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Understanding Research-led Teaching

By Angela Brew

When I use the term "Research-led teaching" nowadays it trips off the tongue as if the concept has been around for a long time. After all, it does describe established practices. Academics have always found ways to relate their research to their teaching and this has largely been done without jazzy terms or emotive language. Yet the phrase "research-led teaching" has appeared only in the last few years and the coining of this phrase provides opportunities for development of the relationship between teaching and research that were not there previously. Some of these opportunities I find exciting. Let me explain.

Although there is now much talk of research-led teaching, the concept is not well understood. There is a need to go beyond the idea that research-led teaching is about the presentation of up to date material in lectures, or that teaching is research-led because it is taught by Professor Bloggs who happens to be the world's leading expert on the subject. There is a need for dialogue to extend people's understanding of what it may mean in particular contexts. I have found that the more academics learn about research-led teaching the more complex and interesting they find it.

So how are we to understand it? The first thing to note is that what we think is possible or desirable depends crucially on what we understand by research, what we think knowledge is and how we think students get it.

For example, an academic who has a conception of research focused on the external environment (Brew, 2001) may view research-led teaching as involving students in a range of social activities mirroring research conferences, journal publication, presenting posters, engaging in teamwork and networking. Someone who has a conception of research focused internally on the analysis of data to develop an understanding, may see research-led teaching more as a process of engaging students in courses on methodology, interpretation of data etc.

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How the academic conceptualises knowledge is also likely to affect their understanding of research-led teaching. So for example, Gibbons et al.'s (1994) conceptions of "Mode 1" and "Mode 2" knowledge production are likely to translate into different conceptions of research-led teaching; the former focused on courses as consisting of objective knowledge viewed as separate from knowers, i.e. an Enlightenment conception, the latter on communication and negotiation with knowledge viewed as created as much outside universities as within.

Contents

Understanding Research-led teaching by Angela Brew	1
From the Editor	2
(Re)creating a Higher Education Community of Inquiry by Jane Robertson	6
Research-led Teaching: Why don't some academics like it? by Erica Smith	9
The Teaching Research Nexus by Roger Landbeck	10
The Early Career Researcher Development Program by John McDonald	11
The Australian University Teaching Awards 2002	14
A Short Festival on Lies and Lying Eidos Ideas Dossier No. 18	15
Book Review	18

continued page 3



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From the Editor

There is a current debate occurring both in Australia and the UK about whether some Universities should be designated as "teaching only institutions" leaving others to concentrate on research. It is therefore timely that we publish some articles on research-led teaching and the nexus between teaching and research. The article by the HERDSA President, Angela Brew is particularly useful in clarifying ideas about the nature of research and its connection with teaching. She shows the importance of the conceptions of research, teaching and the nature of knowledge to the debate. An understanding of these conceptions should help to illuminate the different starting points of those engaged in the debate and so facilitate discussion.

Jane Robertson explores the nature of the relation between research and teaching through her interviews with New Zealand academics. She comments that "despite the voluminous and complex literature both supporting and denying a link (between research and teaching) we know very little about the variation in the way the research/teaching relation is experienced by academics".

For several years now a writer,

known as Eidos, has challenged, and at times, infuriated readers with comments on issues in higher education. Now Eidos has decided to retire, so the last contribution from the mysterious writer appears in this issue. Thank you Eidos for your contributions. Is there anyone out there who aspires to the mantle of Eidos so that we can continue this kind of article? If there is please contact me.

We welcome Margot Pearson and her team from the Australian National University as the new Editors of HERD, the society's international referred journal, and wish them well. Further details can be found in this issue.

The next issue of the News, due in August, will contain articles on indigenous education. Jan Orrell is gathering contributions from Australia and Kathryn Sutherland from New Zealand. We look forward to it.

Don't forget to register for the annual conference in Christchurch and I look forward to meeting many of you there. I'll be looking for short contributions of impressions of the conference!

Roger Landbeck

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The teaching which is likely to result from these different conceptions of knowledge is very different.

Similarly, different conceptions of scholarship, different conceptions of learning, and different conceptions of the subject matter of the course will lead to different understandings and practice in relation to research-led teaching.

“ How the academic conceptualises knowledge is also likely to affect their understanding of research-led teaching. ”

The nature of the research which is being carried out and the level of research activity as well as how the course or unit is perceived by the teacher, for example, whether the course or the research carried out are of a general or a specialist nature will similarly influence whether research-led teaching is thought to be appropriate.

Whether there is a perceived close relationship between the topics being researched and taught or whether this relationship is viewed as distant as well as how the academic views the appropriateness of the development of research-led teaching at particular levels of study will also influence the extent of research-led teaching. For example, some academics only view research-led teaching as relevant at the Honours level, while others view it as important to develop this relationship from the first year university experience.

Research-led teaching will be viewed differently where an academic has what Prosser and Trigwell (1999) call an “information transmission teacher focused” approach to teaching and when they have a “conceptual change student focused” approach. An information transmission approach may result in a view of research-led teaching as the process of telling students about the academic’s research, for example, in lectures, perhaps using anecdotes from laboratory experiences, while a conceptual change approach is

more likely to lead to engaging students in research in some way.

We can also find differences in understandings of research-led teaching according to what is to be learnt and whether the teaching takes a student-focused or a teacher-focused perspective. For example, if a teacher includes the content of their research in lectures and it is this content which students have to learn, we can say that this is research-led teaching focusing on content using a teacher-focused perspective. If the teacher gives a lecture (without active participation) on research methods, then we can say this is research-led teaching which again is teacher-focused, but where the process of research is what is to be learnt. In both these cases, the students are an audience for research.

A student-focused perspective where the students are an audience for research can be where a tool or technique has been developed to engage students actively in learning the research findings, but where they are not themselves engaged in doing the research. For example, on the basis of their research Lenzen and Smith (1999-2000) developed a teaching tool known as a “Personal Greenhouse Gas Emissions Calculator”. This enables students to become personally involved in what was previously presented as lecture material. It is research-led in that the students are an audience for the research findings and it is student focused in that students are actively engaged in their learning. But students are not engaged in research activity as such; merely an audience.

Where students are actually engaged in research activity, a distinction can be made between whether what is to be learnt by the students are the processes of research or whether both the process and the content of the research are to be learnt. Again, teacher-focused and student-focused methods are in evidence. So, for example, if the processes of research are to be learnt and a teacher-focused method is used, then students may engage in library searching exercises, or textual analysis; the intention being not so much to learn about the content but to learn about how to do the particular technique. A

student-focused approach may go much further with teaching processes mirroring research processes. A course may be structured like, for example, the Multimedia Systems course at Southampton University, to simulate the process of preparing and presenting a paper for a conference and learning from a conference experience. A student focused approach to teaching which engages students in research activity in order to teach them research processes may include journal clubs, and seminar presentations as preparation for essays (so mirroring the process of preparing conference presentations for journal publication). It may also include teamwork. Indeed, in my discussions with over 200 academics, the most frequently cited example of research-led teaching has been engaging students in group work. Group work does not necessarily make teaching research-led. An explicit focus on group work as a form of research activity may do, however.

Student-focused approaches to teaching where students are engaged in inquiry may involve the whole course or unit such as in fully fledged

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problem-based learning, inquiry based learning or work-based learning programs, or may be focused at unit or subject level, with individual academics implementing elements of such programs in limited areas. Yet teacher focused approaches are also in evidence. In such examples, students learn about the process of research and about the content by actually doing some of the teachers’ research. It is in relation to such examples that the dangers of exploitation have been highlighted. Students may be required to do repetitive research which goes beyond what they need in order to understand the subject or the research techniques (processes), and they may



not be acknowledged when the work is subsequently written up for publication. Such examples do serve to caution that research-led teaching may have a dark side. It does not necessarily contribute to enhanced student learning.

“ Histories of the university demonstrate that the relationship between teaching and research has been constantly changing to suit varied social and political circumstances. ”

The Backward Glance

It will be noted that so far I have talked of research-led teaching as quite distinct from the scholarship of teaching, with which it is frequently coupled. It is important to make a distinction between the two, lest the idea of using disciplinary research in teaching and encouraging students to develop disciplinary research practices and processes should become submerged and research-led teaching considered as only being relevant to those people who are interested in doing pedagogical research. The two come together when the teaching has been done and the academic reflects upon it. I call this domain of research-led teaching “the backward glance”. I find Trigwell, Martin, Benjamin and Prosser’s (2000) dimensions of scholarship in teaching, the “reflection” and the “communication” dimensions, particularly helpful in unpacking this.

For Trigwell and colleagues, three levels of the “reflection dimension” are: non- or unfocused reflection (where routine course evaluation may be carried out according to university policy but nothing is essentially done about this); reflection while the teaching action is actually taking place; or reflection which is focused on asking what do I need to know about such and such here and how will I find out about it. In this latter instance, the teacher then uses a variety of evaluative methods to evaluate teaching and learning. Since only the

latter leads to evidence based decision making in relation to teaching and learning, only that form of reflection can be described as a research-led backward glance.

The “communication dimension” focuses on how and where teachers communicate their knowledge about teaching and learning. Trigwell et al. differentiate four levels of communication: the absence of any communication about teaching and learning; communication with departmental or faculty peers informally in tea room conversations and more formally in departmental seminars; reporting of work on teaching in local and national conferences; and publication in international scholarly journals on teaching and learning. These levels define levels of the scholarship of teaching. In research-led teaching terms they differentiate different ways academics may engage in the backward glance.

And Finally

Histories of the university demonstrate that the relationship between teaching and research has been constantly

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changing to suit varied social and political circumstances. The present is no exception. Within a dual funding model where teaching and research are funded separately, the relationship between research and teaching is always going to be problematic. Within research-intensive universities the motivation for an interest in developing research-led teaching lies in the competitive advantage which comes from attracting students to an environment where they are likely to be taught by some of the world’s top researchers; the assumption being that this is bound to be better education. On the other hand, within universities which are less strong in research, the

motivation to engage in research-led teaching is more likely to come from aspirational motivations and a desire to ensure that governments don’t strengthen funding mechanisms which may divide teaching institutions from research ones.

But opportunities are opening up. I believe that the encouragement for research-led teaching is no use unless it is designed to improve students’ learning. We should not make assumptions that just because an initiative is research-led that it actually does enhance learning. We should also not assume that it is necessarily for the benefit of students. Research has found that students’ views about the role of research in their education differ from researchers’ views (Lindsay et al., 1998). There is a need to understand

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the students’ perspectives. We should also not assume that research-led teaching is the same for all disciplinary areas. Some of the most exciting initiatives I have come across are where academics are working and discussing with their students what research means for their particular field of study, or the nature of knowledge in their particular disciplinary area. Discussion appears to be the key to opening up new ways of thinking about teaching and learning. Let’s keep talking.

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(Re)creating a Higher Education Community of Inquiry

By Jane Robertson

In thinking about this article I found myself revisiting several questions that continue to both trouble and inform my work in academic staff development. Chief amongst these is “what is our vision for higher education” (in the twenty-first century/knowledge age)? But when I say “our”, am I talking of students, physicists, sociologists, academic staff “developers”, university administrators/managers, government, society at large...? Is it any longer possible or even desirable to conceive of a unified vision that would embrace all interested parties? What remains and what I talk about here is a personal vision of higher education – politically and economically impractical maybe but a vision to which I subscribe passionately and one I consider worth fighting for!

I would like to see institutions of higher education as dynamic sites of critical inquiry where inquiry is not primarily the preserve of academics but is an activity in which students engage with their teachers from the very beginnings of their university careers. What, if anything, might in some way connect academics and students across diverse disciplines in this disconnected age of ours, is joint engagement in a community of inquiry. Sadly the vision seems impractical because, despite the lip-service paid to the needs of the knowledge society, the current performative policies and practices colonising higher education are constraining inquiry, forcing it out of the undergraduate curriculum and into elite institutions and postgraduate programmes. And we are paying a heavy price for greater access to higher education. Mass production is not

renowned for fostering dialogue, creativity and critical questioning.

How to challenge this narrowness of vision? “Research-led teaching” would seem to offer the possibility of recreating universities as sites of critical inquiry. The University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand, positions itself as a research university and prides itself on the close relationship between its research and

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its teaching. In this it conforms with the New Zealand Education Amendment Act (1990) which characterises a university as an institution in which research and teaching are closely inter-dependent and where most of the teaching is conducted by people who are active in advancing knowledge. For audit purposes institutions of higher education in New Zealand must specify the expected effect of the link between teaching and research.

However, legislating for and claiming a close relation between research and teaching does not reveal much about the actual *nature* of the

relation. If anything it has tended to relegate the integration of research and teaching to the “taken-for-granted” category. Despite the voluminous and complex literature both supporting and denying a link (e.g. Hattie & Marsh, 1996; Neumann, 1992; 1993), we know little about the variation in the way the research/teaching relation is experienced by academics. Yet just as we need to be aware of students’ prior understandings of phenomena before we engage them in new learning, so too do those of us who work in academic staff development need to know more about academics’ understandings of research, teaching, learning, scholarship and knowledge and their interconnection before we can work collaboratively to promote and enhance research-led teaching. We need to interrogate the “taken-for-grantedness” of the research/teaching relation and work towards understanding what research-led teaching might mean in different knowledge-constructing contexts.

My recent research has focused on exploring the complexity of academic experience in this area. I interviewed 25 academic staff (men and women at different career stages and across a range of disciplines) at the University of Canterbury, about their experiences of research, teaching, learning and knowledge, and of the research/teaching relation. In my interview analysis I concentrated in particular on the metaphors academics were using to articulate their experiences of these various phenomena. The results of this analysis highlight the coherence in the experiences of individual academics (i.e. experiences of research, teaching, learning and knowledge are closely interwoven) and point to a more complex picture of variation amongst



individuals than has previously been suggested.

With a very few exceptions my participants described the relationship between their research and their teaching as being a close one. This accords with the findings of Neumann (1992) and Rowland (1996). However it is the nature of that "closeness" that requires careful scrutiny. I will draw on

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my interviews briefly to illustrate. For example, David sees knowledge as "the process by which all the individual loose pieces of data are welded together into a coherent view" (David, 3). His experience of the research/teaching relation is described in terms of a "house that's built". Research occurs up on the roof while teaching lays the foundations. Engaging in both is mutually productive, the relationship, in David's words, symbiotic. However from a pedagogical perspective there are constraints involved at undergraduate level in relating the foundations to the roof.

Probably the most efficient way of doing it is not to give them the research right off, but to give them the next step in the chain because after all there's so many steps in the chain they have to go through before they can really appreciate in depth what the research is about ... (David, 18).

The metaphors are overwhelmingly orientational (hierarchical). In this instance learning is a process of ascending a ladder/staircase/mountain. Research takes place at the "top" and is distant from the undergraduate student's learning experience. As Chris puts it; "Research earns double prizes so it's at the top of the great chain of being and it informs teaching and then teaching enables learning" (Chris, 14).

In contrast, for Carol it is

not a matter of building up knowledge to get some kind of positive edifice that results ... you know, I mean it's building, building, building more, more, more ... I see knowledge completely differently ... it's an act of engagement, it's a positive engagement with the world, not in the

positive sense of constructing something that becomes ontologically present and transferable (Carol, 13).

Teaching and learning are, metaphorically, about establishing relationships (engagement) – between student and teacher, student and student and between students and the discourse under scrutiny. Teaching (and learning) conceived of as relationship links to the metaphor of knowledge as creation (birth). Students are invited to engage in the same research process as their teacher. Research is no longer distant from, but is an integral part of, pedagogy.

Despite the brevity and relative simplicity of the examples above, they do, I think, indicate the pivotal role played by academics' experiences of knowledge. What knowledge is understood to be (a product or a process; something to be discovered or something that is socially constructed) fundamentally shapes academics' experiences of research, teaching and learning and hence of the research/teaching relation. Thus pedagogy tends to reflect the nature of academics' beliefs regarding knowledge structures and processes. Where knowledge is understood to be hierarchical and cumulative, teachers anticipate a lengthy period of peripherality for students ("there's a tremendous amount of factual information that needs to be absorbed before the process of tying it together and seeing the connections can occur" - Grahame, 6). Understanding is delayed. Consequently students who do not progress to postgraduate study may never come to realise that knowledge is permeable and provisional rather than bounded and stable.

By contrast, when knowledge is understood to be discursively constructed, students are expected to engage with teachers in the joint production of knowledge from a very early stage in their university careers. The "teaching" objective is to encourage students to participate actively in the inquiry processes of the discipline.

You are trying to bring students into the process of how we acquire knowledge and what we do with it ... it is kind of making them part of that little scholarly community for the time that they're here ... so that they'll leave here with an inquiring mind (Anne, 11).

I don't think of myself as a teacher ... I don't perceive my role here as a teacher. I would never describe myself as a teacher. I don't do teaching ... I see my role as kind of mentoring and facilitating a process whereby these co-

learners – who are learners as I am a learner – are participating in a process ... (Carol, 10-11).

Students occupy a less peripheral, more participative role in the learning community right from the beginning.

We (I am referring here to those of us working in academic staff development) are inclined to assume that the teaching practices of academics reflect their experiences of and beliefs about teaching and learning. In recent years much research (e.g. Martin & Balla, 1991; Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001; Trigwell, Prosser & Taylor, 1994) and academic staff development work has gone into surfacing such beliefs and exposing higher education teachers to alternative understandings of teaching and learning. Similar work has been done in relation to academics' experiences of research and scholarship (e.g. Brew 1999, 2001) and of the research-teaching relation (Robertson & Bond, 2001). What is missing in this jigsaw is an exploration of academics' experiences/understandings of knowledge (which would appear to underpin experiences of the other phenomenon)

"What is missing in this jigsaw is an exploration of academics' experiences/ understandings of knowledge (which would appear to underpin experiences of the other phenomenon) and a focus on the interrelation of the whole rather than just the parts."

and a focus on the interrelation of the whole rather than just the parts. We need to ask how experiences of research, teaching, learning, scholarship and knowledge are related to form an intellectual "world-view" which sanctions particular research and teaching practices and determines the nature of the research/teaching relation.

But to what end? It is important for those of us working in academic staff development, to acknowledge that academics are not a homogenous group and that their research and teaching practices vary according to their beliefs, amongst other things, about knowledge. Secondly, it is important that academics themselves become



more aware of the factors shaping their practice. Thirdly, we need to engage students in this awareness. Understandings of knowledge and its structure need to be made much more explicit than hitherto. Fourthly, there needs to be a debate in the university community that transcends disciplinary boundaries, regarding the nature of knowledge in the contemporary world and the position of the university as but one source of knowledge "creation" and "dissemination". Can we afford to graduate students who possess temporary banks of codified knowledge but who lack the ability to navigate their way in a complex world by interrogating and challenging that world? This is a likely outcome of the research/teaching drift (Clark, 1995) we are currently experiencing.

None of this is to deny the need for "foundational" knowledge, particularly in those knowledge areas that possess a cumulative and hierarchical structure. However we need to challenge the pervasiveness of the dissemination metaphor that sanctions a top down transmission of research findings – a kind of "trickle-down" approach. Of course it is important to narrate research findings, to "tell" research stories. But equally, if not more important in an institution that wishes to encourage critical inquiry or research-led teaching¹, is the need for academics to model explicitly an inquiring approach to learning and to engage students in inquiry processes.

The modelling occurs all the time, in the course structure, in the nature of assessment and its feedback, in interaction with students... but I suspect it remains largely implicit, for academics and students. The modelling of how one engages with knowledge needs to be surfaced as something to be not just uncritically emulated but critically deconstructed. As one interview participant put it:

I can say to them [the students] – look, I used to tell people this, you know, even five years ago, and I now know I was wrong – and I think that it is very good for them to see that – you know they can see you working with the material and it's not that I am the fount of all knowledge, I've got it all here, I've got it buttoned up you learn what I tell you, but I am – a fallible human being, that knowledge comes through all sorts of ways and we're trying to develop it – in a way what you're demonstrating to the class is how the material arrived (Janet, 10).

Finally we need to ensure that students have opportunities not just to be recipients of research stories and observers of knowledge constructing processes, but that they have multiple opportunities to become active participants in a community of inquiry. This process of engagement will, of necessity, be carefully structured over time, but it cannot be regarded as the preserve of postgraduate study only (despite TEAC's recommendation to this effect)². If that is the case our "mass" higher education system will be doing no more than enticing greater numbers of students into our

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institutions only to disempower them when it comes to the skills of critical inquiry required for success in our knowledge-challenged age!

Endnotes

1. I prefer the term critical inquiry. For me, "research-led teaching" perpetuates notions of hierarchy and transmission.
2. TEAC (Tertiary Education Advisory Commission) recommended that the current legislative requirement that degrees be taught mainly by people involved in research, should be amended. Instead undergraduate degrees should be taught by people with a "comprehensive and current knowledge of their discipline and the skills to communicate this knowledge in an effective manner" (TEAC, 2001, p. 109).

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Research-led Teaching: Why don't some academics like it?

By Erica Smith

This short discussion is based on conversations in meetings and staffrooms about the links between research and teaching, fuelled by the recurrent rumours that the Australian government wants to designate some universities as "teaching only".

While the idea of teaching-only universities is not popular amongst academics, the main argument against the idea appears to be that a teaching-only university would be of a lower status than a teaching-and-research university, and would not be attractive to potential staff. The argument that a university where staff did not research would be the poorer from a teaching perspective is sometimes resisted quite fiercely. Surprisingly, the resistance does not come only from those academics who do not research. It comes also from those who have large research outputs.

Here are some of the arguments I have heard *against* research-led teaching:

- All that researchers want to do is to invent subjects to teach which relate to their pet research themes;
- The area of a person's research couldn't possibly fill even one subject let alone a whole curriculum;
- Academics who keep up with their reading will be just as good at teaching as those who research; and
- Surveys show that students don't seem to think that teachers who research are any better at teaching than those who don't.

Such arguments seem to me to stem from a particular view of research, a particular way of researching and, I am sure, particular discipline traditions,

both in research and in teaching. My views, for example, grow from my fairly broad-ranging research in education and my students who are all adults. It is very clear to me that the research in which I engage keeps me on top of developments in both policy and practice, forces me to keep up with the very latest literature, and gives me constant and changing insights into what is happening in my area of

“It seems, therefore, that in order to have a sensible debate about research-led teaching it is necessary to examine academics' understanding of what research is and to acknowledge that there are many different modes of research.”

education at the practitioner level. Moreover it gives me access to senior personnel in the field of practice as well as other researchers and their research. The deep knowledge of the field gained from research could never be replicated through even the most assiduous reading of all the literature that is written in my area of research. Students, moreover, tell me that they like to be taught by people who write some of the literature that they read. And finally, since my students are adult practitioners their essays provide me with additional understandings of the field of practice and often spark ideas for research projects. The traffic is certainly not all one way.

However those researchers who plough a fairly narrow furrow in their research may not gain the same breadth

and depth of knowledge as those whose areas of interest are broader, and this perhaps leads to their view that research does not inform one's teaching. They may indeed have chosen an area of research which does not relate closely to the subjects which they teach. This is quite valid but cannot necessarily fully inform their view about links between research and teaching. They may also feel that good teachers – in a teaching and learning sense – need not have deep content knowledge to interest and engage students. This again may be true, but only to an extent.

It seems, therefore, that in order to have a sensible debate about research-led teaching it is necessary to examine academics' understanding of what research is and to acknowledge that there are many different modes of research. The current emphasis upon research output – in Australia, on DEST points – does not lend itself well to such discussions, but until we have the discussions academics will be talking at cross-purposes on this very important issue.

Dr Erica Smith is a senior lecturer in vocational education and training at Charles Sturt University. She has managed several large competitive grants and research consultancies in the areas of VET policy, competency-based training and young people's entry-level training. In the higher education area she has published research on assessment and on work placements.

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The Teaching Research Nexus

By Roger Landbeck

This article is a collection of some contributions to the debate on the links between teaching and research. I am greatly indebted to Professor Alan Jenkins of Oxford Brookes University in the UK for most of the information contained here. Alan has conducted extensive research in the area, and has co-authored a book on the subject, see below.

The UK debate on the subject was sparked by a series of questions posed to Vice-Chancellors by the Education Secretary, Charles Clarke. He asked "What about institutions with different focuses? Should some specialise in teaching, and others in research?"

Roderick Floud, Vice-Chancellor of London Metropolitan University, responded with an article in the Guardian Higher Education section, entitled "Divided we Fail".

<http://education.guardian.co.uk/higher/research/story/0,9865,856950,00.html>

This was followed by "Horse and Carriage", in which Tom Wilson and Geoffrey Alderman put cases for and against divorcing research and teaching.

<http://education.guardian.co.uk/higher/news/story/0,9830,874021,00.html>

The next day Alan Jenkins wrote "Keep the Link Alive" arguing that the nexus between teaching and research is essential to our universities' health. However he noted many Vice-chancellors were failing to maintain the

connection,

<http://education.guardian.co.uk/higher/research/story/0,9865,875346,00.html>

In an email discussion on the POD network, Alan Wright, from the University of Quebec, wrote:

The suggestion to choose between research and teaching was made by a Canadian commission on higher ed published around 1990. (The suggestion was met with hostility by some professors ... "If ALL you can do is teach well ... you should take your silly little ... over to the community college".)

The Guardian article, by a senior administrator at London Met. U, recognizes the huge changes in the research environment, the imbalance in the reward system, but advocates pursuit of the ideal: researchers have an obligation to communicate their findings beyond a close circle of peers and that means they should and must teach and write textbooks.

Problem is, in my experience, that we keep pretending. We pretend that all professors can be active, successful researchers (by traditional measures) and it is simply not the case. But nobody wants to admit it. The consequence is huge inequities in workload. Neither the academy nor the student body is well served by the "solution" of downloading the heavy aspects of teaching and the unattractive assignments to grad students and part-timers.

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The relation of teaching and research is discussed in Issue 3 of Exchange Magazine which according to its website "exists to stimulate the sharing of ideas, practices and news about learning and teaching in higher education".

www.exchange.ac.uk/issue3.asp

An Australian study showing how the University of Western Australia, Curtin University of Technology and the University of Ballarat sought to develop the nexus is found in "Strengthening the Nexus between Teaching and Research" by A. Zubrick, I. Reid, and P. Rossiter. Canberra 2001. Department of Education, Training and youth Affairs.

www.detya.gov.au/highered/eippubs/eip01_2/default.htm

For contact details for Alan Jenkins see Alan Jenkins, Westminster Institute, Oxford Brookes University.

Associate LTSN Generic Centre
<http://www.ltsn.ac.uk/genericcentre/>

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For details on Linking Teaching and Research in the Disciplines go to <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/genericlink/>

See also "Reshaping Teaching in Higher Education: Linking Teaching with Research" by Alan Jenkins, Rosanna Breen, Roger Lindsay and Angela Brew published by Kogan Page.



The Early Career Researcher Development Program: Learning how to become an active researcher - not just “waiting in the wings”

by John McDonald

A New Approach for Early Career Researchers

Early career researchers are generally defined as academics who have completed their PhDs within the last five years, and/or have experienced an interrupted research career, and/or do not have an established track record in publications or external competitive grants. The idea of early career researchers “waiting in the wings” is taken from the title of a project commissioned by the Australian Research Council (Bazeley et al., 1996). The report found that the barriers to establishing an academic research career included short-term employment contracts with limited opportunity for research; heavy teaching and administrative loads; and lack of funding or resources for research. Personal motivation and commitment to a research career were found to be significant determinants of success. A range of schemes now operates across the higher education sector to assist new researchers. Most universities offer travel and infrastructure support, as well as access to internal funding grants, and workshops on grant applications and writing for publication. In addition, the Australia Research Council, for example, funds postdoctoral research fellowships, and has a separate process for assessing applications from early career researchers.

In 2002, the University of Ballarat developed an innovative, semester-long

program for its early career researchers. The program aims to build participants’ strategic knowledge to enable them to become more active researchers. This was predicated on the belief that there are still substantial sectoral barriers confronting new researchers, and that many staff development programs treat the problem largely as a matter of skill acquisition: if new researchers could only learn the “tips” to getting published or winning a small grant, then they could assiduously work their way from the “wings” to playing supporting roles and then centre stage. These tips are supposedly either learnt during one-off workshops, or gleaned

“ The program aims to build participants’ strategic knowledge to enable them to become more active researchers. ”

over several years as a research assistant or associate investigator under the direction of an experienced researcher. An alternative view, can be found in works by Hatt, Kent and Britton (1999) and Van den Berghe (1970). Here, becoming an active researcher is seen as a matter of individual or collective strategy. Thus, it is possible for an early career researcher to accelerate their research career.

The Early Career Researcher Development Program is based on an understanding that becoming an active researcher requires:

1. insight into one’s current practices;
2. a broader understanding of the research policy, program and funding environment at sector, institutional, departmental and network levels;
3. appreciation of the politics of research, and the politics of becoming an active researcher;
4. knowledge and skills to build a research track record; and,
5. effective strategies for taking greater control over the pace and the path of one’s research career.

Within a structured, supportive learning environment, participants learn – in months rather than years – how to carve out a research career.

This is one of the approaches that the University of Ballarat, a small, regional, dual-sector university, has developed to support its new academic staff and enhance its research performance.

The Early Career Researcher Development Program

The objectives of the Early Career Researcher Development Program are to:

- Increase in the number and proportion of research-active staff;

Increase in the number and proportion of staff who are aligned with designated or emerging Research Centres;

- Produce measurable short and medium-term improvements in the research performance of participants; and
- Increase in the University's research performance as measured by refereed publications, research income, postgraduate student enrolments and timely completions.

“ By the end of the program, each participant was expected to submit a manuscript to a refereed journal, and to prepare a high-quality application for internal research grants funding. ”

The Early Career Researcher Development program ran over eleven weeks in semester one, 2002. Two-hour seminars were held each week on the following topics.

1. Becoming an active researcher: knowing the rules and taking control
2. At the cutting edge: selecting your research field and building intellectual capital
3. Mentors, partners and collaborators: building research relationships
4. Getting into print: planning, completing and publishing research
5. Workshop: drafting a paper for submission to a refereed journal
6. Understanding the big picture and using it to your advantage: research policy, priorities, funding formula and performance indicators
7. Developing your research portfolio: programs, projects and proposals
8. Successful research grants: locating funding sources and

submitting high-quality research proposals

9. Workshop on UB internal research grants: how to prepare a successful proposal
10. Building your research team: recruiting postgraduate students and obtaining scholarships
11. Final workshop, launching and celebration.

There were ten participants in the program, drawn from four different schools. All participated voluntarily – some self-nominated and others were nominated by their Head of School. Experienced researchers with particular expertise were brought in to facilitate seminars. Process and impact evaluations were conducted.

Learnings and Outcomes

Overall, the program was found to be very valuable, and met its performance targets. By the end of the program, each participant was expected to submit a manuscript to a refereed journal, and to prepare a high-quality application for internal research grants funding. The nine participants who completed the program submitted a total of 20 manuscripts, with each person submitting at least one. (One participant – a post-doctoral research fellow – submitted six manuscripts). Seven of the nine participants prepared applications for internal grants funding (due to other work pressures, two participants did not lodge an application). A total of \$26,000 was allocated to the seven projects. Detailed feedback was provided on each application.

Participants were asked to identify the major benefits of the program. Some had imposed stricter time management and allocated a greater proportion of their working hours to research:

I have strict times available for research only and have started to say “no” to doing things that impinge on my research time.

The big challenge is shifting our work practices away from what we're doing now toward something far more supportive of research.

Program participants also forged networks and discovered new opportunities:

Many times I benefited from the news items, the coming together and sharing stories ... the insider stuff ... the feeling of being invited into the networks ... feeling at the centre of things ... catching a glimpse of how money works at the full university scale.

It was a great introduction to a culture that I wasn't really aware of until I came into the program.

It's made me more conscious about research opportunities (for example, personal projects, collaborating with research students, turning ideas into projects). I've got a more strategic approach to research.

Other participants developed a more focused and programmatic approach to research:

My research focus is sharper.

It's pretty obvious that a lot of people [starting off in research] go off on different tangents and spread themselves too thinly. I've got a colleague with eight or nine key interest areas. It was made clear to us that it's better to develop research standing in just a few areas rather than ending up, five or six years on, with a track record that's still only fundamental in seven or eight areas rather than really strong in one. This program would have saved my colleague a lot of time. Strategising is something I've learnt.

Unexpected outcomes of the

“ It was a great introduction to a culture that I wasn't really aware of until I came into the program. ”

program included the opportunity to meet with researchers from different disciplines and schools, explore cross-disciplinary perspectives. Participants also realised that they would assume greater responsibility for sponsoring junior colleagues:

We can assist with mentoring the next person, taking up what we've learnt and – hopefully – living what we've learnt as well.

Improvements for ECR II

Overall, the program evaluation was positive. The program is being



delivered again in 2003 with a new group of participants. Following feedback from the first group of participants, a number of improvements have been introduced. They include:

- Preparation of individual development plans so that each participant can identify key objectives and work towards achieving them during the program;
- Placing more emphasis on an action learning approach, so that participants are linked with mentors and guided through a process of putting their plans into action;
- Additional, extended workshops focusing on preparing research grant submissions, and writing for publication;
- Not running the program on Fridays (which most participants had designated as a "research day"!)
- Allocating a pool of research funds for early career researchers

(a "Research Starter Scheme" has now been established that allows participants to submit applications on a competitive basis for funding).

Conclusions

The Early Career Researcher Development Program is an innovative approach by the University of Ballarat to accelerating research careers and building institutional research performance. The program enhances participants' research skills and strategic knowledge. Feedback from participants and key performance measures indicate that the first program has been valuable. It is too early to determine the longer-term outcomes of the program for participants' research careers. The redeveloped program will be run again in 2003.

Acknowledgment

Thanks to Peter Baird who conducted an independent evaluation of the program. Some of his material has been included in this paper.

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New Editors for HERD

A new editorial team has been appointed to the Society's journal (HERD). The team is based at the Australian National University and is headed by Margot Pearson. Other members of the team are:

Linda Hort (Special Editions Editor)

Pam Roberts (Reviews Editor)

Gerlese Akerlind

Mandy Lupton

Chris Trevitt.

Authors should submit their papers in electronic form to the HERDSA office whose email address is office@herdsa.org.au. An acknowledgement will be issued together with a code number, eg.H0405. This number should be quoted in any future enquiries. All enquiries about papers should be directed to the office.

The change to new editors has inevitably meant delays in the processing of papers and we ask for your patience as a result. The new team is eager to get to work.

The first issue for 2003 is due anytime now.



The Australian University Teaching Awards 2002

The Australian University Teaching Awards were presented in December 2002. HERDSA member, Associate Professor Lynne Hunt, won in the Social Science category and went on to become joint winner of the Prime Minister's Award for Australian University Teacher of the Year. Lynne's authentic learning pedagogy had previously been recognised at HERDSA's 2002 conference when she and her colleagues received the Merit Award for the Best Paper on Authentic Learning Environments.

Congratulations Lynne on a great achievement and thank you for contributing your thoughts on what teaching means to you. Editor.

"It is an enormous task to prepare for the Australian Awards", Lynne said. Indeed it is. She prepared a 23 page submission and a CD Rom, which were accompanied by a video and a copy of her book, *Claremont Cameos*, an oral history of women teachers, which was based, in part, on students' research. This submission illustrated the creativity of Lynne's approach to university teaching and learning. For example, Edward C. Uggemeier featured in a Webshow, created by high school students as part of the Click Around ECU transition to university program in which Lynne was involved. Over the years, she has

produced over 35 educational videotapes for use by external and on-campus students. However, she noted that, "Of itself the production of teaching resources is useless. It's not what you've got but the way that you use it that counts". Lynne normally teaches in three-hour, workshop mode, and the videos are integrated into her design of workshops in a variety of ways. One that her students particularly appreciated was to establish "tutorless tutorials" in which students responded to questions on videos while Lynne sat in an adjacent room and mentored students on their research designs on a one-to-one basis. "I wanted to adapt postgraduate teaching and learning strategies to undergraduate study. The students loved it and commented that such personal attention is rare in an undergraduate degree".

The Australian Awards for University Teaching attract considerable publicity, and Lynne has been intrigued by the response from former students who read of her prize in local newspapers: "It has been very humbling to hear from students I taught as long ago as the 1970s. One former student said she had changed career direction after studying social equity issues with me. I think university lecturers can forget how influential they are. This is both an honour and a

responsibility. But I was most intrigued by the fact that none of my former students made reference to my teaching! Mostly they remembered feeling personally supported. It's the same for me. When I look back at my own undergraduate career, I remember the lecturers who gave me time and encouraged me. Perhaps we can all draw lessons from reflecting on our own student years in this way".

Was it worth all the fuss? Lynne thinks it is, because it focuses the minds of universities on teaching and learning and the Award ceremony itself is a celebration of teaching. The Awards first began in 1997, and have been emulated around the world. They have been instrumental in raising the profile of teaching and learning so that the professionalism of teaching is now a recognised part of career development in Australian universities.

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Lynne won the Prime Minister's award jointly with Peter O'Donoghue of the University of Queensland. Peter has agreed to contribute a similar article for the next issue of HERDSA News.

The HERDSA Email LIST

HERDSA has a moderated email list. News about the Society, forthcoming conferences and job vacancies are usually posted on a Wednesday. To join or leave the list go to

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



Eidos Ideas Dossier No. 18

A Short Festival on Lies and Lying

Other readers of Australia's best Daily will recognise my shamelessly borrowed title. It's inspired by one of my favourite reads, the regular last page of Sydney Morning Herald's weekend "Spectrum".

For less discriminating readers (and those unwise enough to live interstate or overseas), the nuance resides, quite simply, in not expecting a linear argument. Think of it more as "here are the pieces – make up your own story".

Fibs in Class

I've often wondered why teachers get annoyed about student plagiarism. Okay, it's against the rules. But that's the lowest level of moral reasoning. Anyhow, we happily tolerate other kinds of student rule-breaking; some we even applaud. Clearly, an honest answer lies elsewhere.

Deeply held positions generally have complex or multiple justifications. In order of precedence I'll nominate these:

1. We can't tolerate being fooled by anyone of lower status – it offends our sense of ownership and power.
2. It's possibly (but not necessarily) gaining unfair advantage over other students; so it offends one of our more comfortable values, fairness or justice.
3. It's possibly (again not necessarily) a barrier to quality subject learning.
4. Prudentially, it's a bad habit to encourage and might get students into really big trouble (law suits) if they do it when they become professionals.
5. It's a form of lying or falsehood, so it offends the scholarly value of truth-telling.

Really Big Lies

Wasn't it Machiavelli who thought the security of the State might actually depend on the capacity of our princely leaders to tell lies to the rest of us? We collude in our Leaders' dishonesty and actually praise them for the care they demonstrate in keeping the Awful Truth concealed from we suckers who couldn't bear (and often don't care) to know it.

There are always spoilsports, like filmmaker Michael Moore (*The Awful Truth, Bowling for Columbine*), who don't want to play along with that particular game. But I suppose everyone's entitled to a living, even political satirists.

Propaganda

My generation was still at school when World War II ended. It wasn't until years later that we (the gullible masses) began to grasp the enormous role played by lies – a.k.a. *propaganda*. The lies were on both sides, but it was Hitler's right-hand man and propaganda chief Hermann Goering who raised political lying to an art form.

Goering's most incisive piece of wisdom, to the considerable enrichment of posterity, came out of an interview during the Nuremberg trials (April 18, 1946:- see Gustave Gilbert's *Nuremberg Diary*):-

Why of course the people don't want war. Why should some poor slob on a farm want to risk his life in a war when the best he can get out of it is to come back to his farm in one piece? Naturally the common people don't want war neither in Russia, nor in England, nor for that matter in Germany. That is understood. But, after all, it is the leaders of the country who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy, or a fascist dictatorship, or a parliament, or a communist dictatorship.

Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country.

Those particular lines have had a new lease of life on the internet, since we've become caught up in what George W Bush is now calling the war of the "civilised" against the "uncivilised". Scholars kindly note: Hermann Goering lives!

Enter General Semantics

In earlier EIDOS articles I've referred to the legendary, shameful, silence of German intellectuals during Hitler's rise to power. But in the decade following World War II it almost appeared as though the Academy of the Victors had learned a lesson too. Post the 1940's, various academic societies began to form organised around the study of "general semantics".

Their prime target was the study of propaganda. At least one of those early journals – *ETC - The Journal of General Semantics* - continues to this day. For once in history, academia directly involved itself in questions of what passes as public truth (and its obverse, public lies). "Disinformation" subsequently became a catchphrase in criticism of the East during the Cold War period. We were really hot on the defence of "truth".

The Honest Scholar?

Within the Academy, there's a general, diffuse notion of "honesty" in scholarly values that has always been comfortably easy to honour *in its narrowest form*. That comprised honesty in matters concerning the pursuit of knowledge *within the*



discipline. Plus (if we dared) honesty within academic life generally.

With the step into propaganda studies some scholars accepted that it's neither intellectually nor morally coherent for an intellectual to presume to comfortably restrict the domain of truth-telling (and the detection and critique of falsehood) to the territory of a discipline or field of study. If we care about honesty, we have to care about it everywhere.

Either we care about it in every domain of human engagement or (the argument runs) we don't really care about it at all. So it's not only when we check and double-check our scholarly citations, quotations and references. Nor only when we tell our students that it's very naughty to plagiarise.

We show we care about honesty when we act as custodians of honest thinking and sound reasoning in all spheres of human life. Including the political.

Hoaxes

There's a distinction made, but the moral line is pretty thin, between hoaxes and propaganda. Alex Boese (*The Museum of Hoaxes*, Penguin, 2003) thinks a mere lie becomes a hoax when it's outrageous, ingenious, dramatic or sensational. It's so deliberately deceptively clever that it succeeds in capturing the public's (perverse?) imagination.

Boese believes that the rise of democracy and the media in the west (post C18th) plus the increasing political importance of "the public" and "public opinion", served to encourage hoaxes on a grand scale. During the C19th the public began showing what it has continued to show ever since - that they didn't actually mind being lied to, as long as the lies were ever more sensational and amusing. Anything's better than the dull, everyday truth of the world and the mundane lives of ordinary people.

The newspaper, radio, television, and now the internet, have each become hailed as advances for democracy. Each makes it easier for individuals to connect with mass audiences. But the more free people are to communicate with each other, the

freer they also are to deceive and manipulate.

Manipulation by Insignificance

So, back to Machiavelli, Who better placed to manipulate than he who owns the media, or politicians who share their beds with media barons?

In his day, Kierkegaard believed the mass-circulation newspapers were a root cause underlying the widespread nihilism he saw sapping the moral strength of Danish society. When everything is presented as "news", when each trivial or substantial thing dished up is of equal importance, everything becomes unimportant. Nothing matters any more.

Even the gravest tragedies, the most momentous events, become significant to the "public" only to the extent that the stories about them are more entertaining than other stories. Consequently, lying and truth-telling are made to appear to be indistinguishable - or else their distinction becomes of no consequence.

Consequently, Boese argues, those who participate in modern democracies bear the awesome burden of *learning about* the ways of misinformation. Only then can they ever truly defend and benefit from the freedoms they enjoy. *But who will teach them?*

Internet Lies

Skeptics of uncritical approaches to Internet learning argue similarly. Tara Brabazon (*Digital Hemlock*, UNSW Press, 2002) tells a story. "An excited teacher, having just had his classroom wired for the net, tried to integrate it into his work ... asked his students to write their papers on their current unit of study - the Holocaust - that relied on the Internet as their primary source of information ... One third of the papers ... presented the Holocaust as a hoax"

"Access to information is not the primary issue for educators. We need to intervene in the blind acceptance of data, to create reflexive interpretation ... The Internet is (frequently) a self-published medium, presenting the spurious along with the serious. The

overarching need for users is to be conscious of how information was formed, and why ... The greatest difficulty emerging from theorists of the Internet is that scholars focus overtly on the technology "itself" rather than maintaining a critical approach about its use and application." (emphasis mine)

Hubert Dreyfus, probably the most widely read and influential sceptic of Internet learning (*What Computers Can't Do*, 1972 and *What Computers Still Can't Do*, 1992) found the primary root of his own disquiet in Kierkegaard's writings on the effects of the mass-distribution Press in an earlier century. "...the crowing cultivation of curiosity and the consequent failure (by the Press) to distinguish the important from the trivial ... making every sort of information available to anyone, thereby producing an anonymous, detached spectator".

Against Nihilism

Just as no individual assumes responsibility for the consequences of information in the Press, Dreyfus argues in *On The Internet* (2001), no one assumes responsibility for even the accuracy of information on the Web. No one knows or cares where it came from. A perfect medium for slander and innuendo. And, Dreyfus might have added, hoaxing.

Kierkegaard's, and thence Dreyfus', answer to this dilemma lies in *commitment*. Which is why I began this piece with a personal observation about why it is that we object to student plagiarism. Of the five reasons I gave, only the last seems to me to reveal an underlying commitment to anything worthy of the title "scholar".

That's a commitment to honesty and fair-dealing, to truth-telling and consistency, to soundness in reasoning, to taking responsibility for the consequences of the "information" one disseminates. And - I would add - to upholding such values right across the entire spectrum of one's human engagements. I see two particular second-order commitments, two practical positions, deriving from that challenge.



Two Positions

The first is a pedagogic position, *a propos* students and student learning. Every course of study that either requires, invites or allows students to use the Internet as an information source should, on pain of being deemed pedagogically inept and dangerous, train students comprehensively not only in the "literacy" of the technology but also in the "literacy of critical interpretation". Such training is possible only within a subject domain.

No assessment task that contains data sourced from the Internet should thus be acceptable until the student presenting it has cross-referenced and tested it for accuracy and authenticity. Who put it there? Where did it come from? Why was it put there? How far is it credible?

The second is *a propos* the broader role of the academic and scholar in community and national life. I regard a Scholar's commitment to truth as of necessity extending far beyond the mere boundaries of his or her field of study. In my view a commitment to truth and truth-telling extends undiminished to the farthest frontiers of public affairs. This is a far-reaching claim with vast ramifications.

Silence of the Academic Lambs

By the time this little piece reaches publication the international turmoil that surrounds me as I write may well

have come to a head, one way or another. I make no secret of my own value judgements on matters of peace and war. However I am not arguing, nor would it ever make sense to argue, that scholars and academics must therefore think like me about the rights and wrongs of one country invading another. That would be puerile, unscholarly, presumptuous.

What I do think can be, and must be, argued is that a commitment to the scholarly value of honesty makes it imperative that every scholar apply similar levels of critical acumen as they do in their own field of study, in respect of the information disseminated, and the arguments presented, in public affairs. And that they cultivate and demonstrate some guts by sharing those criticisms within the public domain when the consequences of complicit silence are so overwhelmingly terrible to imagine.

It is my own view that the currently propagated international pro-invasion hoaxes rely not only on easily discreditable information, but on arguments and reasoning so patently poor that it would be laughed out of any first-year philosophy seminar worth its salt. I may be wrong in both claims, but for months past I have looked in vain for any significant academic or scholarly assault on the dominant ideological position.

Commitment to Public Critique

I privately believe that we Australians have been perilously hoaxed into an involvement in a very

stupid and powerful American Leader's private vendetta. The consequences for us, for him, and for millions of others, could be devastating. I dare to hope many of my colleagues will agree with me. But I respect them equally if they reason otherwise.

What I challenge them all to do, whether they agree with me or not, is to participate. *Take leadership* in the public debate over the world's future. Demonstrate at least as much critical skill and acute skepticism as you are so proud to display towards your students' learning or towards your own research and that of your colleagues. Commitment to scholarly values and community service both demand it.

Hail and Farewell

This is to be the last EIDOS. I've enjoyed the ride immensely. I thank my several editors as well as my faithful readers – all four of them – for their support and encouragement. It's now time to look elsewhere for instant gratification.

With just a hint of sadistic glee I warmly encourage someone else to take the running and write some future opinion pieces for this excellent newsletter. Remember that when someone responds to your writing with epithets like fatuous, bloated, infantile and pontificating, it generally means you've hit some mark or other. At least they bothered to read your stuff!

It's when not a soul has anything to say back that you need to get worried. Bye for now.

Eidos



Book Review

Work Based Learning and the University: New Perspectives and Practices.

Derek Portwood & Carol Costley, (eds) (2000) SEDA Paper 109, Staff and Educational Development Association, Birmingham UK. ISBN 1 902435125

Reviewed by Chris Hughes

Work Based Learning: pioneering its formalisation

Pioneers tackle the hard stuff. Sure the explorers have been through the territory before, but it is the pioneers who do the work of building the infrastructure so that the territory may be tamed and settled in the manner to which they are accustomed. And so it is with this collection of essays from Middlesex University's Work Based Learning Program. The collection is written and edited by the pioneers who did the hard work involved in formalising work based learning so that it is now recognised within their university (and at others, including in Australia) for formal accreditation and awards. Their efforts have resulted in an innovative and generally coherent process for formalising work based learning to the point where Middlesex university is comfortable making awards from undergraduate up to doctoral level, entirely on the basis of negotiated projects completed at work.

Work based learning at Middlesex is not just about students studying in a workplace mode – completing assignments focused on work or undergoing work placements. It is a much more radical notion than that. Work based learning is about workers (and would be workers) negotiating with the university to have projects they complete at work recognised for advanced standing in existing university programs, or for whole areas of study and for whole awards. Everything is negotiated: the number of projects, their focus and scope, and the assessment criteria. Even the level and title of the award to be made are subject to negotiation. Some stages of the negotiation are supported by pre-designed work based modules (on such

things as “work based research methods” and “the recognition of prior learning”). One of the innovations here is that the negotiation is often three way, with the employer of the student being recognised as a full partner in the process.

Another novel feature of Middlesex's approach is that their RAL (recognition and accreditation of learning) process for the recognition of prior learning is itself part of the learning that is accredited by the program. The RAL process is portfolio based and is promoted both for its contribution to the recognition of prior learning and for its support for the development of reflection in students. RAL is often the first step the student takes towards refining an area to focus on, and establishing the scope and level of the award sought. Completing this step is recognised by credit towards the eventual award.

Most pioneer tales are interesting, and the reader will not be disappointed here. The contributors are at their best when describing the detail of the new terrain, the pathways and structures they have developed, and the initiatives of the students who accompanied them on the journey (and, one suspects, sometimes did the digging). Whether it be the use of the RAL process with managers or with a group of long term unemployed women in London, the involvement of a magistrate seeking two year's credit for his experience and learning towards an Arts degree, or a variety of projects implemented in large and small companies, the detail is fascinating. In addition the reader may sample the application of the approach to the work based learning of creative workers, via an analysis of the learning of Shakespeare. There is also an interesting chapter on how the program

was debated and eventually steered through the process of approval within the university.

Just as pioneers tell interesting tales, they also develop theories that help interpret the new terrain and the phenomena they encounter and the approaches they develop, and this set of pioneers is no exception. They draw on an eclectic range of theorists, from Marx to Weber and on to the poststructuralists and postmodernists. This is where I felt the collection was less convincing. When expounding the revolutionary nature of the work based learning studies program at Middlesex, and situating it as a challenge to the tradition of adult education generally represented in the academy (and as a challenge to the academy itself), the writing becomes noticeably abstract. This approach seems to be taken in the hope of gaining the reader's consent to the proposition that work based learning is intellectually rigorous and fully worthy of being brought into the academy. Here I found that the abstract academic style of writing tended to undermine the claim being made. The adoption of old and rather dubious stereotypes of organisational forms based on the personalities and preferences of ancient gods did not help – and neither did the willingness to engage with all forms, even with Zeus-like managers who, as presented, are anathema to workplace learning. Familiar rhetorical tricks are used too: in Chapter 2, Costley sets up a familiar straw man in the notion that university learning is about transmission whereas work based learning is more about engagement and intelligent scepticism. Here I felt the theorists did protest too much.

Workplace learning involves difficult issues for adherents to the



liberal traditions of adult education, and at times this collection is not reassuring. When Garner and Portwood begin chapter 8 of the collection with the statement that "The main justification for universities to engage in work based learning in the workplace is the improvement this brings to the performance of the organisation" (page 77) one can readily appreciate just how far from the traditional adult education focus on the needs of individuals the pioneers at Middlesex have come. Most authors in this volume are appropriately sensitive to the needs of their learners and to the demands of the context they are working with. The problem is that the context is just so demanding. It forces our intrepid pioneers to face some very

difficult dilemmas. They have driven a path through this jungle, and they are at pains to defend their work as ethical, but I am sure many readers will find some of the compromises involved troublesome.

This is an interesting collection of essays by a group of pioneers in a territory traditionally beyond the formal reach of universities. They have built pathways and structures, and provided a guide for others who follow. They have brought workplace learning within the reach of the formal programs of universities. Like all pioneers however, they have irrevocably changed the landscape that they have worked on as well as their homeland. Only time will tell if the

rich subtlety and potential of workplace learning, and the freedom it affords many individuals, will be enhanced or inhibited by its formalisation and inclusion in the programs of the university. Likewise I wondered if the university itself would be able to maintain its character while engaging so directly with the human resource managers in the world of work.

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HERDSA

Professional Recognition and Development of Teaching in Higher Education

Several groups have been hard at work
developing aspects of the new HERDSA scheme
while other individuals have been piloting it
by preparing portfolios.

It is planned to officially launch the scheme
at the Opening Ceremony of the Annual Conference in
Christchurch on July 6, 2003.

So plan to be there.

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Learning for an Unknown Future

6-9 July 2003

University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand

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www.conference.canterbury.ac.nz/herdsa2003

The following prizes will be awarded:

Taylor and Francis Prize for Best Paper by New Researcher

Edith Cowan University Authentic Learning Award

Details available on the website. Applications due 9 May.

HERDSA Conference 2004

No venue yet. Any offers to host the conference?

HERDSA Conference 2005

No venue yet. Any offers to host the conference?
