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NEW WINE, NEW BOTTLES : SOME RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN HISTORY TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT IN VICTORIA AND ENGLAND

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Introduction

This article examines recent developments in the structure and assessment of Year 12 Australian History in Victoria and discusses the assumptions underlying those developments. Comparisons are drawn with the Schools Council 'History 13–16' Project in England. A number of implications stemming from these changes are then discussed in the context of teacher education. We shall see that a new wine of history content and method is now being put in a new bottle of assessment forms.

Changes over the last few years in Year 12 Australian History in Victoria include changes in content, changes in the conception of historical methodology considered appropriate to schools and changes in assessment procedures. To some extent this must be an artificial division since the categories are inextricably entwined, but it makes for convenience here.

Year 12 traditionally has been the selecting ground for university entry and this remains so today, despite efforts to end that heavy reliance on a relatively narrow set of criteria. Fortunately, some of the subjects themselves have altered dramatically in their treatment in the last decade and especially with the advent of new school-based assessment procedures from 1981 onwards, largely as a result of pressures from the teachers themselves at Year 12 and awareness of the growing disjunction in History between Year 12 and the earlier years of secondary school. Australian History for VISE (the Victorian Institute of Secondary Education) is a considerably more progressive offering than many other VISE subjects and there is now a substantial degree of 'fit' between what is required in Year 12 Australian History, what is expected of University History students and, somewhat unusually, what is happening at the junior secondary level, these latter developments being outlined in Dickinson and Lee (1978) and Rogers (1979).

Recent Developments in Victoria

What have been the major changes in the conception of the methods of historical inquiry for schools? This can be judged firstly from the section 'Objectives in teaching history' for the VISE Australian History course. For example:

- (1) Knowledge –
To gain an accurate knowledge of the important events and personalities of the period and culture under study, in sequence and in context—that is, familiarity with the factual evidence upon which explanation or judgements about the period and culture must be founded.
- (2) Comprehension –
To understand the existence of problems in history: the complexity of historical events and their interpretation because of the interaction of a variety of factors.
- (5) Values –
To recognise the values of the society in a particular period and in the culture under study, and also the values of historians who have written about that period or culture, thereby for the students to come to a better knowledge of their own values.
- (7) Historical Thinking –
To encourage an understanding of the significance of time in history, to develop an enriched imagination about the past. To achieve these goals by cognitive and affective learning and by a vicarious experience of the past.

(VISE, 1980, pp. 1-2.)

These objectives ("evidence", "interpretation" and "expression" are also noted in conventional terms) clearly also tell us something about content and about the criteria and forms of assessment that would need to be used to test the fulfilment of such objectives. In terms of method, the objectives are to be achieved through the following major forms:

- document study
- research projects
- role playing
- different types of essays (e.g., 'Imagine that . . .')
- field work (particularly in local history)
- oral work (debates, interviews, discussions).

All of these possibilities are intended to facilitate *understanding* rather than the mere passive acquisition and regurgitation of knowledge. The student is given a more active role and, though this is a terribly complex and controversial area, is encouraged to 'do history' in much the same sort of way as a professional historian. Obviously, however, they are not doing history in precisely the same way: for example, an historian would never use evidence in the context-free fashion of unseen document tests. Indeed,

the very concept of 'context-free evidence' is almost certainly a logical impossibility, although this device is widely used and defended by the Schools Council 'History 13–16' Project in England (Shemilt, 1980).

Still, and despite the point that many of these new methods could still be employed in the old way, most students in History nowadays will be handling evidence in various forms, whether that be artifacts, local records or headstones in local history, or detective work in Year 7 as a prelude to historical inquiry or using conflicting secondary sources at senior level, and will be learning in a concrete fashion about the nature of evidence, its varying reliability and validity, its incompleteness and so on. Document studies could be abused and taught in a thoroughly non-historical manner. But this is quite unlikely. Document studies now are such an integral part of the accepted 'state of the art' that the 1981 VISE Australian History course will not even bother to have the 'compulsory document section' which has been an HSC feature in Australian History in the 1970's. It is assumed that teachers will use documents, broadly conceived, in the normal routine of history teaching. In all of this, there is now an increasing emphasis on *making sense* of the material, of actively interpreting the material instead of passively accepting it. Naturally nobody is claiming that Australian History is unique in this, though there could be some claim that in Victoria it has helped to lead the way in the (former) HSC History subjects at least. There is also a related emphasis on empathy and the importance of historical imagination; complex questions, of course, but at least attempting to encourage a feeling, not necessarily approval, for other people in other times and peoples, for seeing things from the perspective of the historical actors.

What have been the changes in content? For a time in the 1970's in Victoria there were two *rival* HSC Australian History courses, one called 'Themes' and the other 'Survey', dealing with Australia from 1788 to 1950. The titles are self-explanatory and represent two conflicting views of how school history should be taught. The VISE Australian History course commencing in 1981 is something of a compromise between the two poles, mixing thematic and topical units with units posited on a strict chronological basis. There can be no doubt that this is a sometimes uneasy compromise between differing views of history, compounded by the need to work within the parameters of introducing a new course which will inevitably fail if it attempts to stage a revolution overnight. The actual course content is as follows:

A. *List of Core Topics*

1. Aboriginal society before European settlement.

2. European settlement and the effects on Aboriginal society.
3. Colonial society in the early years in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land.
4. Immigrants and society [1820-1860].
5. Political power in Australian society to the 1850's.
6. The land hunger.
7. Melbourne, the growth of a metropolis.
8. Working men and women and social reform 1860-1910.
9. The wealth beneath the soil—mining.
10. National identity and consciousness 1880-1900.
11. Federation and the early Commonwealth.
12. Australians in wartime—Great War and Second World War.
13. The nineteen twenties.
14. The Depression decade.
15. The growth of the new federal power 1941-1972.

B. *List of Optional Units*

- A. Women in Australian history.
- B. Post-war immigration—multiculturalism in Australia.
- C. The Aborigines in the 20th century.
- D. Aspects of schooling in 19th century Victoria.
- E. The dismissal of the Labor government in 1975.
- F. Local history.
- G. The debates on discovery and foundation of Australia.

Putting aside for the moment what is meant by *core* and *options*, a number of points can be made about the body of historical content in the new course.

- The old parameters of 1788-1950 have vanished.
- Much emphasis now is given to Australian pre-history and to the role of Aborigines in Australia since 1788.
- The coverage now extends virtually to the present day, although the thrust of the course remains very firmly in the nineteenth century.
- Political and constitutional history and the history of elites is less dominant. People have been 'discovered' and social history is firmly established.
- What counts as legitimate history has been greatly expanded. This is particularly so in the optional units, though it is dispiriting to see these topics only yet on the fringes of legitimacy.
- History also has 'expanded' in another sense, moving into areas previously reserved for politics or sociology and referring to a much more diverse array of sources.

In all of these respects, the Year 12 course reflects changes which have occurred over the last decade throughout professional history and across all levels of schooling. The course is not a revolution. Rather, it is the result of a powerful cumulative process both in professional history and in school history.

Current attitudes towards the place of content in history can be judged further by the very notion of a *core* and list of options, particularly when it is realised that only three sections of the core are to be covered by any one class. That is, the core as a whole is neither a common nor a compulsory core. What is the rationale behind this? The VISE *Australian History Handbook* states that:

The topics of this course have been chosen to give teachers and students a wide range of choice both in the topics they wish to study and also in the methodologies which can be employed.

. . . It is strongly recommended that there should be some logical relationship between the core topics selected. For example, study could focus on related chronological periods or on underlying themes. It is anticipated that the optional work chosen or devised will have some close link with a period or theme selected for study in the core. It is also crucial that students' study not consist of fragmented bits which they are unable to cohere for themselves.

and:

It is strongly recommended that attention be given to the historical background of the topics and units. For this purpose it is essential that students have access to an introductory narrative Australian history text.

and, finally:

The aim is to focus students' attention on 'in-depth' studies of specific topics and options, which should be seen in the general context of Australian History. It is hoped that this course will give students some appreciation of how and why changes have occurred in Australian history. This may be achieved by students studying particular themes and/or periods.

(VISE, 1980, pp. 1-3.)

Certain tensions are apparent in these statements, most particularly the tension between the expressed concern for a broad context of knowledge, a grasp of time, place and change, yet also a concern that superficial chronicle surveys be abandoned and replaced by detailed studies of particular themes, topics and times. The hope that the tension will be resolved

by recourse to a narrative text seems a pious one, and perhaps one intended primarily to avert attack. More convincing is the plea for connections between areas chosen from the core and further connections again with the optional unit. The notion of an *optional core* remains a curious one, although it is probably not all that far from the **reality** of former survey courses in history. On the other hand, the move towards schools devising their own optional units is an excellent one, noting that these school-devised units must go through a strict accrediting process and that it is in no way a licence for anarchy or a lack of accountability.

Changes in method and content naturally have strongly influenced changes in assessment in Year 12 Australian History (and school history in general) over the last decade. Forms of assessment must change as one's perceptions of what counts as worthwhile historical knowledge and an appropriate methodology change also.

The changes in assessment can be divided into two main areas. First, changes in assessment form; second, moves towards school-based assessment. A useful way to chart trends in assessment forms is to look at changes in the sorts of exam questions that have been asked in the Victorian Year 12 examinations throughout the 1970's.

(1) 1974 HSC:

Discuss the point of view that the Maritime Strike of 1890 was a conflict between the organised forces of labour and capital.

A compulsory documents section, all of **written material**, also was included.

(2) 1976 HSC:

Imagine that you are a newspaper reporter sent to the goldfields in 1854. Your task is to write reports on TWO of the following:

- (a) the various nationalities represented on the fields;*
- (b) administration of the fields;*
- (c) social life on the fields (living conditions and recreation).*

A compulsory documents section, including **cartoons** as well as documents, also was included.

(3) Sample question VISE 1981:

Imagine that you are ONE of the following at the time of the Depression of the 1930's:

- (a) a wheat farmer*
- (b) a child in primary school*
- (c) a barmaid*

- (d) a bank manager
- (e) a charity worker for the Salvation Army
- (f) an unskilled factory worker.

Give brief details about your age, previous background and place of residence. Then, writing as the person you have selected, give an account of the Depression years in Australia, how these years affect you and how you managed in these times of widespread unemployment.

There is no longer a compulsory documents section.

No doubt selecting one example from each paper can give a loaded view of what is happening; for example, the 1981 course retains essentially a traditional essay format albeit with different content emphases, but it can be seen that the nature of the examination has changed with the introduction and then the ending of a compulsory documents sections, and that the type of question also has changed. Put simply, there has been a decided move towards the use of 'imagine that' exercises which are intended to encourage more imaginativeness and empathy and more of a *feel* for the people being studied. This imaginative play must remain faithful to the historical evidence and be supported by the skills of historical method, yet it does allow greater flexibility and creativity by the student and perhaps brings the student a little closer still to the approach of the professional historian. The worry must be that questions of this kind may no longer be peculiarly **historical** questions. I have discussed this point at length elsewhere (Stockley & D'Cruz, 1981).

The shift towards school-based assessment includes a number of points. As from 1981, Year 12 Australian History no longer will consist solely of three-hour written examinations totally marked externally. Statistical moderation of subjects across the board, using physics as the bench-mark subject against which to judge all others, will remain and will continue to disadvantage Australian History students, but that issue is a complex one and one beyond the bounds of this article.

In the new Year 12 Australian History, assessment of the core topics will comprise 70 percent of the total assessment, 50 percent being allocated to a two and a half hour external examination and 20 percent being allocated to teacher assessment. To quote from the VISE Handbook, teacher assessment of the work is:

. . . the teacher's assessment of the student's work in the core topics over the year. The assessment should be reached by a variety of assessment techniques and procedures. Special attention should be given by teachers to assessing those elements of a student's abilities

and understandings which cannot be assessed in an external examination. . . . The assessment should take into account a minimum of three different assessment techniques. (pp. 23-24)

Suggested assessment techniques include: formal assignments, oral work (structured in varying degrees), field work, extended research projects, essays, role-playing and simulation and objective tests. This is meant to be a suggestive list, by no means a prescriptive one. Assessment of the one optional unit to be undertaken by students must be viewed in terms of the specific optional unit objective. Study of an optional unit is intended to develop:

- (a) the skills of researching, gathering and ordering of information
- (b) some awareness of the differences within the body of historical evidence and opinion
- (c) the ability to define historical problems
- (d) the ability to select, analyse and evaluate evidence in relation to historical problems and developments
- (e) the ability to present and discuss a reasoned and soundly based response to a specific historical problem or development.

(VISE, 1980, p. 27.)

Part of the work in the optional unit is to consist of a research project and a case study which applies the concepts and understandings forming the framework for the particular unit.

Assessment of the optional unit constitutes 30 percent of the total assessment, giving a figure of 50 percent school-based assessment for the course. Comparability of standards and expectations across schools in the course is to be maintained by a process of consensus moderation. Teachers of the subject from a pool of about 10 schools will come together at regular intervals to compare student work, to discuss grading schemes and assessment techniques and to talk about approaches to the course and its assessment. This is a time-consuming and expensive process and the Victorian Education Department may well be displeased when it realizes the expense of the time-release for the teachers who will be involved. Nonetheless, the advantages to students and teachers of such contact and interaction are many and could be one of the great benefits of the new Australian History course.

In short, the last 10 years, and particularly the 1981 changes, show a number of significant changes in the content, methodology and assessment of Year 12 Australian History in Victoria. The bulk of these changes will work to bring Year 12 Australian History into line with the more

enlightened teaching taking place at tertiary level and at junior secondary level. This congruence of ideas at junior secondary, senior secondary and tertiary level is indeed an intriguing one and one at odds with the situation over the last 10 or 20 years. Previously there had been a congruence of content domination, heavy reliance on examinations and a reality of student passivity. That congruence collapsed in the 1960's and 1970's and now has been replaced by its virtual polar opposite. Moreover, tradition has been overturned in the further sense that Year 12 seems to have shifted as a result of change at other levels of schooling. Traditionally, the reverse has been the case.

Comparisons with Developments in England

These changes can be compared with some examination questions from the 1980 Schools Council 'History 13–16' Project papers, which nowadays accounts for some 20 percent of candidates sitting in England for the Certificate of Secondary Education and General Certificate of Education. Briefly, the Schools Council Project 'History 13–16' was established in 1972 in an attempt to meet the decline of history as a school subject and in an attempt to meet the obvious dissatisfaction with what was being taught in traditional school history texts. The Project abandoned the old survey-course chronological format. The structure of the 'History 13–16' course instead consists of the following units:

- What is History?
- History Around Us
- Enquiry in Depth
- Modern World Studies
- Study in Development

Further discussion of the course lies beyond the scope of this article (see *Explorations*, 1980; Shemilt, 1980; Stockley & D'Cruz, 1981). Our concern here is only with some of the new forms of assessment.

It must be realized that students take theme examinations (including 'History 13–16') at 16 and that not all will go on to take the equivalent of the HSC. Hence, there can be no direct comparability of standards. Nevertheless, the comparison is extremely fruitful because it can be seen that the **forms** of assessment are very similar, utilising many types of documents (not simply the written word), and relying on notions of 'evidence' and 'empathy' and conflict amongst historians. This is particularly pertinent because the Schools Council 'History 13–16' Project has developed an enviable reputation over the last few years as a curriculum project both innovative in method and content, yet intellectually rigorous.

Indeed, moves are now afoot in England to commence a 'History 16–19' Project and a 'History 11–13' Project along the same lines of an emphasis on historical methodology, empathy and the handling of evidence, though with an insistence that there is more to history than an evidence-based methodology, an acquisition of skills. The 'move' refers to:

. . . aiming to induct secondary school pupils into the logic of historical narrative ('change', 'continuity', 'development', 'regress' and 'progress'), into the mysteries of historical explanation ('motive', 'cause', 'chance' and 'contingency'), and in attempting to convey some apprehension of History as a humane study concerned to reconstruct and understand rather than to describe and censure the roles of individuals, groups and institutions. (Shemilt, 1981, p. 1.)

WISE *Australian History* lacks such a forceful and articulate rationale and lacks also the materials and evaluation study of 'History 13–16' but there is nothing in the above with which it would disagree. Nor would there be anything to disagree with in terms of types of assessment, it being noted here that 'History 13–16' uses as part of its formal assessment long-term research projects conducted by individual students, including oral discussion of the research with examiners. We have not seen that yet in Year 12 Australian History in Victoria but, as detailed elsewhere in this article, the possibility now is most definitely there in that section of the course assessed by the schools.

The examples from 'History 13–16' are as follows:

Example 1

Answer EITHER Question 3 OR Question 4

3. Write an account in your own words of how Mao Tse-Tung and the Red Army won the support of many Chinese people 1927-37.

Use your own knowledge and the information below. You will get no marks if you just re-write the extracts in your own words.

- (a) "1. Replace all doors when you leave a house and return the straw matting.
2. Be courteous to people and help them when you can.
3. Return all borrowed articles and replace all damaged goods.
4. Be honest in all transactions with the peasants.
5. Be sanitary and dig latrines at a safe distance from homes ...
6. Don't damage crops.
7. Don't molest women.

8. Never ill-treat prisoners of war."

Mao Tse-Tung, A list of rules for the Red Army 1927.
(*Mao Tse-Tung and the Chinese Communist Revolution* by
E. M. Roberts)

- (b) "Has there ever been in history a Long March like ours?
... The Long March is ... an Agitation Corps. It declares to
the approximately 200 million people of eleven provinces
that only the road of the Red Army leads to their liberation."
Mao Tse-Tung writing at the end of the Long March in 1936.
- (c) "During the fourth annihilation campaign, he (Chiang Kai Shek)
ordered that the town of Tungku should be burned to the
ground and all its inhabitants murdered, because it had sheltered
Red Troops." (1934) (E. M. Roberts)
- (d) "The task of the peasants is to provide us with information
concerning the enemy, food, comforts and soldiers for our
armies." Chiang Kai Shek (E. M. Roberts)

[½ page allowed for students to write their answer in the examination
booklet.]

If you have answered Question 3 do not answer this Question.

4. Sun-Yat-Sen and Chiang-Kai-Shek are both important people in
the history of China. In the case of each man (a) describe an
action which he took, (b) explain why he took that action, and
(c) explain how that action affected the history of China.

1. **Sun-Yat-Sen**

- (a) Action or event
- (b) Reasons for the action
- (c) Effect of the action upon Chinese history.

2. **Chiang-Kai-Shek**

- (a) Action or event
- (b) Reasons for the action
- (c) Effect of the action upon Chinese history.

[2-4 lines allowed for each part for students to write their answers
in the examination booklet.]

Schools Council 'History 13-16' Project examination, Certificate of
Secondary Education, 1980, Paper 1 'Modern World Studies: The Rise
of Communist China'.

[40 minutes allowed for 3 questions of this type.]

Example 2

- 2. (a) The aborigines believed that some diseases were caused by
evil spirits.
- (b) Galen believed that disease was the result of an imbalance in
the four liquids of the body—blood, phlegm, black and yellow
bile.
- (c) Until the 19th century some people believed that "bad air"
was a cause of sickness.

Each of the statements above gives an explanation of what different
people believed CAUSED disease. Choose TWO and in each case
explain how those concerned believed disease could be CURED.

Example 3

A poster is included in the exam paper, depicting the announcement
in 1869 of the 'Grand opening of the Union Pacific Railway from the
Atlantic to the Pacific'. The students are then asked the following
question:

Explain the likely attitudes of TWO of the three following groups
to the news announced in the poster.

- (i) the Plains Indians
- (ii) Cattlemen
- (iii) Homesteaders

[½ page allowed for each answer.]

The three examples all come from the Schools Council Project History
13-16 Papers in the 1980 Southern Regional Examination Board for the
Certificate of Secondary Education.

Clearly, there are a number of similarities between the 'History 13-16'
examination examples and the suggestions for the 1981 VISE Australian
History course, especially in some of the suggestions for the school-based
assessment components of the latter. Equally clearly, there remains an
enormous gap between the English examples, remembering that these
constitute a minority of examination styles still in England, and the bulk
of even the most recent developments in Year 12 Australian History in
Victoria. At this stage the Victorian course and forms of assessment
lack the systematic approach of 'History 13-16': for example, in the
sequential handling of such concepts as 'change', 'cause' and 'regress'.
Moreover, 'empathy' is conceived in narrower terms than in 'History
13-16'. On the other hand, the activities suggested for students are

strikingly similar in both cases and, as noted previously, the objectives for the courses could be interchanged with little difficulty.

Implications for Teacher-Educators

What are some of the implications of these developments for staff in tertiary level history departments and for teacher-educators?

One would expect increasing numbers of Year 12 Australian History students to have those skills, the absence of which university staff so frequently have bemoaned. First year students will continue to lack that maturity and experience of life (that 'second record') which historians need and which Professor Elton *et al.* would argue precludes history virtually entirely from the schools. However, they increasingly should have the skills of document work, an understanding of those concepts—'change' 'cause' and so on—central to history and a grasp of the mechanics of handling evidence and of analysing the reliability of evidence.

Furthermore, the shift towards continuous assessment in Year 12 school history will bring Year 12 more into line with university practices (and, it should be noted, more into line with junior and middle secondary school practices). This is particularly so when we consider that these new forms of Year 12 assessment are to include research projects, open-book examinations, oral discussion and evaluation, field work and role playing. Many of these forms already exist at university level and presumably students now should be better equipped to handle these tertiary level demands, notably the greater emphasis on self-reliance and self-motivation. The new stress on oral skills and participation also should help prepare history students for the tutorial and seminar situation.

On the other hand, worries may stem from the fact that school history increasingly is being based on an elective system; a point already touched upon in a different context when discussing the concept of an 'optional core'. The trend away from survey-courses and away from commonality of courses, a trend also strongly apparent at tertiary level, means that very few students in any particular Australian History tutorial can reasonably be expected to have the same background knowledge. Doubtless there was no golden age when the ideal of survey-courses was the reality. More often the courses were a superficial canter through time. Furthermore, the progenitors of the new Year 12 Australian History course are acutely aware of the problem, as we have noted already. Yet again, this diversity of knowledge backgrounds may not worry some people, particularly people who could argue that the method is the thing. But can content and method be divided so sharply? Does it even make sense to postulate such a

division? I admit my own concern at this trend when I teach History Method classes to history graduates and struggle to find examples from history of which all of my students will have heard, let alone worked systematically upon. This is not to be confused with a 'decline of standards' argument. It is instead a concern over a fragmenting of commonality, a concern expressed more strongly in the current fashion for a core curriculum. This is a difficult question for teacher-educators as much as it is for teachers themselves. The important point to emphasise in this context is that questions to do with core learning within a culturally diverse society are related to specific subjects like history and cannot continue to be handled solely at some totally general and abstract level of debate about a 'core curriculum'.

The final corpus of implications for teacher-educators perhaps has more to do with in-service work than with the pre-service training of teachers. It cannot be assumed that history teachers trained a decade or two ago will be knowledgeable about more recent developments within their subject and within the pedagogy of that subject. Hopefully that is a truism. Nonetheless, the rate of change in history as a subject is little known and appreciated. The majority of Victorian history teachers as yet would have only the sketchiest notion of the new Year 12 Australian History course. The Schools Council 'History 13–16' Project is just starting to spread in Australia, yet how many teachers involved would be aware of the Project's recent *Evaluation Study* and its substantial modifying of Piagetian conceptions of history teaching and its thoroughly imaginative proposals for new forms of assessment? And how many would know of the Project's awareness of its own shortcomings and of self-admitted flaws and shortcomings in the Project material now entering Australian schools?

Teachers are not in a position to keep track of all of these developments, nor necessarily to perceive the ramifications of changes at a particular level of schooling. Teacher-educators are in such a position and must take the initiative in much more in-service work on the type of problems outlined above. The new Year 12 Australian History course in Victoria will not fulfil expectations without extensive in-service work. Only then can there be a wide and worthwhile debate on the full implications of recent developments in Year 12 History in Victoria, particularly when compared with related developments overseas and recent changes in secondary school history in general in Australia.

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A DELPHI STUDY OF LECTURER ROLE PERFORMANCE

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The use of student rating questionnaires to assess the teaching performance of lecturing staff in institutions of higher education has been widely debated. In summary, those who oppose the use of such ratings often argue that:

- (a) they could favour the entertainer, rather than the teacher who gets his/her material across effectively;
- (b) they appear to be highly correlated with expected grades; that is, a hard grader would get poor ratings;
- (c) students are probably not competent judges of instruction since the long term benefits of a course may not be clear to them.

On the other hand, this opposition is countered by arguments in support of student ratings, such as:

- (a) they could provide feedback which the teacher might not be able to elicit from students on a face-to-face basis;
- (b) they could provide a way in which a teacher could demonstrate teaching effectiveness to those who have expressed an interest in evaluating this parameter for salary increases, etc.;
- (c) they could provide information in areas of strengths and weaknesses in teaching.

In the light of these types of arguments for and against student ratings, it seems realistic to suggest that the evidence gained from their use probably falls far short of a complete assessment of a lecturer's teaching contribution. However, if teaching performance is to be evaluated, then systematic measures of student attitudes, opinions and observations can hardly be ignored. It was on the basis of both these views that a study was undertaken in New Zealand which focussed on the use of student ratings as an assessment of lecturer role performance.

Background

Unlike most studies which utilize student ratings, this investigation employed a modified form of the Delphi Technique. Briefly, this method uses a panel of respondents to make a series of individual judgements relating to an assigned problem. The distinguishable phases of the technique are referred to as 'rounds', and these are detailed as follows: