

Stuart Hall and OU Research

Clip: FOUY234S_clip1

Taken from Vice Chancellor John Horlock's Valedictory Lecture, 1990

Transcript:

Stuart Hall:

A good deal of academic research is of course done by academics in large research teams or in research laboratories. But in the humanities and social sciences there's a good deal of space for personal research, done with perhaps a research assistant or two in collaboration with academics in another place. And that's the sort of research that requires relatively small amounts of money and funding, say from the University Research Committee. Time to think, time to write, access to good libraries, and an opportunity perhaps to get a certain amount of research assistance with field work.

Now this is exactly the sort of personal, relatively small-scale research which academics can draw on when they're planning, thinking about, researching, writing for and structuring courses for Open University students.

These units are all from courses that I've either chaired or worked on since coming to The Open University. And they all not only reflect my own research but they're different as a consequence of that research.

In 1964 I went to the University of Birmingham to join Richard Hoggart to create The Centre for Cultural Studies, which was a research centre in a new area – never been researched before. As such, it's since had an enormous impact on teaching, undergraduate courses, both at universities and polytechnics, both in the UK and elsewhere, in the United States especially.

Now at The Centre for Cultural Studies, I was leading a small research team in the 70s, we published this book "Policing The Crisis" which was a study of attitudes to law and order. That book has since become a quite influential textbook for our undergraduate courses in criminology. It converted me into criminology, I'd not been a criminologist before – but I was then able when I came to the OU to chair the first Open University course on crime: D335 Crime & Society.

Now I was then interested in questions of political sociology and political attitudes as a result of my research at Birmingham, when I came to the OU we applied to and got a small research grant from the University Research Committee which got me a research assistant, we put together a small team. And as a result of that work on the sociology of political attitudes I then became involved in and chaired D209 The State & Society. That's a major second-level course in the Faculty of Social Science, still going, with another two or three years to run, teaching about 800 students a year.

So my own experience is that there's been a continuous interaction between research and undergraduate teaching. My research has opened up new areas of teaching for me, I've then been able to feed those into Open University courses, and the range of teaching in the Faculty, in cultural studies, in criminology, in political sociology, has been extended and expanded as a consequence of that direct relationship – in my own case at any rate – between research and teaching.