

academics clearly appreciate the greater importance of the former in an effort to redesign, as it were, the educational philosophy in Hong Kong. Such a reorientation could be particularly relevant as 1997 is but nine years away and it is clearly felt that insufficient attention is given to preparing university students for 1997. There is little doubt that the return of Hong Kong to China will revamp the educational system of Hong Kong in light of the mainland priorities whatever they may be. The present decision makers of Hong Kong's educational system are not unduly concerned about that matter. After all, most of them do have foreign passports!

### Conclusion

What can be learned from the above observations in terms of likely job satisfaction of Australian academics considering moving to Hong Kong? Eight points merit repeating:

- job similarity augurs well for an easy and relatively painless adjustment;
- financial reimbursement is a definite

incentive;

- social isolation and insularity will tax the need for mateship;
- the higher demands of the job reflect the greater pace of life in Hong Kong;
- the teaching load is greater and time for research less generous;
- English language skills of Hong Kong students (and frequently staff) can render difficult a sustained discussion of more complex topics;
- staff perceive considerable discrepancies between what is and what ought to be emphasized in the tertiary curriculum;
- last but not least, job security both in the short and longer term is rather precarious.

To sum up, Hong Kong offers superior opportunities to the beginning academic who is able to return to Australia after a few years to continue his career as well as to the mature academic who is prepared to retire from academia before or by 1997. I would not advise anyone to come to Hong Kong in mid-career without a firm undertaking from his home institu-

tion to be able to return to his previous job. And do make sure that any understandings, promises and agreements are in writing!

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## Hidden inequalities: professional experience programme leave

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### Introduction

This brief article represents a synopsis of a longer paper<sup>1</sup> which looks at a number of issues related to Professional Experience Programme Leave in NSW Colleges of Advanced Education, particularly as it affects women. The findings suggested that the system of PEP leave discriminates against women in both direct and indirect ways.

In collecting the data for the full-length study anomalies were noted in the different colleges in relation to specific PEP leave conditions. Although colleges may argue that PEP leave conditions are 'beyond their control' (because they have been formally established in the Dunbar Report<sup>2</sup>), in fact, the variations discovered suggest a great deal of flexibility to change aspects of this leave. This paper will provide some general insights into this aspect of women's participation in academic life.

Some of the major PEP leave variations which occur in the college sector in NSW specifically operate to disadvantage women. This latter area is particularly

**“Because greater numbers of women in the system are ineligible to apply for leave, the burden falls disproportionately on them to cover the duties of other staff on PEP leave.”**

relevant in light of the fundamental restructure of higher education which is proposed in the Dawkins *Higher Education: A Policy Statement 1988* (or 'White Paper') and also in relation to the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission's (CTEC) comments in a discussion document on the *National Plan of Action for Women in Tertiary Education* (1987, Section 35).

Higher education institutions have not yet had the opportunity to undertake an investigation of women's access to the study leave or professional experience

programs in the context of the White Paper or the CTEC document. It is imperative this question be investigated.

### Findings About Variability

All NSW Colleges of Advanced Education were to address the issue of women's access to PEP leave, and examine the conditions which relate to such leave, in their Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plans. No comparative studies exist which have undertaken a thorough examination of the different conditions at different colleges, much less their impact on women.

Almost all conditions applying to PEP leave vary throughout the NSW college sector. In our longer paper, the variability in a range of PEP conditions for different colleges in NSW is shown. Here, general reference to conditions is made, with some examples of the degree of variation.

#### 1. Eligibility

PEP is not a condition of service but a form of leave for which staff must become eligible and which an institution may grant at its discretion. Therefore,



certain conditions are imposed by a college to determine who is eligible for PEP leave. Conditions usually relate to length of service, academic status and employment status, i.e. whether the staff member is tenured/contract and/or full-time/fractional. In some colleges staff must complete six years' continuous service to be eligible to apply for leave, whilst in other colleges only three years' service is required. Variations in NSW colleges are shown in Table 1.

**“The unequal position that women already hold in the academic hierarchy . . . is contributed to and maintained by unequal access to other employment benefits, such as PEP leave.”**

**Table 1: Eligibility period and length of PEP leave in NSW Colleges of Advanced Education**

College	Eligibility Period	Length of PEP leave
Armidale	6 years	6 months
Catholic	6 semesters	6 months
Cumberland	3 years	6 months
Hawkesbury	12 semesters	6 months
Kuring-gai	3 years	6 months
Macarthur	3 years	6 F/T; 12 P/T
Mitchell	3 years	6 months
Nepean	6 semesters	6 months
Newcastle	Not stated	6 months
Northern Rivers	6 years	12 months
NSWIT	6 semesters	20 weeks
Orange	6 years	6 months
Riverina	Apply after 2 years*	6 months
Sydney CAE	3 years	6 months
Sydney Arts	3 years	6 months

\*Although staff may apply after two years' service they are expected to submit their application for PEP Leave at least 12 months before the date the programme is intended to commence. Therefore three years' service would be completed before PEP leave is taken.

In addition to rules of eligibility, other criteria apply in granting PEP leave. The Dunbar Report (1978) specified that the proportion of academic staff who may proceed on PEP leave in any one year should not exceed 5% of the academic staff establishment. In institutions where the number of staff eligible to apply exceeds this 5%, PEP leave becomes competitive.

Colleges vary in both the basis on which staff become eligible and the criteria and processes used to select the permissible number who may proceed on PEP leave.

Most colleges consider only full-time tenured staff as eligible. Only a few permit fractional tenured or contract staff to apply. Lecturer III level and above is the most common status for eligible staff.

Some institutions have provision for lecturers to count their time as senior/principal tutors or tutors when calculating service time for eligibility for PEP leave. In a few colleges, some service may be carried from other higher education institutions, although again, it must be continuous.

## 2. Allowances

With an attempt in some colleges to reduce the allowances available for PEP leave, allowances are currently the most contentious aspect of PEP leave. Administrators argue that the cost of PEP leave is escalating and colleges cannot afford to spend large amounts of money on what is considered a privilege rather than a condition of employment.

The rate of PEP allowances paid to staff varies considerably across the college sector. Some institutions pay set allowances to all staff members selected for PEP leave; some vary the amount depending on the years of service (up to a maximum of six years); some vary depending upon whether leave is taken within or outside Australia. Allowances to spouse/dependants are absent at some colleges, while others pay proportional amounts to both spouses (from 2%-5% depending on the college) and dependants (1%-2.5%) to assist in defraying expenses related to travel.

## 3. Selection

The manner in which selection deci-

sions are made also varies greatly across Colleges. The usual practice is to have recommendations made by a committee to either the Principal or Council. The committees in some institutions are comprised of only senior academic and executive staff, whilst other colleges have a committee formed by academic staff who are peers of those making their PEP leave application.

In most instances the Head of School is required to make a recommendation about the value of the proposed leave to the institution and the staff member. In one or two colleges, the Dean or Head of School is able not only to veto the application, but does not have to inform the staff member.

## Implications of PEP Conditions for Women

On the surface, academic staff may think that access to PEP leave is neutral, a fairly cut-and-dried process that applies fairly to all staff. However, a closer examination reveals that academic women as a group can be severely disadvantaged by the current system.

Data on positions in colleges of advanced education (CAEs) reveal that women are located mainly in lower levels, often in contract and part-time academic positions, while men hold a preponderance of the senior, as well as full-time and tenured, positions. The Office of Status of Women (1985) have indicated that women in CAEs comprised these percentages of staff in academic categories:

- 9.5% of staff above Senior Lecturer
- 11.2% at Senior Lecturer I level
- 14.8% at Senior Lecturer II level
- 22.0% at Lecture I
- 41.5% at Lecturer II
- 43.2% at Lecturer III
- 45.2% of other teaching staff

The unequal position that women already hold in the academic hierarchy, that is their concentration in lower levels, is contributed to and maintained by unequal access to other employment benefits, such as PEP leave.

PEP leave is a valuable form of staff development which enables academics, *inter alia*, to undertake full-time research, write books and journals free from teaching/administrative commitments, keep up with the latest developments in the discipline and meet other colleagues working in their specialisation. All these activities provide valuable experience and evidence when seeking promotion. Ineligibility to participate in such a staff development scheme disadvantages certain groups of academics identified above, a large proportion of whom are women.

Professional Experience Programme leave, as it is designed in most colleges, reflects the perception that the 'normal'



academic staff are tenured, full-time employees who do not have breaks in service and who can take PEP leave accompanied by a spouse and possibly dependent children.

The profile of women in higher education, however, does not fit this picture. Women are found in disproportionate numbers in contract or fractional positions. They have breaks in service to fulfil childcare and domestic responsibilities and hence move in and out of the paid workforce. But, since in most colleges only full-time tenured staff — the majority of whom are men — are eligible to apply for PEP leave after a certain period of continuous service, many women in higher education are clearly discriminated against by the present rules.

Not only do women more frequently miss out on the opportunity to apply and be selected for PEP leave, but in doing so also subsidise these staff development opportunities for their male colleagues. No replacement staff are provided when academics proceed on PEP leave and the remaining staff are required to assume the teaching and other duties of their absent colleagues. Because greater numbers of women in the system are ineligible to apply for leave, the burden falls disproportionately on them to cover the duties of other staff on PEP leave.

The figures which were produced in the various EEO Management Plans from the College sector in NSW indicate a definite trend for greater proportions of male than

female academics to take advantage of PEP leave. However, the reasons for this were not explored in any detail.

If women have a partner/spouse, that person is often employed and unable to accompany her on PEP leave. Where dependent children are involved, alternative care must often be arranged. In this case, staff may often find it impossible actually to take leave because of these constraints. Thus, although eligible, they do not ask for leave as much as male staff or do not go away for such long periods or do not go overseas or do not take dependants.

It may be that women are less confident about applying for leave in a system which they believe discriminates against them already in an indirect way. Or it may be that the kind of research that women do is not always considered to be 'respectable' or in the 'mainstream' of academic research and that their proposal for study leave will not be looked upon favourably.

### Conclusion

The current system of defining eligibility for and conditions relating to PEP leave vary considerably from college to college within the NSW CAE sector. The reason for the apparently lower participation rates of females in these crucial staff development opportunities needs to be explored further. The career prospects of women in academic life depend on the amount and quality of research, along with the publications and improved

teaching which flow from keeping abreast of and participating in developments within their discipline. Access to PEP leave on a regular basis provides just such opportunities for women.

After examining the PEP rules in NSW Colleges of Advanced Education, we believe that part of the reason for women's lower participation rate can be attributed to systemic discrimination inherent in the conditions relating to PEP leave. This results in a situation where women are either ineligible or unwilling to apply for leave. Consequently, men are afforded greater opportunities to benefit from this particular form of staff development at the expense of women, since only 5% of staff are eligible to go on PEP leave in any one year.

Therefore, in undertaking any detailed review of PEP leave special attention needs to be paid to the systemic discrimination against women which limits their access and a full investigation needs to be launched to determine whether it is universally the case that women participate less in PEP leave and if so what factors prevent them from doing so.

### References

1. Copies of the full-length paper are available by contacting either of the authors at Nepean College of Advanced Education in Sydney.
2. *Report of the Tertiary Education Commission on Study Leave in Universities and Colleges of Advanced Education*, August 1987.

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## Adult and continuing education in higher education: The Latest Word

### Reviewing Previous Policy

Over the past two decades, adult and continuing education (A&CE) in higher education has faced many quite diverging policy recommendations and statements. While it is important to note what the Dawkins White Paper, the latest word, states about A&CE, it is relevant to set current pronouncements in the context of changing policies in recent years.

In 1966, in its advice to government, the Universities' Commission recommended that adult education be no longer provided in universities because it was deemed to be "inappropriate"<sup>1</sup>. The recommendation was not accepted by

government. The recommendation, however, confirmed the marginality of the field within universities and created feelings of insecurity for those university personnel involved in the field.

In the late 1970s, the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC)<sup>2</sup> introduced the famous, or infamous, 1% debate. Noting that continuing education was an important field of activity for universities, a change from the earlier recommendation, the TEC argued that one per cent of recurrent funds should be devoted to continuing education. Was that figure to be a maximum or minimum?, so the argument ran. However, of more significance was the fact that additional funds were promised, but never allocated, for continuing

education. Continuing education, it has been argued<sup>3</sup>, became an item of controversy between universities and the commonwealth regulating body. While the argument continued, there is evidence from a survey by Smith<sup>4</sup> that continuing education-type activities diversified in the university sector.

In 1985 and 1986, a new era appeared to be about to begin with the publication of two Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (CTEC) commissioned reports by Johnson and Hinton<sup>5</sup>. The reports not only highlighted the importance of the whole field of A&CE but stressed the importance of the field in universities, though the reports contained criticism of some aspects of university

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