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The Work of AUQA (Australian Universities Quality Agency)

By David Woodhouse

Quality Audit

AUQA is established as a limited company, under the aegis of the nine Australian ministers responsible for education. This gives it a great deal of authority in carrying out its appointed task of auditing the quality assurance arrangements of all the 39 universities, the four other self-accrediting institutions, and the eight state and territory accrediting agencies that are responsible for the non-self-accrediting institutions of higher education.

The process of quality audit is well-understood internationally. It is able to cater for diverse organisations because it is based on the objectives and characteristics of the organisation (whether internally or externally specified). Starting with these goals, AUQA investigates the processes planned and in place for achieving those goals, and the outcomes of the processes.

For institutions, AUQA's starting point is the Mission, goal, objectives, etc, together with any relevant legislation. In the case of agencies, the audit scope is defined by the legislation in the particular jurisdiction, but increasingly the focus is on the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes. It is AUQA's task to determine whether each agency is implementing these satisfactorily, and whether a consistent interpretation is being used nation-wide.

AUQA's Procedures

AUQA's Constitution specifies four objectives. The first two are that AUQA should investigate the quality assurance arrangements of the institutions and

agencies in its constituency, and produce public reports on its findings.

In 2001, AUQA wrote audit procedures and appointed its staff (four professionals in the audit field and two support staff) and a group of about 100 honorary auditors. Although the procedures were well-tried elsewhere, AUQA regarded them as provisional until it had carried out the three audits, which it therefore referred to as 'trial audits'. AUQA sought volunteers to undergo these trial audits, and selected from the volunteers the University of New South Wales, Northern Territory University and the Queensland Office of HE. For each audit, AUQA assembles an audit panel from its Register of auditors. The panel typically contains members from

“ AUQA is established as a limited company, under the aegis of the nine Australian ministers responsible for education. ”

Australian HE institutions, from industry and from abroad, and an AUQA staff member.

A detailed feedback and debriefing on the trial audits, involving the three audit panels, the three auditees and all the AUQA staff, provided a large number of comments and suggestions for adjustments to the audits, to the Audit Manual, to the training of the honorary auditors, and to emphases, but no significant changes to the process were seen to be needed. Furthermore, the three auditees have since put the AUQA audit reports on their respective websites. (For all substantive audits, the audit reports

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Designed by Liz Wilson

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From the Editor

At the time of writing Australian members are preparing to receive the long awaited Federal government's review of higher education. The Minister of Education, Dr. Brendan Nelson described his reform package 'as a comprehensive plan that would put universities on a firm footing for the next 25 years.' (The Australian 4/12/02). It is to be hoped that the proposals will be fair and just, especially to the smaller players in the system, and that the importance of teaching is properly recognised.

The society is seeking to make a useful contribution to this environment by developing its scheme to recognise and develop teachers and teaching. This was launched at the Perth conference in July and its early development is proceeding well thanks to an enthusiastic group of volunteers. For details see the report by the President, Angela Brew.

A feature of the Australian higher education scene at present is the focus on quality and audits of universities which are now getting under way in earnest. Apologies to Kiwi readers who have, 'been there done that!' David Woodhouse contributes an overview of the work of the Australian Universities Quality Council which I hope will be useful for readers not familiar with the processes and philosophy of academic audits.

I was delighted to read Owen Hicks reflections on his ten years as a staff developer at the University of Western Australia. I am sure those members who are staff developers will benefit from these timely and challenging thoughts.

We wish Owen and his wife well in their new venture overseas.

It was encouraging to receive such a good response to the call for submissions about Research in Progress that was posted on the email list. There was a great variety of interesting and useful projects. Hopefully the list opened useful contacts between researchers. We are considering putting the project details onto the research section of the website. Your ideas and comments about the content of this section would be welcome.

Linda Chatel, who has been working in the Herdsa office, will be retuning to Western Australia after Dec 12th. We are grateful to Linda for the hard work she has put in to the office and wish her well in the future. The Executive is taking the opportunity to rethink the kind of office structure that can best serve the Society. The new arrangements will be circulated to members, via the email list, as soon as possible. Likewise we hope to announce the new editors of HERD shortly. The delays in processing papers in the interim are regretted.

The theme of the next issue due in April 2003 will be research led teaching. If you have a paper to contribute on this theme please contact me. Meanwhile I extend to all readers best wishes for the Christmas season and thank all those of you who have supported me with encouragement throughout this year.

Roger Landbeck

INTERIM HERDSA OFFICE ARRANGEMENTS

The HERDSA office in Canberra is now closed. However for the moment the phone number (+61 2 6253 4242), the email address (office@herdsa.org.au), and the post office box (PO Box 516 Jamison, ACT 2614, AUSTRALIA) for mail will remain the same and arrangements are in place for enquiries to be answered. The fax number is no longer in operation.

Members will be informed through the email list when new arrangements are in place together with the new contact details.

will be public, and will be available on AUQA's website, www.auqa.edu.au)

The Audit Cycle

AUQA currently has a constituency of 51 auditees, and it is aiming to audit all of them over a five-year period. This may be the first of continuing lustral cycles, but consideration will be given towards the end of the first five years to whether a different approach or emphasis has then become more appropriate. AUQA is selecting ten

“ AUQA expects that all its auditees are involved in some sort of self-monitoring. ”

auditees at random at the beginning of each year for audit in the following year.

2002 is the first full year of the five-year cycle, and at the time of writing (October) three audit reports have been published (Victorian Office of Higher Education, University of Southern Queensland, and Curtin University of Technology), with another imminent (University of Ballarat). The reports on the 2002 audits should all be public by early in 2003. The 2003 auditees have already been selected and some audit panels appointed. The first submission for the 2003 tranche of auditees, namely from the University of Canberra, is due in December 2002, with an audit visit planned for March 2003. The last of the 2003 audit submissions will be received in August 2003, with an audit visit in November 2003.

The Audit Process

AUQA expects that all its auditees are involved in some sort of self-monitoring – otherwise how do they know how well they are doing, and whether they are meeting their own objectives? Auditees provide to AUQA a report (a 'performance portfolio') indicating their QA processes and evidence of the effectiveness of these processes. This portfolio can arise from the auditee's on-going self-monitoring process, or may be a result of a specially undertaken self-review. Auditees are free to take as long or short a time as they wish in preparing the portfolio, but once it is with AUQA, AUQA attempts to complete the audit process in six months. The typical schedule is:

- receipt of portfolio
- (one month later) audit panel meets to discuss the portfolio

- (two weeks later) panel chair and AUQA staff member on the panel visit the auditee to discuss the proposed program of the audit visit, and identify any further information needed by the panel
- (six weeks later) the panel visits the auditee and interviews a wide range of people
- (two months later) the auditee is given a draft report for comment on fact and emphasis
- (one month later) the Board of AUQA approves the report for release, and it goes to the auditee
- (two weeks later) the report is published

Sampling

AUQA's audits are 'whole-of-institution' audits, not discipline assessments. This means that AUQA is not checking each and every department and program. Rather, the audits use a sampling approach, sampling in many different dimensions. For example, the audit panel usually interviews a small sample of departments, meets a sample of students, seeks examples of course approval procedures in action, reads some review reports and checks the action taken on the reviews, visits a sample of campuses, and so on. This means that, while audit panels always investigate the main aspects of the academic scope of an institution, namely the teaching, learning, research, staffing, student support, community service and resourcing, the level of detail of investigation of each of these factors can vary from audit to audit. Also, the specific issues arising at a particular institution can depend on the characteristics of that institution and on the factors that emerge from the panel's sampling.

Standards

The terms 'quality' and 'standards' are often linked, or even confused. When they are distinguished, there is often a suspicion that even if the quality is 'high' or 'good' (whatever that is intended to mean), the standard is still low. AUQA distinguishes between these terms, firstly by defining quality as 'fitness for purpose'. Contrary to some accusations, this is not a restrictive or mechanistic interpretation. On the contrary, it fits perfectly with the concept of quality audit, provided the word 'purpose' is understood inclusively to mean all of an organisation's objectives, Mission, goals etc.

Then 'standard' denotes an actual level of attainment. (There are also other

meanings of 'standard', such as procedural standards, standards as the scope of activities, or standards as the norm or average.) Because of the diversity of the HE sector, it would not be possible (even if it were appropriate) for AUQA to set system-wide standards, nor is it feasible for AUQA to set institution-specific standards. What is feasible and reasonable is for AUQA to hold each institution responsible for setting and monitoring its own standards, for being able to describe what these standards are, to justify its processes for achieving them, and to provide evidence of its performance in these matters. This is therefore one aspect of AUQA's audits.

International Operations

One very important area that AUQA is investigating closely is the international activities of institutions, both in Australia and abroad. Within Australia, institutions are required to comply with the conditions set down in Protocol 5, and these are checked by the state or territory accrediting agency. In practice, some agencies have (quite

“ AUQA's audits are 'whole-of-institution' audits, not discipline assessments. ”

reasonably) decided that an AUQA audit will suffice for such checking. AUQA also explicitly enquires about the support processes in place for students from abroad, and the accuracy of the information they receive (both before and after enrolling).

For students abroad, the protocols are again relevant, as they require any course given abroad to be of at least the same standard as the equivalent course given in Australia. AUQA investigates closely the procedures the institution has in place for ensuring the quality of such courses, from inception and contract, through course approval and staff appraisal, to assessment and moderation. If necessary, representatives of the audit panel (usually the chair and the AUQA staff member) visit a sample of overseas programs.

AUQA has, and is further developing, many international links. AUQA is an active member of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in HE (the Executive Director is current Past

President), and work is in hand to establish an Asia-Pacific Subnetwork. Contact is being established with QA agencies in our region, as this will be mutually beneficial to the international operations of Australian institutions. These contacts are one route through which Australia's renewed attention to the quality of its HE is becoming widely known among our regional partners. Feedback suggests that this renewed attention is already having a beneficial effect. Work with other QA agencies will help to ensure that nothing falls between the cracks, but also is intended to avoid Australian institutions being subject to multiple checks of the same areas of activity.

Other Quality Work

In addition to its specifically audit work, AUQA is taking a major role in quality issues nation-wide (and indeed internationally). While it is too early for AUQA to, for example, provide submissions to government enquires that pronounce authoritatively on what it has learned from its experience of audits, it nonetheless does already provide such comment as it is able (to the 'Crossroads' review for example). AUQA also has a high media presence, and comments frequently on quality issues.

AUQA works with professional associations and with the auditors-general on matters of mutual interest. The intent is to share information and to share experience, but above all (as with the international links) to try to avoid Australian institutions being subject to multiple checks of the same areas of activity.

AUQA has just organised (with the support of other associations) a very successful conference on quality ('the Australian Universities Quality Forum') in Brisbane. Keynote speakers at the Forum, which attracted 175 registrants, included Dr Peter Shergold (DEST) and Professor Peter Sheehan (for the AVCC). The Forum format was designed around workshops, and for each workshop there was an on-line discussion over the three weeks preceding the conference. The workshop format was used to ensure that

the Forum was of practical value to all those involved.

A matter of great concern is the quality of the audit process and the consistency between audits, carried out by different panels drawn from the Register of auditors. To address these issues, AUQA maintains on-going contact with, and provides relevant information to, its auditors. Also, it will be holding an annual meeting of auditors (the first was held in September 2002) to enable them to share their on-going experiences of audit, to refresh their recollection of the process, to introduce any new AUQA procedures, and to communicate developing world-wide QA practice.

“AUQA's intent is to be highly interactive.”

The audits will reveal many examples of excellent practices in universities and agencies. While these will be disseminated via the public audit reports, these brief references will not be very useful in helping others to understand the practices and adapt them for their own use. Therefore, AUQA is planning a web-accessible Good Practice Database that will include more details of those good practices that seem to have the potential for transference more widely across the sector.

AUQA also runs workshops, produces newsletters for its auditors and the media, and maintains a very active website.

AUQA's Other Objectives

AUQA's Constitution contains four objectives. The first two refer to the audit activity. The third charges AUQA with the responsibility of commenting on the National Protocols from time to time, and indicating whether they can be improved. Finally, under the fourth objective, AUQA will be expected in due course to produce a summative report on the HE sector in Australia, and how we match up to other countries.

Conclusion

AUQA's intent is to be highly interactive. It seeks feedback from the institution or agency after each audit is complete, and welcomes input at any time.

Dr David Woodhouse is Executive Director of the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA), which is responsible for auditing the academic quality assurance procedures of Australia's universities and state accreditation agencies. David undertakes many national and international quality assurance activities, providing advice and training on educational quality assurance to governments, agencies and institutions in a number of countries. He is an evaluator for the Business Excellence Awards, and a reviewer for the Internationalisation Quality Review programme of the OECD and European University Association. He has served two terms as President of the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education.

Before working in Australia, David Woodhouse was founding Director of the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit (1994-2001), and Deputy Director of the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (1990-1994). Before that, he was a faculty member in mathematics, computer science and education in universities in several countries, and was at various times head of a department and dean of a faculty. He has been very active in extension work in schools and teacher education. His leisure interests include multisport, drama and flying light planes.

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Report of the Scheme to Recognise and Develop teachers and teaching

This new HERDSA initiative is designed to recognise individuals' higher education teaching¹ which satisfies a set of quality standards related to a set of criteria. It then builds on that recognition through advanced professional development activities designed to ensure that the standards are maintained and built upon.

At the 2002 conference, Executive called for people to form a development group of members particularly interested in developing the Recognition and Development Scheme and committed to preparing a portfolio. A further call went out over the listserv. As a result, a Stage 1 (development) Group has been established. Twelve members volunteered for this including disciplinary academics, academic developers and learning support

advisors; people at different stages of their careers, people with experiences of other "Fellowship" schemes in other organisations, people from a range of universities and Australian States and from New Zealand. We are also now proud to note that it includes finalists and winners of the Australian Awards for University Teaching!

Some members of the Stage 1 development group met at the 2002 conference and early in December two further meetings were held in Canberra around Australia's National Teaching Forum. It is gratifying to see what a large measure of support there is. Many useful suggestions have been made. Teams have been formed to work on particular aspects and team leaders are collating ideas. The documentation that the teams are preparing will be presented to the HERDSA Executive in February.

Following the development of the scheme (Stage 1), the Executive will be asked to give the go ahead for a full pilot and further volunteers will be sought for this. A number of HERDSA members have already indicated they would like to be involved in this and the list of volunteers for the full pilot phase (Stage 2) is already growing. Those who successfully complete their portfolios will be awarded their Certificate and the Scheme will be officially launched at the HERDSA Canterbury Conference in 2003.

Angela Brew
President

(1) 'Teaching' is used to refer to conventional higher education courses, on-line and distance education as well as academic development activities and learning support events and activities.

The HERDSA E Mail List. Notes for users

The HERDSA Email list is now administered with a web-based system from the ANU in Canberra. This makes it relatively easy for subscribers to manage. It is a moderated list so all messages posted are seen by the list moderator before being finally posted.

Posting to the list.

Send an email to herdsa@mailman.anu.edu.au

Un-subscribing or editing your options.

Go to <http://mailman.anu.edu.au/mailman/listinfo/herdsa>

Enter your email address alongside the box '**Unsubscribe or edit options.**' and click the box. There you will find a range of options you can choose. For example under '**Mail Delivery**' you can suspend the mailings without un-subscribing by ticking the **Disabled** box. This is useful if you are going away and don't want your mailbox cluttered up. However you will need to enable the mail again when you return.

Roger Landbeck
List Moderator

Because i was invited

(with apologies to the late Judith Wright who used this title for a much more profound reflection)

By Owen Hicks

Owen Hicks resigned from his position as Head of Organisational and Staff Development Services at the University of Western Australia in August 2002, after serving there for ten years. He has joined Australian Volunteers Overseas with his wife and is waiting for a posting. In this article he reflects on his experiences in those ten years.

When originally asked by Roger to reflect on my years as a staff developer the task didn't seem too difficult. As time to produce copy came closer the task got much harder. Doesn't it always? To say something interesting and of value... well you be the judge.

One of the first issues that arises is that of nomenclature – staff developer, academic developer, educational developer. What am I? Who are we? Do labels matter? While I have some concern over a proliferation of position titles, my reflections on this issue from the past ten years are that we have to continue to live with a multiplicity of labels, that these should be chosen strategically to best suit institutional cultures, and that a degree of role ambiguity is inevitable and, in fact, healthy. I haven't observed that any greater or lesser credibility is attached to the titles we carry. My own titles over the ten years at the University of Western Australia (UWA) were Co-ordinator Professional and Career Development, Director Centre for Staff Development, Professorial Fellow and Director Organisational and Staff Development Services. Staff in the Centre carried titles such as Staff Development Officer, Senior Staff Development Officer, and Lecturer in Higher Education Development. What always mattered most was whether we could do the job, and underpinning that, the scholarship we engaged in to support our work. Did we know the literature? Did we engage in related research? Did we disseminate our findings through publication or other means? Did we participate in discussion and debate with colleagues? And the people I worked with across the

University rarely knew or cared particularly about my status.

Between the above lines lurks the issue of 'academic' versus 'general' appointments. While I don't have current, systematically gathered, data on the issue, it appears that there has been a trend over the past five years or so towards general staff appointments. If this is true and it is cost driven, with savings hoped for from diminished scholarship, then it is short sighted and will significantly diminish the

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capacity of staff development (let me settle on this term for the duration of this article) in universities to meet expectations, both individual and institutional. My own position was originally a general staff appointment, later converted to academic, identifiably so with a professorial title in the later years. My work changed little, probably not at all, as a consequence of these transitions. I had similar access to similar people and similar opportunities throughout my ten years at UWA. The one tangible and somewhat ironic consequence of conversion of my position to academic was that I lost my seat on the Academic Board (having been elected to one of the 'general' staff positions on the Board at the time of their creation). However, if staff are better able to provide a high quality scholarly service to colleagues across their institution, as academic appointments, then such appointments make more sense. I should add that our Centre was unique ten years ago, being the only one in Australia

staffed entirely by general appointments. The Centre has gone against the trend suggested at the beginning of this paragraph, with now almost all of the direct staff development service providers being academic appointments.

Which leads me to the conundrum of 'service units' versus 'academically free' sub-disciplines. When I started in my position it appeared that there were a number of units in Australian universities that saw themselves as academically independent sub-disciplines, very similar in character to any other academic department in the university. The 'pure form academic department' model appeared to be something directors and staff aspired to and to which greater status was attached. I don't think this notion exists any longer. Service units, with a none-the-less strong scholarly base appear to have emerged as the preferred sustainable option. Dynamic and strategic services integrated into the day-to-day activities of the university appear to have a secure future. The scholarly base is perhaps under greater threat than it was and is not being researched and developed, as it should. Some institutional leaders do appear to expect a more instrumental, 'off the shelf', even outsourced approach, to the delivery of staff development. While there has been considerable research into various aspects of teaching and learning in higher education over the past ten years, I would note the relative lack of inquiry into aspects of staff development itself.

A few brief memories and a recurring theme:

An Executive Dean said to me at our first meeting ten years ago, "I believe in what you are trying to do, but in a budget debate I will vote against you every time". I think times have changed in that regard.

A physical sciences lecturer, a chemist, stopped me on our James Oval, singing the praises of a technique for engaging students, something he had been quite sceptical about during a workshop on lecturing a couple of weeks earlier.

Another Dean, who confided, before the event, that he saw my purpose in facilitating a Faculty retreat as being there to blame if it was a disaster, while he would be happy to take the credit if it was a success. What was success? The bar wasn't set very high. If people were still talking to each other at the end of the two days, he would be happy. They were. He thanked me profusely.

The job hasn't always been easy.

And the recurring theme, that I heard so often, goes something like this:

"There is so much staff development needed across campus, and it's everybody else that needs it." - a statement too often made by staff developers themselves. It does make me wonder.

A few reflections on broader issues:

There seems to be a lot of 'change' about in higher education, but most of it is quite trivial. 'Change' in my view is often subterfuge. It enables a shallowness, a 'surface approach' to life, a 'flavour of the month' mentality. I'm not a Luddite and I love creativity and innovation, and risk even. But my observation on the last ten years leads me to the view that most fundamentals remain the same. Good teaching, for example, is still about providing effective learning opportunities. It's still about caring about the learners and it's still about engaging in sufficient scholarship in the discipline and in the practice of teaching.

- And 'quality', 'we know it when we see it'. Well do we? I'm not so sure. But I do believe that in higher education in this country we have become obsessed with the tracking of 'quality' and attempts to measure it. And this has actually taken the focus off doing it! I would encourage colleagues to stay off the 'quality gravy train' if you can - some will know what I mean.
- Higher education in Australia in recent years has too often been 'like a candle in the wind', too ready to take whatever direction will meet with approval, and funding. Not just at the macro level but also at the micro level issues don't appear to be sufficiently challenged or defended. The sector has a tendency to be told what to do then toe the line without sufficient questioning. Is that really a good idea? Is it necessary? Would it work here? Individual institutions have a greater tendency to jump on bandwagons. Institution X is doing Y. It has been noticed. We had

better do Y too, lest we be seen as backward or at least not as progressive.

- Boyer's concept of scholarship has been a most useful vehicle for raising the profile of teaching, but it is becoming a meaningless mantra. Conceptualisation of surface and deep approaches to learning has been corrupted and diminished in value. Teaching methods continue to be compared with little regard to the effectiveness with which 'rival' methods are executed. 'Flexible learning' has earned dubious 'theoretical' status. Phenomenography is just one voice. 'Constructivism' is showing its limitations. The whole field of teaching and learning in higher education is ripe for a major intellectual overhaul (not a quality audit).

“ It is simply not acceptable to expect students to tolerate a 30-year apprenticeship as a mechanism for giving academics the knowledge and skills required for effective teaching. ”

At the 'chalkface', while a great deal of progress has been made, we still appear to be struggling to do better than a cottage industry approach to teaching and learning. I found some of the profiles of recipients of Australian Awards for University Teaching published in *The Australian* in the past year have been quite disheartening. There is a profound irony in teachers engaged in the formal process of teaching students, rejecting a similar process, for themselves, on learning how to teach. Thankfully, my experience has been that not too many academics do, in fact, reject the need for, and value of, programs on teaching and learning in higher education. For many academics the lament is rather that these initiatives have come too late in their career and if only as young academics they had had the opportunity. Some are understandably irritated by the suggestion they should now attend so late in their career.

I have little doubt that some academics can become great teachers through 30 years of practice and reflection (see Bruce Williams' comments in the *The Australian, Higher Education Supplement*, September

25. I sent a response. It didn't get published), but at what cost to their students along the way? It is simply not acceptable to expect students to tolerate a 30-year apprenticeship as a mechanism for giving academics the knowledge and skills required for effective teaching. There is no place for parody of those who have had to learn on the job. But equally there is no place for the off-handed dismissal of the value of well constructed and effectively delivered programs introducing new academics (and some older ones) to the scholarship and practice of teaching. It is something we need more of rather than less. Many universities in Australia have very good programs and these are receiving attention from overseas institutions.

Today's academics can do much better than learning through trying to impersonate the lecturers they admired, great though they may have been. Programs on teaching and learning are part of the answer, but they do need to be exemplars of good practice. I know we could do more to ensure we are modeling excellence in the provision of appropriate learning environments in our programmes on teaching and learning for new staff.

It is uncharacteristic for me to be sounding so negative but let me persist in this vein just a little longer. Another of my concerns over the years has been the growing negativity expressed by staff in many of our universities. The gloom in some departments is appalling. Many academics appear unhappy, overworked and pretty dismal. This rubs off on the students. I believe we have a duty to present learning opportunities to our students in a challenging and positive way. In this context staff development has a critical role to play as a supportive benefit to staff within our institutions. Raising morale and promoting what can be done in difficult times is an incidental but critical part of our role.

And what of HERDSA? When I first started in my position at UWA I felt incredibly isolated professionally. I joined this thing called HERDSA, couldn't find out who else was a member in WA, so with a few colleagues formed the WA Branch. It wasn't too long before we had 100 members. From branch president, to Society president, to delegate to the International Consortium for Educational Development in Higher Education, I had a challenging, sometimes tiring but enjoyable journey. For me, HERDSA and ICED were opportunities for collegiality, for scholarship and for friendship. I hope I gave as much as I gained. I'm optimistic about the future of HERDSA. There will be people who come forward to do the work. Enough funds will

be found. What it provides can't be done without?

If I was to reduce what I saw as important to just one word (though one is hardly enough), what would it be? In a higher education context my word is research or teaching. Not even scholarship, though that was a close call. It's certainly not quality and it's not benchmarking. It's not flexible learning (two words of course but if they could be reduced to one it would only be a little closer). I'm sure it's not internationalisation, though if less driven by economic imperatives it might have been a contender. There is an old English saying Good wine needs no bush. The bush refers to 'a bunch of ivy hung as a vintner's sign in front of a tavern'. And the message in the proverb, "If the wine is good enough you don't have to advertise the fact". Maybe 100 years from now the proverb will have become "Good universities need no badging". And people then will struggle to give it meaning. My word is definitely not badging.

My word is caring, perhaps old fashioned, hardly intellectual, a little comy even. But I believe that any success in my job has come from caring passionately about what I do and doing my best in caring for the people working with me.

- caring about the big picture, but also caring about the detail.
- caring about new initiatives but also caring about the essential ongoing services.
- caring about the scholarship of what we do.

- caring about who has just won a national grant, but also caring about who hasn't had a lunch break, and who has to do the photocopying.
- caring for the people in the building, about who they are and how they feel.
- caring for a hard-working but happy environment, one where things get done but people also have fun.
- caring locally and also

“ If I was to reduce what I saw as important to just one word (though one is hardly enough), what would it be? ”

internationally.

- and caring about work, but also caring about home and family and friends and community.

Some months ago at my final national directors' meeting in Brisbane, one of my colleagues asked me what I was going to miss most. The reply came out of my mouth without a thought, but on reflection I was pleased with what I had said. My response was "oh the people", the people I was working with and those who have been part of my work environment over the past ten years

locally, nationally and internationally.

In my career in higher education development I've had a great time. The staff I worked with were dedicated and worked hard. I expected that. It happened without pushing. We got things done. We had fun, with some personal joys and hardships along the way. Others appeared to value our contribution. I originally felt ten years in my position at UWA would be long enough. Closer to time that seemed the case. With reluctance and some satisfaction I chose to leave.

Let others dance to a more profound tune. But for me,

Only the grass stands up... [I hope]

from Judith Wright, Bora Ring

and as I ride into the sunset:

I can see quite clearly today, as regards myself, that I am not stifled by reason, God be praised! I still feel ready to set out on Quixotic expeditions.

from Nikos Kazantzakis, Zorba the Greek.

Best wishes to you all.

Owen Hicks

Owen Hicks was the President of Herdsa from 1997 to 2000. He was convenor of the International Consortium for Educational Development in Higher Education Conference held in Perth in July 2002.

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HERDSA 2003 Conference

**Deadline for submission of papers
IS FRIDAY 31ST JANUARY 2003**

See Page 27

BA Students' Part-Time Work: The pay-off can be more than a lowly pay cheque

By Irena Yashin-Shaw, Margaret Buckridge,
Patrick Buckridge, Kay Ferres

The prospect of facing an inscrutable interview panel can be daunting and intimidating even for the most seasoned of job-seekers. How much more so for students fresh out of a BA seeking their first graduate position. The transition from academia into the full time world of work is a rite of passage that can be fraught with frustration and disappointment. It would be worthwhile therefore if we in higher education could help prepare our Arts graduates for the inevitable questions - "So tell us a little about yourself", "What are your strengths and weaknesses?", "How would you rate your teamwork/ communication/ entrepreneurial/ analytical/ problem-solving / etc skills?" and the dreaded, "What experience do you have?". Non-vocational Arts students who have never had the opportunity to participate in work placements, cadetships or pracs may be tempted to say that they don't have previous experience. Yet in the majority of cases this would not be true. On the contrary, by the time they hit the full time work force most students have had years of experience in part-time jobs. Admittedly these jobs are often menial, low-paid positions in the service or hospitality sectors but they nonetheless can provide long-term value for students beyond the immediate pay cheque. The catch however is for students to see and mine this value.

Griffith University's School of Humanities undertook a project this year to help their students to identify the full range of skills they were acquiring through their Arts studies. Many Arts courses traditionally do not have any period of internship or industry or professional experience built into them as

do more vocationally oriented degrees such as law, business or medicine. Formal placements offer students a genuine experience of a number of different dimensions of professional work and a chance to apply/evaluate/adjust, their academic knowledge. It also challenges them to come to grips with a different kind of learning. Although no department relishes the task of arranging work experience, the arrangement is viable in most industries because it has benefits for the employer as well - enhanced graduates for the industry or profession overall, information about graduate preparation and outcomes from

"The transition from academia into the full time world of work is a rite of passage that can be fraught with frustration and disappointment."

project or report work. This picture is a bit different, however, for non-vocational liberal arts degrees. There may not be a particular employment direction emerging even for the third-year student and there is no ready-made cohort of would-be employers.

Consider however a factor that has increasing importance in the Australian higher education scene, namely that an increasing percentage of students are employed in part-time jobs during their period of study (DEST, 2001). It is a way of making ends meet that is arguably more available to Arts degree students than it is to students in programs with high compulsory contact hours. It is the case, that most of the jobs held down by students under these circumstances are in the lower-paid tiers of the service sector eg. fast food, café/bar work, retail, supermarket checkout, delivery, theme parks, etc. In the great majority of cases, they are not the kind of jobs to which the students will aspire as graduates. Nonetheless such jobs may provide a rich context for students to begin reflecting on

the way they use knowledge acquired at university. In fact it could even be argued that such a context provides even more scope for recognising the deployment of generic skills than formal work placements because of the authenticity of the experience (Billett, 2002). Students working as community carers, waiters or cashiers have to deal with real problems, real people and real complaints. To do this they draw on a number of capacities developed in their academic context but often without realising the source of these skills.

Take for example the humanities student who works as a checkout operator in a large supermarket who deals humanely and sensitively with a self-conscious customer using a St Vincent de Paul food voucher. Such appreciation for and understanding of peoples sensibilities and contexts is deepened through the study of literature because of the insight given into the myriad circumstances and problems of people represented in the pages of great books (Nussbaum 1997). Similarly, being able to rise above the conflicts and tensions in an office as a result of being able to view the situation more philosophically is also a legacy of literary studies. Students learn vicariously strategies for conflict resolution as a result of analysing the effectiveness of these strategies when used by characters (albeit fictional) in novels studied as part of their degree. One student said that her study of Gulliver's Travels gave her an insight into human nature which had proven useful for dealing with the interpersonal dynamics at her part-time work in a law office.

Developing a rapport with clients, customers or colleagues by being able to converse easily and intelligently on a variety of topics is useful in any workplace. It might be the student working as a community carer who can put an elderly immigrant client at ease by talking to him about the history of his homeland; or the waitress majoring in Spanish working in a restaurant with a highly multicultural clientele who chats with customers in their native language; or the history major who facilitates

workplace relationships at a tutoring centre by talking to people about what she knows they are interested in. All of these are examples from undergraduates who participated in the study.

Students are using their academically acquired analytical, problem-solving, communication and social skills (among others) in their workplaces. They also take back to university capacities acquired in the workplace such as time management, teamwork and an understanding of systems outside of the university experience. However if they do not make the explicit connection between these two contexts and consciously realise the way they transfer skills between them they may under-represent themselves in job interviews. To this end a pilot course for final semester Arts students called Learning and the Workplace was trialed as part of the study. It was specifically aimed at helping students to engage in the kind of thinking they would need in preparation for job seeking and the transition to full time graduate employment. Students were asked to formally reflect on the origins, acquisition and development of generic skills from their Arts courses. Then using the context of their existing part-time jobs, students examined and documented how these skills were being transferred and used in their part-time workplaces. Finally students used the identification of this transfer to develop their CVs and aid in the preparation for and success in full time job seeking. Thus upon completion of the course, students have a documented folio identifying the broad range of generic skills acquired during their time as students and part-time workers. Engagement in such a process, it is hoped, will serve students in a number of ways - firstly to empower them for the subsequent experience of seeking full-time employment by enabling them to demonstrate and document for prospective employers in any field the broad range of skills they have already acquired and had some practice in

applying through existing employment; secondly to enable them to fully develop their CVs to serve as a useful and practical reference tool for writing intelligent and persuasive job applications; and finally to provide them with a sense of confidence for the task

“Nonetheless such jobs may provide a rich context for students to begin reflecting on the way they use knowledge acquired at university.”

ahead (that of job-seeking) as a result of their forward preparation.

It is anticipated that engagement in this process of extended reflection and documentation using their existing part time work as a context will enable Arts graduates to better package their skills to be more attractive to prospective employers. Dr Jane Skinner (2002) of Monash university says that Arts graduates are not very good at doing that because they tend to think of their developed capacities in terms of their academic work only. That could be one of the reasons that Arts degrees are currently so undervalued. Hopefully after participating in a course such as that described above, the question of “What experience do you have?” will not be so daunting to an Arts graduate.

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HERDSA 2003 Conference

Reviewers of Papers Required

If you are willing to review one or two contributions please contact Philippa Bright philippa.bright@stonebow.otago.ac.nz or Carol Bond carol.bond@stonebow.otago.ac.nz as soon as possible.



Conference Review

Effective Teaching and Learning 2002: A Conference for University Teachers

By Cristina Poyatos Matas

Effective Teaching and Learning 2002: A Conference for University Teachers took place on the 12-13 of November 2002 at the Hilton Hotel, Brisbane. Queensland University of Technology hosted this event in conjunction with Griffith University and The University of Queensland. The theme of the congress was on Valuing Students Valuing Staff. A total of 140 participants from different states of Australia and other parts of the world attended. What started being a local Brisbane conference has become an interstate and international event, which demonstrates the interest for improving the quality of higher education in increasing in the whole world.

The event was well organized, friendly, very informative and inspiring for many of us. The organizing committee and convener, Gail Hart from QUT, really took good care of all of us, providing a warm introduction for each presenter and helping all the assistants wherever they could. The venue was good, and the audiovisual coordinator, Alan Rattray and his team really made possible that technology become transparent. This allowed presenters and audience to concentrate only on learning from each other rather than on having to deal with technological puzzles, as it happens in many congresses. There were lots of interesting Power Point (PP) presentations, however from the point of view of the audience I can see that coping with one, two, even three was okay, however when the fourth one was on the way the levels of concentration were hard to maintain. At this stage, one very much felt like in a Kentucky tour visiting Europe and saying "not another Church!" It certainly made many of us start reflect on the use of PP and about start considering other ways in which we can share our knowledge in a conference context using more interactive and audience-centred approaches or using PP in a more interactive way.

The variety of keynote speakers have to be applauded, many of them came from other educational sectors outside the University world. It was very interesting to find that we are very much facing the same challenges (cuts of funding, the pressures of information era and online learning, student diversity and others) just in different contexts. I found that there is a lot that we can learn from each other's experiences. In the first day there were two keynote speakers. The first one, Kate Joyner from the Brisbane City Council, delivered an impressive multimedia presentation in which she talked about a very interesting values program that has been developed by the Brisbane City Council. This aims to take to all the employees a better understanding of the organization values and culture. The second keynote speaker had a real sense of humor that kept the audience smiling, the Chief Superintendent Clem O'Regan shared with all of us the educational training challenges that they are facing. The Queensland Police Service, in the same way that the higher education sector, is trying to develop and improve their own educational programs to reach more students, as well as to maintain joint educational ventures with different Universities with very limited funding.

A total of forty papers were presented in the two days' event in three parallel sessions. I wish I could have gone to all of them, as they sounded really interesting. Therefore, I will only be able to comment on the ones that I saw, but QUT is producing a CD containing all the papers presented in the conference.

Related to the theme of valuing students, some of the papers presented were about the use of student learning portfolios in different learning contexts, commenting on procedures, as well as on different learning portfolios formats. Some of them were about online portfolios, such as the ones presented by Terry Hutchinson and Natalie Cuffe who talked about Online Interactive Reflective Journals for Successful Research Completions in law. Ted Nunan also talked about a software produced by the University of South Australia to use Online Learning Portfolios to promote,

track and assess student learning and generic capabilities. Deborah Gahan and Beverly Broughton talked about how they have been using learning portfolios to support new early childhood learners in new roles among other learning strategies in their paper Scaffolding novice learners in new roles in an early Childhood degree. Cristina Poyatos Matas also contributed to this topic by sharing the way in which she has been using Reflective Research Learning Portfolios to support the development of New Researchers in a Spanish Studies program.

The challenges involved in teaching large classes were not forgotten and some papers gave very useful ideas for making first large classrooms interactive. Among those was the paper of Paula Callan on Injecting some active learning in the large lecture setting: One librarian's experience. Paula explained how she introduces different types of learning activities (such as true/false, scenario, analysis, etc.) to make learning more engaging for the 300 students in her class. Others focused more on issues related to support students to developed graduate capabilities and generic skills, like the paper from Liz Heathcote and Martin Murray.

Mary Kelly, the equity coordinator of QUT and keynote speaker of the second day, talked about the different initiatives taken by her University to support students in their learning journey. Other papers in the conference dealt also with the provision of learning support, one for international and local students (paper by Karen Dooley and another by Lila Keimo, Heather Bigelow, AsPro Sandra Jones). Other papers presented different approaches to provide learning support for Maori students (paper by Jaqui Taituha and Jennifer Tipene-Leach), or students who speak English as a second language (Linda Lawson and Martin Reese). There were also a number of papers on embedding Indigenous perspectives in Education (paper by Jean Phillips, Jo Lampert and Sue Whatman), and in Justice Studies Curriculum (Belinda Carpenter, Michael Barnes and Rachel Field).

It was quite interesting to see a number of innovative papers from legal educators to make learning more interactive, community based and engaging for future solicitors. In this area, it is worthwhile to mention the study reported by Anne Matthew from QUT on Co-operative Student Learning Fostering Teamwork Skills in External Students. She talked about an assessment model that she has developed after analyzing reviewing the role of some complex issues on peer assessing, peer marking and student reflection assessment that many of us are facing in different teaching and learning contexts. Issues related to process versus product assessment, and who should award the teamwork mark in virtual law learning environments were discussed. She explored them across the whole law curriculum of QUT, and discussed individual and teamwork reflection assessment while working in virtual teams. I have to say that I was very impressed with her work, and that I really look forward to learn more from her paper once it is available in the electronic proceedings.

There were also some papers related to the area of valuing staff. Among them, Joanne Smissen from Deakin University presented a framework to provide support for the transition from research student to new first year teacher with her paper on Teaching teams in First Year Biology to facilitate the transition from research student to teacher. Cheryl Kerr, Sharon Saunders, Georgia Smeal, Karen Whelan and Tina Van Eyk presented an integrated team approach to support coordinators of large units. In the last day, Melinda

Shirley and Tina Cockburn talked about the development of a practical toolkit to assist staff in a large unit to resolve conflict within their teaching team. Another paper that was in this area was Partnerships in teaching and understanding-case studies on the role of professional development presented by Mia O'Brien and Sarah Stein. They dealt with issues of what makes good quality teaching and teaching scholarship. They presented the results of an interesting case study that aimed to articulate curriculum objectives and translate graduate attributes for an undergraduate program and it's courses.

Halima Goss, Amanda Cassidy and Bob Boyd presented an interactive paper on a team-based approach to developing enhanced learning environments for tutorial teaching. They certainly engaged the audience with the type of teamwork that they are using in their course 'Fitness, Health and Wellness'. We all learnt about the six dimensions of wellness, and many of us found that the intellectual and occupational sides are taking over our lives and that we need to work towards balancing the six dimensions. I guess something to take into consideration when making our New Year's resolutions!

Another area that was present in the conferences was mentoring in higher education. Michelle Aniftos and Lesley Willcoxson reported a study that they conducted on Tracking the benefits of Mentoring in Higher Education: Research Challenges. Deborah Veness and Diane Coward dealt with Learning partnerships through mentoring: Asking and

Answering the difficult questions, the cuts of funding to support these programs being one of them.

The last day we saw a panel of three outstanding, inspiring and creative University teachers, Carol Daiglish, Ron Weber and Jeff Giddings, who shared with all of us the way in which they value students in their own teaching practices. I found this session particularly useful, and I really enjoy learning from the teaching styles and experiences of these great national teaching award winners.

Finally, I would just like to mention that the networking dinner was a real opportunity to meet others, exchange views on the different papers and discuss future research collaborations, while having a wine and enjoying a delicious meal. Overall, this year's conference has been great. I was told that in 2003 Griffith University will host the conference, and for what I heard it sounds like it is going to be another great event. Therefore, I look forward to see you there and continue learning from all of you and with you.

Wishing all of you, a Merry Xmas and Happy New Year!

Cristina Poyatas Matas is Co-ordinator of the Spanish Studies programme in the School of Languages and Linguistics at Griffith University. She was a finalist in the Australian Awards for University Teachers in 2001 and 2002.

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Research in Higher Education Reports

Enhancing undergraduate students' assignment writing: An evaluation of a web-based writing program.

By Margaret Fletcher

Universities have undergone significant change over the past decade, with changing clientele, increased student numbers, and decreased staffing. As Coaldrake & Stedman (1999) noted, such changes affect the roles and responsibilities of universities as teaching institutions:

As student numbers increased, institutions were faced with an increasing diversity in student population, both in academic preparation and in terms of language, socioeconomic background, and other factors. Students can no longer be assumed to be sufficiently gifted to learn for themselves in the face of indifferent teaching. Nor can individual or group differences within the student population be ignored (p.8).

At Griffith University, the opening of a new campus has resulted in a 350% increase in enrolments in the Bachelor of Education Primary degree program from 1999 to 2003. Students enter the program through a range of pathways and bring diverse learning experiences to their first year of university studies. Their ability to write is instrumental in their construction of knowledge and skills and critical in courses where written assessment tasks determine success or failure. For some students the literacy demands of assignment writing remain problematic (Fletcher, 2001). For some academics, finding ways to help students overcome such problems also is problematic (Fletcher & Bartlett, 1997).

Universities generally are seen as "site[s] for students simply to apply the literacy they are assumed to have gained through their schooling and life experiences, and not as setting[s] for literacy development" (Neville, 1996). For some academics, numbers of students and time issues are the problem. For others, it is knowing how to assist students as writers that remains the issue. As Bauldauf (1997) reported, "in general lecturers do not teach much of their disciplinary discourse explicitly, or even point it out. Rather they assume such things are taught elsewhere or that it will be a part of Higher Education Institution's rites of passage. It is clear

from this work that many university researchers do not really consider or understand the language use decisions of their discipline" (p.10).

In this paper, our attempts to address explicitly the writing needs of undergraduates are reported in a longitudinal study evaluating the development and outcomes of a writing tutorial program. The research design involved a case study approach applying an embedded design using several units of analysis (Yin 1984). Results of data collected from undergraduate students and their lecturers identified a range of

“ It is clear from this work that many university researchers do not really consider or understand the language use decisions of their discipline ”

perspectives related to what each party considered as effective literacy practices in a tertiary setting. Analyses provided a qualitative measure of perceptions that students had of themselves as writers, of how students perceived a writing task and of what they believed assisted them to understand and write successful assignments. Analyses of data from lecturers provided insights into their expectations of students as writers. Based on these data, a web-based writing tutorial was developed and students were invited to participate in an evaluation project over second semester during their first year studies.

First-year student perspectives

Forty-one students were interviewed. Students described three areas as problematic. First, they differentiated the role writing contexts played in their perceptions of their level of difficulty when writing assignments. For example:

I've never written like this before. It's totally different. Like I've finished school () three years and I've come back here and

all of a sudden I've got to, I've got to um reference my material [yes] um. I've got to write a lot longer assignments than I ever had to do at school so [that's () making things a bit more difficult. (RS:109)

First-year students struggled with knowing how to meet the contextual demands of assignment writing. They were aware of the factors they needed to include when writing assignments, but generally they were unsure of how to do this.

Second, they described how knowing what to write when answering an assignment as a problem. Students described ways they attempted to develop topic knowledge through researching and seeking clarification from their lecturer. However, many first-year students reported this as unsuccessful when lecturers were unhelpful. The following response illustrates a common experience reported in the first-year interview data:

I went to the library and I looked up definitions of combination and that sort of thing to find out which direction I was going in um then I went to a lecturer about it to (0.3) and she sent me on my way. . . She told me she wasn't there to um pat me on the back and tell me it would be OK and to go and work it out myself (um). (SM:24)

Third, students identified the procedural aspects of writing; knowing how to write as an issue. This was a concern identified by all students interviewed. For example:

But when I go into writing into the academic essay, I have extreme trouble trying to sequence the information. The research is fine. The information is good but in order to make the essay make sense and follow a good structure and a line of discussion, I feel every time, I just feel totally lost. I'm never sure on how to select a quote, how to use it. Being able to write in your own words but you can't because you must be able to reference your work. The introduction and conclusion I have problems with. How do I sum up every thing that I have written? (AF:54).

Other students described strategies they used in an attempt to organise their ideas:

I read the question and made concept maps and connected ideas. I think I showed him my concept mapping and he said that was good work. You know, um you're on the right track and I thought I was then but then it sort of fell apart after that. (KH: 95)

Consistently, students reported difficulty in knowing how to write assignments. This centered on structuring and organising information, developing fluency of ideas, using supporting references and citing material.

“ It made me reflect on my assignment writing technique. ”

Informed by these data, a web-based writing tutorial was developed to address identified writing needs of the students (Bartlett & Fletcher, 1997). The tutorial was process oriented and developed a strategic writing approach for students. The program modelled how to develop declarative knowledge about knowing what to write when answering an assignment question and procedural knowledge related to knowing how to write the assignment. Students undertaking a first-year curriculum subject were invited to use the program when writing a theoretical rationale as an assessment task.

First-year student evaluations

Data reported here were collected from 174 surveys completed by students after they had used the program.

The writing process. Generally, students described the process they adopted as writers when using the program as a positive writing experience. They identified which parts of the program they found most helpful. For example: “It helped in breaking the questions into parts...” (96.38). “Finding the key words and chunking were most helpful to me” (96.60). “If I was doing a research assignment it would greatly help skim reading, chunking, organising information, analysing the assignment question, and paragraphing effectively.” (46.32).

Students reported how declarative and procedural aspects of writing were made explicit and reported that this gave them guidelines about ways to select and organise information in their assignments.

Personal reflections. For some students, following a process stimulated a reflective review of their approach to writing. This suggested engaging with the program increased metacognitive activity related to their responses to a writing task: “It made me reflect on my assignment writing technique” (165.77). “It made me examine more closely how I write assignments” (51.109).

Students recognised how the program helped them address specific writing difficulties that they had found problematic as writers. “I found the information on referencing helpful as I always seem to be unsure about this aspect of my assignments. The paragraphing information helped also. I often tend to write in a disjointed manner, and I found this section helpful in making my writing more cohesive”, (84.124). “The terms given (Finding the actions words) were an excellent learning tool to map out my assignment” (22.60).

The technology. In an attempt to address the difficulties students had reported in gaining clarification from lecturers about assessment tasks, the program incorporated a Notice Board, Email link to the convenor and Chat room to facilitate interactive dialogue about the assessment task. Many students found this provided them with instant access to information: “This was fantastic. All those questions that were on my mind were answered here (Chat Room)” (16.28). “You could get the correct answer without trying to run around to find a time to find M (Email Link)” (172.31).

While the following comment suggested the information lodged on the site was helpful, it was evident that many students were ‘lurkers’ who did not actively contribute to the discussions. “Even though I didn’t ask for help, I found the NoticeBoard a great way to keep up to date with information about the assignment” (144.27). Students were aware of this as illustrated in the following comment: “It (chat room) would have been more useful if others had used it instead of just the same group of people. (12.41)

Some students found the web-based environment unreliable or difficult to access: “If I was able to access the Internet from my home, these programs would probably be of more use. I find it extremely difficult to sit in a cold computer lab with all sorts of people coming & going, and concentrate on the task at hand. I have never been able to write assignments or study in a room with more than one other person” (71. 65).

While web-based technology offered an interactive environment where ongoing dialogue contributed to some students’ understanding of the assignment task, there were ongoing technological problems that caused frustration for some students. “I ran out of time with the program and just had to get the assignment finished” (112.63). Furthermore, there remained a group of students who perceived technology as alienating and preferred face-to-face communication. “I’m more comfortable with direct help where I can express that I am still confused” (38.54). These comments suggested students’ learning styles may influence their capacity to use such programs effectively.

Conclusion

For many students, the program provided them with a strategic approach to managing content and process when answering an assignment question. Their reflective comments about writing assignments using the program indicated greater ownership and satisfaction with both the product of their effort and the process that enabled it. First-year students appeared to have few options for help

“ I found the web site more helpful than my tutor. Isn’t that saying something! ”

when they encountered difficulties writing assignments as illustrated in the following comment: “I found the web site more helpful than my tutor. Isn’t that saying something!” (615). Generally their evaluations recognised the lack of support available and evaluated the program positively:

“This program was extremely useful, as no one since I have been at University, has actually shown us what is expected from assignments at a Uni-level. Thank-you for this program, as it has helped me a lot” (66.89).

As a consequence of this research project the website was re-developed this year, incorporating evaluation data. Content was refined and updated to include a section on writing a Literature Review and made more user-friendly using the more stable platform of CD ROM technology (Bartlett & Fletcher, 2002). While this version has not been formally evaluated, unsolicited feedback suggests students continue to find the



program helpful in guiding their development as successful and strategic assignment writers.

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Research in Higher Education in Progress

Title of project

PhD assessment: An investigation of examination process, examiner consistency and factors that identify thesis quality across disciplines

Brief Description of project

Doctoral research is a significant component of research activity in Australian higher education and effective research student supervision and high

quality research are key goals. The main control over quality is the thesis examination, but there is no systematic study of examiner consistency or application of standards within and across disciplines. Drawing on candidature history, examiner reports and ratings, this cross-institutional study responds to the need for foundational research into the area. The study will ascertain assessment processes, assessment criteria and factors that identify highly-rated theses. The ultimate aim is to improve the quality of doctoral education practices.

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Title of project

The Nature and Consequences of Alternative Entry Programs for Mature Age Students

Brief Description of project

Studies that have examined alternative entry programs (AEPs) for mature age students show that these programs do meet their aims and that they do assist students to participate in university study. What remains unknown,

however, is a theoretical base on which to design AEPs for mature age learners.

This case study expands the pool of research that has examined AEPs for mature age students. Towards this end, it explores: how and where AEPs for mature age students are positioned within an institution; how these programs select, design, deliver and assess content; how these programs structure and evaluate their teaching and learning practices; and the consequences for mature age learners. The main concern guiding this study is: 'What is the nature and the consequences

of alternative entry programs for mature age students?'

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Title of project

Detecting and dealing with warning signs in postgraduate research supervision

Brief Description of project

Recent changes to Australian government research education policy have added renewed impetus to universities, concerns the quality of their students, research education experiences and about research students, completion rates. While there has been a significant amount of research into the factors contributing to completions in these

programs and into how to strengthen the supervisor-student relationship, little attention has been given to helping supervisors recognise warning signs that students are experiencing difficulties. This project seeks to draw on the existing literature about research education completion rates to identify these warning signs. The project will then explore the strategies used by expert supervisors to detect these warning signs and deal with the difficulties students are experiencing. A model that maps the dimensions of the research education experience and the ways in which these dimensions interact and impact on research students will be developed.

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Title of project

Interdisciplinary research education and staff development at UQ:an interdisciplinary study

Brief Description of project

Key stakeholders in higher education within universities from industry and business, from government, and from the community are increasingly recognising the fact that the complex problems of the 21st century cannot always be solved

effectively by discipline-based research. Instead, highly innovative and creative problem-solving strategies developed through interdisciplinary research have become essential. Although universities have emphasised the need to break down disciplinary silos, much of this work has centred on undergraduate programs. While there are some research students who choose to work on interdisciplinary research topics, very little has been done to develop interdisciplinary research education systematically. This study seeks to develop a systematic program of interdisciplinary research activities in two

research centres and to conduct a scoping study to identify the issues involved in establishing and developing interdisciplinary research education and in providing interdisciplinary research staff development across the university.

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Title of project

Conversations with an examiner
Investigator: **Dr. Geof Hill**
(<http://www.the-investigative-practitioner.com/>)

Brief Description of project

This project is being undertaken in three parts. The first is a literature review

of literature pertinent to the examination of a thesis. The second is a discussion based on data from four conversations between an examiner and his students. Each of the students was submitting a Masters of Education thesis using action research. The third section is a conversation between the author and a second thesis examiner about what constitutes a 'quality' action research thesis.

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Title of project:

Anfractuosity: the phenomenology of reflection in labyrinthine space

Brief Description of project:

My PhD research project is an exploration into the relationship between holistic engagement, reflection and creativity as experienced in defined spaces. These spaces are labyrinthine in that they are constructed around the principles of the traditional unilinear

labyrinth. Key research questions driving the program are: How do people make meaning of engaging with labyrinthine space? How does this vary according to different contexts, media and the individuals' needs and purpose? The aim of the research is to understand how people make meaning of these connections and their own creative process in order to be able to apply this knowledge to the construction of spaces (actual or virtual) that will encourage and facilitate creative engagement. The methodology for the research is phenomenology. The process involves the construction of context specific

labyrinthine spaces and then working with participants through conversation and artefacts to discover how they make meaning of the experience of these spaces.

Contact details

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Salim Akoojee wrote from South Africa 'The project I'm engaged in is not Higher Ed..but issues that I'm hoping to engage with certainly would be relevant to the sector. But here it is anyway.'

Brief Description of project:

Examining the Private Further Education and Training sector in South Africa in light of recent growth and scramble for legislative regulation. The national quantitative component will explore the nature of the sector in term of institutional profile, student and staff demographics, and programme details. A qualitative component will examine selected case studies to explore further the findings in the national survey.

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Title of project:

Private Vocational/Further Education and Training in South Africa: Giving form to the phenomenon

Title of project:

An instrument for testing the transferability of mathematical skills.

Brief Description of project:

Science students are required to use mathematics, at various levels, in all their science subjects. Certain mathematical skills are essential for success as an undergraduate student, and in the student's future career.

An ability to transfer the skills learned in mathematics to other disciplines is expected of both undergraduates and graduates. An instrument to determine whether, and to what extent, students have the ability to transfer mathematical knowledge and skills to problems in physics and microbiology is being developed.

Funding body: Science Faculty Interdepartmental Research Grants

Keywords: mathematics; transfer; physics; microbiology

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Title of project

Retention and Persistence in Higher Education: Critical Analysis of an Australian Context.

Brief Description of project

The project examines the factors that impact on retention and persistence of psychology undergraduates at a Perth

university. It is informed by critical theory and examines issues of power, exclusion, and oppression as well as sense of community as frameworks for the analysis of higher education. My goal is to inform practice in the training of undergraduate students within the school of psychology and to transform what for many are oppressive systems that seek to maintain the status quo.

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Title of Project

An investigation of fourth year programs in Australian universities:

Their role, the importance of their contribution and the quality of student experience

Brief description of the project

The aims of this study are to investigate the role of fourth year programs in Australian universities, map

these programs and then to focus on the experience of students in fourth year at a specific institution. There is a paucity of literature on fourth year programs, especially in relation to articulation into research degrees and development of research skills. This study aims to address this gap.

Early experiences of research in undergraduate programs, and how these experiences relate to a students' success in postgraduate research studies, are relatively unknown. In light of recent governmental policy on research and research training (Kemp, 1999), the initial

research experiences of these students are of particular interest. Another key aspect of the study is the significance of honours programs across faculties.

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Title of project:

Student learning processes and outcomes in a hybrid problem-based learning environment

Brief Description of project:

The study aims to clarify how PBL influences the way university students learn. Specifically, it seeks to describe students' learning processes and outcomes in the hybrid PBL environment provided by the Adelaide Bachelor of Dental Surgery course that combines PBL and conventional lectures. This project plans to address the following questions concerning the whole course, the PBL tasks, and PBL-format assessment:

- what approaches did students adopt?
- what motivated students?
- what were students' perceptions?
- what influenced students' perceptions?
- what learning processes did students use?
- what sort of knowledge outcomes, relating to the organisation and integration of knowledge, did students achieve on the PBL task through the use of concept mapping?
- what influence did contextual factors and students' level of experience of PBL have on their learning approaches, processes and outcomes?

It is planned that the outcomes of this study will improve our understanding of the relationships between context, processes, and outcomes in the area of

PBL knowledge development in a hybrid PBL curriculum. This understanding will inform how we can optimise a hybrid PBL environment for quality learning outcomes

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Title of project:

Ethics and Online Student Evaluation of Teaching

Brief Description of project:

Teaching online is part of the everyday practice of many academics and online student evaluation of that teaching is an expected activity of both individuals and institutions. Yet, conversations about the ethical practice of online student evaluations of online teaching are rare. To raise issues and concerns and to develop ethical practice in online student evaluation of online teaching we proposed four questions and an innovative six-stage process to investigate those questions. The questions were: (1) Is student evaluation online teaching different from, or similar to, evaluation in other contexts? (2) What ethical considerations are raised when evaluation goes online? (3) What further ethical issues arise when online evaluations are used for research and

publication? and (4) What constitutes ethical practice in this context?

And the six stages were:

1. Online role-play conversation between the three authors in which each adopted a different position: online student evaluation of teaching is not different from evaluation in other contexts, it is very different and not sure/can see both views (March 2002).
2. Development of an issues paper (April 2002).
3. Online forum hosted by the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) Academic Development Special Interest Group (ADSIG) listserv (June 2002).
4. Workshop at the HERDSA annual conference (July 2002).
5. Online discussion with ASCILITE and HERDSA members (August 2002).
6. Discussion at ASCILITE conference (December 2002).

We are currently working to develop an ethical framework around three dimensions - people, principles and power - to guide both individual and institutional practices. We believe new learning and teaching technologies open up new opportunities to receive student feedback on our teaching. With new opportunities come new dilemmas and the need to look at some existing dilemmas in a different way. When technology, teaching and student evaluation of that teaching intersect, as they do in the online learning context, an ethical framework offers a powerful tool to guide us towards resolution of the difficult questions raised.

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Title of Project

Mental models of assessment: An analysis of how academics structure their thinking for online delivery

Brief Description of project

The focus of this study is on how academics develop in their thinking about formal online assessment as they acquire

increased experience with the same subject. It seeks to identify considerations which influence the way online teachers think about assessment, including relevant frameworks, theories, models, theories-in-use, assumptions, personal preferences and other realities. This longitudinal study seeks to identify factors that lead to change and development in academics' mental models of assessment.

Interventions and strategies that promote advances in thinking, especially about innovations that optimise the capabilities of the Internet, are of particular interest.

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Title of project:

Problem-based learning of Requirements Engineering

Brief Description of project

Teaching Requirements Engineering has been classed as a 'wicked problem' (Bubenko, 1995), with the inadequacy of formal education in training competent analysts/designers noted (Robillard, 1999). In addition to content, competence in such a domain requires a measure of creativity and experience based on practice.

Problem-based learning (PBL) integrates the learning of content and skills in a collaborative environment (hence developing graduate attributes such as social interaction), and emphasises "learning to learn" through the PBL process and by placing great responsibility for learning on the learner (Wilson & Cole, 1996).

While PBL has been demonstrated to result in deep learning outcomes, especially in the early years of a course (Newble and Clarke, 1986), and is used in a variety of disciplines (Schwartz, Mennin and Webb, 2001), including IT education for learning programming skills (Adams and Clarke, 2001; Clarke and Thomas, 2001), there is a reasonably widespread perception among academics in the disciplines, that it is not appropriate for the learning of fundamental concepts, as they believe that students first need a grounding. However, we consider PBL

ideal as, in addition to learning content and skills, students learn based on their need to know.

This project aims to assist students to achieve deeper learning outcomes, such as analysis, evaluation and creativity as described in the revision of Bloom's higher order levels of learning (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2000), by changing the approach to teaching in an introductory unit, Requirements Engineering (RE), in Software Engineering (SE). RE is offered in the first semester in the second year of a 4-year undergraduate engineering program.

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The Herdsa Web site – www.herdsa.org.au

At present the Research page of our website is empty. What kind of materials do you think should be posted there?

- Should we place these brief project descriptions there?**
- Would research reports of completed projects be helpful?**
- Anything else?**

Please send your ideas to Roger Landbeck Landbeck@ozemail.com.au

Herdsa New Zealand Branch Report

By Pip Bruce Fergusson

The HERDSA New Zealand branch is in good heart. We have enjoyed closer connections with our South Island members this year through the teleconferencing of branch meetings, and hope to extend this facility next year to include members in Hamilton, Palmerston North and Wellington if possible. Membership numbers are slightly up this year, to 129 compared with 127 last year. The 'buddy' scheme where members can join up a new member and both receive a cheaper subscription has been some help.

2002 Conference at Perth, Western Australia

A good number of New Zealanders attended the Conference this year in Perth. At this Conference a group of New Zealand participants explored an idea promoted by Neil Haigh for a National Centre of Excellence for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. Those present supported the idea. Neil sees this Centre as being funded by government, and possibly managed by a Board. Some ideas about the strengths and possibilities of this scheme were discussed, and Neil

agreed to send out his draft document to the NZ HERDSA list, ASDUNZ members and the polytechnic staff developers' network. A motion, 'that NZ HERDSA support in principle the formation of a National Centre of Excellence for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education,' was passed unanimously.

Conference 2003:

An exciting looking HERDSA Conference, "Learning and Teaching for an Unknown Future", is being organised by a very active committee of South Islanders, based around Christchurch. Helen Matthews, Rod McKay, Carol Bond, Philippa Bright and Chris Heath have been working hard on this, supported by local colleagues. Keynote speakers Janet Donald and Ron Barnett will give opening and closing plenary sessions. Our sincere thanks to the organizing committee for their energy and commitment for this big task. We look forward to joining you in Christchurch in 2003 for what we confidently expect will be an excellent conference.

Local activities:

A very successful seminar was held on 7 May, entitled "Lifelong Learning." This brought together 36 people from a range of areas, some of whom are not our usual supporters. Feedback was most positive.

However our attempt to organise a second seminar around political issues was subverted by the calling of an early election, and our intention to share in the visit of HERDSA Scholar Tom Reeves also came to naught when Tom's family situation resulted in his being unable to fulfill his role. Tom is likely to present a seminar at the University of Otago when he is over later in the year. The other event to happen this year was the visit of Barbara Millis, a US Air Force educator attending Victoria University as a visiting scholar. Thanks to the assistance of Kathryn Sutherland, we were able to have Barbara speak in Auckland on 11 September. A good group of 35 participants was present.

Branch News

It was good to get news from the New Zealand branch
but what of the other Herdsa branches?

What are you doing?

Please send a report of your activities for the next issue of Herdsa News.

Deadline for copy is Monday 10th March 2003

Book Reviews

Work-based learning: A new higher education?

Edited by David Boud and Nicky Solomon. The Society for Research into Higher Education. Open University Press. 2001 ISBN 0 335 20580 AUD\$65.00

Reviewed by Stephen Billett

The integration of learning experiences in educational institutions and workplaces is currently being emphasised in both compulsory and higher education. For many areas of vocational learning, there is nothing particularly new about this integration. In universities, medicine and education are disciplines that have long worked to integrate these two kinds of experiences. However, there is some interest to extend the integration of these experiences more widely in higher education and for a range of purposes. So the book edited by Boud and Solomon is timely. It seeks to describe something of the current integration between work-based learning experience and university programs, and provides a basis for focussing on the potential for learning in these arrangements. The subject matter is treated as an emerging trend in higher education practice that holds both promise and problems, and illuminates deliberations about the purposes and forms of higher education. All this is played out between the conceptual premises that are advanced in the introductory and concluding sections and case studies that comprise the larger middle section. The tension is between the need to find balance between new practices buoyed by new times and new demands, and maintaining what is essential about higher education. The concern is that the importance and potential benefits from a rich integration of work-based and university-based experiences in higher education might be jeopardised if they are positioned as focused on objectives that are counter to the interest of learning and learners in higher education. Hence, there is the need to balance the promotion of work-based learning as a means of reforming or transforming the academy, as is reflected in some of the case studies, with efforts to conceptualise the contributions to learning that might arise from this integration. The editors have identified this tension as a key concern, and Symes' penultimate chapter captures well the kinds of balances that need to be exercised in this endeavour.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part, Framing Work-based

Learning, which outlines the book's project, conceptual premises and organisation. This part comprises four short chapters written by the editors (Boud and Solomon) with contributions from Symes. The editors are able to exercise some authority given their pioneering and practical work at the University of Technology, Sydney. There they explored the application and integration of workplace experiences across a number of the University's faculties. The second part of the book comprises case studies of university-based workplace learning projects from the United Kingdom and Australia. The case study authors comprise university academics, industry-linkage or partnerships managers in universities and those based in industry. Surprisingly, there are no cases from industry sectors where there has long been an integration between practice and educational provision (e.g. medicine, education and law). This sets up the case studies as reflecting, in the main, new and, as it turns out, reforming practice, rather than an extension of existing practice in universities. The third section discusses current progress and prospects for the future.

In the first part, the case for a work-based component to and premises of work-based learning provisions are set out. It is argued from the outset that the higher education context is changing and that innovations of different kinds are shaping both the bases for and practices within higher education. Work-based learning is but one of these, yet it attracts the editors' and contributors' interest. Helpfully, the characteristics of what is referred to as work-based learning is detailed early. For Boud, Solomon and Symes, it has six key characteristics. These are: a partnership between a workplace and a university, in what is intended as a suitable and sustained collaboration; (ii) learners who are students and who negotiate between the two partners; (iii) the program of learning is derived from the workplace, rather than a university-based discipline or interest; (iv) the starting point for the individuals' program is their level of competence; (v) much of the learning centres on projects

in the learners' workplaces and (vi) the university assesses the outcomes of the learning process. So early in the text there is the suggestion of some departure from long-accepted premises for higher education. That is, a shift from the content of the course and the processes of learning being those selected by and privileged by the university. Also, the focus of learning switches from the learner to the workplace in a way that might cause concern in some university courses. However, there is also much that is familiar in what is proposed. Much independent work by students at both undergraduate and particularly post-graduate work would be well-described by these six characteristics. The issue of in whose interests is the course being offered is also not new. The requirements of employers shape many university courses (e.g. law, education, medicine, etc), however, these interests are often exercised at the occupational, rather than specific enterprise level. So concerns about the breadth of learning outcomes and the focus of learning experiences is raised early. A brief history of work-based learning practice is presented. This was as interesting as it was short, and could have benefited from a longer and more comprehensive treatment. This might have helped more to present the balance between continuity and change. However, in their second chapter, Boud and Solomon elaborate some of the existing ways that work experience have been recognised and accommodated in university programs. They refer initially to the growing practice of granting credit for workplace experiences. Yet they differentiate credit granted for entry with the focus of study shifting from the academy to the workplace. These are discussed in terms of how equivalences can be achieved, how university educators will manage this challenge and consideration for professional development. In order to advance a conceptual base to evaluate how the integration of these experiences, Boud authors two chapters that argue firstly, for closer associations between learning and work; and secondly, to advocate a work-based curriculum.

The case studies that comprise the

book's second section offer accounts of practice. The chapters by Evans and Portwood provide accounts of the evolution of the concept of work-based learning from national and institutional perspectives, respectively. Both are sourced in the United Kingdom. They refer to the evolution of the idea of work-based learning within higher education, meeting and overcoming resistance, particularly within the academy. These accounts project a sense of triumph and self-promotion that is distracting. They also works to marginalise the focus on learning. The effect is, instead, to position work-based learning as a tool of reform and reformers. Stephenson's chapter focuses on the outcomes of workplace experiences to be categorised in terms of capabilities. He argues that these serve traditional educational goals of developing robust vocational knowledge. Here, the author identifies issues associated with pedagogy, including the granting the learner greater responsibility and how such practices are to be enacted. However, it would have been particularly useful for the author to have elaborated on how general capabilities arises from these experiences or describe these capabilities in the context of a particular workplace. Garnett, Comerford and Webb describe a work-based project in the construction industry. They emphasise meeting enterprise (employer) needs as a basis for the efficacy and purpose of work-based learning, thereby potentially marginalising the learner. Caley provides a more nuanced, strongly conceptualised and considered account of work-based learning within a university environment. Unlike others, in referring to work-based learning she points to the continuity in practice, rather than change or reform.

Citing the model of community embedded in the Cambridge college system and the devolved university decision-making she identifies work-based initiatives in terms of continuity. She also provides a useful account of the learning project that constitutes using workplace experiences and is reflective about the strengths and limitations of the workplace-based learning. In her chapter, Onyx raises the pragmatic purposes to which workplace learning is to be put. That is in positioning her university as the national leader of work based learning, - promotion of the institution, rather than quality of learning experiences. This sentiment is reinforced by Shipley's account of work-based learning as an entrepreneurial tool that should focus on the employers' needs. White's chapter focuses on the measurement of outcomes (specific required competencies) as a basis for quality assurance. This is unfortunate because again a concern for management predominates over learning processes. Lyons and Benett discuss the difficult task of making judgements about learning from work-based experiences and projects. This chapter describes processes that have been practiced, yet with little critical reflection. It is noteworthy that the cases studies provide or attempt to provide evidence to support their claims. Perhaps this was not requested or expected, but throughout the support for the many propositions advanced is weak.

The third part comprises a chapter by Symes and a concluding chapter by the editors. Both are useful. Symes chapter provides a level of discussion that is absent in many of the case studies. He deals with the content critically and sceptically, albeit constructively. His

critique suggests that it might have been more useful for the case studies not to promote work-based learning as the basis for reform, and its proponents as pioneers in inhospitable terrain. Instead, he proposes a more critical and reflective approach be taken in considering the integration of workplace-based experiences. In their summary, the authors suggest universities are seeking to be responsive to changing times. Nevertheless, they raise important issues associated with the purpose and conduct of workplace based learning and the need to be careful to protect the balance of interests that are represented in the integration between experiences in the workplace and the academy.

So, in all, this is a timely and useful text. It lays out what is being taken by some as innovative practice, yet may more usefully be seen as continuity and extension of existing practices. The text also highlights that care that needs to be taken to with innovation to identify the key purpose of the innovation and seek to understand how the innovation can achieve that purpose. It sets out a clear set of intents for the integration of work-based learning with university studies, yet also illustrates how other purposes come to inhabit an innovation that aims to improve student learning.

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Web Tools Newsletter

Have you seen this very helpful newsletter that is produced weekly by Graeme Daniel and Kevin Cox of the City University, Hong Kong?

Recent topics examined were Trends in Teaching Geography and History, Factors Inhibiting Change and Teacher Training in Technology.

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Academic tribes and Territories: Intellectual enquiry and the culture of discipline.

2nd edition Tony Becher and P. Trowler Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press. 238 pages ISBN 0335 206271 (pb) 0335 20628x (hb)

Reviewed by Yoni Ryan

So much has changed in the lands of academia since the first edition of this book was published in 1989, under the sole authorship of Tony Becher, that I welcomed the opportunity to discover what Becher and new co-author Trowler had made of 21st century 'tribes and territories'.

Like a good reviewer, I went searching for the first edition – but the sole copy had disappeared from Monash shelves. Memory will have to suffice. I recall being deeply impressed on first reading by the extensive interviews, the richness of Becher's oral data, the distinctive voices of each of his designated 'tribes', and the fierceness of their discipline territoriality – across institutions and countries. I recall also being amazed that so few academics at the time even knew of the book, much less read it. What could be more interesting than a study of your own tribe? Perhaps we academics prefer to see ourselves fictionalised in novels like those of David Lodge (*Small Places*).

The original book was an ethnographic study of 220 academics in 12 disciplines in 18 elite universities in the US and the UK, written over the period 1980-1986. It was inspired by Becher's irritation with the C.P. Snow 'two cultures paradigm' (the sciences and the humanities). The authors build on this original data, plus the results of a small update study over 1991-1998.

And this is really the core problem with this second edition.

Few universities in a mass system bear any resemblance to Becher's research institutions. Most academics inhabit worlds where their teaching, administration, grant writing and entrepreneurial skills are as important as their research abilities. University systems have become so pressured by a lack of finance that the once distinct tribes have been forced into arranged inter-marriage in mega-faculties. Earlier this year, for example, RMIT announced its reorganisation into two conglomerates: business, design and the social context, and science, engineering and technology, with another section organised into task responsibilities (teaching, research, students and finance), designed to cut across faculty 'silos'. Vice Chancellor Ruth Dankin said the solutions to

university problems "are not discipline based", and that universities must move to a "cabinet style" "to promote collective responsibility" (*Higher Education, The Australian*, Sept 11, 2002, p20). Most universities are merging their tribes in similar structural patterns.

Structural change is not the only source of assault on disciplines. As the economist ideology pervades education systems, students demand vocational courses, necessitating a dilution of the 'pure' studies of disciplines – a semester of Biology for Nurses, a soupçon of Physics for doctors, a dip into Psychology for Business students.

The importance and fascination of the first edition, I now see, lay in its depiction of a passing world, of tribes already on the verge of extinction, except perhaps in places like Oxford, or Harvard.

Faint echoes remain of course, just as migrant families retain a few nursery and food words into a third generation. So in Chapter 6, the authors identify certain patterns of communication, such as a continuing preference for articles among biologists, and book publication among historians. They also reassert the earlier categorisation of disciplines into 'hard pure' (Mathematics), 'hard applied' (Engineering), 'soft pure' (Language) and 'soft applied' (Law). At the same time, they argue briefly that post-modernism has 'fractured' discipline identities. (I wouldn't blame post-modernism myself – it is only one intellectual manifestation of a post-industrial society. But that's another argument.)

Becher and Trowler concede that the boundaries between 'hard pure' and other discipline types are blurring. Nevertheless, they assert, disciplinary cultures, where cultures are "taken-for-granted values, attitudes and ways of behaving", persist.

It is difficult to agree with this, in the light of our current experience of vocationally oriented, cross-disciplinary programs, and demands for broadening curriculum to include other expressive/language modes and other considerations. For instance, the language of Maths must now expand beyond the exclusionary symbolic mode of formulae, to include explanations in ordinary English (at least at school level). In tertiary Engineering, ethical and

environmental issues have (mercifully) been added to technical skills.

If the persistence of distinct discipline cultures into the 21st century is questionable, then the hypothesis of this book (that knowledge forms or disciplines are inseparable from the knowledge communities they generate) cannot be sustained. Knowledge communities are simply too diverse, and too separated from their previous location within a place called 'a university', to develop a culture. As Delanty (2001) argues, globalisation and communication technologies – the new 'networks' – now determine what 'knowledge' is and the 'value' to be placed on that knowledge, and increasingly knowledge is performative not discursive. Discipline tribes have been usurped, at every level: the increasing employment of part-time staff in universities also weakens disciplinary culture. Casuals have no opportunity to be socialised into a department ethos, are not encouraged (as once they might have been) by the lure of eventual entry into an arcane and privileged elite, and are in any case more valued for their practical teaching and professional skills than for their mastery of a discipline.

Hence in my opinion, reworking *Academic Tribes* in this second edition was an error. The world it describes has largely disappeared, and it does not account enough for the disruptive effects of technical and structural change. Worse, Becher and Trowler seek to use the tribal integrity of disciplines to argue against the heavy bureaucratic hand of the Research Assessment Exercise in the UK.

They say only peers within the disciplines can judge the quality of research. Few of us would disagree with that, but the authors' failure to demonstrate a singular culture for each discipline undercuts the potency of their argument.

Nevertheless, I enjoyed the book. I pondered assertions that most academics have between 100-400 professional colleagues, known by name through conferences, the norm being 200, and 12 close colleagues to whom they send drafts or papers (but these colleagues are not in the same department – it's a jealous world!). I'd be lucky to remember the names of 12, much less 200!



I was fascinated to learn that Marketing and Sociology articles commonly cite 100 references, where in Physics it is 25. Does that tell us something about the fragility of Marketing and Sociology as disciplines, that they must bolster their argument with so many references? Becher and Trowler do not speculate on the reasons. There are a few tentative generalisations about pedagogical and assessment approaches in different disciplines, for example the observation that short answer/MCQs are more typical of the hard pure sciences, and essays and orals of soft pure humanities. However, this link could use further exploration.

Overall, Academic Tribes undermines its own argument. The authors are too clear-eyed (too 'scientific'?) not to recognise that their research elites, interviewed in the 1980s, are no longer

representative of contemporary academics, yet they reassert the strength of disciplinary cultures. They acknowledge that 'identity' in the post-modern world is often 'virtually' constructed, that each of us is a composite of multiple identities, all of which shape our work identity. However, they insist contrarily that disciplinary identity persists in the face of the ideological, economic, structural, technical and cultural forces that bombard it.

The result is echoes from the past, and perhaps a reader's recognition that the two cultures are now three – technology, 'pop culture' and the 'dismal science' of economics.

Another sad passing – Open University Press, which with the Society for Research in Higher Education has done a wonderful job in education

publishing, has been taken over by McGraw Hill. The imprint will be kept alive, but whether SRHE will find its commercial partner as accommodating remains to be seen.

Reference:

Delanty, G. 2001. *Challenging Knowledge: The University in the Knowledge Age*. Buckingham: SRHE and OUP.

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Departmental Leadership in Higher Education

by Peter T. Knight and Paul R. Trowler.

Buckingham The Society for Research into Higher Education. Open University Press. 2001

Reviewed by John Dearn

For the weary and stressed head of department, talk of nurturing, growth and fostering creativity could seem like another world. Nevertheless, this book by Peter Knight and Paul Trowler provides a timely and very valuable insight into the nature of leadership in higher education and is highly recommended for either current heads struggling to make sense of their work or for those aspiring to be heads. Whether the latter group having read this book would be encouraged in their pursuit is another matter.

The book aims 'to provide some tools for reflection on the practice of leading at the departmental level and below in higher education' and consists of ten chapters organised around two sections. The first section explores the context of leadership and change in higher education and the reader is taken on a journey through some contemporary ideas on organisational management, including an interesting exploration of the relationship between theories of change and theories of leadership.

The second part of the book explores leadership in the context of five particular issues related to higher education - assessment, learning and teaching,

research and scholarship, administration, and professional development, with a final chapter on learning to lead.

Leadership at the level of the department or school is emerging as one of the key factors in determining the capacity of universities to respond to change. The particular challenge for heads of department, as opposed to leaders of other higher organisational units, is that they have to reconcile the particular social practices, values and attitudes of the department they are leading with the policies, conventions and values of the institution. This book provides a useful framework for exploring this terrain though, as Knight and Trowler make clear, exploring the topics raised in the book is 'likely to disturb some unexamined assumptions, which can cause a lot of difficulty for those whose assumptions had a "do not disturb" notice nailed to them.'

Although it is written by two British authors, Australasian academics will have no difficulty in identifying with the issues and contexts explored in the book. Indeed, some of the scenarios presented will be all too familiar. Take this description of the new departmental head

'who is not aware that leaders are expected to have a public presence in the office throughout the working day and for most of the working year' (p.166).

Many a head will feel some anguish reading that the 'leaders' time will be dominated by tasks that are quite different from the interest in research or teaching that vivified their career to date, which means that a sense of loss may compound a sense of guilt. On this analysis, learning to lead should include appreciating that the job has the potential to erode the self-identity that has brought career success' (p.166). Sobering stuff, and it raises the whole issue of who should take on the task of heading departments and whether a separate career path needs to be created to reward those who do take this task seriously.

The focus of the book is the 'community of practice' – synonymised here with the department, though depending on the institutional context, could be some other group such as a program team. As academic work gets more complex, and the model of the lone academic responsible for the full range of activities from curriculum development, production of resources, teaching and

assessment is becoming increasingly untenable, this look at teaching teams is most welcome.

The most refreshing aspect of the book is its constant emphasis on context – do not expect a handbook of ‘how to do it’ prescriptions. As top down models of change come to dominate higher education the recognition of the particular characteristics of universities as organisations becomes ever more important. The picture painted of leading in higher education departments, where social practice is situated and largely tacit, is one of considerable complexity and uncertainty. While descriptions of universities as ‘organised anarchies’ may be somewhat of an exaggeration, the complex layers of the diverse communities found within institutions makes the very concept of leadership in higher education somewhat problematical.

Anybody with experience of policy implementation in universities will immediately recognise the analysis of the issues related to facilitating change at the local departmental level in a context dominated by academic tribes and notions of autonomy and independence, and

perhaps identify with the interesting concept of ‘contrived collegiality’. This is a world of compromise, trade-offs, conflict and negotiation.

One of the key roles of heads of department is to interpret and translate the policies driven top down by senior management into the discourses and practices of their department. This policy implementation at the local level of the department is presented as a process of policy remaking, and suggests a key role of the head of department in facilitating meaning making within local communities.

The highly contextualised nature of leadership does, however, raise important issues in relation to the way universities can respond effectively to external change. Even if Knight and Trowler do not offer any simplistic solutions, they do at least make it clear why so many top-down attempts to introduce change, through what is termed here the technical-rational approach to change, come to nothing or at least fail to achieve intended outcomes.

Overall, the book manages a nice blend of theory and practice and while some may find the theory a little heavy

going (Marx, Foucault, and Levi-Strauss all get a mention), there is a wealth of pragmatic information including an analysis of providing leadership in the important area of continuing professional development.

Knight and Trowler describe their overall model as ‘distributed conceptual leadership’. Picking up the metaphor of departments being sailed and not driven, they note that ‘the leader needs to read the wind, the currents and the trim of the boat, tacking and changing with that reading’ (p.67). As universities are pushed into an ever more uncertain future, this approach to leadership couldn’t be more important or timely.

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2nd Annual RMIT Research Conference

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2-3 June 2003

Abstracts of no more than 300 words
should be submitted by 28th February 2003.

For more details contact conference convenor,

Dr Pam Green <pam.green@rmit.edu.au>

INVITATION

Foundations of University Teaching Colloquium: Pedagogy, impact and logistics.

At the 2002 HERDSA conference in Perth it was decided by those who attended a workshop led by Allan Goody (UWA) and Janice Orrell (Flinders University) to establish a network of those interested in institutional programmes that prepare academics to teach. Three activities have been resolved:

1. A list server has been established by Kathryn Sutherland (Kathryn.Sutherland@vuw.ac.nz) so that information may be shared. Its address is foundations@vuw.ac.nz
To subscribe, email foundations-subscribe@vuw.ac.nz and type **subscribe** in the subject line and message body.
2. In addition, a website is being built to share resources. This will be completed in the next few months and the address will be mailed to those on the listserver.
3. A colloquium on the pedagogy, impact and logistics of Foundations of University Teaching programmes will be held in Adelaide, on April 10-11, 2003 at a cost of \$75 per participant (to cover meals, printing and resources).

The colloquium will be workshop and discussion based, broadly structured around the three themes of programme pedagogy, impact and logistics. This will include teaching approaches, the impact on practice and the influence of contemporary opportunities and constraints on design, delivery and related policies. In particular there will be opportunities to reflect on these issues in the light of contemporary research, the national higher education agenda and our own collective experiences. The possibility exists to establish some collaborative research projects to address any gaps in the current research findings that may be identified.

Generally, the colloquium aims to develop an accessible information and resources data-base related to:

- a. current and innovative practices
- b. contextual issues and interface with other programmes
- c. current research findings and gaps
- d. identification of target groups

If you are interested in receiving further information, subscribe to the list server or contact:

Deanne Gannaway

deanne.gannaway@flinders.edu.au

Education Development Officer - Flinders University Staff Development & Training Unit

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Looking ahead: HERDSA Conference 2003

Learning for an Unknown Future

We are looking forward to hosting you at HERDSA2003 in Christchurch, New Zealand and want you to enjoy another very successful conference as well as many of the treats the South Island of New Zealand has to offer.

Preparations are well underway. Our core planning committee involves colleagues from Christchurch and Dunedin – those in Christchurch have logistics as their focus, while contributions and publications are the Dunedin focus. Early on we brainstormed what we wanted the conference to be and identified principles to underpin our planning process. It was reassuring for us to find that many of the features of the Perth conference were on our original 'wish list' – we want to build on the Perth experience of stimulating and rigorous debate in a welcoming and friendly atmosphere.

The conference theme, Learning for an Unknown Future, is relevant for all of us in Higher Education whether we teach, focus on research, consider ourselves learners, are staff developers, use technology for learning or seek to improve the tertiary environment. HERDSA2003 will be an opportunity for us to share knowledge and experiences so we can approach the future with confidence; it will also be a time to foster our enthusiasms for Higher Education.

Keynote contributors to HERDSA2003 will address both the practicalities and underlying principles of teaching. We plan to recognise that sound research lies at the heart of HERDSA and high quality education by including a plenary session on research issues to be led by Associate Professor Mike Prosser (Director, Institute of Teaching and Learning, University of Sydney). Dr Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Director of the International Research Institute of Maori and Indigenous Education, University of Auckland, will be a contributor to this session. Professor Ron Barnett (Institute of Education, London), and Professor Janet Donald (Centre for University Teaching, McGill University) will also contribute plenary sessions to challenge our thinking on learning for an unknown future.

Reviewers please! Paper reviewers play a pivotal role in ensuring that our conference is professionally satisfying. At present we are very keen to increase the number of HERDSA members prepared to review papers. We seek your help – if you are willing to review one or two contributions please contact Philippa Bright or Carol Bond who are coordinating the publications process (philippa.bright@stonebow.otago.ac.nz or carol.bond@stonebow.otago.ac.nz). Please note that contributions for publication in Research and Development in Higher Education, the refereed conference proceedings, should be submitted by 31 January 2003.

Conference details and information for contributors and participants are on the website (at last!) – please check the conference sections of <http://www.herdsa.org.au> or go directly to <http://www.conference.canterbury.ac.nz/herdsa2003> and explore the possibilities. Contacts for the Conference Office are email: herdsa@cont.canterbury.ac.nz, phone: +64 (3) 364 2915, or fax: +64 (3) 364 2470

You are welcome to email Rod or Helen for further information: rod.mckay@canterbury.ac.nz or matthewsh@cpit.ac.nz.

Christchurch in July may be a little chilly but a clear winter's day with the snow on the mountains in the distance can be stunning. You can expect a convenient venue and comfortable accommodation. There are plenty of opportunities beyond the conference: coffee houses and restaurants; theatres and galleries; Canterbury wines (there will be a wine tour available at the conclusion of the conference). Mt Hutt is the nearest ski field and other great fields are easily accessible in Canterbury and Central Otago. If you enjoy train trips a day journey through the Alps to the West Coast and back is a possibility when the conference is over. Exploring possibilities for our visitors is one of the more enjoyable aspects of convening the conference!

We look forward to your participation in, and your contribution to, a memorable South Island, New Zealand, HERDSA conference.

Rod McKay and Helen Matthews Co-convenors HERDSA Conference 2003

Forthcoming Conferences

11th International Improving Student Learning Symposium

**Improving Student Learning; Theory,
Research and Scholarship**

1st-3rd September, 2003

**Hanover International Hotel,
Hinkley, Leicestershire, UK**

Call for Papers

The theme for this symposium, "Theory, Research and Scholarship", is intended to help bring those two communities together. What research has been done to test or extend existing theories? And what emerging theories/hypotheses might there be from the practical experience of scholarly teachers?

All submissions will be reviewed by three independent international referees. Decisions will be relayed to authors in March 2003. The decision of the Symposium Committee will be final.

Closing date for submissions: 31st January, 2003

For more details contact Chris Rust crust@brookes.ac.uk>