Higher Education **29:** 129–141, 1995.

What parts of teaching do academics see as feasible to delegate?

PAMELA M. WARTON
Macquarie University, School of Education, Sydney NSW 2109, Australia

Abstract This paper investigates Australian academics' views about teaching by asking them about the aspects of their job they could contract to others. In particular, it contrasts the views of 26 academics in the Humanities with those of 26 in the Social Sciences. The results showed no differences as a function of level of appointment or gender but a significant difference by teaching area: academics from the Social Sciences were more likely to approve in general the practice of 'buying out' time. When asked about contracting out specific aspects of teaching, the only area of difference was for marking (Social Sciences were more often in favour). In all other respects, the viewpoints expressed by academics from the Humanities and Social Sciences were very similar. Such approval was rarely given unconditionally, however. Concerns were expressed about the need to maintain some degree of supervision or responsibility for teaching. Academics agreed on their overall goals in teaching, on whether or not lecturing, tutorials and student consultation could be contracted to others and on the ideal amounts of time to spend on teaching, research, and administration. It is argued that this pattern of results is more likely to reflect a difference in implementation of goals rather than a difference in baseline ideas as a result of different cultures in the two teaching areas.

Introduction

When academics are asked to nominate which, if any, parts of their teaching they can "contract out" or delegate to others, what activities do they nominate? What are the reasons they give? And how far do their responses vary as a function of the content area they teach? These questions are asked in the present study as a way of tapping aspects of teachers' thinking. They reflect (a) a general interest in teachers' views of teaching, (b) a concern with the impact of the teaching area on the ideas held and (c) the use of a particular route – asking about the extent to which work can be delegated – as a means of understanding the way work is regarded. The focus on academics stems partly from their relative neglect in analyses of teachers' viewpoints. (Most of the research has been based upon samples of primary and secondary teachers.) More strongly, it stems from the possibility that the university sector is particularly likely to bring out the impact of a variable influencing viewpoints in all sectors: the content area in which one teaches.

Surprisingly, although there has been considerable research on the implicit theories held about the nature of the subject matter taught, there has been relatively little attention given to the impact of that content area on teachers' ideas. At the school level, this dimension emerges as critical in research by Stodolsky (1988). Her research demonstrates clearly that the same teachers use completely different instructional approaches for the teaching of mathematics and social studies. At the tertiary level, Samuelowicz and Bain (1992) report that their interviews with five teachers in the Natural Sciences and eight in the Social Sciences "suggested" (p.93)

some differences in the extent to which ideas about teaching vary with the field of teaching while Everett and Entrekin (1994), found "consistent and interpretable differences in work-related attitudes between staff in the different disciplines" (p. 225).

If the area in which one teaches makes a difference to the ideas held, where are the differences likely to appear? One possibility is that academics will vary in the extent to which they see teaching as central to their role and in the extent to which they are given encouragement to "buy out" teaching time in order to research. Blackburn *et al.* (1991), for instance, have reported that, within U.S. universities, those faculties with access to large grants (in particular, faculties in the social sciences and the natural sciences) often released academics from teaching. This did not occur in the humanities, which, as Blackburn *et al.* state, "have traditionally seen teaching as a fundamental component of their profession" (p.370).

The link between teaching and research is also likely to be different across content areas. Although there is an agreed nexus between teaching and research (Neumann 1992; Ramsden and Moses 1992), there is also a tension, either real or potential, between the demands of teaching and research in universities (Elton 1986; Moses 1990). This tension may be differentially experienced across content areas for several reasons. First, it has been argued that there may be a link between research and teaching in the humanities (Elton 1986) but that such a link is less likely in the sciences or in the applied social sciences. Second, because faculties of institutions may vary in the extent to which they encourage academics to 'buy out' their teaching, individuals in those faculties may experience differential pressure to gain release time from teaching in order to conduct research.

The research by Blackburn *et al.* (1991) is focussed on the willingness of institutions to release academics from teaching but gives little information about the views held by individual academics in those institutions. Several studies of school teachers have, however, addressed that issue. These studies have shown that teachers distinguish between essential and dispensable aspects of their job, and between activities that are mandatory and activities that are "extra", a teacher's "gift" (Kerchner and Mitchell 1988; Warton *et al.* 1992). This research has also demonstrated that it is under conditions of stress, such as the possibility of industrial action, that such distinctions in the way one defines the work of teaching become particularly likely to be reflected upon. There is reason to believe that similar conditions face Australian academics in the 1990's. Within the Australian system there is now the understanding (indeed, the expectation given that universities are now required to have educational profiles and strategic plans which specify their research and teaching links) that academic staff must both teach and research. They cannot, as Powell *et al.* (1983) point out, ignore teaching in the way that it is possible (although unwise) to ignore research. In contrast to their colleagues teaching in the school sector, however, academics have considerable autonomy over the curricula and the methods of teaching they employ, the amount of time they commit to teaching and whether or not they conduct research. In the face of current demands, they must give thought to priorities with regard to

teaching and research, and also to the parts of work that are open to assistance or to setting aside completely.

For research, it is an accepted practice – indeed, essential practice on many research projects – that academics gain assistance with routine tasks such as data collection, interviews, or data entry. Research is not viewed as an activity in which all components must be completed by one, responsible individual. On the contrary, collaborative research is actively encouraged by institutions and funding agencies. In contrast, teaching is often viewed as an individual responsibility. Gaining assistance for teaching (in Australia at least) seems to be less widely regarded as acceptable. If teaching is regarded as the defining feature of an academic's work, a reluctance to limit that aspect may be understandable. In practical terms, however, contracting out is not unknown or completely hidden: academics may, in some circumstances, be given relief from teaching. Increasingly, many Australian higher institutions, as part of staff development, are now introducing schemes for relief from teaching for staff who are enrolled in higher research degrees. Moreover, many research grant schemes, including that of the Australian Research Council, allow for researchers to apply for teaching relief in order to research.

The question then arises as to what aspects of teaching can be distributed to others. The task of teaching is not a uniform one. Teaching in the university context may be defined as a set of activities, from lecturing to consulting with students. These activities have different qualities: some are more satisfying than others, some are more at the academic's discretion, some have a stronger tradition of being moveable to other people. Few, if any, individuals would expect, for instance, that a course convenor should take all tutorials, workshops, and practicals, or even give all lectures, in a large undergraduate course. In practice, the job is often shared with others. As pressures mount, however, (both from the size of classes and from research demands) and as the feasibility of buying-out time with research money increases, the issue has come to be one of greater relevance now than in earlier times, and the basic questions asked in this study come to be more salient: questions, that is, about the parts of the job that are regarded as less moveable, and the reasons for regarding them in this way.

These several considerations give rise to the design of the present study. Two groups of academics were interviewed, in order to investigate the likely impact of teaching area. These particular groups (from Humanities and Social Sciences) were chosen because the traditional distinction between 'pure' and 'applied' areas (Biglan 1973) is usually reflected in different teaching goals. If, for instance, an individual considers the job of tertiary teaching to be one of helping students to develop professional or practical skills – a view more likely to occur in the Social Sciences, for instance Economics (Everett and Entrekin 1994) than in the Humanities – his or her views about the distributability of parts of the teaching job may be quite distinct from the views of someone who considers the job to be conveying a distinctive way of raising questions or thinking about questions. In contrast, teaching methods across Humanities and Social Sciences are relatively similar, leaving a possible difference in ethos to be the main issue. The field of natural sciences was set aside because the presence of extended laboratory sessions

as part of the face-to-face teaching makes difficult a direct contrast to the Humanities.

There were two particular hypotheses. The first is that academics from Humanities and the Social Sciences will vary in the extent to which they view aspects of teaching as able to be contracted to others. The second hypothesis is that parts of the job of teaching will not be treated in an equal fashion – individuals will discriminate in the extent to which they will contract out various parts of teaching.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 52 academics (14 females and 38 males) from an Australian university: 26 from Humanities departments (English, History, Philosophy) and 26 from Social Sciences (Economics, Commerce, Psychology). A modified snowball sampling technique was used, with interviewees asked to nominate others who would be willing to be approached to participate and who were likely to hold other views. From the pool of potential subjects, people were selected who fitted the sampling requirements (Academic level and department). Care was taken in the sampling to ensure that academics at all levels (Level A – associate lecturer or tutor to Level E – professor) and both contract and tenured academics were interviewed. Moreover, the final sample was selected within each of the two areas (Humanities and the Social Sciences) to reflect the overall distribution of academics across the university with respect to gender and status. Consequently, more lecturers and senior lecturers were interviewed than academics at other levels. It may be argued that the sample was representative of the university as a whole and was also similar to samples from other Australian universities. The range of academic experience was from 1 year to 35 years, with the mean length of experience being 11 years. Of those approached for the final sample, only one person refused to participate, and one other individual chose not to complete the interview.

Procedure

Participants were interviewed individually for approximately an hour. The semi-structured interviews comprised questions requiring in-depth, open-ended responses as well as several sets of summary statements which were rated for agreement or disagreement. Interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim.

The initial questions were priming questions. These asked how the interviewees would describe their job to another interested person. Interviewees were asked also to allocate the percentage of time they *actually* spent on teaching, research/

scholarship and administration and the percentage of time they would *ideally* spend on those activities.

The main section of the interview focussed on the issue of contracting out within the academic job. Academics were asked first whether they were familiar with the practice of buying out time and second, to describe their general view of that situation. They were asked whether there was any part of their job they could contract out, (assuming there was a suitable person for the position) and their reasons for their viewpoint. They then nominated those sections of their job they could get someone else to complete and those they could not contract out. A list of specific activities from marking, student consultation to research, was provided for their reference. Finally, in this section, interviewees summarized the differences they saw between the activities they were prepared to contract out and those they could not and the reasons why they felt other sections of the university may or may not agree with this viewpoint.

The final section of the interview focussed on ideas about teaching, and in particular on what the academics felt they were trying to achieve in their teaching. After some open-ended questions that served as an opening device, academics were given a list of possible aims: to convey skills; to encourage students to think and work independently; to motivate or light a spark; to convey knowledge; to encourage students to think critically and challenge assumptions; to prepare students for the outside world. These alternatives were determined from content analyses of open-ended responses in pilot interviews to the question of what was the aim of teaching. From the six alternatives, subjects were asked to select their most important aim and then to rate each of the six alternatives on a four-point scale (from 1 = very important to 4 = not very important).

Results

Results are presented in terms of both a quantitative analysis and a qualitative description of the interview content. The quantitative analysis considered possible group differences in responses to the overall issue of buying out time, to the questions of what, if any, parts of teaching could be contracted to others, and to ratings of possible aims of university teaching. The qualitative analysis presented indicates the themes and issues raised in the interviews as justifications or comments on the decisions about buying out teaching and views about the teaching process. The quotations identify the respondents in terms of their group (i.e. Humanities versus Social Sciences), but also by gender and level (from level A or associate lecturer to level E or professor).

A. Quantitative analysis

Since there were no systematic effects due to the gender or to the academic level of the person interviewed, results are discussed in terms of group membership differences i.e. Humanities versus Social Sciences.

Responses to the general issue of buying out time

From the open-ended responses to the question about the general view of buying out time, three types of responses were identified: Strongly opposed, accepting with reservations, and in favour. The frequency of these responses differed significantly with faculty. For Humanities, the proportions of staff in these categories were 0.54, 0.27 and 0.19: for Social Sciences the proportions were 0.11, 0.58 and 0.31. Academics from the Humanities were more likely to oppose buying out in principle than academics from the Social Sciences ($X^2 = 10.72$, d.f. $= 2$, $p < 0.005$) who were more likely to agree with reservations.

Responses to buying out specific parts of teaching

Academics were asked to respond (Yes/No) whether they would be prepared to contract out: lecturing, giving tutorials or workshops, marking, and student consultation. In order to eliminate some of the practical barriers to contracting out, they were asked to assume that there was some well qualified person available to do the work.

A minority of the overall sample, who were strongly opposed in principle to buying out teaching, refused to allocate any of their teaching to others (proportion of the Humanities staff 0.31, proportion of Social Sciences 0.08). This difference reflected the overall group difference in approval of the practice of buying out teaching.

Academics from the Humanities and Social Sciences varied not only in their willingness to contract out teaching, but also in the extent to which they were willing to distribute specific components of the teaching task to others. The proportions of staff (Humanities versus Social Science) who were prepared to buy out particular teaching activities were as follows: Marking 0.42 vs. 0.85, with the difference being significant ($X^2 = 10.04$, d.f. $= 1$, $p < .005$); Tutorials/workshops 0.62 vs. 0.81 (no significant difference); Lectures 0.54 vs. 0.62 (no significant difference); Student consultation 0.22 vs. 0.46, with the difference approaching significance ($X^2 = 3.2$, d.f. $= 1$, $p < .10$). The base for these proportions is the total sample. Student consultation was the only nominated part of the undergraduate teaching role which the majority of staff (0.78 in the Humanities, 0.54 in the Social Sciences) felt they could not distribute to others.

Aims of university teaching

Six alternatives were presented. Academics were asked to select from this group their most important aim in teaching (see Table 1). The choice "To encourage students to think critically and challenge assumptions" was nominated by 60% of academics, while another 20% chose "to encourage students to think and work independently". Each of the items was then rated for importance (from 1 = very important to 4 = not very important). The mean ratings for the complete sample as well as the breakdown by group (Humanities versus Social Sciences) are displayed in Table 1 in order of rated importance. The rank order is the same for both groups, but the only difference in absolute level of importance was on item 3 " To motivate or light a spark". This was rated significantly more highly ($p < 0.01$) by the Humanities.

Table 1. Means (and S.D.) of ratings of aims of teaching (1 = very important to 4 = not very important)

	Mean (S.D.)	Humanities	Soc. Sc
1. To encourage students to think critically and challenge assumptions	1.12 (.39)	1.05	1.19
2. To encourage students to think and work independently	1.27 (.57)	1.18	1.35
3. To motivate or light a spark	1.67 (.81)	1.50	1.85**
4. To convey skills	2.02 (.73)	1.82	2.19
5. To convey knowledge	2.29 (.79)	2.18	2.38
6. To prepare students for the outside world	2.87 (.82)	3.05	2.72

** Mean difference significant at $p < .01$

Reported practice

One possible reason for the approval or disapproval of contracting out is the discrepancy between academics' actual distribution of time in their jobs and their ideal distribution of time. Interviewees were asked to allocate percentages to both the actual and ideal amounts of time to spend on teaching, research and administration. There was considerable variation across individuals, which was not unexpected, given the broad range of experience and academic positions of those in the sample. There was no significant difference, however, between faculty groups on these measures. Indeed, the ideal proportions of time for teaching, research, and administration in the Humanities and the Social Sciences were almost identical. There was also no relationship between individuals' decisions about buying out teaching and their reported discrepancy between the actual and ideal time for teaching and research. (Chi square analyses for each group yielded no significant connections between overall approval for contracting out and the discrepancy between ideal and actual time for teaching or research.)

For the Humanities, the actual proportions of time given to teaching, research and administration were 0.55, 0.28 and 0.17. The ideal proportions were 0.45, 0.42 and 0.13. For the Social Sciences, the actual proportions were 0.51, 0.21, and 0.28 with ideal proportions of 0.46, 0.41 and 0.13. It is clear that both groups wish to increase their research time. For the Humanities the interesting finding is that the larger part of this extra time for research, despite their overall disapproval of contracting out teaching, appears to come from the time allocated to teaching: for the Social Sciences, the time will be taken largely from administration.

B. Qualitative analysis of interview data

Several themes emerged from the qualitative analysis which may account for the pattern of results just described. The key issue to do with buying out some of the teaching appears to be one of *responsibility*. This was raised as a justification for

both opposing buying out any teaching as well as for limiting the extent of the involvement of others in one's work.

"It interferes with, or impedes the essential personal connection between a staff member and those for whom he or she is responsible" (Social Sciences/Male/Lecturer).
"We have a responsibility to put our emphasis on the teaching. That's why we're here – without the students there wouldn't be anything. Our job is to teach" (Humanities/Male/Senior Lecturer).

Both of these academics were strongly opposed to any buying out of teaching. The issue of responsibility, however, was not limited to those opposed to the practice of buying out time: it was often raised to justify the specific aspects of teaching that could be dispensed to others. For instance, the following academic (Humanities/Male/Senior Lecturer) drew clear distinctions between the parts of teaching he could buy out in terms of the relative amount of responsibility he considered each required.

"Student consultation would be virtually impossible to contract out because *you* are the one responsible for the course. The basic service jobs, like tutoring, marking and so forth you can. The basic high responsibility jobs – course administration and lecturing – you can't".

Similarly, academics who were prepared to buy out tutorials but resisted any other form of contracting out also raised the issue.

"It comes down to a question of responsibility. In areas where we are teaching students and assessing them there is a strong obligation to be as fair as possible. And I'm not sure that, when it comes to actually assessing people's academic progress that you can necessarily contract that out to people who don't have the same degree of involvement and responsibility as you" (Humanities/Female/Lecturer).
"I believe I have some sort of responsibility as far as the rest of my job goes to either do it personally or to maintain stronger supervision than I could if I contracted it out" (Social Sciences/Female/Professor).

Finally on this issue is a comment from an academic who was prepared to buy out all aspects of teaching.

"I'd want to make jolly sure that it was run properly and that there were no criticisms of it, because I regard it still as my professional responsibility" (Social Sciences/Male/Professor).

Closely allied with the notion of responsibility are the issues of *supervision* (as raised in the last quotations) and *quality control.* Many academics accepted the principle of buying out time, but with conditional approval. As the following typical quotations show, reservations and provisos were raised about:

control over the amount of work to be contracted out;

"You would want very close control over things like marking and the actual teaching. You can't contract out large amounts and still keep control and in a sense maintain some academic integrity" (Humanities/Male/Senior Lecturer).
"If you've got a lot of marking you should mark ten papers yourself, otherwise you risk losing that bit of knowledge about students and how they perform"(Social Sciences/Female/Associate Lecturer).
"A percentage of the lectures is OK. But I wouldn't want anyone doing the lectures that introduced the course, or which touched on areas that were central as I perceived them to be to the course"(Humanities/Male/Senior Lecturer),

the quality and reliability of the person doing the work;

"I'd want to be satisfied that whoever was the outside contractor was highly qualified" (Humanities/Male/Senior Lecturer).
"You really need to have people you can totally rely on to mark according to your marking scale" (Social Sciences/Female/Lecturer)

the importance of supervision;

"It's necessary to keep a tab on things. I think I'd want to make sure I kept in good touch with the person or persons to whom that work was farmed out ... especially in a course for which I had convening responsibility" (Humanities/Male/Professor),
"I could contract out tutoring because that person would be working directly under my guidance, with my assistance" (Humanities/Male/Lecturer)

the level of the work;

"You could contract out basic levels of all these sorts of topics ... So that you're keeping your eye on the most important parts, on the higher levels of work" (Social Sciences/Female/Associate Lecturer).
"You'd start at the end that was least demanding of the knowledge that you think you bring to the course. I'd need to mark the students' work because it ought to be a function of what I think . . . so I'd not want to farm it out even if I could" (Humanities/Male/Associate Professor).
"The jobs I would contract out are routine, fairly mechanical and the jobs I would not contract out require my particular intellectual input. I would *never* contract out what I consider to be my unique contribution to my course" (Social Sciences/Male/Senior Lecturer),

the need to be able to specify the tasks which were to be completed by others.

"We would only use part-timers for first year marking – nothing in excess of that. And it's got to be an assignment that has a reasonably clear marking scheme so that there is comparability across part-timers" (Social Sciences/Female/Associate Lecturer).

These quotations give us some indication as to why academics teaching in the Humanities and Social Sciences differ with respect to their views about buying out marking. Marking, in the Humanities cannot be clearly specified. Moreover, it is viewed, especially in the Humanities, as an integral component of the teaching process which gives valuable feedback both about the students' understanding and the teacher's effectiveness.

"Marking the assignments during the semester is important because it can be one of your most potent teaching tools" (Humanities/Female/Associate Professor).
"I might think for a moment that I could give marking to someone else, but I would like to respond to what the students have to say and know what they're thinking" (Humanities/Female/Associate Lecturer).
"As the lecturer I would always want to mark student work, or grade it, at least some of it, to see what things were getting across ... how well I was communicating and what the misunderstandings there were" (Humanities/Male/Senior Lecturer).

Indeed, these points were spontaneously acknowledged by a Social Sciences academic (Male/Associate Lecturer) in the following quotation:

"I don't think it would be easy to contract out marking in English, History, those sorts of areas. Not where it's opinions and where you need, say, the feedback from every single person in an assignment before you can get that person as an individual moving along".

Such a comment suggests that there is less a difference in overall outlook between academics in the Humanities and the Social Sciences than a difference dictated by the demands of the content area and its assessment. Concern with responsibility for courses, the ease with which one can specify teaching and marking requirements and consequently oversee or monitor the work seems to account for the ordering of teaching tasks which can be bought out: namely, marking (for the Social Sciences), tutorials/workshops, lectures, marking (for the Humanities) and finally, the most ill-defined of tasks, student consultation.

A final theme relevant to decisions about buying out teaching, was the *indivisible nature of the academic role*, or, in a weaker version of this idea, the *indivisible nature of the teaching role.*

"It is very difficult for me to think of academic work as contractual. I don't envisage it as something that is easily split – it's in my mind all the time. The teaching process for me has constructed outcomes for research" (Humanities/Male/Professor).
"I do regard teaching as a sort of integrated whole . . . I'd be unhappy to even contract out marking, except multiple choice" (Social Sciences/Male/Lecturer).
"The whole job in a way is an integrated whole. I like to see what's going on and monitor it at every level" (Humanities/Male/Senior Lecturer).

Such views go some way towards understanding the reluctance of some academics to buy out teaching: it is difficult, if not impossible, to contemplate buying out some teaching if there is such an interweaving of the parts of one's working life. Since these views were expressed rarely by academics from the Social Sciences but were not infrequent in comments from academics in the Humanities it appears also to contribute also to the group differences described earlier.

Themes expressed in ideas about aims of teaching also help shed light on decisions about buying out teaching. Only two ideas were expressed with any frequency and they were present in responses from academics in both the Social Sciences and the Humanities, but usually in reverse order. They were concerns about the need to *interest, motivate or engage the student* in learning and to *provide the student with knowledge and skills.*

"The first thing of course is to interest the students. Once you have them interested you can think seriously about how you pursue the two other objectives which are to convey information and of course to encourage them to acquire the skills and disposition that will make it possible for them to become good students or scholars with the appropriate critical capacities" (Humanities/Male/Associate Professor).
"There are two things. At the basic level there are things that students must know: concepts, techniques, ideas. The first thing is to make sure that they've got those things grasped, understood. I think the other thing is ideally to try and convey something of the excitement, the feeling, the ethos if you like of the discipline" (Social Science/Male/Associate Professor).
"I'm trying to use the material I teach them to convince them that they can think. There's two bits involved in that: passing on material which sort of forms the foundation and switching them on so they're actually confident enough to read the stuff" (Social Sciences/Male/Lecturer).
"Really communicating the love and feeling and knowledge of the subject is the most important" (Humanities/Male/Professor).

Again, such comments appear linked to how dispensable one considers aspects of teaching. If an academic considers that the primary aim of teaching is to

motivate and engage the students in learning, then s/he will find it difficult to buy out aspects of teaching which require face-to-face contact. Moreover, when marking is viewed as an important component in delivering encouragement and feedback, as so many of the Humanities staff indicate, then that too will be difficult to dispense to others.

Discussion

The two hypotheses examined in this study were both supported: different parts of the university varied in their overall views about contracting out, and individual academics varied in the extent to which they were prepared to contract out particular aspects of their teaching. It is, perhaps, surprising that there were no differences in viewpoints as a function of some commonly considered variables, namely gender or level of appointment.

This study began with the expectation that asking about the extent to which parts of a job could be contracted out would be a productive route to an investigation of ideas about teaching. This expectation was confirmed. It is clear that contracting out is an issue of importance to those academics interviewed. It is an issue that most have reflected upon, treat largely as an issue of responsibility and as relevant to the way academics define their jobs. In short, the method used in this study – asking academics about those aspects of their teaching they were prepared to dispense with – is a productive route for the exploration of ideas about teaching and job definition.

The major question raised by the results has to do with the extent to which the Humanities and Social Sciences exhibit two cultures or one. In favour of a difference in cultures between the Humanities and the Social Sciences is the difference in overall approval or disapproval of the practice of contracting out. There were also differences in the views about marking with the Humanities regarding marking as an intrinsic part of teaching which could not easily be dispensed with. Qualitative responses also suggested that a number of academics in the Humanities see a closer link between their research and teaching than do academics in the Social Sciences, a finding consistent with Elton's argument (Elton 1986).

On the other hand, there were many similarities in viewpoints. Certainly, a larger proportion of academics in the Humanities than in the Social Sciences were strongly opposed to buying out teaching but this did not mean that the Social Science academics were strongly in favour of the practice. Rather, a large number approved buying out time but expressed reservations or stated limitations to the practice. Similarly, aspects of teaching, apart from marking, were viewed in a comparable way across faculties. Tutorials or workshops and to a lesser extent lectures are readily dispensed with, whereas student consultation was considered by a great majority of academics to be the responsibility of the lecturer.

In other aspects of views about teaching, there were again more similarities than differences. The two groups expressed the same sorts of viewpoints about the aims

of teaching: they did not differ in terms of the way they would allocate their time to teaching, research and administration under ideal circumstances; and the issues they raised as justifications for their decisions about buying out time did not differ.

It may well be that the most parsimonious hypothesis for this pattern of results is that there are some common general goals shared by the disciplines. There are goals such as encouraging students to be critical, encouraging and motivating learners, ensuring that students learn the requisite skills. These goals, however, differ in the way they are implemented. Marking provides an example. In the Humanities, giving students detailed feedback through marking is seen as an indispensable part of both helping students to become critical scholars and of motivating and encouraging them. In the Social Sciences, however, there are aspects of marking that are more directly linked to assessing the skills of students and so marking is more likely to be routine and readily specifiable. These aspects of marking, usually at junior levels of the University, are the ones that are able to be contracted out.

The second reason why similar general goals may be implemented in different fashions has to do with the nature of competing pressures. In the Social Sciences, academics report pressure from administration, probably due to the large student numbers in their disciplines. This pressure forces a review of academics' overall views about contracting out, thus accounting for the numbers who approve the practice, but with reservations. Such findings suggest the need for caution in endorsing the traditional viewpoint of different cultures in different teaching areas. In the present sample, differences do occur, but not so much in baseline views as in the implementation of goals: consensus in views about teaching is more often the case than difference.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my thanks to the academics who gave of their time so willingly. I also wish to express my appreciation to Professor Jacqueline Goodnow for her constructive advice and support throughout this project. This research was assisted by funding from Macquarie University (MURG scheme) and the Australian Research Council.

References

Becher, T. (1987). 'The disciplinary shaping of the profession', in Clark, B.R. (ed.), *The Academic Profession*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, pp. 271–303.

Biglan, A. (1973). 'The characteristics of subject matter in different academic areas', *Journal of Applied Psychology* 57, 195–203.

Blackburn, R.T., Lawrence, J.H., Bieber, J.P. and Trautvetter (1991). 'Faculty at work: Focus on teaching', *Research in Higher Education* 32, 363–381.

Elton, L. (1986). 'Research and teaching: Symbiosis or conflict', *Higher Education* 15, 299–304.

Everett, J.E. and Entrekin, L.V. (1994). 'Changing attitudes of Australian academics', *Higher Education* 27, 203–227.

Kerchner, C.T. and Mitchell, D.E. (1988). *The Changing Idea of a Teachers' Union*. New York: Falmer Press.

Moses, I. (1990). 'Teaching, research and scholarship in different disciplines', *Higher Education* 19, 351–375.

Neumann, R. (1992). 'Perceptions of the teaching-research nexus: A framework for analysis', *Higher Education* 23, 159–171.

Powell, J.P., Barrett, E. and Shanker, V. (1983). 'How academics view their work', *Higher Education* 12, 297–313.

Ramsden, P. and Moses, I. (1992). 'Associations between research and teaching in Australian Higher education', *Higher Education* 23, 273–295.

Samuelowicz, K. and Bain, J.D. (1992). 'Conceptions of teaching held by academic teachers', *Higher Education* 24, 93–111.

Stodolsky, S. (1988). *The Subject Matters*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Warton, P.M., Goodnow, J.J. and Bowes, J.M. (1992). 'Teaching as a form of work: Effects of teacher's roles and role definitions on working to rules', *Australian Journal of Education* 36 (2), 170–180.