider perspective on Continuing Education provisions such as for example cost, logistics and overlap between various agencies.

The intention instead has been to record the perceptions of course members regarding the value placed on the inservice courses marketed by the A.S.T. Unit and that these perceptions might have some importance to the further planning for the Continuing Education of teachers.

The findings that emerge consistently throughout the discussion have been tested against the following statements in answer to questions which were posed at the beginning of the study.

Statement 1:

"Advanced Study Courses for Teachers may not be meeting the Continuing Education requirements of 1979 course members."

Once it was possible to ascertain the characteristics of people taking on A.S.T. courses, given the three main groups: (i) primary

teachers; (ii) secondary school and tertiary teachers; and (iii) those who were not employed as practising teachers, it became clear that certain groups were in a more favoured position to complete courses of study than were others.

Primary school teachers were by far the largest group represented. Eight out of every nine teachers taking A.S.T. courses were in this category. These respondents chose A.S.T. study, they said, because it appeared to be the most suitable means of gaining further teacher education. Two out of every three respondents were over 30 years of age, were married, and had family responsibilities. For these adult learners, study at a distance was seen as more certain than the uncertainty of being chosen for inservice courses, and as more convenient than having to attend weekly classes at a university or extra mural vacation courses. Not only were A.S.T. students adult learners but almost one in every two held positions of responsibility; (21.8 percent were deputy principals or principals).

If it is accepted that teachers require continued inservice training (particularly those who hold administrative positions) then the fact that the high proportion of the senior teachers unable to complete A.S.T. courses becomes noteworthy. Certainly this raises the question as to whether or not these courses are successfully meeting the requirements of those for whom they are intended.

A contributing factor to the high withdrawal rate of senior teachers centred around the high demands placed on a senior teacher's time. The significance of this result lies in the assumption that the very people who require a greater understanding of current educational matters are prevented from continuing their study.

Although A.S.T. courses include papers specifically designed for secondary school teaching and for tertiary education, only a small number of those surveyed were secondary school teachers. Also given that the chances of completion were less for this group than for the other two groups it would seem questionable as to how much these courses are actually accomplishing the purposes intended.

Whether teachers in secondary schools or those teaching adult education classes were unaware of A.S.T. courses or whether these courses were considered inappropriate was not established by this study and consequently may merit further investigation on another occasion.

The group most likely to complete courses comprised those who were *not* employed as classroom teachers. If success can be judged by the ability to complete courses of study this small group (8 percent of respondents) can be classed as relatively successful since at the time of survey 66 (78.6 percent) were working toward completion at the time of survey. A factor enabling course members in this group to complete appeared to be that they were in a better position to cope with study without the demands of regular classroom teaching.

The necessity of keeping up to date with changes in teaching whilst out of the classroom would have been expected as a good reason for wanting to complete. Yet all things being equal the increased job opportunities that result from such courses were more frequently cited as a reason for taking the course.

Overall, respondents were of the opinion that A.S.T. studies provide an opportunity for further vocational training. The courses were regarded as relevant and practically orientated to the task of teaching. Course members said they wanted to perform well in their A.S.T. studies. However many course members stated that they regarded themselves as handicapped by their vocational responsibilities. This, the respondents said, was the major reason why people were not able to do as well as they expected. They had chosen to gain professional knowledge but, warranted by data, they were being frustrated by obstacles connected with their job demands such as inspectorial visits, gala days and mid-term assessments.

It seems then, from this evidence that A.S.T. study does not fully accommodate to the job circumstances and characteristics of people who study at a distance. Although this conclusion is difficult to support in any measurable form it may be given fuller meaning in the second statement.

Statement 2:

"While there are factors outside the control of the A.S.T. Unit many course members withdraw because of reasons that the A.S.T. Unit might be able to counter."

From the semi structured group interviews held in Phase One of the investigation, the general consensus among respondents was that students withdrew because of work pressures or because of personal crises. Some explanation was also attached to the nature of the course. The Phase Two questionnaire that followed was able to compare persisters with withdrawers and it became possible to uncover certain course related reasons that were said to explain why many A.S.T. Unit students failed to complete their studies. Discriminate analysis revealed four variables to be related to withdrawal. They were (i) prior educational experience; (ii) the amount of support given; (iii) the number of papers taken; and (iv) the present teaching position.

Prior educational experience was a significant influence in whether students continue with the course. Evidence also pointed to certain indicators such as the length of time between last involvement in and re-entry to formal learning. The greater the time lapse between study, the more difficult course members found it to make the adjustments necessary for study at a distance.

The A.S.T. Unit could counter this by collecting more information from the course member at the time of enrolment. By knowing more about the student's past education and the time since formal study

was last attempted the A.S.T. Unit may be in a better position to prepare the beginning student. The 'Open University' actually suggest time schedules. Students on entry to formal learning again need specific help with allocating their time, such as, how much time each task will take and how to schedule the learning task into organised time periods.

Course members who had not studied previously through the A.S.T. Unit were less likely to complete. Surprisingly, prior educational experience through Massey did not appear to favour persisters any more than withdrawers. In fact 41.4 percent of the withdrawers had experienced Massey extra mural study as compared with only 30.3 percent of the persisters. This result appeared to contradict the point that prior experience of correspondence study, such as extra mural work through Massey would successfully fit students for A.S.T. study. From the evidence, it would seem that the style and organisation of the course rather than the content, appeared to contribute to previous Massey extra mural students' withdrawing - notably rigid requirements and inflexible demands. Dissatisfaction was expressed at insufficient freedom to explore and inquire according to their personal interests, restrictive teaching method, inconsistencies in course organisation and problems in communication.

Students who had had Massey extra mural experience were also more likely to have completed a Diploma in Teaching or a degree. Thus there might not have been the added motivation that could have encouraged a student who had yet to gain a qualification. Certainly the findings showed that the closer the course member was to completing a Diploma in Teaching or Service Increment the more likely he was to complete the course. Conversely people who were beginning or who had completed a qualification such as a degree were more prone to withdraw.

In short, the kind of previous educational experience and the stage the course member was at was related to the likelihood of completion.

Support is the second contributing factor that may bear on withdrawal. The indication was that persisters rated the support given to them by 'significant others' higher than did the withdrawers. Lack of support appeared to produce feelings of alienation amongst withdrawers. In particular, the anxiety that was produced through taking on a formal study course after an absence (on average of eight years) from study was accentuated when colleagues and family had a somewhat negative view of it all. As no active encouragement was given to A.S.T. members to form study groups or indeed to contact others who are studying in their area, it might be understandable that many found the obstacles too great.

Taking on a manageable task, the third factor, was something that persisters had apparently mastered. Generally most had only one or two papers to cope with. Withdrawers on the other hand tended to overburden themselves. The number of papers they took was on average higher than that of persisters.

With regard to the fourth variable, some course members, because of their present teaching position, were in a more favoured position to complete A.S.T. studies. Teachers holding assistant positions showed a higher rate of course retention than those in managerial positions. Whether assistant teachers are more able to cope with study because they do not have to face the extra administrative duties of their senior colleagues is open to question.

The time factor reported by respondents weighs heavily with teachers who hold positions of responsibility. Principals and senior teachers are more inclined to withdraw for reasons to do with overloading, particularly at the beginning of the year. The claim is that time does not permit them to; complete background reading, to get to grips with what the assignment is asking and to complete the assignment before the due date.

There were other indicators of less significance but the four main factors mentioned above appear to have the greatest bearing on withdrawal.

The question becomes then, if such matters influencing withdrawal are within the control of the A.S.T. Unit, what more might be done to prepare and support the student?

Statement 3:

"A.S.T. students might be given help in adjusting to correspondence study."

Internal study reportedly provides opportunities for face to face contact between student and tutor. Difficulties can often be overcome more readily than is the case with students who study by correspondence - if for no more than logistic reasons.

It cannot be assumed that because all intending A.S.T. students are teacher trained, they are equally disposed towards study. There appear to be marked differences between students on entry to an A.S.T. course. Respondents stated that if their previous learning had been whilst at Teachers College they often had difficulties in adjusting to the greater freedom available and self discipline needed for learning at a distance. It seemed, from evidence, that because of the intervening period since undertaking a course of study many intending students have a hazy conception of what it entails. Study skills have become rusty and there appears to be a general lack of confidence in their own ability to articulate thoughts on paper for someone else to scrutinise.

Overcoming problems of 'how to study' appears to cause anxiety on the part of the students. Almost one in three withdrawers (32.4 percent) would have preferred relevant assistance of this kind from the A.S.T. Unit. Teachers are in the invidious position of being presumed to be capable learners and scholars. The very act of teaching invites expectations of high achievement from the teacher who takes on a course of study. These beginner distance education students need some way of being eased into study without being made to feel inferior.

Statement 4:

"Information about A.S.T. courses would be better appreciated if more specific."

The conclusion in statement 4 is strongly supported by the findings. Over 80 percent of all respondents would have liked to have seen a more detailed course outline prior to enrolling. Although there are descriptions in the A.S.T. Unit brochure and in the November supplement of the Educational Gazette, these do not appear to be explicit enough for many students. Intending course members state they want to know about the practical requirements for each course in order to prepare for the year of study. One third of the students who withdrew stated that the course was not what they had expected. Therefore having a more realistic expectation of what is entailed might contribute toward a reduction in the number of student withdrawals and, of course, enrolments.

Information about qualifications was a stated issue of concern. The adequacy of information regarding Diploma in Teaching, Service Increment and cross-crediting possibilities was a source of mystery for many A.S.T. students.

Another related information issue was the value respondents placed on the personal contact with the A.S.T. Unit on entry to or during their study; 33.7 percent of those who responded suggested that personal contact would assist in promoting and clarifying A.S.T. study. The implications are that students, at times, need immediate help concerning course related problems.

Statement 5:

"Adjustments to A.S.T. study made by the organisation might enable course members to take fuller advantage of opportunities."

Support for this proposition comes from an earlier study by the author and from the semi structured interviews in Phase One of the investigation.

Respondents were very much in favour of a timetable, an alternative to the existing A.S.T. Unit one. In total, 629 (59.7 percent) course members requested a change in timetable - a change prompted by the work patterns with which they were faced. Shorter courses of half year or term duration was another alternative strongly supported.

It would seem from evidence that course members would like to see greater flexibility in course organisation. At the moment respondents have indicated that the restrictions of a conventional course organisation may prevent many from realising their goals. If it is accepted that course flexibility is educationally defensible then the question would have to be raised whether the A.S.T. Unit is in the best position, given existing staffing and resources, to make the necessary adjustments towards a more open form of learning.

Statement 6:

"Many teachers desiring to undertake further study experience difficulties in doing so."

Evidence from the present study appears to support the statement contained in the *Review of Teacher Training* (1978) page 44: "From information gathered it became obvious inservice training is still not, either in quality or quantity, reaching enough teachers in the profession". It could be assumed that the objective of the A.S.T. Unit is to allow teachers the opportunity of furthering their vocational training. Yet when teachers enrol for such a course of study only to find the strain of completing the course too great, serious consideration must be given about A.S.T. study as a viable means of Continuing Teacher Education.

It could be that the existing provision is inadequate in so far as the agencies offering Continuing Teacher Education seem to function largely in isolation and therefore in ignorance of each other. What the teachers of the present study reported was that they would like to see some co-ordination of what is being offered.

Several respondents suggested for various reasons that the best way for them to up-date their professional competency would be to have one year, or even one term off to study in an institution of some sort with a mixture of ages and professions.

Findings from the present study indicate that course members desire to study collectively at times. Opportunity for time away from the classroom for inservice seminars integral to A.S.T. study was called for.

A general concern was expressed by respondents over the lack of a structured approach to Continuing Teacher Education. There were many varied suggestions but many seemed to be asking for the provision of regular inservice training for teachers beginning when they enter the profession and continuing at planned intervals throughout their career.

Findings revealed a reported desire for self-initiated learning. A small number of teachers wished to be given the opportunity to further their knowledge in a field of interest arising from classroom experience. Rather than following conventional courses they would prefer to work through a performance problem in consultation with A.S.T. Unit or teachers' college staff. Certainly a more positive outcome could be expected; if the course member feels his ideas and opinions are valued; if he is given responsibility in deciding what his question is and then how he should answer it.

A.S.T. study, for some the only means available for gaining the Continuing Teacher Education they seek, is not necessarily as convenient a method as maybe imagined. However by making certain adjustments to the present system a more satisfying participation might be expected to result.

SPECULATIONS FOR CHANGE

It appears reasonable to conclude that certain changes may be needed if the A.S.T. Unit is to sustain the volume of students in its Diploma in Teaching courses. However in speculating for change, any solutions will need to be considered in the light of philosophical, educational, pedagogical, economic and political implications. For this reason the problem may not be resolved by 'discovering' solutions amongst the general responses of respondents who in this study represent one part only of all who may have interests (for many reasons) in the Continuing Education of Teachers. Any consideration therefore should be grounded in a defensible, theoretical analysis, able to accommodate the complexities inherent in whatever change might be envisaged.

Furthermore the problem may not be resolved simply by finding solutions in order to maintain the status quo. It may be that the A.S.T. Unit cannot give to teachers the kind of Continuing Teacher Education that many are seeking. Knowing of certain course related problems is not enough. Being in a position to take appropriate action is also necessary. Whether the A.S.T. Unit has the kind of resources that might be needed to improve its delivery or allow 'better' teacher education to result, is open to question.

Speculating for possible change in one part of the system also implies possible repercussions elsewhere. It could be that the existing model of Continuing Teacher Education is no longer appropriate. Therefore a more global perspective might have to be considered in order to assess the part that the A.S.T. Unit plays, not only for today but in the future.

APPENDIX 1

TITLES AND CODES OF 1981 A.S.T. UNIT DIPLOMA IN TEACHING AND
EXTERNAL TRAINED TEACHERS CERTIFICATE COURSES**

Mathematics Education

- *01.11 Mathematics Studies
- *01.12 Introduction to Classroom Mathematics
 - 01.21 The Nature of Mathematics Teaching
 - 01.22 Mathematics in the Primary School
 - 01.23 Mathematics in the Secondary School

Reading

- 02.21 The Reading Process
- 02.22 Reading in the Primary School
- 02.23 Reading in the Secondary School

Language and Literature Studies

- *03.11 English Language Studies
- *03.12 Introduction to Classroom English
 - 03.21 The Learner of English
 - 03.22 The Teacher of English
 - 03.23 Traditional Literature for Young People
 - 03.24 Contemporary Literature for Young People
 - 03.31 Learning Languages Other than English
 - 03.32 Teaching Languages Other than English
 - 03.33 Second Language Learning
 - 03.34 Second Language Teaching
 - 03.35 Introduction to Drama
 - 03.36 Drama in the Classroom

Social Studies

- *04.11 Foundations of Social Studies
- *04.12 Introduction to Classroom Social Studies
 - 04.21 Principles and Practices in Social Studies
 - 04.22 Design of Social Studies Programmes

Science Education

- *05.11 Science Studies
- *05.12 Introduction to Classroom Science
 - 05.21 Science Teaching
 - 05.22 Science in the Primary School
 - 05.23 Science in the Secondary School

* T.T.C. papers only.

** Source: *A.S.T. Calendar 1981*, pages 33-37.

Special Education

- 06.21 The Exceptional Child
- 06.22 Teaching Children with Educational Handicaps
- 06.23 Learning and Limited Educational Achievers
- 06.24 Limited Educational Achievers and their Community
- 06.31 School Organisation for Limited Educational Achievers

Music Education

- *07.11 Music Foundations
- *07.12 Introduction to Music Teaching
 - 07.21 Musicianship Theory
 - 07.22 Musicianship Performance
 - 07.23 Musical Composition
 - 07.24 Music in the Primary School
 - 07.25 Organisation of Music in Secondary Schools
- 07.31 Instrumental Music
- 07.32 Aural Perception
- 07.33 History and Form in Music
- 07.34 Vocal and Choral Music
- 07.35 Harmony and Part-Writing

Physical Education

- *08.11 Introduction to Physical Education
- 08.21 The Nature of Physical Education
- 08.22 The Teacher and Physical Education
- 08.24 Programmed Planning and Teaching Strategies in Physical Education
- 08.31 The Community and Physical Education

Maori

- 09.21 Maori Language in the Classroom
- 09.22 Maori Language Teaching
- 09.31 Issues in Maori and Pacific Islands Education in New Zealand
- 09.32 Classroom Practices and Maori and Pacific Islands Education

Evaluation

- 10.21 Introduction to Evaluation
- 10.22 Evaluation and the Classroom Teacher
- 10.31 Issues in Evaluation

Home Economics

- 11.21 Home Economics Teaching
- 11.22 Home Economics in the Classroom
- 11.23 Contemporary Issues in Home Economics
- 11.31 Food and Nutrition
- 11.32 Food, People and the Community
- 11.33 Clothing

Technical Subjects

12.21 Technical Subjects Teaching

Commercial Subjects

- 13.21 Commercial Subjects Teaching
- 13.22 Economics and Accounting
- 13.23 Typing and Shorthand
- 13.24 Accounting and Typing
- 13.25 Economics and Typing

Art Education

- *14.11 Introduction to Art and Craft Teaching
- 14.21 Basic Studies in Art Education
- 14.22 Personal Development in Art Education
- 14.23 Art History in the Secondary School
- 14.31 Critical Visual Awareness
- 14.32 The Visual Environment and the Art Teacher

Professional Education

- *15.11 Child Development and Schooling
- *15.12 Learning and Teaching
- *15.13 The Teacher and the Curriculum
- 15.21 Education in the Junior School
- 15.22 Junior School Learning Environment
- 15.23 Classroom Management and Planning
- 15.24 Personal Relationships in the Classroom and School
- 15.25 Developmental Factors in Teaching Adolescents
- 15.26 Sociological Factors in Teaching Adolescents
- 15.33 A/V Technology
- 15.35 Education and Schooling

Adult Education

- 16.21 The Adult Learner
- 16.22 The Adult Learning Experience
- 16.23 The Teaching and Learning Process

Library Studies

- 17.21 Planning the School Library
- 17.22 Operating a School Library

Educational Administration

- 18.21 Educational Administration
- 18.22 School-based Administration

Education Outside the Classroom

- 19.31 Teaching Outdoors
- 19.32 Skills and Resources in Outdoor Activities

Health Education

- 20.31 Health Education - Individual and Community
- 20.32 Health Education and the Social Environment

APPENDIX 2

A.S.T. UNIT GROUP INTERVIEW

Introduction

We have invited you to assist in an evaluation of the Advanced Study Courses for Teachers. Because you enrolled for the courses this year we feel that you could make a valuable contribution.

To give you some background of the development of A.S.T. Unit Courses - Diploma courses began in 1962. The courses were initiated through the Correspondence School. The first units covered subject areas such as - reading
- physical education
- social studies
- mathematics

These early courses were designed along the Paper A/Paper B type prescription. Paper A consisted of the theoretical background and Paper B, the practical side of how to teach the subject.

Since these early beginnings several changes have taken place.

1. Units have changed to papers for which a choice can be made to make up the required number for a Diploma in Teaching.
2. Papers of a supplementary nature have been introduced:
 - * Introduction to School Library
 - * Issues on Maori and Pacific Island Education in New Zealand
 - * Student Evaluation and the Teacher
3. The A.S.T. Unit has become more of an independent identity. It is now placed at the Wellington Teachers College and called Advanced Studies for Teachers Unit. Administration is undertaken by a staff of 11.
4. External tutors called on were mainly retired principals and inspectors. Now they are teachers college lecturers working in the seven colleges throughout the country.
5. Courses have been more widely advertised over the past two years. Brochures and magazine supplements are sent to all schools.
6. At the moment 18 courses are offered. Next year there will be 21 courses. Further courses in adult education are being considered.

Any change has to be carefully considered. This is one of the reasons why we have invited you. Because all of you have experienced A.S.T. Unit courses this year we feel you may give some lead as to how courses can be re-organised.

The intention of the A.S.T. Unit is to provide a post-basic service to teachers. However, we feel we can improve the effectiveness of the courses. For instance, one of the problems being experienced is the high withdrawal (drop out) rate throughout the year. The majority of teachers who drop out of courses do so within the first few months. Many do not even complete one assignment.

Schedule of Questions

A. A.S.T. Unit in Relation to Other Alternatives

There are several post-basic alternatives for teachers to choose from:

- (i) Local or national inservice courses
- (ii) Part-time or extramural university study
- (iii) Teachers College Continuing Education courses

as well as A.S.T. Unit courses.

1. *Why did you choose to study through A.S.T. Unit?*

For those who may have experienced post basic alternatives:

2. *What is the difference between A.S.T. Unit courses and the other alternatives?*

B. Credits and Cross-crediting

Teachers have been concerned about courses which will provide credit towards a recognised qualification. A.S.T. Unit courses do give credit which can be used for a Diploma in Teaching as well as the recently introduced Service Increment.

For teachers wanting to continue with B.Ed., an A.S.T. unit can be cross-credited towards one paper of a 21 paper degree in the case of Massey University.

1. *Do you agree with present system regarding Diploma in Teaching crediting?*

- (a) *Six A.S.T. Unit papers plus six degree papers complete Dip. Teaching.*
- (b) *Six social science degree units or five science units complete Dip. Teaching.*

C. Status of Diploma in Teaching

The idea is to develop a professional qualification so that teachers will have a choice. They will either choose to follow a degree course or they can choose to follow a purely professional course such as offered by the A.S.T. Unit. This

will allow two paths with each course offering a different emphasis and consequently a different qualification at the end. The intention is to have a minimum number of cross-credits.

It could be that more value may be attributed to a Diploma or Advanced Diploma in Teaching that can be obtained through the completion of a set number of A.S.T. Units. This points to a credit specifically designed for teachers that is orientated towards professional status and therefore different in kind from a degree qualification.

1. *How would you feel if a Diploma in Teaching could only be got through completion of A.S.T. Unit or teachers college post-basic course?*
2. *Would you regard Diploma in Teaching more highly if it were considered equal in status to a degree qualification?*

D. Communication About A.S.T. Unit Courses

1. *What did you know about A.S.T. Unit courses prior to enrolling?*
2. *Would it have helped if you had a set of objectives and requirements of the courses available before actually enrolling?*
3. *Has your understanding about the courses changed since enrolling? Vastly different?*

E. Withdrawal from Courses

1. *All of you have for various reasons withdrawn from A.S.T. Unit courses this year. What has been your reason for doing so?*
2. *In your opinion why do you think teachers withdraw from the courses?*
3. *Could anything have been done to enable you to continue with the course?*

F. Organisation of the Courses

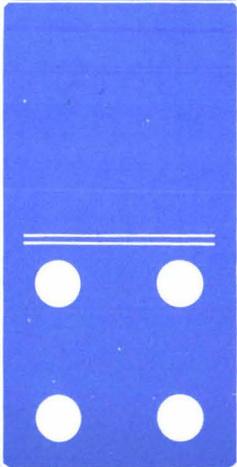
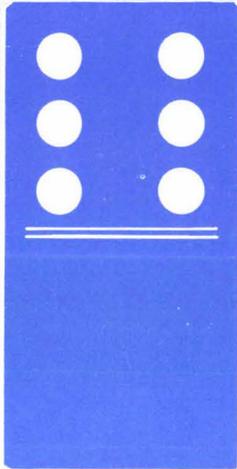
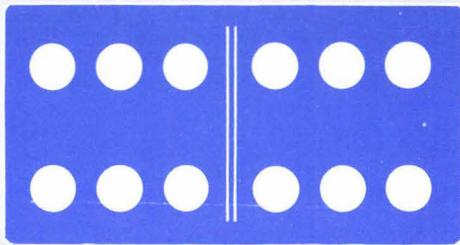
There has been some thought about organising the year differently. One alternative could be in the completion of the course by the end of the second term. Study could be undertaken in the first two terms, possibly beginning the year by having the first study guides before Christmas and maybe completing a part of the course requirements prior to the start of the school year.

1. *Would you have preferred an alternative such as this?*
2. *Can you suggest any other alternative of 'when to study'?*
3. *Would you like to see more flexibility in the handing in of assignments and when to complete a course of study?*
4. *Would you have found an inservice course of value? When would be a good time for coming in for a course?*
5. *Related to the last question - would you have liked to meet your tutor?*
6. *Would you have liked to meet or know about other teachers who are studying through the A.S.T. Unit in your area?*
7. *There has been some discussion over the workload required for Diploma papers. Do you consider the workload to be a reasonable expectation?*
8. *At what level of difficulty would you class A.S.T. Unit courses? E.g. too abstract? too heavy on emphasis on the simple recall of facts?*

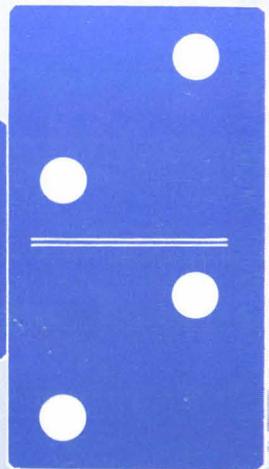
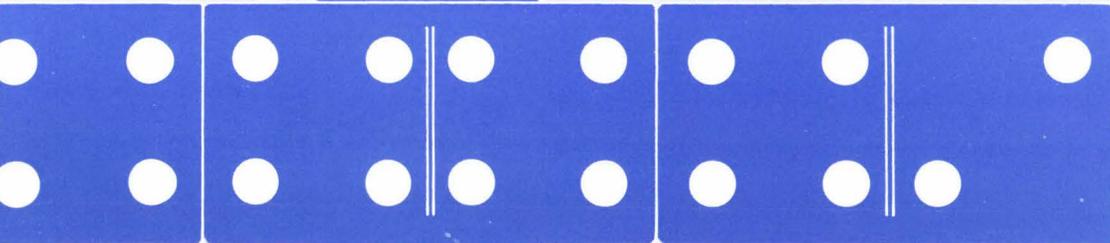
G. Open

We have touched on some of the problem areas that A.S.T. Unit courses may be having. Are there any other problems that you would like to comment on?

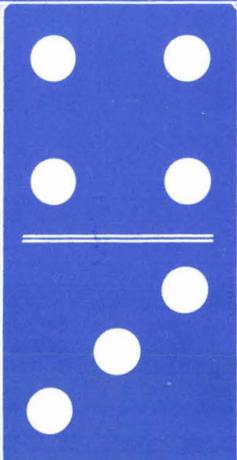
1. *Are you generally satisfied with the course?*
2. *Would you want to take another A.S.T. Unit course as the papers are presently structured?*



Advanced Studies
for Teachers Unit



A survey of
teachers studying
with the A.S.T.U.
1979



INSTRUCTIONS

Please answer this questionnaire by:

EITHER writing in the space provided
OR placing a tick in the appropriate
box (Please disregard code numbers)

TEACHING SERVICE

FOR
OFFICE
USE
ONLY

1. In which year did you first begin teaching? _____

1. L L L L L
5. L

2. Have you had a break in your service?
Yes []¹
No []²

7. L

3. If Yes [✓], how long was the break?

8. L

4. What did you do during this period? (*please specify*)

9. L

5. (a) Are you employed as a trained teacher? Yes []¹
No []²

10. L

(b) If Yes [✓], what is your present position.

11. L

(c) If No, what is your occupation?

12. L

(d) What is your designated teaching position? (e.g. Scale A teacher, Principal, etc.).

13. L

6. What other responsibilities do you have related to your teaching? (e.g. in charge of the school library, organiser of athletics, NZEI or PPTA representative, etc.).

14. L L L

16. L L L

7. Please indicate what other "out-of-school" interests and responsibilities you have.

18. L L L

20. L L L

22 8. How many A.S.T. papers or paper equivalents are you taking in 1979? _____

What are they?

- 23 1. _____
25 2. _____
27 3. _____
29 4. _____

9. What were/are the reactions of the following towards your A.S.T. studies? (Tick one box in each row)

	Very Encouraging	Encouraging	Neutral	Discouraging	Very Discouraging
31 <input type="checkbox"/> Immediate Superiors	[] ⁵	[] ⁴	[] ³	[] ²	[] ¹
32 <input type="checkbox"/> Colleagues	[] ⁵	[] ⁴	[] ³	[] ²	[] ¹
33 <input type="checkbox"/> Family	[] ⁵	[] ⁴	[] ³	[] ²	[] ¹
34 <input type="checkbox"/> Husband/wife	[] ⁵	[] ⁴	[] ³	[] ²	[] ¹

35 10. If you are a parent with dependent children, please list their ages, starting with the youngest child.
39
43

47 11. Do you have any other dependents living with you (e.g. an aged parent)?

Yes []¹
No []²

48 12. Have you any other comments on how A.S.T. study has affected your personal/family life?

STUDY PATTERNS

50 13. Do you have a place where you can study without interruption?

Yes []¹
No []²

14. (a) Do you use your weekends for A.S.T. study?

Yes []¹

No []²

51

(b) If Yes [, how much time on average would you spend on study in the weekend?

52

15. Please estimate how much time *on average* per week you would spend in studying *one* A.S.T. paper or paper equivalent?

0 - 4 hours []¹

5 - 8 hours []²

9 - 12 hours []³

13 hours + []⁴

54

16. What do you consider to be the best conditions for you to study under?

55

17. Would more information on how to organise your A.S.T. study have been helpful to you?

Yes []¹

No []²

57

18. What qualifications have you obtained since you left secondary school? Please indicate the year of completion.

Qualification: _____

Year: _____

58

59

19. In which year were you *last* involved in any kind of formal study?

61

20. Have you studied by correspondence before?

Yes []¹

No []²

63

21. If Yes [, was this through

- Massey Extramural Department []¹
Technical Correspondence Institute []²
Advanced Studies for Teachers Unit []³
Other (*please specify*) []⁴
-

22. When you enrolled for A.S.T. courses in 1979, how many previous years had you been studying through correspondence?

INFORMATION ABOUT A.S.T. COURSES

23. Did you see the publicity brochure sent out about A.S.T. courses last year?

- Yes []¹
No []²

24. (a) How were you introduced to A.S.T. courses? (*Tick all those that apply*).

- Heard about them from another teacher []¹
Heard about them from an inspector, principal or senior colleague []²
Read about them in a professional journal []³
Read about them in the supplement to the Gazette []⁴
Read about them in the A.S.T. brochure []⁵
Other source (*please specify*)
-

(b) If you have ticked more than one box above, please double tick [, your *first* introduction.

25. How would you rate the information available about A.S.T. Courses?

- Excellent []¹
Adequate []²
Unsatisfactory []³

26. Do you think A.S.T. courses should be more widely advertised?

- Yes []¹
No []²

27. Would you have liked to see a set of objectives and requirements of the A.S.T. courses available *before* you enrolled?

Yes []¹

No []²

74

28. Has your view about A.S.T. courses changed since enrolling?

Yes []¹

No []²

75

In what way? _____

76

78

29. Can you suggest any other ways of promoting A.S.T. courses for teachers?

80

CARD ONE

5

7

ORGANISATION OF A.S.T. COURSES

30. There has been some thought of organising the A.S.T. study year in a different way. Would you please indicate your preference by ticking [✓] the appropriate box, or by commenting in the space below?

1. The present A.S.T. academic year from February to November should continue to operate. []¹

2. The course should be completed by the end of the second term. Study could be undertaken in the first two terms; possibly the first study materials could be despatched before Christmas, and part of the course requirement completed prior to the start of the school year. []²

3. The A.S.T. academic year could begin in May and finish in May of the following year. []³

4. The course could be arranged to run on an individual basis. Students would work at their own pace, and when they complete the course requirements they would sit the external exam. []⁴

5. If none of these alternatives appeals, would you please give your own preference and comment on it. []⁵

9

10

31. (a) Would you prefer shorter study periods such as half year of 'term' courses, with evaluation at the conclusion of the course?

Yes []¹

No []²

- (b) If Yes [, would you sooner study in

the first half year? []¹

the second half year? []²

the first term? []³

the second term? []⁴

the third term? []⁵

(tick those that apply)

32. Considering your present workload, please tick the months you would prefer *NOT* to have assignments due.

March []

April []

May []

June []

July []

August []

September []

October []

A.S.T. COURSE ASSESSMENT
AND VALUE OF DIPLOMA IN TEACHING

33. The present assessment policy is that 60% of the total marks can be gained from course assignments and 40% from the external exam. Do you agree with this policy?

Yes []¹

No []²

34. Regarding A.S.T. course assessment, is there any alternative you prefer?

Please comment _____

35. How do you view the level of difficulty of A.S.T. work?

Very difficult []¹

Difficult []²

Moderate []³

Easy []⁴

Very easy []⁵

36. Do you consider the Diploma in Teaching equivalent in status to a comparable period of university work i.e. two thirds of a bachelor's degree?

Yes []¹

No []²

27

37. How would you like to obtain a Diploma in Teaching? (*Tick all those that apply*)

Entirely through A.S.T. Courses []

28

Through a combination of A.S.T. and university courses []

29

Entirely through university []

30

Entirely through Teachers College post basic courses for teachers []

31

A combination of Teachers College, university and post-basic courses []

32

A combination of university basic pre-service teacher training and university courses []

33

38. Do you have any further comment on the value and status of A.S.T. courses?

34

CONTINUING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

39. There are a number of post-basic study opportunities for teachers to choose from. For example:

- (a) Part-time university courses
- (b) Extramural university courses
- (c) University extension classes
- (d) Adult education courses
- (e) Teachers college continuing education courses
- (f) Advanced Study Courses for Teachers

You chose to study through A.S.T. Would you please indicate how significant were the following reasons for prompting you to study through this method. (Tick one box in each row)

	Highly Signifi- cant 4	Signi- ficant 3	Of some signifi- cance 2	Of no Signifi- cance 1
--	---------------------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------------------	---------------------------------

36	You wanted to experience an educational challenge	[]	[]	[]	[]
37	You wanted to gain the service increment and/or Dip. Tching salary increase	[]	[]	[]	[]
38	You wanted to handle a new task more competently	[]	[]	[]	[]
39	Enrolling for A.S.T. courses would enhance your promotion prospects	[]	[]	[]	[]
40	You are of the opinion that Dip. Tching is a worthwhile qualification to have	[]	[]	[]	[]
41	You see the courses as having a strong practical orientation	[]	[]	[]	[]
42	You see A.S.T. correspondence courses providing a private and anonymous way for you to study	[]	[]	[]	[]
43	A.S.T. courses are a test-ground for you to see if you can cope with extra-mural university study	[]	[]	[]	[]
44	You are of the opinion that the courses are the most appropriate way of attempting formal study since leaving teachers college	[]	[]	[]	[]
45	You chose the courses because they have direct relevance to classroom teaching	[]	[]	[]	[]

40. Which of these do *you* consider to be the 3 most important means of up-dating and gaining further knowledge in your teaching? Please specify by ranking in order, 1 being the most important.

- School-based in-service courses _____ 46
- Local in-service courses _____ 47
- Teachers refresher courses _____ 48
- National in-service courses _____ 49
- Visiting other schools _____ 50
- Part-time or extramural university courses _____ 51
- A.S.T. Courses _____ 52
- Reading textbooks, magazines etc. _____ 53
- Adviser visits _____ 54
- Teachers College Continuing Education Courses _____ 55

41. Do you have any comments you wish to make on the usefulness of A.S.T. Courses and other alternatives?

56

FUTURE PROSPECTS

42. Would some co-ordinating information be helpful to you about *all* study courses for teachers, e.g. teachers college, technical institute, community college, long-term in-service, university and A.S.T.?

- Yes []¹
- No []²

58

43. Do you have any suggestions for any further new courses of study through the A.S.T. Unit?

Please specify _____

59

44. Would you like to see the continuation of A.S.T. Courses as presently organised?

- Yes []¹
- Not sure []²
- No []³

61

45. Are there any views that you have not already had the opportunity to express about A.S.T. courses?

Please comment _____

GENERAL INFORMATION

46. Sex

Male []¹

Female []²

47. Ethnic group

What do you consider yourself to be? (e.g. Maori, European, Samoan etc.)

48. Marital Status

Single []

De Facto []

Married []

Widowed []

Separated or divorced []

49. Please indicate what provincial area you live in.

Northland []¹

Marlborough []⁹

Auckland []²

Nelson []¹⁰

South Auckland []³

Canterbury []¹¹

Taranaki []⁴

Westcoast []¹²

Gisborne []⁵

Otago []¹³

Hawkes Bay []⁶

Southland []¹⁴

Manawatu []⁷

Wellington []⁸

50. The locality of your residence is

University []

Non-University City []

Rural []

This section is to be filled by students who did not complete a course of study for 1979.

REASONS FOR WITHDRAWAL

1. In your opinion why do you think teachers withdraw before completing an A.S.T. course?

74 LL

2. Have you ever started a course of study before, but for various reasons have had to withdraw?

Yes []¹
No []²

76 L

3. Why did you withdraw from your A.S.T. course(s) this year?

2
CARD TWO

5 LL

4. Did you withdraw from all your A.S.T. papers in 1979?

Yes []¹
No []²

7 L

5. Prior to withdrawing, what circumstance regarding A.S.T. study gave you the most trouble?

8 LL

6. How significant were the following reasons for your withdrawal from an A.S.T. course. (Tick one box in each row)

	Highly Significant 4	Significant 3	Of some significance 2	Of no Significance 1
The study was more difficult than anticipated	[]	[]	[]	[]
The workload was heavier than anticipated	[]	[]	[]	[]
The return of assignments was too slow	[]	[]	[]	[]
The tutoring was not helpful enough	[]	[]	[]	[]
Family commitments prevented study	[]	[]	[]	[]
Illness prevented you from studying	[]	[]	[]	[]
The course was not what you expected it to be	[]	[]	[]	[]
You were unable to get textbooks	[]	[]	[]	[]
You changed your job - moved to another school	[]	[]	[]	[]
There was nobody you could discuss the work with	[]	[]	[]	[]
The standard was too high	[]	[]	[]	[]
Overcommitment in general	[]	[]	[]	[]

If there were any other important reasons not noted above, please specify.

7. Would anything have helped you to continue your study?

Please comment _____

8. Having withdrawn, would you now like the opportunity to change to another A.S.T. subject immediately?

Yes []¹

No []²

9. If you do intend to enrol for further job-related study next year or in a future year, what agency would you enrol with?

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----|----|
| A.S.T. courses | [] | 25 |
| Teachers College courses | [] | 26 |
| Massey Extramural courses | [] | 27 |
| Other (<i>please specify</i>) | [] | 28 |

10. If you intend to re-enrol will you enrol with the A.S.T. Unit for the same paper(s) as the one(s) you have withdrawn from?

- | | |
|-----------|------------------|
| Yes | [] ¹ |
| No | [] ² |
| Undecided | [] ³ |

30

THANK YOU



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Government Building Lambton Quay

Private Bag Wellington New Zealand

In reply please quote

40/6/24

Telegrams: DEPED WELLINGTON

Telephone: 735 499

18 May 1979

Dear Student

EVALUATION OF THE ADVANCED STUDIES FOR TEACHERS UNIT
COURSES

... I commend the attached questionnaire to you. The A.S.T.U. services are growing rapidly and it is important that we gain information about student reaction to the courses offered. Mr McLellan's study will go a long way towards providing this information and will be of considerable assistance in planning new developments.

Mr McLellan himself is ideally suited for this particular research project. He has had quite extensive experience in a variety of teaching posts, and has himself undertaken a number of university courses studying both internally and extra-murally. His selection of this research topic reflects his deep interest in the continuing education of teachers.

Thank you in anticipation of your assistance.

Yours sincerely

B. W. Kings
for Director-General of Education

enc



Advanced Studies for Teachers Unit

Correspondence School
Department of Education
Private Bag
Wellington New Zealand

Dear ,

This questionnaire is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of Diploma in Teaching courses offered by the Advanced Studies for Teachers Unit. The study is being undertaken by the Department of Education with assistance from the N.Z.E.I.

I appreciate that your time is valuable but feel that you have a worthwhile contribution to make through your association as a student with the A.S.T. Unit this year. This is your opportunity to give personal views on many of the issues that surround continuing education and of the study opportunities that are available to teachers.

In order to ensure that results are valid a reply is needed from each person contacted. The information received through this questionnaire will be regarded with the strictest confidence and only used for the purposes of this evaluation.

Teachers are faced with many demands but I would be grateful if you would assist by completing the questionnaire and returning it in the pre-paid envelope by

If there are any queries about the questionnaire please feel free to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

J. McLellan
Research Co-ordinator



Advanced Studies for Teachers Unit

Correspondence School
Department of Education
Private Bag
Wellington New Zealand

Dear ,

This questionnaire is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of Diploma in Teaching courses offered by the Advanced Studies for Teachers Unit. The study is being undertaken by the Department of Education with assistance from the N.Z.E.I.

I appreciate that your time is valuable but feel that you have a worthwhile contribution to make through your association as a student with the A.S.T. Unit this year. This is your opportunity to give personal views on many of the issues that surround continuing education and of the study opportunities that are available to teachers.

Part of this evaluation is endeavouring to find out why students withdraw before completing a course of study. Because you have indicated that you have withdrawn from one or more papers this year I would be grateful if you would assist by completing the questionnaire and returning it in a pre-paid envelope by

In order to ensure that results are valid a reply is needed from each person contacted. The information received through this questionnaire will be regarded with the strictest confidence and only used for the purposes of this evaluation.

If there are any queries about the questionnaire please feel free to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

J. McLellan,
Research Co-ordinator



Advanced Studies for Teachers Unit

Correspondence School
Department of Education
Private Bag
Wellington New Zealand

Dear ,

Recently I sent you a questionnaire designed to evaluate teacher reaction to Diploma in Teaching courses offered by the Advanced Studies for Teachers Unit. So far I have not heard back from you.

I realise that you are probably very busy and that time is at a premium. However if I am to draw conclusions from the survey about continuing education and of study opportunities that are available to teachers, I need your response.

In case you have mislaid your questionnaire booklet I am enclosing another copy with this letter. Please send it back to me within the next few days.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

J. McLellan,
Research Co-ordinator

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