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Access to Continuing Education: a Clientele
Analysis of the Hawkes Bay Community College.

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the
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To my parents.

ABSTRACT

Access to Continuing Education is largely confined to a small section of the adult population. Clientele analysis of Continuing Education institutions throughout the world have shown participants in Continuing Education to be consistently similar in terms of their social and demographic characteristics. Most participants are already advantaged in terms of their life-style - a narrow 'creme de la creme' sector of the population. Few Continuing Education institutions have set out to cater for the educational needs of all persons in an area - including the disadvantaged.

This thesis presents the findings of a clientele survey of the Hawkes Bay Community College. From the beginning, College administrators were committed to catering for all groups within the Hawkes Bay population. This study analyses the characteristics of all persons attending College programmes in September 1978 and assesses their representativeness of the region's population. In brief, it describes the social and demographic characteristics of persons for whom the College provided access to Continuing Education.

A self-administering questionnaire was completed by 1849 College clients and the results were compiled using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences on a Burroughs 6700. Questionnaire items covered the respondent's age, sex, ethnicity, marital status, place of residence, occupation, income, present and past education.

Analysis of the participants in terms of these factors shows that the College has succeeded in attracting a number of persons from groups which have previously been under-represented in Continuing Education. Increased rates of participation are found among members of ethnic minorities, persons with low-status occupations and persons with low levels of educational attainment and consumption.

Within the College itself, the Community Education department attracts a more heterogeneous clientele than the Vocational Education department. Much of the latter group's homogeneity stems from its youthful age structure. Most prominent among non participants at the College are older men, older members of ethnic minorities, semi- and unskilled workers and residents of small towns and rural areas.

Although the College has been successful in attracting numbers of people from groups not usually involved in Continuing Education,

these groups are still under-represented at the College on a proportional basis. The College clientele is still dominated overall by groups who have always had high participation rates in Continuing Education. The Hawkes Bay Community College has, however, been successful in making headway towards opening up access to Continuing Education for all groups, including the disadvantaged.

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PROLOGUE

Overview

This thesis is concerned primarily with showing which sorts of people gain access to a particular Continuing Education institution and how representative they are of the local population.

The findings presented in this thesis represent the second stage of analysis of a research project known as the 1978 Hawkes Bay Community College (H.B.C.C.) Clientele Survey. Two previous reports have detailed

- (i) the Design and Validation of the Questionnaire - Benseman, J.R., (B.Ed. (Hons.) Research task - unpublished). This latter report details the various stages of planning and negotiation between Community College, University and Department of Education staff that culminated in the design and completion of the survey questionnaires.
- (ii) the initial analysis of the findings of the survey - Nolan C.J.P., Benseman J.R., Ryba K.A. (1978 Clientele Survey - Massey University, 1979). This second report analysed the raw frequency distribution of the various variables (e.g. sex, age etc.) within the College as a whole, as well as within the two major College departments - Vocational and Community Education.

Implications of the findings for the College were discussed across a wide spectrum of interests and particularly from an institutional analysis viewpoint.

Scope of Thesis

More specifically, the main aims of this thesis are:

- (i) To describe and analyse the characteristics of persons¹ attending the Hawkes Bay Community College during September 1978.
- (ii) To ascertain the representativeness of the College's clientele in relation to the Hawkes Bay population.
- (iii) To relate the survey and its findings ((i) and (ii) above) to the issue of access to Continuing Education in general, and other comparable research studies in particular.

The thesis itself is divided into four main chapters (excluding the Prologue):

- (i) Statement of the Problem. This chapter introduces the concept of participation and explains its significance in Continuing

Education. Barriers to participation are seen as a way of explaining the variation in rates of participation among different sectors of the population. Clientele analyses, therefore, perform an important role in Continuing Education research in showing who gains access to Continuing Education provision. The Hawkes Bay Community College explicitly delineated goals relating to clientele. In doing so, it sought to overcome barriers that have traditionally denied access to a number of sections within the community.

- (ii) Research Literature Review. Having outlined the nature of the problem, Chapter Three reviews a number of research studies related to the topic. Studies of three different types - Intra-agency, Inter-agency and Community surveys - from Britain, United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are reviewed. A summary of the salient points in relation to a number of variables concludes this section.
- (iii) Research Design. Drawing on the experience of other research findings, Chapter Four explains the rationale and mechanics of the research design used in the H.B.C.C. Survey. Explanations of the types of variables and their significance to the survey are related to the computer technique used as well as methods of data presentation. A review of the main events leading up to the survey and details of the organisation for the distribution and completion of the questionnaires conclude this section.
- (iv) Results - Characteristics of Participants. Chapter Five presents the detailed analysis of the findings of the Hawkes Bay Community College and is divided into the following sub-sections
 - (a) Sex, Age,
 - (b) Marital Status,
 - (c) Children at home,
 - (d) Ethnicity,
 - (e) Occupation,
 - (f) Socio-economic status (of respondents' occupations),
 - (g) Income (personal and household),
 - (h) Educational Background,
 - Years at secondary school

- Highest school exam. qualification,
- Post-school qualification,
- Prior involvement at the H.B.C.C. (1975-1977),
- Previous Continuing Education involvement (non-H.B.C.C.),

(i) Place of residence.

Data in each sub-section is presented in diagrammatic or tabular form, followed by a written explanation and short resumé of the main points.

(v) Summary and Conclusions. The final Chapter of the thesis summarises the main findings of the study in terms of the variables ((a) - (i) above). The College as a whole and its two main departments are examined with reference to client profiles as well as detailing the characteristics of non-participants for each of the clientele. A general conclusion completes this final section.