Book Reviews

PHIL RACE and STEVE MCDOWELL, 1996: *500 computing tips for teachers and lecturers.* Kogan Page, London, pp.135, NZ$37.00.

With more and more people buying computers for home and school use, guides like this are assured of a place in the market. In this slim volume Race and McDowell set out the steps for 'Getting started with computers' in the first chapter, beginning with the purchase of the necessary hardware. Part of this chapter is devoted to 'green' issues in relation to computing, with advice to the reader to ask the salesperson about the extent to which components in the new machine can be recycled, how to set up a 'paperless' office, and how to save on printing costs by making handouts to students available on disc with the facility for editing.

Race and McDowell have set out their 500 tips in note form under 47 topics divided into four chapters which, following the first chapter, are devoted to software, IT for teaching and learning, and a concluding chapter called 'More bits and pieces' which covers such things as multimedia, printing, monitors, 'space junk', the law, viruses, and a large range of other matters. Surprisingly, the Internet receives little attention and this large topic is covered in a mere two pages. Many people beginning computing will want to know more about the Internet than is provided here but will have to look elsewhere. In a book that covers so many aspects of computing, more information on the Internet could reasonably have been expected by readers. There are some useful tips about the Internet though. Readers are advised to use the Internet 'at cheap rates if possible' to reduce their telephone accounts, and there is a little information on e-mail, newsgroups, modems, service providers, and on-line information services.

I would have found this book very useful when learning to use my first computer. The authors have organised this introductory volume on computing in a carefully graduated way. There are a few explanatory pages at the beginning of each chapter which inform the reader how the pages that follow are organised and how to use them according to the level that one has already achieved. Clearly, not every part of each of the four chapters will be necessary for all those who consult this book, but anyone other than an IT professional is sure to find at least some of tips provided by Race and McDowell useful. Advice when learning to use a new programme such as 'don't try to learn too much', and the authors' acknowledgement that modern programmes are extremely complex and that most users will only ever use a small part of them is reassuring for anyone being introduced to computers and computing. Advice like finding a 'real task to try' when beginning to use a computer is also useful, acknowledging that one usually learns how to use a computer by focusing on a particular job that needs to be done. Advice to allow time to learn a new programme and to save one's work often will be appreciated by novices as well as by more seasoned users of computers. I found the section on word processing particularly sound, as well as the following section on where to go next - inserting pictures and diagrams, 'foreign' characters, file exchange options and so on. For me, the most useful part of the book of 'Tips' is the section on spreadsheets, an aspect of computing that I have always found difficult.

The format of *500 tips* for teachers and lecturers makes the book easy to use and the column will be a useful companion for the beginning computer user. The format enables the reader to access the tips easily and each piece of

advice is succinct and easy to understand.

500 tips for teachers and lecturers is sure to find a place beside many home and school computers. The clarity of the language used by Race and McDowell is refreshing in a field that is easily clouded by jargon which, for many beginning as well as seasoned users, can be very intimidating. This volume already has a place near my word processor.

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TERRY EVANS and DARYL NATION (editors), 1996: *Opening Education - policies and practices from open and distance education.* Routledge, London and New York, pb: UK14.99.

Opening Education is the latest addition to the Routledge Studies in Distance Education series.

This book will be read by the distance education and open learning fraternity but will also command the attention of educationalists generally.

Terry Evans and Daryl Nation, the editors, provide an overall framework for opening education in a brief introductory chapter and successfully synthesise their contributors' ideas, viewpoints and information at the end of the book. They quickly focus the reader on the importance of globalisation in opening education; of modern technologies that enable world-wide audiences to access various local, regional and national educational experiences, and of transformations to these contexts because of global influences. The editors and their contributors exemplify the importance of rigorously examining educational ideas, policies and practices arising from the interplay of local and international influences.

Fourteen selected contributors from different national contexts assist the editors to define and debate important issues related to open

and opening learning. Some of the chapter writers are well known but others are less familiar. Such a selection has provided a rich variety of material, contexts and perspectives as well as a refreshing stylistic mélange. The book's purpose, to provide the opportunity to reflect on opening education, is enhanced by eclectic choice of contributors, all of whom underscore the importance of issues of globalisation, technology and life-long learning. These issues emerge as the common threads of ideas, experiences and comment in relation to opening education.

To suit their particular purpose, the editors have sequenced their contributors' chapters. However, they can be read in any order without compromising the connectedness of the book.

James Hall and Andrew Robinson in their respective initial chapters provide a modern technology focus. Hall contends that technology is able to change all learning and as a consequence the traditional organising concept of universities is being challenged. New structures and practices are emerging, blurring distinctions between distance and campus-based learning. From the European context, Andrew Robinson analyses and discusses the European Union policies to readjust educational frameworks to promote life-long learning utilising the products of the information technology revolution. Open and distance learning are acknowledged as important agents for educational access, technology transfer, regional development and job creation. He identifies many of the barriers to progressing towards these goals, yet optimistically points to how these barriers can be overcome.

Including contributions related to the often ignored school and non-formal sector in distance and opening learning, adds to the appeal of this publication. Ole Aaberhus and Brian Kenworthy take the reader to Mongolia. The material and their analysis is based on their own work and that of others in assessing educational needs and constructing a proposal

for distance education as an instrument in the overall development of Mongolia. Providing education in a vast, thinly populated country undergoing dramatic political and economic changes presents incredible challenges. An example of local adaptation of appropriate technology-based educational solutions sourced internationally is provided in this chapter. Home-based education, research conclusions about its effectiveness and its increasing popularity as an alternative to institution-based schooling are covered in Roland Meighan's contribution. Most of his material relates to the United Kingdom and provides insights into the characteristics of homeschoolers, the education establishment's treatment of them and the effectiveness of such provision. Meighan concludes, "home educators are, without necessarily intending to, blazing the trail for a future flexible education system that provides alternatives for everybody, all the time." Margaret Haughey and Judy Roberts survey policy and practice in open and distance schooling in Canada. Their contribution covers federal, provincial, school jurisdiction and individual school initiatives to develop technological infrastructures to expand educational opportunities. Of particular interest is the decentralising of distance education, the development of education partnerships, schools and school systems sharing resources and the increase in school based distance education. This succinct but comprehensive examination invites interesting comparisons for antipodean readers familiar with their own correspondence based distance education institutions.

Two different approaches are taken by Victor Jakupec and Richard Johnson respectively in their analyses of the Australian governments' reforms and restructuring of distance education since the mid 1980s. For Jakupec, policies and reforms were devised to conform to economic rationalistic ideology of the new right. He concludes though that the demise of the short-lived DECs has propelled distance education into the mainstream as higher education institutions adopt open and flexible

delivery policies and practices. Richard Johnson sees the failure to rationalise distance education in Australian higher education as having led to waste and an inability to achieve coherent purpose and provision. This situation he regards as the result of directionless policy and a lack of will on the part of all stakeholders to work through issues to find sound solutions.

From Australia to India, and Sontash Panda discusses the interrelationship between policies on education and distance education and actual practices. A brief history of India's higher education and distance provision is followed by his observations on distance education practices, especially issues such as access, relevance, quality and effectiveness. Finally, he suggests the need for traditional and open universities to converge and collaborate far more than at present.

Angelo Castro and Charles Wong provide a contrasting context to that of Sontash Panda. Hong Kong is a developed, populous but pocket sized territory. Distance and openness take on new meanings in Hong Kong where continuing education is an important alternative for working adults. The writers highlight the significance of 'temporal distance'. Both local and overseas institutions operate in the territory and the writers discuss the policies and practices that characterise such dual provision. Readers will be reminded of Richard Johnson's view of the Australian policy experience when they reflect on the comments these two writers make about the *ad hocery* of government policies in Hong Kong.

Increasingly, stakeholders are demanding an assurance of quality services from their distance and open learning institutions. Andrea McIlroy and Robyn Walker discuss the potential of Total Quality Management, a practice drawn from the business world, as the basis of a quality solution. TQM is explained, some quality practices implemented in education contexts are discussed and they outline how TQM could be applied within

distance education with advantage.

Nick Campion's *Open learning, closing minds* is the last contribution in the book. As the arresting title to this chapter suggests, Nick Campion alerts the reader to the disservice to educational processes that results from an uncritical acceptance of current discourse promoting open learning. An analysis of changing learning contexts is followed by comment on the perceived educational contributions of open learning. Using material from Alan Bloom and other theorists he provides a basis for the critical examination of university level open learning policies and practices.

Terry Evans and Daryl Nation have succeeded in providing a very accessible book that discusses substantive issues. Their choice of contributors from a wide range of contexts heightens interest while the ability of all contributors to communicate their ideas in clear, jargon free prose is refreshing. By inviting readers to reflect on the concept of opening education, the editors and their contributors have achieved their purposes admirably. From the range of ideas, experiences, policies and practices concerned with distance, open and flexible learning, the reader cannot help being drawn into constructive reflection on many of the issues related to opening education.

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PETER RAGGATT, RICHARD EDWARDS & NICK SMALL (Editors), 1996: *The Learning Society: Challenges and Trends*. Routledge, London and New York, 302pp., £12.99

A book describing radical changes to adult education in Britain may not appear to have much relevance to students in New Zealand tertiary education institutions, but the many well written chapters in *The Learning Society* covering thirty years of changes to what used to be known and understood as adult education would suggest otherwise. The story it tells will seem familiar to New Zealand readers. In many cases only the names and local details are different. This is because ideological influences known popularly as Thatcherism and Reaganism have filtered through to all levels of the education systems of the Britain, Australian and New Zealand. As *The Learning Society* points out the transformations wrought by Thatcherism in British politics and society have changed old style adult education with its concern over liberal theories of adult education, its providers and how the sector was (and sought to be) provisioned. The changes have led to a utilitarian version of adult education which emphasises a lifelong, but flexible, kind of vocationally oriented learning provided in a range of different settings as diverse as the home, the workplace, study groups or individuals. Quite literally, the responsibility for providing education for adults in the post-compulsory period has shifted from the state to the individuals and employers.

The concept of change is a common strand running through *The Learning Society*. The most influential of the changes are those concerning the new technologies. It is pointed out that technological changes not only impinge upon the workplace and the modes of production but they underlie a greater demand for the more highly skilled workers not to mention the expectation that employing organisations should be 'learning organisations' with the potential to develop fully their workers abilities. Unfortunately, as the editors of *The Learning Society* point out, with the cultural changes that have taken place as a result of the introduction of 'a consumer society', there is now a clear tendency to favour those who are most likely to have access to education and training over those who are economically active but less well off. Yet, on the other hand, there are those who have derived benefits from the technological, economic, social and cultural changes which have taken place during the last thirty years in Britain. The shift to a learning society has provided new learning opportunities for social

activists including feminists, environmentalists, conservationists, and other similar movements.

The principal message in the book under review is that lifelong learning, while in the present climate it tends to emphasise the government's economic and labour market objectives, it also makes a contribution to the wider cultural, social and equitable goals of society. The 17 chapters in *The Learning Society*, in one way or another, explain the decline of liberal adult education in Britain and Europe and the rise of the learning society concept. Chapters by Stock, and Tuijnman, paint a historical picture of the decline of the liberal influence in adult education in Britain and Europe. Tuckett and Tett investigate the consequences of these trends in terms of funding and participation levels, especially of the older adult age group. Employment related issues such as company cultures, part-time casual and temporary work, and equity are covered in chapters by Clarke, Hart and Tuijnman. Policy, theoretical issues, and the future of the evolving learning society are covered by Schuller and Bostyn, Workpole, Field, Jansen and van der Veen. Chapters by van der Zee, and the Commission of Social Justice look especially at the personal effects that the changes are having upon individual adults within the learning society, while Waterman *et al*, Payne, and Cooper investigate the nature in employment conditions (including career opportunities) and what this means in terms of employer obligations and responsibilities.

With technology playing a seminal role in the move to a learning society reinforced by the government's shift in policy towards individual choice in education and training, this reviewer was interested to see what the contributions in *The Learning Society* said about adult learning methodology issues such as experiential learning, flexible learning, open learning and distance learning. Apart from a brief mention of experiential learning by Jansen and van der Veen and Scott's prediction that the university campus of the future will provide new forms of teaching and learning in a 'wired-up campus', most of the methodology issues are presented in three chapters: Field (open learning and consumer culture), Cooper (guidance and coherence in flexible learning) and Kirkup and Jones (new technologies for open learning). Of these three contributors Cooper's main concern was to demonstrate that flexible learning will complicate choices people now have to make about new forms of learning which in turn complicates both educational guidance and career choice. One likely outcome of the trend to 'port-folio careers' will be for a move away from institutional to community-based guidance.

Field's interest was in the way adult education and open learning have been influenced by the consumption patterns of a consumer culture. He suggested that the passion for open learning has resulted in new links being created between the educational and domestic worlds which enhance 'furtive learning' and open up a whole new range of preferred forms of learning, such as lifestyles, and motivation to learn as an individual or in a group, which in the end is still determined by one's level of disposable income. Thus, in Field's view the development of lifelong learning as a form of human development is very much dependent upon the culture and economic capital and the way they interact.

The last chapter in *The Learning Society* is by Kirkup and Jones who write about new technologies and open learning. To these writers it is the promise of the new technologies in the delivery of education and training that links open learning and distance education to the notion of the learning society. Because of this distance education as a term is dated and open distance learning (ODL) is more appropriate because among other things it puts the emphasis for learning upon individual learners, a dominant theme in the learning society. The ODL approach has brought many new opportunities but at the same time it has shown up weaknesses that are not easily overcome by the technologies.

The uneven distribution of the new technologies across social groups, according to Kirkup and Jones, will limit their potential or simply reinforce historic and contemporary education and training inequalities among adult learners. Like Field, Kirkup and Jones indicate that access to new opportunities in life, or in this case the new information and communication technologies, is dependent upon the adult learner's wealth and lifestyle.

The editors of *The Learning Society* have put together a comprehensive resource book for those interested in studying adult learning in the modern age. The message they, and their collection of authors, have passed on about the changes that have taken place in Britain and Europe is an overall positive by qualified one: the learning society is thus not likely to be a Utopian society in which learning opportunities are available to all without restriction but one in which fresh challenges and new opportunities will be presented to those concerned with adult learners and lifelong learning alongside older questions of justice and equity. As I have come to expect with Open University course materials, this book is another valuable resource for those studying adult learning, not only in Britain and Europe, but in other countries with a British heritage. I have no hesitation in recommending *The Learning Society* to students and teachers of adult learning, and to any librarians seeking to update their collections of adult education and adult learning reference materials. At a cost of about $NZ30 *The Learning Society* is a good investment.

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FRED LOCKWOOD (Editor) 1995: *Open and Distance Learning Today*. Routledge Studies in Distance Education, London, ppxv 377, $NZ103-00 (Hardback); $NZ36.66 (Paperback)

This is a particularly wide-ranging volume of essays about contemporary distance education. It is international in scope and brings together contributions from a very wide range of distance educators, some of whom will be well known to readers. Lockwood has organised this collection of contemporary writing on distance education and open learning into eight parts, beginning with five essays on trends and directions in distance education. This first of these, by David Hawkridge of the Open University, provides a timely overview of the Big Bang Theory in Distance Education which looks at current directions in the much discussed information super highway where this is going in different parts of the world. Hawkridge's analysis of the much hyped phenomenon provides the reader with a perspectives of where telecommunications are likely to go and not go in the next five years. This is well placed as the opening essay in this diverse and wide ranging collection and provides the reader with a framework within which to consider where distance education and open learning are heading in the much discussed information age.

Another essay in the first section which I found particularly valuable was by Michael Moore who provides a literature review of American distance education from *The American Journal of Distance Education* . This chapter will be a valuable reference for those wanting an overview of this important source of distance education research for the immediate future. Tony Bates' chapter on Creating a Vision in Open and Distance Learning concludes this section. His analysis of the field is grounded, appropriately, in the changing education environment with which we are all familiar. I found this initial section of Lockwood's collection which contains five thoughtful and diverse essays very stimulating and have returned to re-read some of them. As a group of essays they fulfil the promise of the section's heading 'Trends and Directions'.

A relatively little-researched area of distance education, the student experience , is the subject of another section of this collection. This collection of only three essays contains a thoughtful chapter by Terry Evans on the

potential of research with students to inform the development of the future courses. There are other essays throughout the collection that cover the learner's perspective of being taught at a distance, including one by the editor on assessment material. Anyone who has taught a course at a distance will recognise the need for learner support and Lockwood has taken care to provide a section of this book on how this can be managed. I am sure that this will be one of the most widely used sections of this collection by distance educators.

The following sections of this collection of essays cover information technology, the use of media by learners, course design and assessment, the development of textual materials and various other dimensions of distance education. There is something in this book for almost everyone who has any involvement with teaching or learning at a distance. Perhaps the scope of the book is too broad, but as an introduction to distance eduction this volume of contemporary essays is excellent. As a snapshot of the state of the art of distance education in developing societies at the present time, it is unsurpassed. It could be argued that there is scant attention to the provision of education at a distance in developing countries, but to attempt to cover this complex area would over-extend the scope of an already broadly based collection.

One of the features of this overview of the state of the art of distance education in developing countries is the changing nature of the field and the number of essays which deal with electronic aspects of the delivery of courses. One contribution which stands out is Desmond Keegan's chapter about teaching and learning by satellite in a European virtual classroom. The technologies of teaching courses this way are explained in technical but lucid terms and even the costs are included. Of the 209 students who enrolled for the course that is described and taught by satellite, 207 passed the final examination. As Keegan notes, the low drop-out rate from distance education courses may reflect the possibility that students do not drop out from distance education courses when paid for by their company or when they do the course in company time.

This collection of essays is so wide-ranging and covers so many different aspects of contemporary distance education, from so many different perspectives (the learner, the teacher, the course designer, the evaluator) as well as providing a section on current directions that it is not possible to be other than impressed at its scope. It is a definitive collection of essays about a changing field at a time in which a growing numbers of institutions are becoming aware of the convergence of information and communication technologies and their implications for teaching and learning.

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