

**A CASE STUDY IN SETTING
ORGANIZATIONAL OBJECTIVES**

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From the “Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Trade Union Training” we learn that:

“Central to all activities undertaken by the Authority is its assessment of training needs commensurate with its objective to have an annual contact with 1% of the trade union membership. This objective directly determines the numbers of students and courses, the number of training days necessary, the number of training and administrative staff required ((on the further assumption that one administrative staff is required for each tutor, p. 37)), the amount of floor space required for the conduct of training activities; and, indirectly, travel costs, equipment requirements, service costs and office requisites” (p.4).

This is a hard worked objective; as the Committee concludes “Almost every aspect of the development of trade union training, therefore, is in some way determined by the objective” (p.4). The Committee further notes that there is “no supporting evidence which establishes the objective as being more than a subjective assessment” and consequently express concern whether what is being done by the Authority “constitutes an effective program, *against particular needs seen to exist*” (p. 6, my stress).

It seems clear to me that the kind of objective TUTA has set for itself is an organisation trap. It is a clear device to help set up hard figures for Treasury officials to do their thing with. It starts, however, from a suspect premise. If the climate was more favourable would the premise have been 2%; if unfavourable would 0.75% been about what the market would bear? What seems to have been involved was some clever figuring about the acceptable political price for an entire package.

I am not denying the value of its sort of horse-trading in the political setting of getting funding. I do insist that this kind of objective is a trap that organisations should not get into, particularly if they are thinking of a long-term career. Organisational objectives should be

- (a) effective guides to all parts of the organisation,
- (b) in how to strengthen the organisation’s interdependence with its environment,
- (c) over the time period its expects to function.

What guidance does the one per cent objective give? Clearly it sets up just another numbers game. Each part of the organisation is under instruction to generate its quota of contact days. (from the Committee’s report it seems as if one person doing twelve days in TUTA classes counted as equivalent to twelve persons doing one day).

Generating more than the one per cent would presumably bring accolades. How would this numbers game be best played to avoid criticism and win prizes? Firstly, one would concentrate one’s efforts where unionists are thickest on the ground, i.e. the metropolitan areas: secondly, one would concentrate on unions whose members are most likely to be interested, i.e. white collar and skilled workers: thirdly, one would concentrate on packages of education that

- (a) have the widest appeal and

(b) are least demanding on the staff. With the one per cent objective, these tendencies would soon become the rules of the game. Worse than that, individual tutors would soon be demanding that they be judged by the Authority on their individual scores. In no time TUTA would be like our old Technical School system with its hours before class rules and rote learning practices; and a teacher's union negotiating such 'principles' to enforce the maxi-minimum state of affairs.

Are there objectives for TUTA that might have better outcomes? There are. The objectives that got TUTA off the ground basically meet the criteria I referred to. I think they have been lost sight of in the tactical game of arguing for funds. Despite documentary evidence of these objectives I am prepared to start afresh.

TUTA was not conceived of as a simple enlargement of the Workers Educational Association that started up in the late nineteenth century. It was not conceived of as simply overcoming ignorance of such long-standing institutions as the Australian Arbitration systems. It was not conceived of as providing basic skills that were not gained because of lack of schooling (the proportion of workers having only primary education falls from a quarter of those over 55 year of age to only two per cent of those under twenty five). That is, TUTA is not a substitute educational system. The original understanding was that TUTA was complementary.

The driving force behind the TUTA concept were that the trade union movement had to cope with:

- a. The changing structure of the workforce. Women, migrants, and educated youth are increasingly important in the workforce and they are all relatively non-union in their outlook (Emery and Phillips, 1975).
- b. A potential for management-worker collaboration at shop floor level that had not previously played any part in the evolution of trade union structure or doctrine, particularly around the issue of democratisation of work.
- c. The emergence of new forms of collective bargaining. Overall the recognition of the need to recognize customs, practices and conditions associated with particular work sites: things that cannot properly be laid down in State or Federal awards.

If the objective of TUTA reflected these concerns there would be much less chance of it being just another self-serving educational system. Admittedly, objectives like these do not allow of ready quantification and ready derivation of expected expenditures for writing pads and the like.

Note, however, the difference. The financial requirements of the one per cent objective could be radically altered in a short period of time if there was a change in

teaching philosophy and technology, legislative change on ‘learning leave’ or a change in union attitude to the role of shop stewards. These are just examples but the point is that it requires only changes of this sort to require redefinition of TUTA’s objectives. Clearly, the one per cent objective does not provide an objective that will provide constant guidance over the life of the organisation and allow for the emergence of a coherent institutional character, a staff that is increasingly committed to a shared objective, methods of learning appropriate to its particular task or an acceptance as a national educational system with its particular distinctive competence.

If TUTA set as its objective the sorts of matters that entered into the rationale for its emergence then it would be faced with measuring its *raison d’être* against the following evidence:

- a. That increasing proportions of the disadvantaged groups in the workforce find that they are better served by their unions.
- b. That more collaborative arrangements emerge at the shop floor level which are seen as satisfactory to the participants.
- c. That more disputes are settled at the shop floor or plant level at which they arise.

These are all matters that can be measured. They cannot be measured with the precision of the one per cent objective. They do, however, set TUTA and its staff on a different and a socially more adaptive course. In pursuit of these objectives, TUTA would be oriented to “particular needs seen to exist”. It would be socially helpful if alienated sections of the workforce felt that they had a voice that could lead to appropriate modification of their work setting rather than have to vote with their feet; it would be helpful to all concerned if problems and misunderstandings could be sorted out at the level at which they arise instead of being magnified, and distorted, to make them a dispute or problem that has to be dealt with at a higher level; it would be helpful if, at shop floor level, people could work out ways of doing what has to be done in a democratic fashion without being bothered about whether they have sold out their rights, or the rights of their fellow workers (bothered by their ignorance of these rights).

In these three matters, there is an urgent requirement for education of trade union officials, particularly the shop stewards. Unlike the one per cent goal, these kinds of objectives help in the day-to-day process of choosing where to put TUTA’s efforts.

They also suggest that TUTA would evolve a delivery system that gets education out to the alienated groups, to the workplaces where organisation is being attempted and into areas where industrial relations are particularly unstable. Similarly, in pursuing

such objectives as these TUTA would find itself under pressure to tailor what it delivers to the needs of the particular groups.

These two implications are directly contrary to the proposals of the Committee of Inquiry. They envisaged TUTA as going into the business of packaging standard units of trade union education and retailing them through TAFE's wide organisational network (p. 26, conclusion 3). The Committee rightly criticised the objective that TUTA set for itself.

However, it formulates no suggestions about alternative objectives except to stress that they should be about "particular needs seen to exist". It is not, therefore, clear what objectives would be served by TUTA concentrating on a wholesale packaging business. The effect would be to divert TUTA staff into the art of fine packaging, deprive them of the personal contact necessary to evolve the educational material needed out there and to servicing, at second-hand, only those who are sufficiently self-motivated to attend the TAFE colleges.

The three objectives I outlined above are about existing needs. No doubt there are more but they will emerge if a start is made, and made in the right way. In each of these cases, someone would have to go to the people and have to go with the right credentials i.e. be seen as one who is at with them, not just another 'chalkie'. Furthermore, in each of these cases, some rank and file need to be engaged in the training activity so that officials have to confront their responsibilities to the members. Where there is no danger of black legging supervisory personnel should have some involvement.

Within this scheme, more money would go into travel expenses and less into so-called educational aids and real estate. How do these considerations bear on the Clyde Cameron College (CCC)? The role that TUTA sees for the College is clear from the following table:

Course Content	C.C.C.	General Extension
Special program	-	25%
Skill courses	30%	50
Developmental	60	20
Information and special seminars	10	5
	100	100

Attendance at the College should better prepare people for the roles of leadership that they have accepted in the trade unions. This does not differ from what is expected of the Australian Graduate School of Management. However, the Committee takes the general view that trade union training should be "essentially technical and practical

training” (p.48). and the more specific view that CCC “should not be allowed to become a kind of policy making body” and “not a centre for research and information (p. 28).

There are some qualifications in their statements about these matters but could one even imagine such statements being made about the role that should be followed by the AGSM of Mount Eliza’s Administrative Staff College. As I pointed out in evidence to the Coomb’s Commission, management training is best done by working on problems that re currently real challenges to management. Such centres of training inevitably become ‘think tanks’ and a considerable influence on policy formation. They do not literally make policy but there is no way in which CCC could be prevented from adopting the learning practices most likely to develop the leadership qualities of its participants? Similarly, one must ask how the CCC can possibly fulfill its functions if it does develop a library and other information functions and constantly seek to appraise itself of where the world of work is at, that is research the information available. On the criteria advanced by the Committee the AGSM should forthwith drop its Australian Journal of Management, and concentrate on what is essentially technical and practical.

Again, I find it difficult to infer what objectives the Committee had in mind for TUTA. In terms of the objectives, I have suggested the CCC should be first and foremost in collating and researching what is going on in the world of work and alerting the Authority to new sensitive areas requiring its attention and the trade unions to emergent problems for them. Researching is what the participants should be on about.

I think it is a pity that this function has been physically embodied in another Mt. Eliza but the function is a necessary one and I can find no argument in this report that justifies why trade union leaders should need or receive less that business leaders.
