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Learning and Teaching in Australian Universities: Building on Strong Foundations

By Lesley Parker AM

Lesley Parker presented this paper as a keynote address for the Effective Teaching and Learning conference at Griffith University on 4 November 2004. She very kindly gave permission for it to be reprinted in *HERDSA News*.

Introduction and Overview

I am particularly pleased to be here at the 2004 Effective Teaching and Learning Conference. This annual event is a great initiative, exemplifying one of the key dimensions of contemporary support for and enhancement of university learning and teaching in Australia – a dimension involving the sharing of good practice, learning from others and building networks to tap into in the future.

I begin today by recapping a little recent history, providing a brief thumbnail sketch of the Carrick Institute. I then describe two contrasting approaches to the provision of support for teaching and learning in higher education, using the United States and England as examples. From this analysis, I draw out some key themes. For many of these, I detect a consensus across the system regarding the need for collaborative action, and I consider that Carrick is well positioned to initiate such action. I also discuss several other themes, however, where the direction at present is not as clear-cut, and where different perspectives and versions of reality are yet to be reconciled.

I need to point out at the outset that much of what I discuss today must be seen as part of work in progress. It is still very early days for the Carrick Institute, and its identity, role and priorities are going through a very important evolutionary phase.

The Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: A Brief Outline

I feel in a very privileged position in Australia today. As the Planning Director for the Carrick Institute, I have a rare opportunity. Carrick, as I'm sure you all are aware, was launched in August 2004, following the passing of legislation, in December 2003, to create the National Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education and the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund (LTPF). The concept of these "L&T twins", as I call them, was articulated in a document published earlier in 2003 by the Minister for Education, Science and Training (Nelson, 2003), which itself followed nearly two years of review and consultation across the system, culminating in the "crossroads" reports (Australia, DEST, 2002). In combination, these two programs – the Institute and the LTPF – see the allocation of the largest tranche of government money specifically to university learning and teaching in the history of Australian higher education. For the Institute, the allocation, beginning in 2006, is $21.9 million, with an additional sum

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From the Editor

Welcome to this bumper summer edition of *HERDSA News*. There are a wide variety of articles on topics in higher education and I hope there is something for everyone to enjoy.

The re-election of the Howard Government in Australia has brought concerns about the future plans for higher education. One aspect of these plans is discussed in our higher education policy column. I am pleased that we have been able to publish similar comment on the scene in New Zealand thanks to contributions from the HERDSA New Zealand branch and Peter Hodder. I hope that this will become a regular feature in the *News*.

Another new feature in this issue is the column on IT in higher education written by Roger Atkinson. He reveals some interesting data about scholarly publishing.

In spite of the misgivings about the Federal governments plans, it is very pleasing that they have provided strong support for learning and teaching with the establishment of the Carrick Institute of Learning and Teaching. The current plans for the Institute are described in Lesley Parker's article.

Interesting developments in learning and teaching overseas are featured in articles by Robert Kennelly (a HERDSA Fellow) and Dai Hounsell. The latter report will especially interest those who have been researching into the nature of learning in an academic discipline.

The HERDSA Fellowship Scheme is becoming firmly established after the pilot phase with twenty people currently preparing portfolios. I would encourage more members to consider enrolling, see the details in the article.

For those who might have wondered what it would be like to be lifted out of being a classroom teacher to being a Dean of Teaching and Learning, Sally Kift provides a very personal honest look at her new responsibilities.

I hope you all enjoy a good break over Christmas and New Year so that you can get your papers and presentations ready for a great conference in Sydney in July. The closing date for refereed papers and abstracts is 31 January 2005.

Finally I would like to express my thanks to those who have given their precious time to write the articles for *HERDSA News* during 2004.

Roger Landbeck

HERDSA Conference 2005

Higher Education In A Changing World

3–6 July 2005

The University of Sydney, Australia

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Learning and Teaching in Australian Universities: Building on Strong Foundations

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of $3.15 million dedicated to a new national awards program.

The Australian Universities Teaching Committee (AUTC) was given oversight of the development of the Institute. They went about their task with tremendous dedication, ensuring that the new Institute built on analyses of efforts in other countries of the world, on extensive consultation across the Australian higher education sector, and on the foundations laid by previous national schemes that have support excellence in university teaching. The latter include, as we all know, the Commonwealth Staff Development Fund (CSDF), 1990–96; the Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching (CAUT), 1992–96; the Committee for University Teaching and Staff Development (CUTSD), 1997–99; and, of course the AUTC itself (2000–2004), which initiated several major projects to address emerging issues in Australian higher education and, in addition, oversaw the administration and adjudication of the Australian Awards for University Teaching. Many of these schemes, while enormously valuable, had serious impediments such as lack of funding, lack of continuity, lack of a focal point for accessing knowledge about learning and teaching and limited profile and impetus (Schofield & Olsen, 2000). The hope is that the Institute will take the best of what has been proven worthwhile, both in Australia and overseas, and lift excellence in learning and teaching in Australian universities to a whole new level.

The Carrick Institute's stated Mission is:

> To promote and advance learning and teaching in Australian higher education.

Its designated responsibilities include:

1. Management of a competitive grants scheme for innovation in learning and teaching;
2. Liaison with the sector about options for articulating and monitoring academic standards;
3. Improvement of assessment practices throughout the sector;
4. Facilitation of benchmarking of effective teaching and learning processes at national and international levels;
5. Development of mechanisms for the dissemination of good practice in learning and teaching;
6. Management of a reciprocal program of international visits; and
7. Coordination of an expanded version of the current Australian Awards for University Teaching, with 251 awards, varying from $10,000 to $50,000 in amount.

After much consultation across the whole Australian higher education sector, objectives for the Institute have been agreed as follows:

(a) to promote and support strategic change in higher education institutions for the enhancement of learning and teaching, including curriculum development and assessment;

(b) to raise the profile and encourage recognition of the fundamental importance of teaching in higher education institutions and in the general community;

(c) to foster and acknowledge excellent teaching in higher education;

(d) to develop effective mechanisms for the identification, development, dissemination and embedding of good individual and institutional practice in learning and teaching in Australian higher education;

(e) to develop and support reciprocal national and international arrangements for the purpose of sharing and benchmarking learning and teaching processes; and

(f) to identify learning and teaching issues that impact on the Australian higher education system and facilitate national approaches to address these and other emerging issues.

It has also been agreed that the Institute should value:

- inclusiveness, which I see enhanced by networks and communities, both face-to-face and online;
- long term change, through a focus on systems;
- diversity, through recognising and valuing institutional and discipline-based differences;
- collaboration, through working with, not across or above the system, and through work practices and incentives; and
- excellence, through clear definition and recognition of quality in the programs and awards.

As I pointed out earlier, at this stage, it is early days for the Institute – it is really in a period of transition from the AUTC and dependence on the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) for executive support, to full independence as a company limited by guarantee.

International Approaches to the Provision of Support for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Emerging Themes

World-wide, in many different university systems, there has been increasing attention, especially during the past decade, to the quality of teaching in universities. The review of Schofield (2003) is a useful source in this regard, enabling me to focus, in particular, on comparisons between the US and England, essentially as two contrasting models for enhancing learning and teaching in higher education.

The United States of America

Schofield identifies three main strands of US national initiatives to support learning and teaching in higher education: grants from the US Department of Education Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE), the activities of organisations with voluntary members, and funding from charitable trusts. As many of us are aware, there

are also many other initiatives, which, not withstanding the three strands discussed below, add up overall to a highly dispersed model.

FIPSE

FIPSE, established in 1973, supports some international programs, but has as its main thrust a program of annual competitive grants (with approximately 50 grants, each currently US$0.5 million, aimed at "innovative educational improvement projects that respond to problems of national significance" (Schofield, 2003, p.2)). Recently, the balance of FIPSE's emphasis has shifted more towards active dissemination, involving, amongst other strategies, mentoring of one institution by another. Evaluation (especially in terms of projects' effects on student learning and achievement) and sustainability are seen increasingly as fundamental to FIPSE projects.

"Voluntary Member" Organisations

There are many US "voluntary member" organisations with an interest in post-secondary learning and teaching. One notable example is the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE), which has conducted a Teaching Initiative Program since 1990 – a program which aims for institutions to establish a culture that values and pursues effective teaching and learning. This program was shown in 1997 to be more successful in improving he teaching effectiveness of individuals than in establishing a culture amongst faculty. The latter, more strategic and institution-wide need is now addressed through the AAHE annual summer academy, workshops, conferences and the AAHE WebCenter.

Charitable Trusts

To some extent, the activities of bodies such as AAHE overlap with charitable trusts, such as the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL). The Carnegie-supported Campus Program, for example, is run by AAHE. Other activities include the Scholars Program, aimed at creating a community of scholars, and the Scholarly and Professional Societies Program, which fosters cooperation and networking, and conducts an invitational small grants scheme.

England

In England, somewhat in contrast to the dispersed approach, which has developed in the US, the funding of initiatives to support learning and teaching is increasingly centrally managed. During the past decade and a half, England, at the national level, has made a significant investment in improving university learning and teaching. It has done this, essentially, by building on, and applying pressure through policy developments in the three areas of (I) quality assurance, (ii) university funding (through HEFCE) and (iii) special needs (e.g. harnessing modern technology, or addressing the needs of students with special learning difficulties). This approach has resulted in project funding becoming, in the words of Schofield (2003, p.6), "an everyday aspect of UK higher education life, with literally hundreds of projects reporting in the past five years".

But funding of smallish projects, sometimes in isolation (isolation not just from the sector, but also sometimes from groups within the project director's own institution) has its limits. As in the US, problems of dissemination and the lack of institution-wide or system-wide adoption became obvious during the 1990s. Questions began to be raised about the effectiveness of so-called "lone-rangers", operating in the absence of institutional and systemic support, in bringing about widespread improvements. It was considered that these problems were exacerbated by the complexity associated with many different bodies, accountabilities and sources of funds. To address the problems, and in a move which again further increased central coordination, the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF) was set up in 1999.

Again, the national investment was considerable. Essentially, during the years 1999–2002, around 100 million pounds sterling was allocated by the TQEF through institutional grants, support for 24 subject-based centres and a generic centre coordinated within a Learning and Teaching Support Network (LTSN), and support for individual academics (through teaching fellowships and through the creation of the course-accrediting Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT)).

Across the system however, there remained confusion about multiple structures and responsibilities. Hence, agreement has been reached to set up, by 2006, an independent Academy for Higher Education, jointly owned by the heads of university and non-university higher education, with funding from institutional subscriptions, individual memberships and income from services. The explicit focus of the Academy is on enhancing the student experience, and the hope is that the Academy will provide a more powerful voice for the scholarship of teaching, and, yet again, greater coordination of initiatives. To Australians in this audience, it is of interest that the recently appointed Executive Director of the Academy is Professor Paul Ramsden, one of Australia's leading scholars and practitioners in this area.

Emerging Themes: Comparisons with Carrick

Themes Explicit in Carrick Documents

I have presented the comparison between the US and England as essentially two ends of a continuum, from the highly dispersed and relatively uncoordinated (as in the US) to increasingly centrally managed and interventionist (as in England). Many other countries, of course, lie somewhere along this continuum. Irrespective of the structure and focus of the programs, however, certain key themes – already touched on in my brief discussion of the US and England – have emerged in recent years. I list those themes here, with reference, in parentheses, to those which I consider to have been picked up, at least in spirit at this stage, by Carrick, and where I detect a consensus across the system regarding the need for collaborative action, and a view that Carrick is well-positioned to initiate such action:

(i) the need for more effective dissemination of information about initiatives, at institutional and systemic levels; (Carrick Objective (d));

(ii) the need for a range of models of adoption of successful initiatives, again at both institutional and systemic levels, with an associated will to address inconsistencies in the results of adoption (i.e. the same innovation by different lecturers producing quite different degrees of success), i.e., recognition of the increasing diversity of students and of learning environments; (Carrick Objective (d), and value of "diversity");

(iii) the need for changes to be conceptualised and implemented as strategic, sustainable and well-managed; (Carrick value of "long-term change")

(iv) the need to support the many classroom-based "lone-ranger" initiatives by increasing institution-wide support and commitment, and by collaboration within and amongst institutions; (Carrick value of "collaboration"); and

(v) the need to provide incentives and mechanisms which enable all institutions to participate; (Carrick value of "inclusiveness").

Selected Other Themes

I now go on to discuss some of the emerging themes where, as I indicated earlier, the direction at present is not as clear-cut, and where different perspectives and versions of reality are yet to be reconciled. My views are personal ones, based on my reading of the increasing body of literature documenting aspects of a wide variety of multi-dimensional approaches focused on individual academics, institutions and subject areas (such as Rogers (1983, 1995)) and the proceedings of many conferences, world-wide, focused on university teaching (e.g. Rust, 2002)).

I will discuss only four themes, because I want to leave time for you to have your say here as well. My themes are:

(a) Making real the shift from "Teaching and Learning" to "Learning and Teaching";

(b) The need for clarity about support and accountabilities;

(c) The need to move beyond the Cognoscenti; and

(d) The standards issue.

Theme (a): Making real the shift from "Teaching and Learning" to "Learning and Teaching"

Throughout all levels of education, a shift to a focus on student outcomes has been – perhaps with the use of information and communications technology in learning and teaching – the major development of recent years. I really want to emphasise here that the shift in language from "teaching and learning" to "learning and teaching" in higher education is becoming (and indeed must become) much more than just rhetorical. Increasingly it is recognised that ultimately, education is about what students learn in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values – outcomes which are important not just for the individual student, but also for the community as a whole (Maxwell, 2003). This does not mean that education is not about what and how teachers teach, but it does mean that good teaching is not judged entirely by this, and that the "teacher as performer" model has been recognised as flawed. What it also means is that teaching cannot be viewed solely as something that teachers *do*, and, moreover, do *to* students, and that lecturers cannot be viewed as teaching well even when their students simply do not learn (Bain, 2003, p. 13). Some have even proposed (e.g., Tagg, 2003) that the "new mission" for universities is "to produce learning, not simply to provide instruction".

In addition, and as many a scholar of what is termed "connected learning" has appreciated for some time, good teaching is about relationships – relationships between students and teacher and relationships amongst students, and between students and the process and content of the teaching. The success of the whole teaching and learning enterprise actually hinges on relationships. Again and again, the evidence points to the importance of the caring teaching, the teacher who bothers to connect his or her students to the subject matter as the successful one. As some of our most successful teachers point out (e.g. Hunt, 2003), it is important to start from the position of the student. I would maintain, that, if universities are really about producing learning rather than providing instruction, then it is equally important to finish from the position of the student – again to emphasise: what have the students learnt?

In this context, McInnes (2003), amongst others, has drawn attention to the growing awareness, amongst scholars and some practitioners in higher education, of evidence-based approaches to the organisation of teaching and learning. Individuals, groups, institutions and systems all have important roles here. Increasingly, evidence about student learning, collected essentially from students (and at times from employers) by individual academics, by institutions, and even by systems, is becoming fundamental to decision-making about the efficacy of different approaches to teaching. This is so obvious; one is forced to wonder why higher education has been able to avoid it for so long. It is also important, because it is revealing so much about the conditions that maximise students' learning. There is a mounting body of evidence, in relation to both digital and non-digital learning environments, that students learn best when they are actively engaged, actively connected to their subject matter, and receive timely and informative feedback on their work (McInnes, 2003). But what does "learning best" mean?

In relation to the latter, it is clearly here that effective assessment becomes important. Some years ago, when I was involved in research on gender-inclusive assessment, it was not acceptable in all quarters to bracket pedagogy and assessment. Spectres were raised of "Measurement-Driven Instruction" the "assessment tail wagging the curriculum dog", and "assessment-driven curriculum", and there was limited appreciation (verging on fear and suspicion at times) of the need to align assessment not just with what was being taught, but also with the way it was being taught. Happily, and partly as a consequence of much valuable work (initially at secondary school level) on "authentic assessment", we seem to be moving beyond that situation. Indeed, the recent AUTC-funded project on *Assessing Learning in Australian Universities* (James, McInnes & Devlin, 2002) emphasises certain core principles of effective assessment, actually framed around

the enhancement of learning through the enhancement of assessment.

My underlying principle here is that we will only know how well we have taught if we have good measures of what students have learned. We need to think creatively about these measures, acknowledging that much learning becomes obvious in the longer rather than the shorter term. This is an area of immense importance to Carrick, given especially that "assessment" is fundamental to at least three elements of its seven-part brief, and that indicators of student learning take us inevitably into the highly contested territory of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund.

Theme (b): The Need for Clarity about Support and Accountabilities

Another theme that has emerged internationally also needs much more attention from Carrick. This concerns the need for clarity about the sources and kinds of available support, and the accountabilities associated with that support, especially, on the one hand, in relation to universities' differing missions and student bodies, and on the other hand, in relation to a reasonable return on the investment of public funds. Effective communication is fundamental to developing the kind of clarity I'm demanding here. In relation to CAUT, CUTSD and the work of the AUTC, it is a sad fact that, despite widespread knowledge of the opportunities and accountabilities amongst people such as those present at this conference, the knowledge was not widespread across universities as a whole. I am constantly amazed, in talking to university people around the country, at the level of ignorance of previous systems of grants and projects to enhance learning and teaching. In this sense, it will be important to effectively communicate the business of Carrick, and to ensure that Carrick grants and projects are equal in status to the hallowed ARC grants. A systematic and adequately funded communication strategy is needed, linked into the leadership and communication strategies in individual universities.

The accountability issues must also be addressed with support from universities. Too many CAUT and CUTSD projects concluded with no reported outcomes, or with quite limited reports (Schofield & Olsen, 2000). Very few appeared to accept the accountabilities associated with dissemination of their findings, beyond presentation of conference papers. Further, in relation particularly to recent projects, one major outcome of many projects is a web-site. These are generally hosted on the website of the project director's own university, and are thus subject to a variety of controls over continuity or guarantees of access, updating and cross-referencing. If we are to even approach sustainable, system-wide reform and enhancements, then an effective Carrick-hosted arrangement to address this kind of problem is called for.

Theme (c): The need to move beyond the Cognoscenti

As many of us know, and as revealed by the analyses summarised earlier in this paper, there are some individuals and some universities that act as if they are, in a sense, "excluded" from efforts to improve student learning. While one can only conjecture about the reasons for this, the status issue, referred to earlier, seems to be a big part of it. Apparently, for a significant majority of university academics, it was simply not worth their while to engage actively with the opportunities for the enhancement of learning and teaching provided by CAUT and CUTSD. It appears that many have tended to see themselves as not having the time to engage (a workload issue, requiring institutional action and support) and /or that the rewards accruing from engagement (typically in terms of their own promotion to higher levels) were inadequate. This is a systemic problem, which cannot be solved by Carrick alone – it requires changes to policy and practice, and, above all, collaborative leadership supporting initiatives within individual universities.

An additional problem is that much interaction in this area tends to be confined to a group which might be seen as the cogniscenti: the practitioners and theorists with an existing strong commitment to the area. The sharing of our work – even the most successful work – tends to be a bit of a closed shop. We need to open it up – recognising at the same time that we may lose control of the products and seeing this as an opportunity for diffusion rather than as a threat. It's my belief that firm and committed leadership (especially driving a well-thought-out reward system) and mechanisms such as creative mentoring arrangements within universities could help to expand a lot of this activity to a more representative group.

In the case of diffusion, the roles for individuals, institutions and systems are clear. Across the world, some of the success stories in terms of diffusion are associated with collaborative groups (either within an institution or across institutions), and the development of networks and so-called "communities of practice" (both face-to-face (as at this Conference) and on-line). Individuals tend to play major roles in setting up and sustaining these groups. However, institutional support and, especially, leadership is essential, partly because individuals need the time to engage with this. At the system level, system-wide support for individuals and institutions in this sense actually is a very good investment.

System and institutional support for further work on diffusion is also called for. Much in yet to be learned – for example, the potential of clearing houses, particularly on-line repositories, is not fully understood and is, almost certainly not fully realised. This is an international problem, which would benefit greatly from international sharing of research and practice. The recent setting up, by the AUTC of two projects to address this is a valuable move, and high hopes are held in relation to the outcomes of these projects and the kinds of advice and recommendations for action forthcoming.

Theme (d): Standards

You will have noticed that part of the brief of Carrick requires "liaison with the sector about options for articulating and monitoring academic standards". Some see this as a threat to institutional autonomy. Again, however, I consider that we need to see this as an opportunity rather than a threat. I maintain that if we don't seize the opportunity ourselves to determine the evidence base for our academic standards, then somebody else will do it for us! Further, I see the

national and international credibility of the Australian system as a high quality provider of higher education as hinging on our capacity to articulate and benchmark our standards, in a reasonable and negotiated fashion.

Further, we have, in some work such as that published by Sadler (1987) and latterly by James et al. (2002) for the AUTC assessment project, and in work being carried out in a growing number of universities, an excellent basis for further work. This issue is linked to assessment (part of the Carrick brief) and to benchmarking (also part of the Carrick brief). James et al. (2000) set out very clearly the links between assessment, standards and quality assurance, depicting what they call the "grading loop" (2000, p. 20).

This is yet another example of the some of the strong foundations we can build on as we set about our task of ensuring maximum benefit to the system as a whole from the opportunities and resources being made available through Carrick.

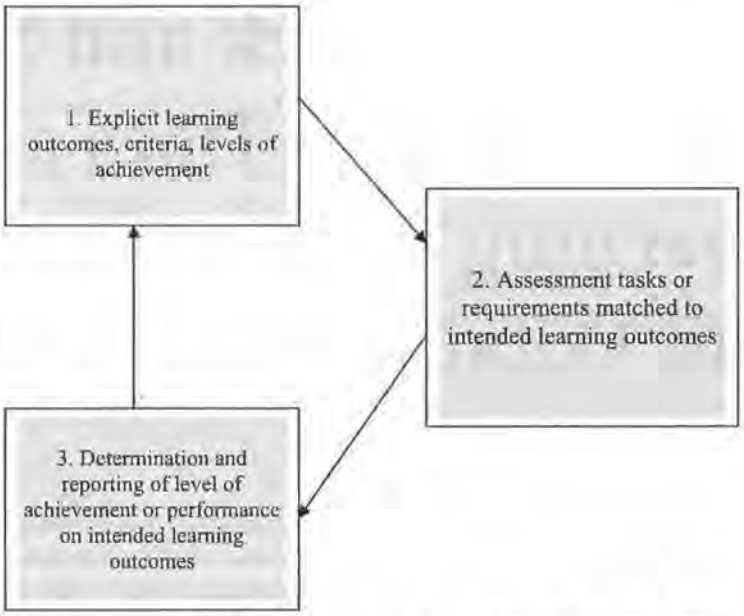

FIGURE 1: The Grading Loop (James, McInnes &Devlin, 2002, p. 20)

Concluding Comments

Many of the messages we receive from elsewhere in the world emphasise, frequently with some envy, that Australia currently occupies a leading position in terms of support for university learning and teaching, and the potential to further improve learning outcomes for our students. Collectively, we have a unique opportunity to further enhance this position, and collectively, we need to work together to ensure that this opportunity is not squandered. Our capacity to reconcile the competing priorities of stakeholders – political, educational, institutional and discipline-based – will be of paramount importance, as will our capacity to genuinely live by the Carrick-espoused values. We have really firm foundations on which to build – let's ensure that we end up with a house of bricks, not of straw or wood.

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Between a Rock and Several Hard Places: Where Does a Faculty Learning & Teaching Sub-Dean Sit and What is That Role?

By Sally Kift

An Uneasy and Highly Visible Place

All Australian universities now proudly possess an array of top-level policies devoted to assuring the quality of their learning and teaching (L&T) programs to serve any number of purposes. With the advent of the Australian University Quality Agency (AUQA) and the Nelson reforms, the urgency that drives this policy development includes the obvious concerns to satisfy quality audits, to manage accountability and risk, and to promote consistency and educational improvement.

However, in many time- and resource-poor Faculties, the charge of operationalising the institutional L&T agenda, and the concomitant responsibility of enhancing pedagogy in the discipline, usually falls to a relatively new class of committed individuals interposed between top-level university management structures on the one hand and the overcrowded classroom and overburdened teacher, on the other.

While most Heads of School and various Program, Year and/or Major Coordinators struggle just to *en*sure (cf. *as*sure) the delivery of their resource-intensive, online and on-campus programs in an inferior funding environment, it is the variously titled Deans or Associate/ Assistant Deans (L&T/Academic) (here "A/Dean, L&T") who "act as the conduit, both ways, between the staff and the corporate plan" (Lines, 2000, p. 44). These discipline-based academics shoulder the dichotomous responsibilities of supporting and promoting the top-level quality agenda (for example, by championing ongoing L&T innovation, improvement and evaluation), while simultaneously endeavouring to enable and support a growing minority of enthusiastic innovators in tandem with persuading the cynical spectators and the spoilers/ obstructionists, about what is doable in pedagogy and why it should be done.

The A/Dean, L&T position is a role of managing down, up *and* sideways: of persuading teaching staff that implementing the institutional agenda will be both valued and of enduring value; of persuading institutional management that their expectations of staff should be realistic and appropriately resourced; and of persuading Faculty/School leadership that the agenda is on a par with institutional exhortations to pursue what is perceived to be more-valued research and commercialisation opportunities. The work that I do also has a strong student aspect, which in some instances is a cause for further managing and persuasion of colleagues.

The Rocky Role

The nature and role of these positions have received little analysis, though Robyn Lines (2000), in the context of an Australian Technology Network (ATN) study to identify support mechanisms for implementing pedagogical change and improvement, reported that these "new academic positions have evolved over a number of years driven by the recognition of the importance of teaching and learning to the overall business of the university" (Lines, 2000, p. 44).

The A/Dean, L&T is often an interesting but unspecified mix of visionary, strategist, mentor and micro-manager, who may or may not (and most often not) have line management and/or budgetary responsibility to develop and implement the strategies, policies and quality assurance adherence with which they are charged.

In my experience, the position is highly specialised, does not come with an instruction book, involves a lot of on-the-job learning and requires a determination and a passion for undertaking a relatively thankless pivotal role in the pedagogical transformation of a Faculty/School. Particularly unenviably, the role's essence is the challenging and shifting negotiation (referred to above) of moderator or "honest-broker" who must mediate the indelicate balance between institutional good- policy-making and Faculty implementation-void-filling; between Faculty good-policy-making and School operational pragmatism and scepticism; and between the institutional rhetoric of valuing L&T and the valued teacher's perception of promotion-reality being still firmly skewed in favour of the more objectively quantifiable research head and (the new threat) commercialisation.

As Lines has identified (2000, p. 44), these positions with their varying names, levels of support, status and recognition, tend to be "very broadly described in relation to improving the quality of teaching and learning" and "include anything to do with the teaching and learning environments that nobody knows what to do with". My own duty statement is prefaced by the overarching notion of being "...responsible to the Dean, Faculty of Law for the teaching and

learning environment within the Faculty" for a set term appointment (three years), which includes 50% teaching relief and a salary loading of up to $8000 per annum.

Words associated with the role, which give further shape to its amorphous structure and capture both the good and the bad, include (Lines, 2000, p. 44–47): "catalyst", "communicator", "bridge builder", "innovator", "encourager", "provocateur", "pedant", "irritant", "problem fixer", "energiser", "relationship builder", "modeller", "champion", "translator" (especially re the "eduspeak": Tomazos, 1997), "mentor", "chameleon", "visionary", "leader", "change agent", "staff developer", "project manager", "micro-manager".

I know that I have taken on many of these characteristics and roles over the course of my tenure as A/Dean, L&T and know also that I have been called many other less flattering names besides. The breadth of the role, as intimated by the word-association exercise above, resides in both:

- the functions undertaken (for example: drafting reports, plans, Faculty responses; service on multiple Committees, sub-committees, working parties, *etc* many of which the incumbent chairs at Faculty level; responsibility for Faculty online and flexible delivery; responsibility for quality assurance, evaluation strategies and supportive policy development and implementation; whole of course dealings with students; liaison with the role's equivalents in other Faculties and, more recently, in other Universities; facilitating both Faculty and individual L&T Grant applications); and
- the stakeholders to whom the position is answerable, or at least "call-on-able-by" (for example: Dean(s); Heads of School (own and Faculty others); QA officers for courses/programs; relevant DVC or PVC; students; institutional L&T support services and IT services; teaching colleagues in own and other Faculties; teaching colleagues from other universities, both discipline and otherwise; sessional teaching staff).

And it Can Be a Very Hard Place

The fact that the A/Dean, L&T role is riddled with tensions and challenges is not unsurprising given the dualities of the commitments demanded of it: dedication to the pursuit of the corporate L&T line is assumed; empathy and (often individual) support for engaged and resistant teachers alike are expected; while the often forgotten foci of much of the busy work, the students, require assurance of quality L&T environments and experiences.

Another focus for tension is when the role has no line management authority (as regards staff supervision or review), as is the case with the great majority of the A/Dean, L&T positions. In these circumstances, it is almost inevitable that those who have line management responsibility may be unwilling and/or unable to accept advice that makes their day-to-day operational roles more difficult: for example, "it has been a common experience to find Heads of School quite resistant to the role" (Lines, 2000, p. 46). Quality assurance compliance for core program documentation (especially the unit/subject/course outline document that forms the critical contract with the student semester by semester) is a frequent flashpoint between the operational and the pedagogical.

Finally, it must again be said that much of the academic staff resistance directed at attempts to transform existing practice which, in turn, is reflected in line managers' defensiveness around committing to collective action on the L&T front, is based in a reluctance by some staff to adopt a more professional approach to tertiary teaching and a failure to engage in scholarly teaching practices.

This is an institutional culture shift which needs to be effectively change-managed—not something in which I profess any expertise. Thankfully, there are many out there who do know what they are talking about. An accessible starting point might be Geoff Scott's paper available online and presented at the Australian Universities Quality Forum (AUQF) 2004, "Change Matters: Making a Difference in Higher Education". Scott speaks there of the necessity to lead and manage change as a "complex learning and unlearning process for all concerned" (Scott, 2004)—a useful way to conceptualise the many challenges and possibilities of the A/Dean, L&T role.

Finding a Place That's a Little More Comfortable

In progressing and assuring the efficacy of any L&T change, innovation, evaluation or improvement, a key aspect of the role of the A/Dean, L&T is to create the appropriate environment (strategic, informed, policy-embedded and political) to assure that the nexus between institutional strategy and classroom implementation is facilitated.

The way in which I have sought to achieve this optimal change-friendly environment, as an A/Dean, L&T is to unlearn the notion of teacher/practitioner and learn a new model as an A/Dean, L&T who has the ability (if the stars are in alignment!) to be highly influential at many different levels. I have sought to represent this quite simple conceptual framework for the role diagrammatically in Figure 1.

As an individual teacher in the centre of the L&T environment, engaging in scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching, a staff member's levels of influence are represented by the lighter quarter-segments of:

- scholarly teaching of students;
- working with other teaching staff (eg in teaching teams, on L&T grants *etc*);
- operating within the boundaries of L&T policy and perhaps suggesting some change; and
- on some occasions working outside the School/Faculty/Institution with other teachers on L&T projects and/or discipline curriculum renewal.

As an A/Dean, L&T, placed in the centre of the L&T environment, it is possible to exercise much greater influence for the "pedagogical good" of enhancing student learning outcomes as represented by the expanded darker, encompassing quadrants:

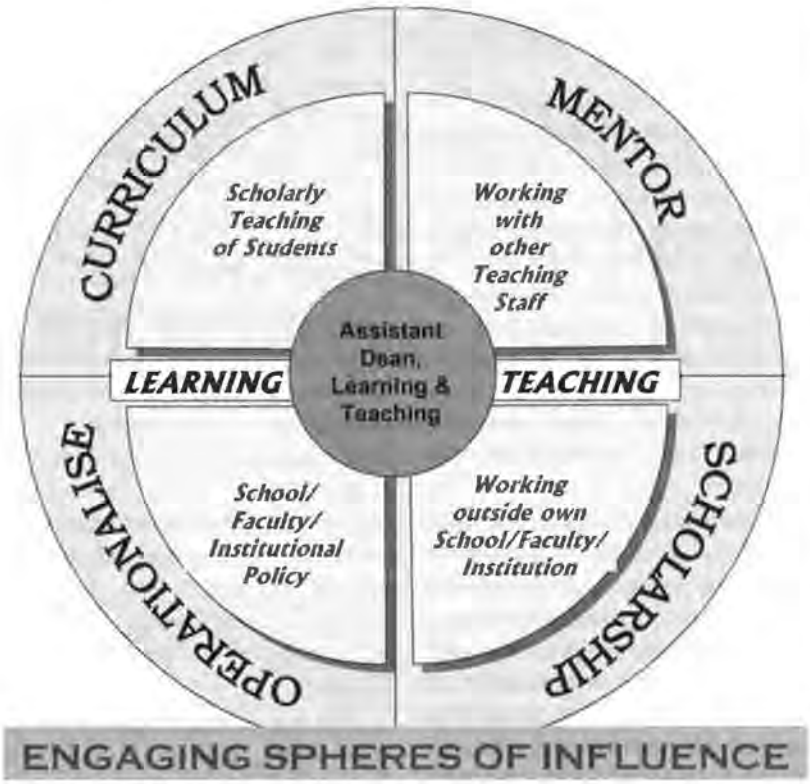

FIGURE 1: Conceptual framework for the role of an A/Dean, L&T

- rather than influencing "only" my own students, in the Faculty A/Dean, L&T role, through curriculum reform and informal curriculum engagement (eg orientation activities, emails to first year cohorts, *etc*) it is possible to be directly involved with *all* Faculty students;
- through supporting and mentoring larger numbers of Faculty staff (both ongoing and sessional) and thereby influencing others' scholarly teaching practice and encouraging those staff to publish in the scholarship of teaching and become involved in L&T Development Grants, there has been some steady evidence of cultural change in the Faculty, particularly amongst more junior colleagues who have easily embraced teaching change and innovation;
- through policy development, implementation and agitation it is possible to operationalise L&T philosophy at both the faculty and university levels: for example, by guiding Faculty course design; by monitoring policy implementation and QA compliance (especially regarding the unit/subject/course outline to ensure constructive alignment and program coherence); through initiating policy development (for example, on closing the loop on student feedback for QA purposes; by initiating small Faculty L&T Grants; by developing funding opportunities for staff to attend L&T Conference for scholarship publication; by developing Online L&T Policy); and
- through scholarship of teaching publications and invited speaking engagements at other Universities, by being institutionally visible (for example, through mentoring and regular presentations at conferences, forums, panels and other scholarly activities, especially staff development opportunities) it is possible to exercise greater influence at a different level of engagement by modelling L&T approaches through that scholarship and visibility and nationally and internationally through scholarship citation.

The Soft Landing

This way of conceptualising the work of an A/Dean, L&T could be described as more relational and holistic than linear—the series of separate elements (Faculty, School, University and sectoral) are intimately intertwined to produce a cohesive approach to transformational practice at all levels within the spheres of influence. For me, working hard for many masters and usually pleasing none, it becomes a sustainable theoretical base from which to operate and to enact a philosophy of student-learning-focused practice with a healthy dollop of care ethic. Within this framework, I am satisfied that, in tackling the difficult learning and teaching issues that beg for resolution, I do so from a position that integrates *supporting* students and teachers *through* practice and scholarship, perhaps as further illustrated by Figure 2.

The reward implicit in enacting a vision that might actually make a difference sustains me on my darker days (of which I have had a few). On deeper reflection also, it is something about the nature of the role that it attracts passionate, compassionate and caring colleagues (particularly my fellow A/Deans, L&T institutionally and nationally) and this provides a great measure of support and validation which cannot be underestimated. I am often left thinking, against my better judgment, that I do have a pretty good job and that, if I couldn't persuade "them" today, I will try again tomorrow. I found over time that naïve optimism and sturdy resilience are two other essential criteria for the job.

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Supporting

Students

This is not just a job for Sally but a true passion and belief in what she does.
Final year law student

Teachers

Working with Sally is intellectually challenging, rewarding and fun.
18 Law Faculty Staff, QUT 2003.

Through

Practice

Sally ...a rare and passionate commitment to improving the student learning experience. This commitment has won her respect and recognition amongst students, peers and the profession.
Prof Peter Coaldrake, VC, QUT. 2003

Scholarship

Ms Kift is one of Australia's brightest and most effective legal academics, working in the area of legal education scholarship and curriculum development. Ms Kift combines high order intellectual and analytical skills with outstanding breadth, energy and creativity.
Prof David Weisbrot, President ALRC. 2003

FIGURE 2: Alternate conceptualisation of A/Dean, L&T role: Supporting students and teachers through practice and scholarship (from the online site that supported my Australian Awards for University Teaching (AAUT) application in December 2003).

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THE HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY COLUMN

The Evaluative State

By Sharon Parry & Shelda Debowski

Colin Steele (2004) recently expressed concern over the direction of assessing university performance. When it comes to teaching and learning, the assessment of performance outcomes is extremely difficult, as teaching and learning indicators are still ill-defined. Here we argue that while the indicators themselves vary considerably and for good reason, the processes by which they are derived need careful scrutiny and perhaps a helping hand from organisations like HERDSA.

The notion of "the evaluative state" as described by Mary Henkel and Maurice Kogan invokes higher education as being governed by operational or instrumental frameworks imposed by government's managerialist agenda. The Nelson reforms give us no reason to suppose that the Australian system is any different; like other national systems, ours looks to others – the UK and the US in particular, to see where it might make efficiencies and improvements. Indeed, the pattern is in full swing: consider recent tensions reported in the media about federal and state controls on and contributions to funding of universities in Australia. Higher Education is no stranger to uncertainty and change, but the new accountability agenda has institutions anxiously reviewing their mechanisms for meeting the mooted criteria for the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund's first stage. (Although, there is still no certainty that these are confirmed.) As we highlighted in our last policy report many institutions are looking at their student feedback systems and trying to evaluate their robustness into the next few years.

Mary Henkel (1998) describes the evaluative systems for European higher education as placing peer review and self reflection at the heart of EU policies. She describes how, in traditional academic settings, peer review of the quality of higher education was "quite easily subsumed under peer review of research and scholarship". She goes on to explain how "higher education systems may be growing but they are also being required to demonstrate their value on a widely diversified set of criteria: basic research achievement, research contribution to industry, service to local communities and regions, reproduction of the academic profession, promotion of lifelong learning and preparation of increasingly large and diverse populations of students for labour markets characterised by change, uncertainty and high expectations of performance". This broader set of criteria is bound to influence the framework for LTPF agenda for learning and teaching for years to come. As the knowledge society broadens its conceptions of research, it also must reconceptualise teaching, to accommodate diverse flexible delivery models in a changing knowledge society; closer relationships between universities and professions, industry and the world of work; a more diversified student profile; and lifelong learning as a global imperative. University teaching is no longer a simple face-to-face lecture and tutorial activity between the teacher and the student. The "nested system" of the learner's environment described by Paul Ramsden a decade ago is now multidimensional.

Unfortunately for universities, there are some issues and challenges that government has not addressed, but which will, as time goes by, shape the kinds of criteria that institutions have to measure up to. One of those is that no shared definition of good teaching exists, so there can be no single conception of what a desirable student learning experience might be. The learning experience expected by students is no longer simply a face-to face endeavour.

Developing a definition of good teaching was never going to be simple because there are competing paradigms of student learning to be taken into account as well as different evaluation frameworks and epistemologies. In the United Kingdom, government—recognising the complexities in the knowledge society and the trend towards Mode 2 knowledge (Nowotny et al., 2001)– its uncertainties and its reliance on social robustness, together with the changing landscape of higher education, proposed a new conception of teaching quality as being "fitness for purpose". In this conception, all institutions could arguably achieve excellence. In addition, multiple perspectives about quality are possible, affecting what should count as evidence and who should count as stakeholders along with students themselves. Perhaps it is in recognition of these complexities that the emphasis in Australia is very firmly planted in the student experience.

Measuring the quality of the student experience is no simple endeavour. On the one hand, the well-embedded Course Experience Questionnaire provides a well-worn path to documenting student experience of courses over more than a decade. On the other hand, institutions in Australia, as in other national systems, have diversified over the past decade to meet a broader and more diversified student market. Its learning needs are highly varied, as are the flexible teaching and learning initiatives developed to meet them; new technologies have come into play; the cost of higher education is shifting more towards student customers who have to earn while they learn; and a more highly professionalised and vocationalised curriculum is overtaking time-honoured teaching and learning activities. The sacred cow—lectures and tutorials—no longer suits all or even the majority of learners. Institutions need to develop instruments that reflect realistic

and valued attributes of the student learning experience at whole-of-course and subject levels.

Institutions struggle to come to terms with what "evidence of systematic student evaluation of teaching and subjects" comprises. The answer, of course, is that it comprises whatever it takes to demonstrate that the institution is achieving desirable student learning outcomes.

In 2002, many of the Australasian Academic Development Unit Directors were surveyed about their institutions' systematisation of student feedback. At that time, only one institution reported having in place mandatory feedback on teaching that was being made available to Heads of Departments. In the intervening period, if course, much has changed and the debate is thickening about evaluative processes: what should be evaluated and who should make the judgements about performance. Here indeed is a major challenge, but also a potential strength. Already we have lost the notion of "nationally comparable data" in relation to student feedback on teaching and subjects, because learning outcomes, as well as student profiles, cannot be compared across the system.

Mary Henkel (1998) described the inherent epistemological difficulty in evaluating higher education programmes: recognition of diversity in the early 1990s led to widespread acceptance of evaluation methodologies taking into account multiple perspectives. The capacity to use multiple perspectives to demonstrate outcomes, when it comes to the quality of teaching or the quality of the student experience, seems logical. But there are two sets of unresolved issues at the national level which institutions cannot second-guess.

First is that, with multiple perspectives, there are choices between arbiters of performance outcomes being connoisseurs, such as experts in learning and teaching or employers or students themselves, or professional evaluators such as those trained by AUQA. Should evaluations rank institutions, or should they adopt a more independent social science orientation leaning epistemologically more towards emancipatory outcomes where understanding and reflection are emphasised? The Learning and Teaching Performance Fund is understood to recognise outcomes rather than improvements, but the question of what constitutes appropriate outcomes remains unresolved in Europe and the United Kingdom, and of course, so far, in the Australian sector.

Second is that government, in imposing evaluative frameworks at all, must make value judgements that have wider acceptance in the community. Which stakeholders count as important in this process? Initiators of evaluation have power or influence over agendas and frameworks, so they must decide how they will make distinctions between those institutions that are performing well, and those which are not. Whose agenda, and whose educational outcomes are at stake?

For those of us involved in teaching in higher education, it is worthwhile remembering that at the heart of these issues lies the question of standards. The Bologna Process is by turns requiring that the standards for primary, secondary and higher education across European systems be demonstrably equivalent, allowing for articulation and cross-fertilisation. The global market for higher education means that Australia, like any other system, is not immune to this need to demonstrate equivalence, and it is this imperative that should underpin our efforts to document the quality of educational outcomes. At the heart of European evaluative systems lies peer review and self-reflection, for it is through these processes that authoritative judgements about teaching, curriculum and student learning can be made with confidence.

An important role for HERDSA in coming years will be to provide avenues for these processes to be benchmarked within the Australian system generally, and avenues for university teachers individually to better understand how to demonstrate standards and student learning outcomes.

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2. Henkel, M. (1998) Evaluation in Higher Education: conceptual and epistemological foundations. *European Journal of Education, 33*(3), 285–297.
3. Nowotny, H., Scott, P., & Gibbons, M. (2001). *Re-thinking science knowledge and the public in an age of uncertainty*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

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"Peter Paul and Andy"- Reflections on New Zealand Higher Education in 2004

By Peter Hodder

The new feature on the higher education landscape in New Zealand over the last couple of years has been the Tertiary Education Commission. Initially headed up by Dr Andy West, the Commission describes its principal purpose as "steering the system". One of its early activities was to establish the Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF). This was designed as a means of redistributing some of the funds previously provided to tertiary (i.e., higher) education institutions on the basis of their student numbers, but anticipated as being used for supporting research. In other words, the more research students the institution had and the more research it did the more money it should get.

Central to the redistribution of funds was the institutional "score". The score was based on panels' assessments of the quality of research "outputs" of academic staff, the number of masters and doctoral theses completed, and the amount of research funds obtained from industry and external contracts[1]. With such criteria, the polytechnics and the colleges of education – which focus on training for particular employment and do little research other than consultancy work – would hardly have been expected to "perform" particularly well. They didn't. As expected, New Zealand's largest university – the University of Auckland – scored best. Top of the other universities – and a surprise to some – was the University of Canterbury, Victoria, Otago and Waikato universities were clustered next, followed by Lincoln and Massey. New Zealand's newest university – Auckland University of Technology – trailed the bunch, but given their origins as a polytechnic and their modest history in research, it was a creditable enough performance.

The departmental scores in the PBRF were rather less useful. Marketing gurus sought to make some capital out of particular departments being the nation's best in terms of research and that there was merit in being in a department staffed by "world-class" researchers, hoping it might attract students. As observed elsewhere[2], research strengths may be of much less importance to a first-year student choosing a university.

Despite being subject to an earlier successful legal challenge by Victoria and Auckland universities, the Commission intends to use the PBRF data to make international comparisons[3]. Given the different methodologies employed in schemes overseas, it is doubtful whether the comparisons will actually be very meaningful. And given that research students are more likely to make their choice of department on the basis of the reputation of individual members of academic staff, it may serve little real purpose. For the public, the PBRF scores excited minimal interest, the international comparison may incite little more than a yawn.

Taking into account the costs incurred by the participating institutions, the PBRF process has cost millions – which could well have been better invested in the research the scheme claims to foster.

As mentioned, the polytechnics lost out in the PBRF, and most lost government funds in the process. It came as no surprise that they lobbied for and ultimately achieved a separate fund to support their community and other industry-based initiatives – to make up for the PBRF funds they had lost. Having robbed "Peter Polytechnic" to pay "Paul University", the Commission recompensed Peter! Perhaps the colleges of education could have argued similarly, but the incorporation of the Auckland College of Education into the University of Auckland and the Wellington College of Education into Victoria University of Wellington means that there will be but two stand-alone colleges of education (at Dunedin and Christchurch). A lobby group of two is a bit small!

In its desire for a more clearly defined role for the various components of higher education in New Zealand, the Tertiary Education Commission tried to spell out what a university, a polytechnic and a whare wananga were. In its discussion document[4], the Commission said little that wasn't already known about the first two. Its scant reference to the whare wananga suggested it wasn't quite sure what they should really do. However, the wananga know what they're about: growth. The largest of them – Te Whare Wananga o Aotearoa – is now the largest tertiary education institution in New Zealand. While its courses are principally foundation and introductory courses, emphasising te reo Maori and computing skills, its effect on raising the participation of Maori in higher education has been remarkable. The challenge to the wananga and the rest of the sector will be to respond to the expectations raised in those who succeed in these programmes.

Other providers too have been involved in offering computing and other courses aimed at attracting participation by those in the community that had formerly shunned tertiary education. So successful has been the marketing of these courses that thousands signed up for "free" courses. Although free to the participants, the educational provider (generally "Peter Polytechnic" and private training establishments) were still able to claim the tuition subsidy from the Government, and provided the overheads could be kept low, perhaps by using on-line tutorials or enlisting the help of other administrative partners, the profits could be substantial. As well as there being some doubts about the quality of the courses, and whether those who enrolled actually achieved something educationally worthwhile, the costs of such schemes were unsustainable to Government. Andy decided that the

numbers of enrolments in such courses are to be restricted from next year [5].

The so-called "export education" part of the sector has taken a hammering this year. Among other influences, the collapse of two private training organisations that provided English language tuition to international students has affected the perception of New Zealand as an educational destination for international students. Universities, polytechnics (and schools too) have come to rely on international students as a way of sustaining growth in an overall stable or declining domestic market. The risk to "Peter Polytechnic" and "Paul University" of using the money intended to buy jam to buy bread has never been clearer.

And if all this were not enough, next year represents the first year that "Peter Polytechnic" and "Paul University" will admit students qualified for entrance from the National Certificate of Educational Attainment [6], the implementation of which has itself been controversial.

Endnotes

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3. "International comparisons of research quality in the New Zealand tertiary education system". See: www.allenconsult.com.au/nztec
4. "The distinctive contributions of tertiary education organisations – Consultation paper". See: www.tec.govt.nz/downloads/a2z_publications/consultation-disrinctive-contribitions-paper.html
5. Andy also decided to relinquish his role at the Tertiary Education Commission to become CEO of AgResearch, one of New Zealand's Crown Research Institutes.
6. For details see: www.nzqua.govt.nz/ncea/about/more-details/index.html.

Several years ago Peter Hodder relinquished an academic life in geosciences for management positions within higher education, and now has a heightened interest in the politics of and developments in New Zealand education. He is currently Director of Postgraduate Studies and Scholarships at The University of Waikato at Hamilton New Zealand.
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The HERDSA Fellowship Scheme

By Roger Landbeck

The HERDSA Fellowship Scheme for the Professional Recognition and Development of Teaching in Higher Education was first introduced at the annual conference, which was held in Perth in July 2002. HERDSA members were invited to take part in a pilot project to trial the Scheme with the expectation that successful completion of a portfolio detailing their teaching would result in the award of a HERDSA Fellowship(FHERDSA).

One year later ten academics were awarded the first HERDSA Fellowships during the opening ceremony of the 2003 annual conference in Christchurch. The ten comprised a mixture of academics teaching in the disciplines and academic developers with one learning skills adviser. A further three fellowships were awarded at the recent HERDSA conference in Miri. Currently 20 are preparing their portfolios under the direction of mentors who have successfully completed the Scheme.

"Teaching" has been described by the Scheme to refer to a wide range of activities in higher education which encourage and support learning: conventional higher education courses, on-line and distance education as well as academic development activities and learning support events and activities.

The following extract from the brochure provides the philosophical basis of the Scheme and the rationale for its introduction.

The Scheme is based upon four fundamental values of HERDSA:

HERDSA places an emphasis on the development and improvement of higher education teaching and learning. While the Fellowship Scheme recognises standards of quality teaching in higher education, it is first and foremost a professional developmental Scheme.

HERDSA is a scholarly society. Scholarly teaching and the encouragement of scholarship in teaching are fundamental values on which the Fellowship Scheme is based.

HERDSA is a society founded on the concept of peer interaction. Peer review is a fundamental element of the Fellowship Scheme.

The Fellowship Scheme is voluntary. It is open to individuals who choose to apply.

Why has the Fellowship Scheme been established?

The purposes of the Scheme are to:

- improve the quality of teaching across the higher education sector and thereby to improve the quality of student learning and academic development outcomes;
- enhance the professionalism of teachers;

- provide a way for universities to recognise and reward those who facilitate high quality learning;
- give individuals a means for making statements about the quality of their professional practice;
- provide opportunities for further professional development in cross-institutional groups;
- enable HERDSA to recognise and reward good teaching through the process of peer review;
- provide a process for critical reflection into teaching practice and the learning process;
- provide a forum for peer evaluation and dialogue; and
- provide a forum for discussion and dissemination of research and scholarship of teaching.

Current Developments

In the light of the experience gained through the pilot project, the procedures and documentation have been modified. In addition an International Reference Group has been formed to monitor the overall standards of the Scheme.

The members of the Reference Group are:

Dr Chris Knapper, Dr Helen King, Professor Ingrid Moses, Mr John Jennings, Dr Elizabeth McDonald, Dr Carolyn Allport.

Recent developments to make the Scheme more widely known in New Zealand are described elsewhere in this issue. All Pro-Vice-Chancellors of Teaching and Learning in Australian and New Zealand universities have now received information about the Scheme.

Personal reflections by Fellows on the experience of preparing for a Fellowship can be found in the September 2003 issue of *HERDSA News*. Those interested in learning first hand about the experience can contact the Fellows by e-mail.

Full details about the philosophy of the Scheme and the steps required to register can be found on the HERDSA web site (www.herdsa.org.au) . Click on the Fellowship link. Note that you will need to be a HERDSA member in order to participate in the Scheme.

Roger Landbeck is Editor of HERDSA News.

The HERDSA Fellowship Scheme in New Zealand

By Kogi Naidoo

Since being awarded the HERDSA Fellowship in 2003 I am still the only New Zealand Fellow. In the spirit of fellowship and collegiality as the HERDSA NZ branch we decided to promote the HERDSA Fellowship more actively. We needed to celebrate good teaching practice and the scholarship of teaching in tertiary education in New Zealand, especially with the hype and angst around the recent release of the Performance Based Research Funding results [a new "payment by results" system the government has introduced]. Teaching was again being relegated to secondary status.

However, teaching excellence is being recognised nationally in New Zealand. In June this year the third group of the National Tertiary Teaching Award winners were announced. HERDSA NZ decided on a national roadshow of HERDSA seminars to be held across New Zealand. We have had two successful seminars attended by nearly a hundred interested staff. The seminars entitled, Winning Strategies: Documenting Effective Teaching were hosted by the Universities of Auckland and Wellington. In the seminars I shared the podium which brought together some of the 2002 and 2003 tertiary teaching award winners to talk about the necessity and potential benefits of documenting teaching practice and compiling a teaching portfolio.

At the Victoria University seminar, Dr Sydney Shep (VUW) and Dr Terry Stewart (Massey) shared their personal reflections on teaching success. At the Auckland University of Technology seminar, Welby Ings (AUT), Professor Chris Wild and Rachel Cuncliffe (UA) demonstrated their passion for and commitment to teaching. The presenters talked about their teaching philosophies and shared hints and tips about what works to challenge and inspire students to achieve the learning outcomes and desirable graduate attributes. The seminars were successful in that they provided staff with a collegial forum to engage with the many challenges we face relating to teaching and learning. I was able to promote the HERDSA Fellowship scheme by highlighting the benefits of and the ability to demonstrate quality teaching.

Another promotional idea has been put in place at my university. The Training and Development Unit (TDU) at Massey University is sponsoring one Massey staff member per year to undertake the Fellowship. The sponsorship will cover registration and evaluation fees payable. At the last branch meeting of HERDSA NZ much interest was expressed by members to initiate similar initiatives at their respective institutions.

These initiatives have stimulated much interest from staff and will result in increased HERDSA memberships and certainly more HERDSA Fellows.

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"Jewel in the Shamrock: Improve Student Learning at Trinity"

Robert Kennelly's experience of the Introduction of the Teaching Portfolio Process using Reflective Practice at Trinity College Dublin

I arrived at Trinity on 1st July 2004 to commence my first job as an academic developer. I was very nervous at coming to a new country for this change of career. Trinity is a traditional, Oxbridge style university, 400 years old, with buildings to match. Trinity has 6 traditional faculties, 64 departments and 30 odd centres. To complicate matters some departments or groups of departments are called a school. The departments vary in size from 3–4 to 50 tenured academics.

At the selection interview I had offered to do four main things:

1. Co-ordinate a year long program for new academic staff in teaching and learning;
2. Facilitate a series of Departmental workshops for teaching assistants (tutors in Australian university parlance)
3. Co-ordinate a series of undefined activities for new Heads of Departments.
4. Introduce Teaching Portfolios.

In my mind there was a link between my experience of becoming a Foundation Teaching Fellow of HERDSA and the 12 month contract at Trinity.

So what did Trinity want with Teaching Portfolios?

Trinity's Strategic Plan of 2003–2008, sets itself the goal of "fostering best practice in teaching ... and strengthening support for all students so that their learning is more effective ..."[1]

In practice Trinity had implemented a number of enabling strategies. These included:

- The voluntary introduction of a student feedback system in 2001;
- Introduction of the Provost Teaching Excellence Awards in 2002; and
- Introduction of innovative teaching Grants in 2002.

In 2004 Trinity planned to introduce the Teaching Portfolio obviously with the aim of promoting student learning. Two strategies have since emerged:

1. To introduce teaching portfolios from a developmental and inquiry perspective, (focus of this article); and
2. To introduce the reviewing of teaching portfolios in the promotion process.

The first of these strategies were supported by:

The engagement of Nona Lyons, an acknowledged teaching portfolio expert from the United States. Nona Lyons is the author of *With Portfolio in Hand: Validating the New Teacher Professionalism* (New York and London: Teachers' College Press, 1998), and joint editor *of Advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning through a Reflective Portfolio Process: The University College Cork Experience* (Ireland: University College Cork, 2002). Nona, created and is conducting the seminars and workshops at the heart of this strategy (discussed later in article).

And the running of workshops to facilitate academics thinking and writing about their teaching philosophy statements. (the workshop facilitator was a Trinity colleague, Dr. Ciara O'Farrell).

Despite the positive preliminary steps made by Trinity for the Introduction of Teaching Portfolios, I had concerns about my role in this process and the extent to which Trinity's culture would be supportive of rigorous, personal inquiry into teaching. My limited understanding of the Irish secondary school system and my own limited observations of the academic expectations of Trinity students forebode a difficult road ahead.

In particular I was concerned at the influence of "grinds schools" in the last year of secondary education, where students were instructed on how to remember and regurgitate information during exams so as to produce a high university entrance score. This may have the affect of preparing a student for a more surface orientation to learning in university rather than a deeper orientation to learning.

Moreover I wondered about the implications for student learning of a pass mark of 40% or less in some departments combined with an apparent reliance on summative assessment in exam conditions. In some departments this practice appeared to beg the question: What is the best assessment method for the learning outcomes being tested? In some cases courses (units or subjects) did not have explicit learning outcomes.

However, it is variable. Many departments do have learning outcomes, do use multi assessment methods, do provide formative assessment and have an aligned curriculum. A number of other departments are engaged in developing a more learning focused approach to curriculum design.

With these initial perceptions in mind a plan was developed.

Firstly, to take the process beyond simply writing a paper called "my teaching portfolio".

I chose to call the program "Developing a Teaching portfolio with reflective practice" Secondly, to market the program with a clear detailed description of what I meant by "teaching portfolio" and "reflective practice".[2]

I described a teaching portfolio as a continuous process of journalising ones inquiry into teaching.

It may include the following:

- A philosophy of teaching, a set of values that both drives and provides a framework for evaluation of teaching and student learning; and
- A set of experiences (captured in the portfolio as "entries"), both good and bad, which are set against criteria for the investigation of a teacher's teaching and her/his students learning.

This investigation should be done through "reflective practice", mostly with the benefit of a facilitator. Nona Lyons best captures this point when she says: "... interrogating a compelling or puzzling situation of teaching or learning ..."[3]

This is not musing about one's teaching but a rigorous critical study, possible using evaluation and assessment data to inform the inquiry. The reflection may be framed by a broad, recurring question, for example: **What influences a student towards a deep orientation to learning?**[4]

With 1.5 academic developers on staff for many hundreds of academics and teaching assistants the question was how many initial participants could we support.

Given my perception of the prevailing academic environment what support would Trinity academics need to commence and continue their reflective journey into their teaching and their students' learning? We decided that participants should have access to one or more of the following:

- a facilitator of reflective practice;
- peer support in pairs and in small groups; and
- access to the academic developers.

With the aim of supporting 24 participants we embarked on our marketing strategy, which included a flyer with pictures, a description of teaching portfolios and reflective practice, information on a series of four workshops to assist academics on their reflective journey.

This information went to all academics which resulted in about 50 enquiries. They were sent a registration form, which sought to identify the extent to which they had an existing interest in the learning of their students.

Examples included:

- An application for a provost teaching excellence award;
- An application for a Learning Innovation project;
- Use of the centralised student survey system;
- Participation at a "Writing a Teaching of Philosophy statement"; and
- Other evidence of inquiry into teaching and learning.

The following program of seminar/workshops conducted by Nona Lyons have commenced.

Sept 29 or Oct 19: Seminar: Introduction to the Development of Teaching Portfolios with Reflective Practice.

November 10: Constructing a Teaching Portfolio: With what kind of entries? Evidence?

November 18: Making Inquiries into Teaching and Student Learning: How do we know what students know and understand?

November 24: Assessing Portfolio Evidence: With what framework and using what criteria?

December 8: Presenting Potential Portfolio Entries.[5]

At least in relation to the introduction seminars my forebodings were unfounded as participants shared happily and enthusiastically about their teaching and their student's learning. They reported learning/teaching experiences of great success and of great disappointment and this focus was brought out in their "one minute essays" at the end of the seminars. These experiences included:

> "... respected discussion & thoughts of my peers, I have established that I am not alone ..."
>
> "Is the process data driven, followed by opportunistic analysis or is it experimental driven, by targeted questions, ..."
>
> "... many of the group, like me, seem to be grappling with issues of student engagement, ... "[6]

Each participant was allocated a facilitator of reflective practice. These fellow academics were selected on the basis that they had the following skills and attitudes:

- Be passionate about their teaching with a student learning focus;
- Have an ability to actively listen to a colleague reflecting;
- An ability to ask engaging questions when required;
- They were not required to be a technical expert or an aficionado in teaching portfolios; and
- They received limited briefing and practice on their facilitator role.

Where are we headed?

We have formed a cohort of academics prepared to invest time and energy into reflecting and documenting an inquiry of their teaching. We have designed support structures (including a facilitator of reflective practice for each participant) to nourish and encourage the journey.

With Roger's agreement, I will report further developments in my experience of the introduction of teaching portfolios with reflective practice to Trinity College in Dublin ... perhaps the April Newsletter.

Robert Kennelly is a Foundation Teaching Fellow of HERDSA and after several years as a tutor and lecturer in Management at Canberra University has taken a 12 month contract as an academic developer at Trinity College in Dublin.
Contact: Kennellr@tcd.ie

End Notes

1. Trinity College Dublin's Strategic Plan 2003 to 2008.
2. Material developed by the author (in collaboration) for marketing the Teaching Portfolio program at Trinity College, Dublin. September 2004.
3. Lyons, N., & La Boskey, V. (2002). *Narrative inquiry in practice: advancing the knowledge of teaching*. NY: Teachers College Press.
4. The author's teaching portfolio, May 2003.
5. Material developed by the author in collaboration for marketing the Teaching Portfolio program at Trinity College, Dublin. September 2004.
6. "One Minute" essays completed anonymously by participants at the end of the first workshop, September 2004.

I.T. IN HIGHER EDUCATION COLUMN

Technology Interactions: Scholarly Publishing

By Roger Atkinson

I invited Roger Atkinson to contribute a regular column to *HERDSA News* on IT in higher education. This is his first article.

The interactions between the new technologies in computing and networking and scholarly publishing present us with a curious paradox. The great advances that we have obtained in computing and networking technologies ought to give us decreased costs for scholarly journals and easier, digital network access. However, in most cases, subscription charges for print delivery and network access are rising every year. To illustrate this point, Figure 1 compares three Australian based professional society journals having print and online versions.

Data sources: Rates quoted in printed copies of the journals and the publisher's website. Prices include Internet access from an institutional local area network in the cases of HERD and DE (AJET is "open access", being unrestricted, free to the Internet, three months after publication).

1. Higher Education Research and Development. http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/07294360.asp
2. Distance Education. http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/01587919.asp
3. Australasian Journal of Educational Technology. http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/

How can we analyse this paradox and the differences shown in Figure 1? In particular, does the technological perspective *really* indicate a potential for lower rates to prevail, and for enhanced services to be offered? After all, the Taylor and Francis Group (publishers of HERD, DE and about 119 other journals under the classification "education"), are using much the same computing and digital networking technologies as ASCILITE is using for AJET. Reviewing these technologies, let's consider three broad, key factors: cost of information storage; cost of digital network transport; and the cost and efficiency of search processes that enable readers to find the content they are seeking. Let's consider these in an anecdotal way, hopefully, this being more readable and informative than large amounts of technological detail.

My first major involvement with *information storage* technologies, now 25 years ago, was with a 10 megabyte (MB) "Winchester disk", part of a $100,000 investment in a word processing facility. At the time10 meg was "huge", but now we can routinely and cheaply deploy on our desktops a personal computer with disk storage 10,000 times that capacity. AJET's online archive, a complete coverage from 1985 to the current issue, occupies 23.7 MB, and is increasing at a rate of about 2.5 to 3.5 MB per year. On a 100,000 MB (100 GB) disk that's trivial, and we really can talk about *marginal costs of storage approaching zero* for the online archives of a journal. HERD and DE, though their current availability online is minor, being only 2000 onwards and 2002 onwards, respectively, would require amounts of server disk storage similar to AJET.

Of course we may have to worry about the average cost of the server and disk space, and whether the journal has to have a subscription income to pay such expenses. I say "may", because in many cases these costs appear to be "already covered"

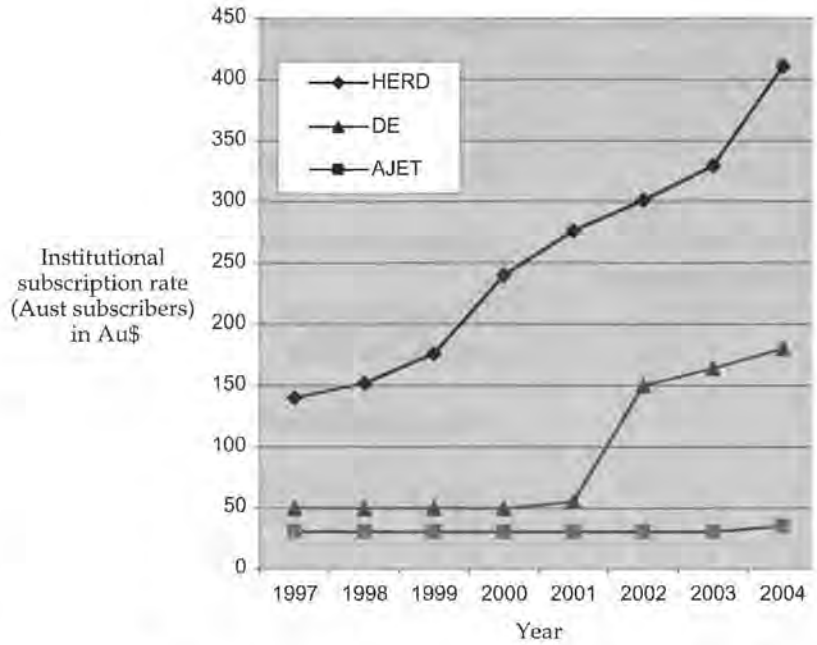

FIGURE 1: Institutional subscription rates 1997–2004 for HERD [1], DE [2] and AJET [3]

by sponsorship, usually in cases where the sponsoring society or organisation has an operational server, and has to have it for other reasons. For a large, comprehensive list of educational research journals that are "open access", see the web page by AERA's SIG Communication of Research, *Open Access Journals in the Field of Education*[4]. You may be surprised by the popularity of giving away research journal articles, free to the Internet, no subscription charges, no annual increases! Whilst you are there, note their admirable, modest intent, "...we hope to do what little we can to promote free access world wide to scholarship in education".[4]

Now for cost trends in *digital network transport*. Again, for many users the scenario is *marginal costs approaching zero*, for typical journal article content. Right now I'm busy with edits for *Proceedings 21st ASCILITE Conference*,[5] pursuing a tough editorial line on reference list checking (among many other matters). Reference list checking requires a little more traffic on our Telstra Bigpond ADSL connection. As we are quite a bit below our monthly "home office" allowance of 500 MB, the quota that if exceeded gets us into an "excess" charge, I become indulgent. It's OK to download a 1 MB file, just for a simple purpose such as checking whether the author of the paper made a citation error (as an aside, easy checking of reference lists, enabled by Google searches and low charges for traffic volume, reveals that the average author is rather sloppy with referencing—a matter flagged for reporting upon in detail, soon, in another column). There is a new indulgence available to me now—often it's easier to do a network search, rather than get off my butt and rummage for hard copy in the traditional archives (now relegated

TABLE 1: Google search results for attempts to find HERD, DE and AJET articles

Journal and search string prefix	Authors	Search string suffix	Google result
HERD 23(1), 2004 higher education research development	Moore	critical thinking debate skills	Not in first 30 of about 222,000
	Maclellan	authenticity assessment academic perception	Not in first 30 of about 7,820
	Zeegers	learning academic achievement science	Not in first 30 of about 443,000
	Watson Johnson and Austin	field study student retention	Not in first 30 of about 261,000
	Ellis, Calvo, Levy and Tan	learning discussion online	Not in the first 30 of about 888,000
DE 25(1) distance education	Kuboni and Martin	support web learning environment	Not in first 30 of about 994,000
	Bernard, Brauer, Abrami and Surkes	questionnaire online learning achievement	Result 3 of about 24,500
	Lou	problem solving collaboration online	Not in first 30 of about 161,000
	de Bruyn	online communication social interactive	Not in first 30 of about 301,000
	LaPointe and Gunawardena	peer interaction conferencing learning	Not in the first 30 of about 34,800
AJET 20(1) journal educational technology	Dalgarno and Harper	spatial learning authentic 3D	Result 1 of about 1,550
	Kennedy and Judd	audit trail data	Result 1 of about 42,400
	Wilson and Stacey	online interaction learning teaching	Result 8 of about 419,000
	Phelps, Graham and Kerr	teachers ICT professional development	Result 49 of about 59,200
	Schwier, Campbell and Kenny	instructional design community practice	Result 21 of about 342,000

Notes to Table 1: See the home page for each journal to access the table of contents for the cited issue. The test was done on 16 August 2004, using "Find results with all of the words". To obtain the search string actually used in each case, combine the "prefix" in column 1 with the "suffix" in column 3. Key words in the "suffix" were selected from or derived from words in the article title, in nearly all cases. Column 4 indicates the number of "hits", and whether the authors in column 1 were found, or were not found in the first 30 "hits".

to the garage—there are complete sets of HERD, DE and AJET out there, along with heaps of conference proceedings). With *marginal costs of digital network transport approaching zero,* let's be indulgent in the number of articles that we download!

There are downsides. The marginal costs for network transport may be exceptionally favourable, but if your campus library is not a subscriber or if you are off campus, as I am, you can hit a "pay per view", almost invariably with the major commercial publishers. "Hit" is the word, who is going to pay US$19 to obtain a single article from HERD? Another downside is frequent lack of stability in online sources. For example, HERDSA's 2003 Conference Proceedings were online,[6] but recently the message from that webserver became "Error 404 ... The requested URL was not found on this server ..."

Considering *the cost and efficiency of search processes,* the ultimate in high tech, low cost is the free to the Internet search engine. Whilst numerous illustrations could be chosen, one interesting question to explore is whether the authors who have written for HERD, DE and AJET are likely to be satisfied with their exposure to one of the most popular of the modern search processes. Table 1 illustrates Google[7] results from searches simulating the outcomes that authors invariably hope for, that is the appearance of their own work near the very top of the search results. Whilst Table 1 is just a simple pilot test, it does seem to indicate that the authors of AJET 20(1) articles are likely to be quite satisfied, whereas authors of HERD 23(1) and DE 25(1) articles are likely to cry "foul" and say "sample size too small", or "I demand a recount", or a different "bias in the selection of keywords". Or one could claim that Google, though a technological marvel and a great free resource, is not in the same class as a reputable abstracting journal, etc, etc.

Perhaps this brief glimpse at the interactions between the technologies and scholarly publishing will have increased your awareness of a paradox: prices rising for commercially based journals, notwithstanding the technologically driven scope for price reductions, and the emergence of new search techniques that are beginning to weaken the ranking of articles published in commercial journals, compared with articles published in open access journals.

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4. AERA Communication of Research SIG: Open Access Journals in the Field of Education. [viewed 14 Oct 2004] http://aera-cr.ed.asu.edu/links.html
5. ASCILITE 2004 Conference Proceedings. In preparation, to appear at http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/perth04/procs/contents.html
6. http://www.conference.canterbury.ac.nz/herdsa2003/
7. http://www.google.com/

Roger Atkinson retired from Murdoch University's Teaching and Learning Centre in June 2001. His current activities include publishing AJET and honorary work on a number of academic conference support and publishing activities. Website: http://www.users.bigpond.net.au/atkinson-mcbeath/roger/

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Round Table Papers from Miri

Off to a Good START: Sessional Tutors Development Programme

By Carol Johnston & Gayle Morris

The articles by Carol Johnston and Gayle Morris, Rosemary Clerehan and Anne Pratt were originally presented at round table sessions at the Miri conference. I invited the authors to revise their papers in the light of their own reflections and input from the audience.

The influential relationship between teacher approaches to teaching and student approaches to learning is well established. A teachers approach to teaching is an outward manifestation of, often unarticulated, conceptions about what it is to teach and what it means to be an effective teacher. While much research has been conducted at the school level in relation to conceptions of teaching there was, until relatively recently, little consideration of this in higher education. Academics may have seen research in their discipline and scholarship in their teaching as mutually exclusive activities. This has changed significantly over the last ten years as pressures relating to dwindling public funding, more competitive markets for higher education—including international markets—and the technology revolution have increased. Many academics would now recognise that there are fruitful outcomes associated with bridging the nexus between teaching and research. Integrating the same scholarly approach to teaching as to discipline related research stimulates greater reflection about teaching and can be expected to result in a reconceptualisation of teaching for some. There is also the recognition that conceptions of teaching have a powerful influence on the learning outcomes of students and that there is sometimes a mismatch between espoused approaches to teaching and observed teaching practice.

Changing conceptions of teaching can be a slow process. However, frequently academic and sessional/casual tutoring staff do not have significant amounts of time to develop their thinking in relation to teaching. The Faculty of Economics and Commerce at the University of Melbourne has, since 1995, focused on building the conceptions of sessional tutoring staff as one way in which to develop a productive culture of learning and teaching in the faculty. The collaborative problem solving tutorial structure is an early example of this (Johnston, James, Lye & McDonald, 2000; Johnston & Olekalns, 2002) where all first and second year tutorials in the economics department were moved to a problem solving small group activity structure. At the same time an intensive and ongoing tutor-development programme, described below, was introduced in order to facilitate this major change from tutor-centered tutorials to ones that are student centered. Within two years this development programme was extended to all departments in the faculty.

The Faculty has over 5,000 students and a large number of sessional tutoring staff are employed to support student learning. Many of these tutors are themselves postgraduate students in the faculty. Typically they will tutor for 2 to 4 semesters before completing their degrees and moving into full time employment elsewhere. As a result, the turnover of sessional staff is high with between 60 and 80 new tutors being hired each semester.

In terms of effecting change in the quality of the learning experience for students the tutors play a pivotal role. Tutors are the first point of call for students and are likely to have the greatest interaction and thereby impact on student behavior and learning. They are the conduit between the lecturer and the student and are in many ways best placed to achieve a change in culture so necessary for imbedding real improvements in teaching.

All new tutors in the faculty are provided with a teaching development programme. The development programme comprises a two hour pre-service discipline specific session; an observation of a tutorial undertaken by a faculty teaching and learning specialist followed by an individual consultation and feedback for each tutor and a further two hour development session around the middle of the semester. The programme is designed to assist tutors to develop conceptions of teaching that are likely to lead students to adopt a deep rather than a surface approach to learning. The full range of programs and services to support tutors' professional learning, can be seen in figure 1.

This tutor-development programme has been well received and has resulted in an improvement of student perceptions of tutorial teaching as evidenced by evaluation surveys of the programme by tutors and by end of semester quality assurance surveys by students. Nevertheless the programme developers felt that there were some gaps. First, several new tutors each year request that the Faculty Teaching and Learning Unit (TLU) arrange for them to observe more experienced tutors actually taking a tutorial. While this is desirable it can also be disruptive of the regular tutorial programme and places undo pressure on the more experienced tutors. Nevertheless, we recognise that tutors would benefit from observing other tutors, in part, to see the operation of teaching theory in practice. Second, there is a need to provide a vehicle for all tutors to reflect on their teaching practice in

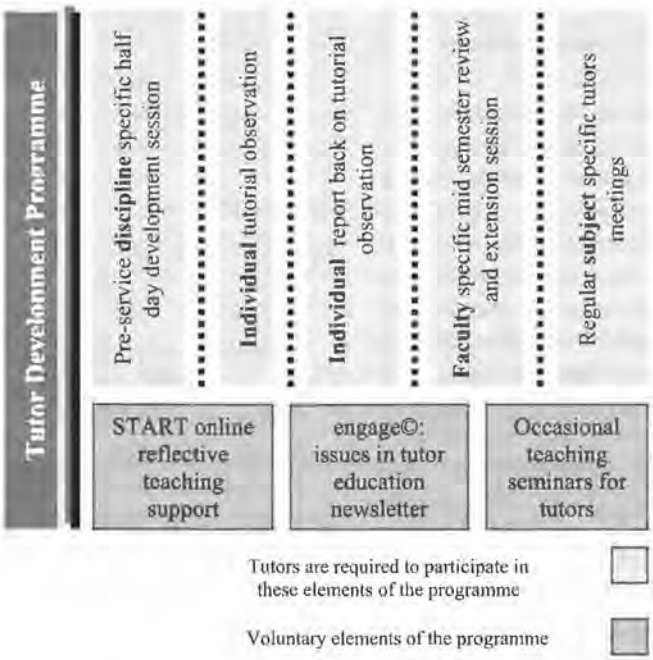

FIGURE 1: Tutor Development Program

order to develop and progress. And third, tutors who are not new to the faculty have not been able to access refresher courses or materials. It is likely that more experienced tutors would have different concerns and support needs than new tutors who are more focused, perhaps, on survival than sophisticated development of skills. These experienced tutors require the opportunity to reflect on their experience and to compare their experiences with those of others.

The tutor-development programme was designed to provide this type of extended and ongoing opportunity to develop an appropriate conceptual understanding of teaching that effectively supports student learning. Kagan (1992) notes that "If a program [of staff development] is to promote growth among novices, it must require them to make their pre-existing personal beliefs explicit, must challenge the adequacy of those beliefs, and it must give novices extended opportunities to examine, elaborate and integrate new information into their existing belief systems" (p. 77). In order to round out the programme and fill some of the gaps identified the Streamed Tutors Audio/Visual Reflective Teaching (START) project was instigated.

Streamed Tutors Audio/ Visual Reflective Teaching (START) programme

The START project aims to assist sessional tutors in their continuing development to more learning centered approaches to teaching. Informal theories or conceptions of teaching are frequently un-stated and yet deeply ingrained in practice. As we have noted these conceptions are hard to change (Argyris & Schön, 1974; Kagan, 1992; Richardson, 1996; Trigwell & Prosser, 1996) however the provision of opportunities that allow articulation and increased awareness of ingrained conceptions of teaching would seem to be a useful first step in achieving a change in teaching approaches (Kreber, 2000.) Each component of the tutor-development programme, including the START project, has been designed to influence this and to encourage tutors to articulate and adjust their approaches to teaching so that it is more closely integrated with student deep approaches to learning identified by Marton and Saljo (1976), Entwistle and Ramsden (1983) and others.

The online tutor teaching development programme, Streamed Tutors Audio/Visual Reflective Teaching (START), was developed by the Faculty of Economics and Commerce Teaching and Learning Unit in collaboration with the Centre for the Study of Higher Education through a $30,000 grant from the University's' Teaching and Learning (Multimedia and Electronic Learning Technologies) Committee. The programme was developed within the context of the disciplines of the faculty i.e. accounting, management, economics and finance but the framework is designed to be transferable to other disciplines and faculties in the university. Each theme of the START programme comprises video and audio interviews with experienced tutors and heads of department, video clips of actual tutorials being conducted in each of the disciplines of the faculty as well as textual comments and focus points for reflection. A screen shot of a typical theme is illustrated in figure 2.

Where reflection is employed in the learning process it is more likely that lasting change will result. The START thematic areas include reflective activities designed to assist tutors to

FIGURE 2: A START Screen Shot

articulate their unstated theories and approaches to teaching. In this manner tutors were better placed to adjust their teaching strategies to more effectively facilitate student learning. The nature of the themes then is to demonstrate good practice through the audiovisual presentation and to scaffold learning in relation to these through interactive reflective activities. These activities are designed to lay bare inherent theories of teaching and seek to adjust these where appropriate.

We chose not to have the tutorial video clips scripted and performed by actors, as we wanted to illustrate exactly what a tutorial would look like in practice rather than an artificial construction. This approach was more naturalistic and provided the opportunity to also illustrate the context in which tutorials take place in so far as some rooms may be more conducive to good practice than others.

Each thematic area developed in the programme is supported by text and scaffolding, and reflective thinking prompts illustrating the good practice indicated in video clips. These themes are used in the initial development sessions for tutors and are available for use in short 10 minute teaching grabs within the regular tutors' meetings. As the programme is online all themes are available for tutors at the time that they require them via the faculty Teaching and Learning Unit (TLU) web site on a 24/7 basis. Themes have been developed on a wide range of topics through which tutors can browse. Topics include questioning skills, strategies to promote student participation, teaching in a culturally diverse classroom, time management, small group management, effective opening and closing strategies and efficient feedback options.

An overarching principle of each of the themes is to illustrate a conception of teaching that is student learning centered rather than teacher and content centered. In addition each of the thematic areas takes into consideration how tutors can contribute to development of aspects of the graduate attributes that have been identified as desirable by the faculty. For example the themes are designed to indicate how to stimulate student participation in each of the disciplines of the faculty and could contribute to the development of student critical thinking, reflection and oral communication skills.

There were several long term aims of this project. As a result of improved teaching practice in tutorials through influencing tutors conceptions of teaching it was anticipated that student approaches to learning would be influenced. The engagement of students in tutorials would be fostered leading to deeper approaches to learning and a greater enjoyment of tutorials. While this may seem a long bow to draw such relationships are well established in the literature (Biggs, 1989; Kagan, 1992; Ramsden, 1992; Kember, 1997; Kane, Sandretto and Heath, 2002) and it was also anticipated that more tutoring staff would engage in professional development activities related to teaching if there are more options available to them in terms of when and where these activities take place. The learning that results from using START is expected to be reflected in reports of greater confidence, innovation and satisfaction in teaching by tutoring staff. Direct learning outcomes are difficult to measure, however it is anticipated that staff that have access to a wide range of professional development materials will be better placed to improve the learning environment of students as a whole.

While professional development support of this kind opens up an important opportunity for tutors to engage in continued active reflection of their practice, future developments plan to expand its usefulness. We would like to see a regular update of the tutorial video clips and we would like to expand the number of these to ensure a broad cross-section of tutorials from each of the main disciplines. We are also exploring ways in which to increase the level of interactivity, for example through the inclusion of a discussion board. In addition we would like to include a self-assessment instrument to assist tutors to clarify and explore further their conceptions of teaching. And finally, we aim to review the whole site in terms of navigation and overall functionality.

We welcome your feedback and encourage readers to have a look at START at http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/tutortraining/tutortraining.htm

Comments can be directed to: cgj@unimelb.edu.au or gemorris@unimelb.edu.au

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Dr Gayle Morris is a Teaching/ Learning Specialist in the Faculty Teaching and Learning Unit with particular responsibility for tutor development.

Since 2003, when Dr Morris joined the Unit, she has refined and further enhanced the programme through the addition of the "engage" online newsletter and seminars for tutors.

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"I have to go now–but you'll find it on the Web". What happens when we put writing support online?

By Rosemary Clerehan

> Glendower: I can call spirits from the vasty deep
>
> Hotspur: Why so can I, or so can any man;
>
> But will they come when you do call for them?
>
> Henry 4, Act 3, Scene 1.

The reality check offered by Hotspur to the boastful and rhetorically inclined Welshman cannot help but remind those of us in the business of educational innovation—particularly on the Web—that we must be very cautious about the claims we make of our work.

The Literature

While there is a growing body of research into students' responses to the use of communication and information technologies in education, there has been less into the value of stand-alone online material to assist in orientation to assignment writing. Krause (2001) calls for more research to investigate students' perceptions of their interactions with, and learning from, the technology, stating that we need to spend more time listening to students' needs and concerns: "ongoing research investigating these issues should be a priority" (p. 164).

Evaluation of Web-based projects, according to Alexander (1999), is seldom done to one's satisfaction. Conscious of how the existence of perfect conditions would have made one's own attempt a lot more convincing, here is an account of how a site providing stand-alone academic writing support resources for first-year students in nine subjects was developed and evaluated from 2001–2003.

As we move towards internationalising the curriculum, the kinds of support we provide for culturally and linguistically diverse groups assumes an even greater prominence than they have had in the past. The current research compares the perceptions of the Web resource from local and international students (n=985). The results suggest significant differences between the two groups, indicating specific issues in the application and management of new knowledge for commencing student cohorts. In a previous survey administered over two years as phase one of the research discussed in this article, of 1,500 students enrolled in the first-year marketing subject, 63 per cent of local and 80% per cent of international students believed they had not understood well what their assignment task required them to do (Clerehan & Walker, 2004).

The Project

"Writing in Subject Areas"

http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/sif/Tutorials/Subjects/subjects.html[1] is a site developed to facilitate student transition to the kinds of thinking and writing valued at university. Using a common template, the site is based on the significance for university students of understanding 1) textual structures, 2) discursive processes, and 3) institutional practices. To enable the presentation of text and the kinds of interactivity we sought, the platform used was NetObjects Fusion.

Writing in Subject Areas was a collaboration between language and academic skills staff in the Language and Learning Services Unit at Monash University, subject lecturers, and first-year students from each of the subject areas. Background research involving Year 12 school teachers, first-year students and subject lecturers was

conducted, and this then informed the model of tertiary writing (drawing on Candlin, 1998) which was used to shape the development of the site.

Before we proceed to the evaluation, the Web site and its objectives will be briefly described. In each of the Web resource's modules there are three sections: Lecturer's Advice; Skills for Writing; and Annotated Assignments. The first section of each module has as its focus the "institutional practices" of writing in the discipline, using the subject lecturer as informant. The second section is organised around a range of interactive tasks, aimed at facilitating students' understanding of the nature of textual structures in their discipline. The third section presents sample assignments (not all of them essays) with the voice of the student (accessible via audio icons) as a kind of counterpoint to the lecturer's explanation of what the topic requires and also their annotations on the assignment.

The objective of the research was to gain a broad understanding of how a large cohort of first-year students studying particular subjects responded to the targeting of these areas: that is, whether the theory (as embodied in the resource) correctly identified the students' learning needs, at least as the students understood them.

Evaluation

The questionnaire was initially trialled with individual students attending the Unit for consultations in 2000, and then administered twice in lectures for most of the subjects, in 2001 and 2002. This was intended to explore whether any "institutional embedding' (Alexander, 1999) was taking place, that is, whether there were changes in how students viewed and used the resource. All returns were from Australian campuses, save for the second (2002) Economics response which was from the Malaysian campus in Kuala Lumpur (n=55).

Results

The local and the international student responses are compared on a series of key points, including perceptions of the usefulness of the lecturer advice, exercises, and student samples; motivation to use the resource; and also on particular aspects of the technology.

Of the total who responded, 629 stated they were local students and 291 international (30%). They were asked how *easy* it was to understand the instructions and explanations in the particular subject module used. Combining the two years, 53–59 per cent of local students found understanding each of the three sections easy, compared with 37–40 per cent for international students. Compared with on-shore international students, fewer students in the Economics-Malaysia cohort found understanding any of the material easy.

There was no significant variation across the two years regarding perceptions of ease or difficulty: each year between 7 and 11 per cent of respondents found the three sections of the module difficult/very difficult and between 46 and 52 per cent easy/very easy.

Students were asked how *helpful* they found each of the three sections. Combining the two years, just over fifty per cent of all students on average found each of the Lecturer's Advice, Skills for Writing and Annotated Assignments sections quite helpful or very helpful, with no significant trend across the two years. A majority of international and local students, equally, found the three sections quite helpful or very helpful. A small percentage, 6 to 10 per cent, found them not very helpful/not helpful at all, with local students represented here to a slightly greater extent than international. Perceptions of helpfulness increased if students spent 30 minutes to an hour on the resource, compared with less than 30 minutes. Data for over one hour were not conclusive.

Students were asked to say how motivated they felt to use each of the three sections, on a 4-point scale ranging from Not at all to A little, Quite and Very. Motivation was greatest for the Lecturer's Advice and Annotated Assignments sections: 65 per cent of respondents overall were quite or very motivated to use each section. Comparing local and international students, international students were consistently more highly motivated to use all three sections (for Lecturer's Advice, for instance, 74 per cent of international students were quite or very motivated, compared with 57 per cent local).

Significantly more motivation was associated with students spending more time on the resource: approximately 70% of students across the three sections of the module who reported themselves as quite/very motivated to use the resource also spent over 30 minutes on it. International students at the Australian campuses tended to spend the longest time on the resource, 42% spending more than one hour.

Discussion

Students' feelings of being able to deal with their first assignment can assist with their academic integration into their new educational context (Krause, 2001). The provision of stand-alone Web resources can be no guarantee that students will learn *how* to write in their discipline, but analysis of the initial findings from the evaluation of the Writing in Subject Areas project suggests they value learning *about* writing in their discipline.

It should be remembered that using the resource was not compulsory, so that those responding to this questionnaire were a self-selected group in a sense: that is, they were motivated to the extent of having a look at the site. Still, the other side of the coin is that 50–63% of the whole group across two years found the three sections helpful or very helpful for their purposes, and 59–65% claimed to be quite or very motivated to use it.

Academic staff are not always aware that they are asking their students for particular ways of encoding and representing knowledge from their students. International students are acknowledged as having potentially the greatest difficulties in acculturating rapidly to the demands of contemporary Western academic culture and to the sub-cultures of the disciplines. This should be interpreted, we argue, not necessarily as a "lack" or deficiency in the students, but as saying something about all participants in the teaching and learning contexts.

The data from the current survey, while pointing to a commonality in perceptions of helpfulness,

consistently reveal a statistically significant difference between international and local students in their levels of motivation in the face of challenges in using the learning materials. This supports other research which suggests that international students are enthusiastic adopters of online support and consistently claim it is helpful to them, despite any difficulties they may encounter (Clerehan, Kett & Gedge, 2003).

An interesting sideline is that the students in Kuala Lumpur found all the materials significantly more difficult than did international students studying at Australian campuses. At the least, this suggests that more effort needs to be devoted to tailoring materials to groups studying within a different culture. As MacKinnon and Manathunga (2003) argue, the dominant culture may be making assumptions about the "other" culture's students' understanding of essay writing which are quite unfounded (p. 139), leading to unhelpful conclusions about students' needs and abilities.

A limitation of this evaluation is that it was conducted via questionnaire only. The pattern of administration of the instrument differed across the nine subjects, and the response rate varied from subject to subject. Support resources on the web are arguably most effective when the lecturer is successful in integrating them with their curriculum and assessment. While these materials were designed to be stand-alone, ongoing support from a subject lecturer will always mean students are more likely to find their way to them and use them.

Conclusion

While the evaluation of this web resource as it stands can make no claims to developing in students a capacity to make due use of the knowledge gained about academic discourse, the findings from the analysis so far suggest that students believe they benefit from a pedagogy which allows them directly "into the camp". This is particularly the case for international students.

If our students can be highly motivated to improve their learning about participating in academic discourse, the least we can do as academics is to find ways of helping them, and to make sure the spirits are coming when we call them from the "vasty deep" of the World Wide Web.

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Footnotes

1. Temporary password available from author. The project is described in more detail in Robert Pascoe et al. (2003) *The Lettered Country*. AUTC. Available online at www.autc.org.au

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Reflections on The Silent Dialogue, Presented at HERDSA 2004

By Anne Pratt

Roger asked me to prepare a reflective piece on my journey through my presentation of The Silent Dialogue, which I gave at the HERDSA conference in Miri. I thought perhaps I should start from the beginning, with an overview of how I came to write this article.

Editors Note. I feel sure that readers will appreciate this insight into Anne's experiences, both into her teaching and her conference experiences.

When I first decided to conduct research into my own teaching I reviewed some of the key literature in this area, and came to the conclusion that many academic experts were claiming that adults want to learn. This was very reassuring! It also seemed that adult students need to be in control of their own learning to achieve their maximum potential (Knowles, 1980). Teachers, it was said, must have the skill to diagnose the learners' needs and offer knowledge and skills that the learners believe will be useful to them, either (or both) personally or professionally. The teacher's role apparently was therefore to facilitate, support, engage and motivate adult learners by harnessing and utilising their previously acquired expertise. The next step was to provide building blocks that would support the achievement of new levels of skill and knowledge within the learning experience. Reflection was often mentioned as a useful skill for both the teacher and the student.

This made some sense, and I began to plan what I would do for my research project, which I had decided would be on the use of metacognitive skills in the classroom. The other consideration was how I would do it. To structure the research design I followed a process outlined for an action research project (Kember & Kelly, 1994). As this model included ongoing reflection it seemed appropriate, as it meant I would need to use metacognition throughout the process, which would be a constant reminder of my goals for my students.

Once the semester started I began by introducing tasks that required some form of reflection, and then encouraged the development of active metacognition by collecting information from the students each week on their "thinking about thinking". I assumed this would encourage deeper learning (Ramsden, 1999) and that the reflective pieces I collected each week would relate to their experiences of the various activities that I had implemented. Unfortunately, this was my first mistake!

I found that the communication that occurred in the silent dialogue was not really anything to do with student thinking on reflective activities, and what they had learnt. Nevertheless, it not only gave me a lot more insight into all sorts of issues, ranging from their level of physical comfort, through to their feelings about others, but also included very frank feedback on how they perceived both me and my teaching style! I was amazed by the wide variety of responses that I noted when reading the student comments, some of which were surprisingly frank and in some cases, very judgemental!

As predicted in the literature (Chalmers & Fuller, 1995), in the first weeks it was very clear that the desire to pass the unit was the primary goal for most students. I realised this must be accommodated by the lecturer and recognised as the starting point before other issues could be addressed.

Students, as expected, were also very anxious. This was of great concern, as there is some evidence that extreme stress is linked to memory loss. The potential for this possibility was clearly problematic, and would of course negate any opportunity for quality student learning until it was managed. Furthermore, negative feelings such as stress and anxiety are not likely to be connected to positive learning experiences, and I was concerned that ongoing anxiety and stress would have negative consequences for the student's commitment and attendance.

Another important issue that I had not fully realised was the impact of the covert push-pull dynamics that are an integral underpinning of the teaching learning nexus. (Ramsden, 1999). By this, I mean the tension created by those students who thought that I was "the expert". The expectations of how I would teach and behave, associated with this perception, were a continual source of pressure from some of the students. It became apparent that, in their view, the whole three hours should consist of me talking as fast as I could, so that they could absorb the information. They would take copious notes, "learn" and, very importantly, go home early!

This attitude was very disruptive to the type of learning I wanted to facilitate, as students with this conception of learning did not want to listen to others, or share experiences. They perceived these activities to be a waste of time. Furthermore, it made facilitation and reciprocation, rather than transmission, very difficult. Finding the key to unlock commitment and motivation in students with the intrinsic expectations that are inherent in the transmission paradigm seemed very difficult. Yet I was aware that where there is little emphasis or support for the development and promotion of higher cognitive skills in the learning process, students are more likely to continue, or even revert to, surface learning (Chalmers & Fuller, 1995 p.43). I was therefore very concerned about this issue, and thought often about what I could do to address it.

My short dissertation at HERDSA was a summary of the research process and these thoughts and reflections,

together with some qualitative evidence of the change I found in some students over the semester, as some of them (but certainly not all) came to appreciate the role of deep reflection in their learning. Following my talk, then one or two others, there was an opportunity for questions. However, I was not surprised to find that there were very few for any of the speakers. I think to some extent this was because we had several different presentations in a very short time, without allowing questions in between. I think this may have interrupted any thoughts that participants wanted to explore as the session was in train. I also thought that it may be difficult for the audience to ask questions, as a large group of the cohort were local Malaysian academic staff, and I thought language problems and cultural differences may have been barriers to further discussion.

I was therefore very gratified when several individual local female Muslim lecturers sought me out at different times after the session. What was interesting was that, in each case, they wanted to discuss issues related to student lack of interaction in the classroom. They did not appear to be concerned about metacognition, or even reflection at this point in time, but were interested in exploring how they could encourage more class groupwork and discussion. I later reflected on what we had discussed, and it seemed to me that there was a great opportunity for programs such as Foundations to be offered to these lecturers. I also surmised that their apparent trepidation in seeking some ideas and support in front of their peers may be a problem, and wondered whether some form of mandatory program, similar to those we now run at ECU for all sessional staff and new ongoing academics, may be more accepted. Although there are a range of views on mandatory programs, they nevertheless have the potential to promote equity and inclusivity (all academics should do it, have the right to do it) rather than being punitive (you are a poor teacher, you must attend). In mandatory sessions lecturers having some problems, or seeking new ideas, can come together to share options and experiences without losing "face".

For myself, hearing my students views through a confidential dialogue has been the most insightful experience I have experienced as a teacher. The diversity of opinion expressed by students highlights that it is unlikely that anyone can deliver the right approach and presentation style for all of the students all of the time. However, explaining to students that there are normal differences in preferred learning styles, and attempting to structure each lecture or workshop to provide a range of activities at different times can perhaps meet the needs of everyone at some level.

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Research in Higher Education Progress Reports

Enhancing Teaching-Learning Environments: An Update On The ETL Project

(ETL = Enhancing Teaching-Learning Environments in Undergraduate Courses)

By Dai Hounsell

What counts as high-quality learning in the 21st century university? What aspects of contemporary teaching-learning and assessment regimes seem to encourage students to give of their best? And in present-day mass higher education, with its unremitting resource pressures as well as exciting technological advances, what scope is there for course teams to try and enhance their effectiveness?

These are some of the tricky questions that I and colleagues at three UK universities have been trying to get to grips with over the last three-and-a-half years in our work on a large-scale research project that runs until next June. We've also been trying to map a path that will be broad enough to span the rich array of subjects on offer in the modern university, but without losing sight of those highly particularised features that help to make a given discipline or field of study distinctive. Hence our choice of contrasting subject areas: Bioscience, Economics, Electronic Engineering and History.

The project has been funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council as part of a much larger Teaching and Learning Programme, and is being undertaken by a team from Edinburgh, Durham and Coventry Universities. We are now in the final phase of the project's work, where our main concern is to complete our analyses and begin to communicate our findings to a variety of groups, including mainstream university and college teachers, senior managers and policy-makers, and academic developers, as well as of course to other educational researchers.

The focus of our research is on undergraduate courses, and especially first and final-year course units, a wide-angle lens that throws up some fascinating contrasts between students relatively new to the experience of university and their more seasoned counterparts who are within a semester of graduating from honours degrees.

In our work on the experiences of final-year students in particular, we have been incubating a new concept, ways of thinking and practising in a subject — "WTP:", for short. Pardon yet another acronym, but WTP does seem to be helpful in trying to capture the richness, depth and breadth of what students might learn through engagement with a given subject area in a specific context. This might include, for example, coming to terms with particular understandings, forms of discourse, a distinctive set of values or ways of acting which are regarded as central to graduate-level mastery of a discipline or subject area. In three final-year Biology courses, for instance, it did not simply involve the kind of conceptual understanding that has been associated with a deep approach. For these students, it also meant getting to grips with how knowledge was generated in the Biosciences through the research literature, while at the same time learning the difficult craft of developing and communicating their own considered views on topics where knowledge within the field was still unresolved or edged by uncertainties.[1] Honours-level study in History, by contrast, seemed to call for characteristically different ways of thinking and practising: the need for students to develop their conceptions of the nature of historical knowledge and evidence, to contextualise the material they were engaging with, and to be able to view a topic from different standpoints or perspectives.[2]

In other subject areas, our analyses have begun to draw attention to what David Perkins has called troublesome knowledge — from our vantage-point, the difficulties which some students can face, especially in earlier years of undergraduate study, in developing a secure grasp of a discipline at university level. In our work in Economics, for example, core ideas like "opportunity cost" have been pinpointed as threshold concepts which may be critical to a progression in students' understanding. A threshold concept has been described as rather like a portal, in the sense that it can open up a new – and previously closed-off – way of thinking about something. It therefore represents "a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress".[3] This transformation may be sudden or it may be protracted over a considerable period of time, with the transition to understanding proving troublesome. And in Electronic Engineering, the troublesome element may be the phenomenon of delayed understanding, where what students

are being asked to learn may not make much sense to them at the time when they first encounter it, perhaps because of the speed with which the subject-matter is being covered or because of its complexity or unfamiliarity. It is only much later that things begin to "fall into place".[4]

At the same time as grappling with the peaks and pitfalls of high-quality learning, we have been exploring how student learning can be helped or hindered by a variety of influences which together make up, within the setting of a particular course unit or module, a "teaching-learning environment". To this end, we have derived enormous benefit from taking John Biggs' thought-provoking work on constructive alignment[5] as a prime analytical benchmark. It has borne fruit in drawing attention to features of the students' experiences of these course units as teaching-learning environments which seem pivotal, yet which, in past research, may not have attracted much attention. One of these is the provision of feedback on assignments and assessments. In some settings, we have found striking instances of the provision of feedback not only on coursework assignments, but also woven into the fabric of day-to-day teaching and learning encounters – and therefore akin to what Diana Laurillard has called "intrinsic feedback".[6] And yet in many other settings, there have been recurring concerns about the quantity and quality of feedback, and consequent difficulties for many students in getting a secure sense of how well they are doing. Another theme has been especially evident in first-year courses in subject areas where successive intakes of students have become increasingly diverse. A question which comes to the fore in settings like these is what measures are taken, not just to accommodate a more heterogeneous body of students, but also to engage constructively with that diversity in ways that will support the students in their learning. In Economics, for example, there seems to be a pervasive orthodoxy in the teaching of the subject which has led lecturers and module designers "to adhere to a standard curriculum of widely accepted intended learning outcomes and to deliver an approved body of knowledge through uniform teaching methods".[7] Yet a "theory-first" approach of this kind may not be ideal for first-year students who have little or no prior background in the subject and are unlikely to go on to major in it.

These, then, are just some of the findings which the ETL Project has begun to yield. If they are of interest to you, you might want to keep in touch with our work as more of it is reported over the coming months. You can do that first, by visiting our website at http://www.ed.ac.uk/etl. There you can find, in downloadable form, recent publications I've mentioned here along with many other reports, conference and seminar papers, and copies of the project's two student questionnaires. You will also find a button link to the main TLRP website and its other projects on higher and further education, and lifelong and work-based learning. Second, you can register for the 2005 HERDSA Conference in Sydney, where we hope to be reporting on our work. See you in July, then, perhaps ... ?

Footnotes

1. McCune, V., & Hounsell, D. (in press). The development of students' ways of thinking and practising in three final-year Biology courses. *Higher Education.*
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Dai Hounsell is Professor of Higher Education at the University of Edinburgh, where he is co-director and head of the ETL Project. At the time of writing, the members of the project team are Charles Anderson, Adrian Bromage, Kate Day, Noel Entwistle, Dai Hounsell, Jenny Hounsell, Ray Land, Judith Litjens, Velda McCune, Erik Meyer, Jennifer Nisbet and Nicola Reimann. They have been assisted by Ruth Wedgwood, Rui Xu and Chunmei Yan.

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Research-As-Learning Postgraduate Students' Research Styles

By Gina Wisker

Postgraduate students are probably the greatest growth area in higher education across the UK and Australasia. While most research conducted into student learning has focused on undergraduates, at the Anglia Polytechnic University (APU) we have, since 1997, been conducting action research into the learning styles and approaches of our PhD students, largely focusing on an international cohort based programme which recruits approximately 30 PhDs yearly (now at 300 in or through the system). Working in an action research format we have used both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect information about students' approaches to their research as learning. We begin with the Reflections on Learning Inventory (RoLI). The RoLI was developed by Gillian Boulton Lewis of QUT and Erik Meyer of Cape Town/Durham. It uses a Lickert scale to ask students to agree with statements which reveal information about their approaches to learning, their motivation, when they know they are learning and have learned, and their hoped for outcomes. These results are merged and matched with results from supervisory dialogues and interviews both individual, in focus groups with the students, all collected as part of the ongoing research development programme (in four stages) and shared with the students themselves as a prompt to their awareness of their own learning (or metalearning).

The idea behind/the main aim of the research is to find out more about how PhD students learn in general, specifically what kinds of problems they might have in their research as learning and how we might then work with them in the research development programme, through materials development and in the supervisory interactions to support and empower them in their successful learning.

Interesting results to date include the identifying of dissonance in some student learning approaches i.e. where they are likely to be taking a high accumulative approach when research-as-learning requires a more meaningful approach, deep-learning, and where they take a high accumulation approach mismatched with outcomes which seek active change – a mismatch where they might well end up with masses of quantitative data and no way of moving towards achieving changes themselves. Such a mismatch when identified can be shared with the student themselves and has implications for their specific research design. So a student with high accumulation learning who is embarking on a scientific PhD, might find their methods and data accumulation perfectly fitted for their intended research outcome while someone with a similar approach embarking on, say, a research programme which uses therapeutic methods to seek transformation in a sense of well-being or something similar would probably contemplate changing their research methods and design, or making their outcomes more manageable as a result of being made aware of some of the problems and mismatches, potential dissonance in their research-as-learning approaches.

Some of our research has indicated that involvement in the research development programme itself and in the action research enables students to become more self-aware learners and to focus on matching their research methods and design in line with their intended outcomes in a very positive fashion. Some more of our research has focused on the supervisory relationship and matching kinds of interactions. We will be moving on to focus more on the supervisory relationship and on the communities of practice developed among the students and the enlarged programme team in the near future.

Student Learning in the Disciplines

At APU in the University Centre for Learning and Teaching (UCLT), we have been working now for about six years (recently funded by an ILTHE / HEA small grant) on a small collaborative research project which looks at student learning and curriculum development across a range of disciplines. Colleagues of Law, Social Work, Biology, English, Women's Studies, Computer Skills for Linguists, Education and Business have been involved over the years. The research project itself aims to bring together a mixture of staff to discuss the learning approaches and behaviours of students and to consider whether these approaches, preconceptions and performance can be modified in a positive fashion through involvement in the action research, and any change in curriculum, the modules, the outcomes or the assessment.

In the first year, students are given the Reflections on Learning Inventory (RoLI) (model year 2003) to help identify their approaches to learning, motivation, intended outcomes and awareness of their learning achievement. The RoLI is followed by focus groups during the year to share with them their developing needs and awareness of their learning achievements. In the third year students are asked in focus groups about how they have developed as learners and then to complete another

questionnaire which asks them to match their own learning outcomes against those set out for the subject area by the LTSN or subject centre (now within the Higher Education Academy) in their discipline. The results of the RoLI are shared with students and their comments in focus groups are discussed with them in relation to learning needs and development.

In addition to the encouragement of reflective and active learning among those students involved in the action research, there have been some specific curriculum developments which have resulted from the research. In the case of both Social Work and Biology, the RoLI questionnaires (kept confidential to the individual) act as part of the initial tutorials and diagnostic work.

The Social Work and Biology students are made aware of their own learning approaches and asked to consider their learning needs. Development follows during the course of the first semester, and during specific learning focused tutorials, leading to responses in a reflective mode in their progress files. This learning, teaching and curriculum development, the inclusion of a model which focuses on learning awareness of diagnosis and development, is being piloted throughout the university and fits with UK policy about developing progress files and development portfolios among undergraduates more generally.

In Law, developments which have occurred have addressed specific issues perceived in the identification of learning outcomes by students leaving in the third year. Many Law students in the third year still identified the learning outcomes of the subject as knowledge accumulation and memorisation whereas the Law society and their tutor were aware that learning behaviours related to threshold concepts of law were more related to problem solving as a learning approach. The law tutor decided to try and change the teaching activities in the first semester of the first year to introduce students to law as something more active, engaged and using problem-solving approaches . To this end, she developed "moots" with the students in their first few weeks at university. They were observed – it was lively and interesting and students were learning to use the information in problem-solving and making arguments in smaller groups to address approaches to cases.

We plan to continue this research with some additional subject areas and so share the action research results with the students focusing increasingly now on the need for diagnostic information to share with them, and on encouraging metalearning.

Recent Publications by Gina Wisker

Wisker, G., Robinson, G., Trafford, V., Creighton E., & Warnes M. (2003). Recognising and overcoming dissonance in postgraduate student research. *Studies in Higher Education*, 28(1), 91–105.

Wisker, G., Robinson, G., Trafford, V., Warnes, M., & Creighton, E. (2003). From supervisory dialogues to successful PhDs: Strategies supporting and enabling the learning conversations of staff and students at postgraduate level. *Teaching In Higher Education*, 8(3), 383–397.

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Report on the Second National Colloquium on Preparing Academics for University Teaching: Critical Issues and New Trends

By Jan Orrell

Facilitated by: Janice Orrell (Flinders University); Allan Goody (University of Western Australia). Margaret Hicks (University of South Australia); Kerry O'Regan (University of Adelaide)

A sector-wide, collaborative "community of practice" was further advanced at the Second Colloquium on Preparing Academics for University Teaching in Adelaide on 21 – 22 October 2004 at Flinders University. This year's theme was *Critical issues and new trends* "and was aimed specifically at those who design, develop, deliver and/or administer foundation or preparation for university teaching programs as well as Graduate Certificates and Masters in Higher (or Tertiary) Education". All but four Australian Universities were represented, with 55 people from Australia and New Zealand attending.

The colloquium was structured and discussion-based. The aim was to generate practical decisions and collaborations for supporting the advancement of institutional provision of effective preparation and development for academics as teachers. Research and evaluations of preparation programmes in Europe, North America and Australia that have found that the participants of these programmes are:

- better able to articulate their educational intentions and provide a theoretically defensive rationale for their approach to teaching
- discuss teaching in terms of the student experience,
- engage in more effective peer reviews of teaching,
- have acquired strong cross disciplinary collegial networks,
- more likely to encourage their departments to collectively address teaching, learning, assessment and curriculum issues using central academic development staff.

The advent of this community of practice is increasingly important as the federal government seeks to judge and reward in high financial terms the quality of teaching learning in Universities through AUQA and the learning and teaching performance fund.

Contexts of Practice

Australia

In the first instance the colloquium established the potential impact of issues in the current Higher education context on the preparation of academics for teaching and the institutional policies that underpin the programmes. In Australia, the two most influential factors are the up-coming Learning and Teaching Performance Funding (LTPF) and the new Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching CILT.

Proposed (LTPF) Stage One criteria include institutional provision of programmes to prepare academic teachers and sessional staff for their teaching roles. The impact of these funds needs to be carefully monitored as they bring considerable opportunities and risks. In some sense this emphasis supports the concerns that Academic Developers have long expressed for increasing institutional focus on the quality of teaching and learning. The lack of a concept of distribution across the sector, however, and the fact that the distribution would not be equally distributed, reinforced the competitive nature of the funds. It was feared that this could drive a wedge between universities reducing potential valuable collaborations.

Hope was expressed that academic developers and their units could work closely with their DVC/PVCs (Academic) to address these sector-wide concerns. It was also hoped that the new Carrick Institute would provide support for the colloquium plans and collaborative endeavours for advancing practice in the design and teaching of preparatory teaching programmes and graduate certificates in higher education. It was also regretfully noted that no representative from EDU's or indigenous community were appointed to the Carrick Institute Board

New Zealand

Kathryn Southerland from Victoria University Welling NZ reported that the three major challenges for academic development in NZ at present were dealing with cross cultural matters, determining the standards required of post-graduate certificates keeping in mind accreditation requirements in the future (given the UK experience) and the possibility of rumored performance-based tuition funding and issues of workload and job pleasure/ viability and how we can support staff in negotiating this particularly in the light of the implementation of the government-initiated Performance Based Research Fund (PBRF) and the potential threat to teaching quality and workloads.

The major influence for those in NZ was dealing with research focus (RBRF) which raised questions of how to combine the responsibilities

of research and teaching particularly because of the marginal status of pedagogical research that was assessed alongside mainstream discipline based research. A challenge to academic developers was to harvest academic interest in researching their teaching and to include research concerns into Foundations programme.

Europe

Alan Goody of UWA, who had just returned form 18 months work in Sweden, confirmed that there too, concerns in higher education focused on standardisation of programmes, dealing with the divide between research/teaching and trying to establish collaboration in an essentially competitive context. He did point out the Sweden essentially is an egalitarian society with a sense of national pride in quality. A major difference and advantage in Swedish higher education is that it is free to students and there is a greater flexibility in arrangement for assessment.

Strengths and Limitations of Foundations and Graduate Certificate Programmes

One of the strengths of Foundations programmes is that they provided a vision for future for the everyday academic staff member and opportunities for cross-disciplinary networking and curriculum improvement through individual projects. Two major issues impacted on a more widespread take up of Foundations and Graduate certificate programmes. One was timing. Because there is very little "downtime" for academics, it is difficult to identify when is the best time to offer programs. This is because of the high workloads and lack of support in schools for participation. The relationship between Foundation courses and Graduate Certificates in Higher Education were discussed. It was noted that there were several flexible arrangements in which advanced standing was given upon the production of evidence for completing a university "Foundation" programme. In some instances, Foundations was funded as part of a Graduate Certificate.

Major Issues Raised

The following issues were raised to be the focus of discussion.

Preparation for Diverse Educational Roles in Universities

This forum recognised that there are multiple discrete teaching roles that academics take on over their career. The forum focused on ways that institutions might fruitfully consider systematic inductions to various educational roles and responsibilities such as sessional teachers, laboratory demonstrators, coordination of honours and practicum programmes, supervision of honours projects and higher degrees theses and teaching offshore. There was also a concern for developing the leadership capacity of new staff given the need for succession planning in an ageing sector workforce.

One of the issues raised was broad definition of sessional teachers. For some institutions this is problematic. As a result there was a request to redefine what is meant by "sessional" in order to make it more manageable. For the 2005 meeting, a special interest group will have tested more acceptable definitions on the list server.

Sessional Teaching

Sessional teaching issues were explored and an extensive list of concerns was generated. These included the large numbers of sessional teachers used in on campus programmes especially the amount of "marking" conducted by sessional teachers. Because of their high workload and high turn over, it was difficult to contact them to provide support and assistance. In addition, sessional teachers are used in offshore programs and needed to understand the university they worked for even though they might never visit the main campus. Sessional teachers also had a role in online learning. Preparation in this mode of delivery required careful attention to assure its quality.

By not addressing the diverse range of sessional teaching support, there was a risk of increasing attrition rates of both sessional teachers and students. The concern was raised regarding the measurement of the quality of sessional teachers and the impact on students' learning outcomes.

Postgraduate research supervision

Postgraduate supervision was largely not included in Foundation programmes except in a "would you like fries with that?" mode. In some instances, it is a subject within graduate certificate programmes with immense variation in design. Issues such as ongoing professional development and mandated preparation for new supervisors were difficult to attend to in a Graduate Certificate. Other strategies identified included:

- Postgraduate supervisor registers (workshop attendance-based)
- Individual workshop on topics –NESB, online resource
- Mentoring programmes

In order to be successful such endeavours needed the support of senior leadership in the University. The effectiveness of Professional Development Units on these matters was determined by the level of support and engagement provided by University Senior Management.

Other Inductions and Issues

Leadership and management, practicum coordination and induction were also issues attended to in some depth. Issues such as peer mentoring, assessment of learning outcomes, relationships between foundation programmes and graduate certificates, hybrid modes of programmes as well as workload issues for academic and academic developers were also discussed. The reports of these discussions will be available on the Foundations website: http://www.flinders.edu.au/foundations.

Outcomes of the Colloquium

Considerable discussion was developed to measures that could assist improve and assure the quality of the programmes. This was recognised to be increasingly important in the up-coming Learning and Teaching

Performance Funding scheme being developed by DEST

Levels of Induction, Training and Education

The first forum produced some valuable beginnings in terms of developing a commonly held view of the scope of the different levels of programmes. The 2003 Dearn, Ryan and Fraser report to DEST made it clear that we need to understand as a sector what diversity of preparation exists so that we can establish clear expectations when staff are recruited from other institutions. Sharing practices in this national forum has enabled us further develop the framework and subject it to critical scrutiny. Plans for further collaborative evaluative and developmental research are underway. The 2003 model was reviewed and subjected to further discussion and revision.

Benchmarking

This second forum took further the issue of engaging in benchmarking to assure the quality of programmes. Stephen Marshall and Sharon Fraser from Macquarie University developed a draft template for benchmarking. Now universities who want to use this will do so over the next 12 months and report back at the 2005 colloquium. In relation to benchmarking the issue of developing common forms of evaluation of programmes was raised because it was considered desirable to generate some form of consistency across programmes. While there was a will to develop common evaluation resources the question was raised that given the current climate, in the future how much information should be publicly available. It was identified that it was important in developing benchmarking relationships to recognise the organisational context and to keep the indicators limited in scope.

Continued Collaborative Practice

The colloquium concluded with individuals' commitments to engage in collaborate research, resource sharing and peer review of resources developed at in Academic Development Units.

Resource sharing

Further collaborative exercises were suggested including:

- Engaging in peer review of programmes
- Locating a body of experts to be reviewers
- Developing a set of guidelines of what Benchmarking/Peer Review might look like
- Exchange visits to witness how things are done in different institutions
- Investigating the possibility of licensing arrangements

Ongoing discussions

To facilitate this, there would be on-going Listserver discussions regarding

- Peer review of resources
- Induction of sessional teachers
- Induction of off-shore teachers
- Induction of workplace learning coordinators

Clearinghouse

There was discussion about pursuing the fIRST model for funding effort in resource-sharing and resource development. It was suggested that fIRST's model of institutional subscription could be useful provided it occurred under some form of umbrella organisation. There was a strongly felt desire for the Carrick Institute to act as clearinghouse for resource templates and experts for reviews.

Research

It was proposed that systematic, sector-wide impact research could be conducted to develop some standard evaluation tools that range from:

- reflections by participants on value of workshops
- 6 month / 12 months follow-up participant interviews
- Pre-test and post-test (eg. via Student Evaluations of teaching)
- It was recognised that we need to move beyond claims of positive outcomes to generating tangible evidence.

Colloquium 2005

The Colloquium concluded with the announcement that University of Tasmania had committed to act as conveners for the Foundations Colloquium in Tasmania in 2005.

TABLE 1: Framework for Professional Development for HE Teaching

	Induction	Foundation	Graduate Certificate	Masters
Dimension	Practice	Reflective Practice	Scholarly Practice	Scholarship in & of practice
Domains	Skills	Philosophy	Student of Higher Education	Researchers of HE
	Knowledge	Understanding	Exposure to research & theory	Investigation
	Resources	Interpretation	Analysis	Critical Evaluation
		Reflection Planning & design Ethics	Interpretation Integration Innovation	Dissemination Transformation
Outcomes	Confidence Information Support Control	Self Efficacy Networks Plan of action	Reading Communities of practice	Research Publication

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Branch Reports

New Zealand

The branch has had a very active and satisfying year to date. In part, this has reflected the benefits of diversifying the range of activities that we engage in.

The year began with seminars presented in Auckland and Wellington by Professor Lorraine Stefani, the Director of the Centre for Professional Development at Auckland University. As Lorraine had arrived in New Zealand during 2003 from a previous position at the University of Strathclyde, we were keen to keen to hear her perspectives on the UK higher education scene ("Changes and Challenges") and her assessment of their possible relevance and implications for the NZ context.

The next initiative followed from two concerns. While we were pleased to see the Government's establishment in 2001 of National Tertiary Teaching Excellence Awards we believed there needed to be increased emphasis on and support for the award winners disseminating their insights and practices to other teachers in the sector. We were also keen to promote the development of teaching portfolios as a professional development activity. Nominees for the awards were required to prepare portfolios. Our interest in teaching portfolios was obviously also associated with our desire to promote the HERDSA Fellowship scheme. The outcome was seminars in Wellington and Auckland on the theme "Winning Strategies: Documenting Effective Teaching". The seminars brought together some of the previous National Award winners and Kogi Naidoo, the first NZ recipient of a HERDSA Fellowship, to talk about the potential benefits of documenting teaching practice and compiling a teaching portfolios. The presenters also talked about their teaching philosophies, including the learning outcomes that they most valued for their students and the learning, teaching and assessment approaches that they considered most likely to enable students to achieve those outcomes.

As a follow-up to these seminars we contacted the body responsible for the national awards (New Zealand Qualifications Authority: NZQA) and indicated that we would like to contact all award nominees to inform them about the HERDSA Fellowship scheme and also indicated that we would like to assist award recipients to share their insights and practices with other teachers. For the latter we proposed a "National Roadshow" and/or a retreat at which the recipients would prepare resources for other teachers. NZQA has undertaken to inform all nominees about the fellowship. While supportive of the other initiatives that we have proposed, NZQA has not been able to assist with funding for them. We are exploring other funding avenues.

An opportunity to make a more substantial contribution to the development of new policies associated with the Government's Tertiary Education Strategy arose when a sector group was established in April by the Ministry of Education to develop a final set of proposals for "a performance-based element for the funding of tertiary learning and teaching". Pro-actively, we indicated our wish to nominate a HERDSA member for the group, highlighting the relevance of the purposes of HERDSA and the background of members. Neil Haigh's nomination was accepted and his participation involved attending five all-day working meetings and making a range of investigations and submissions. The experience confirmed that it was possible to be influential in such a context and the benefits of being able to seek advice from a network of like-minded colleagues on the way through such an exercise. We will definitely be looking for further opportunities to make such a contribution. As a number of initiatives intended to achieve a "stronger system focus on teaching capability and learning environments" have recently been announced by the Steve Maharey (Associated Minister of Education – Tertiary), there will be scope for this. Some of those initiatives concern the "professional development of the tertiary teaching workforce". We also anticipate making a response to a Government Discussion Paper on Tertiary Education Priorities 2005 – 2007.

Another initiative now being signalled is some form of national network or centre (or a cluster of networked centres of "learning excellence"). HERDSA NZ has been supportive of the proposal that Neil Haigh has previously developed for such a network (modelled in part on the U.K. Learning and Teaching Support Network). The Minister has indicated that he is now prepared to fund a cross-sector group to assess further the feasibility of the proposal[1].

In September, Kathryn Sutherland followed up the Miri Conference by organising a colloquium in Wellington at which five colleagues who had attended the conference re-delivered their papers. The Colloquium was titled *Contemporary Perspectives on New Zealand Tertiary Education*, and again, illustrates the various ways in which we are trying to extend the dissemination of scholarship-based knowledge about learning and teaching. It was very well-attended with participants from five Wellington-region tertiary institutions, and two educational organisations.

Other events currently being organised include seminars in Auckland on teaching- research issues (Alan Jenkins and Gina Wisker) and Christchurch and Dunedin (Tom Angelo). We have been delighted to have Tom (a previous HERDSA Visiting Scholar) join our community. Tom is Director of the University Teaching development Centre at Victoria University.

Discussion is now underway of a possible theme that a 2005 programme could be built around. One of those themes is "Indigenising the Curriculum". The theme is both topical and one that may enable us to engage with and support our Maori colleagues more.

Footnotes

[1] The backdrop to these initiatives is the New Zealand Government's

Tertiary Education Strategy which was promulgated in 2002. Defined as "a blueprint for a more collaborative and cooperative tertiary system that contributes to New Zealand's national goals and is closely connected to enterprise and local communities" it identified six broad strategies for achieving this vision were identified:

1. Strengthen System Capability and Quality
2. Te Rautaki Matauranga Maori – Contribute to the Achievement of Development Aspirations
3. Raise Foundation Skills so that all People can Participate in our Knowledge Economy
4. Develop the Skills New Zealanders Need for our Knowledge Economy
5. Educate for Pacific Peoples' Development and Success
6. Strengthen Research, Knowledge Creation and Uptake for our Knowledge Society.

South Australia

Margaret Hicks writes 'The SA Branch of HERDSA has been quiet over the last couple of years. A meeting of SA members is being organised for February 2005 to reactivate the branch. For more details contact Margaret Hicks from University of South Australia.'

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Western Australia

Shelda Debowski writes 'The WA Branch presented a HERDSA Rekindled mini conference in October to around 30 participants. WA presenters at the HERDSA Conference all represented their papers again to local members. The event, which was hosted by Murdoch University, led to much vigorous discussion and some new collaborations. The mini-conference is now an annual event and looked forward to by those who were unable to enjoy the real thing.

Professor Lesley Parker, the Interim Director for the Carrick Institute of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education presented to an audience of thirty or more HERDSA members on the Institute and its progress. Issues touched on during the discussion included the way HERDSA could establish sound working relationships with the Institute, and the potential areas of focus, which might be generated during the first year.

The Branch was planning a Christmas wind-up on November 25th.

For future WA branch information contact Craig Baird: C.Baird@uwa.edu.au

Queensland

Craig Zimitat writes, "In late July HERDSA (Qld) sponsored a joint meeting between the three staff development units from The University of Queensland, Griffith University and Queensland University of Technology.

About 20 staff attended, taking the opportunity to catch up with colleagues as well as to meet the new Dr Neil Carrington, the new Director of TALSS at QUT. The Directors provided a brief update on their units and issues facing them and their institutions. Staff attending shared news about research activities trying at the same time to enlist co-investigators. The gathered members expressed strong interest in following up on collaborations, as well as conducting similar meetings on a twice yearly basis."

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Book Review

The Intelligent Student's Guide to Learning at University by Geoffrey Cooper, (2003). Altona, Australia: Common Ground 2003 ISBN: 1 86335 510 3 (Paperback).

Reviewed By Jo Reidy

The book at a glance

As its title suggests, Geoffrey Cooper's book, The intelligent student's guide to learning at university, has been written in order to offer students generic advice on how to deal with some of the major challenges of tertiary study. Although intended for a student audience, the book also has much to offer support staff and lecturers who would like to recommend either the entire book, or a specific chapter, to groups of students in their own classes and beyond.

The book begins with an Introduction that has been divided into two sections: "The aims of this book" and "How to use this book". Six chapters are followed by four important appendices. The content of each chapter is signalled by a descriptive title:

- Learning at university
- Learning how to organise time and study
- Learning from classwork
- Learning by reading
- Learning by writing
- Learning for examinations.

A brief conclusion, ten pages of practical appendices, and a short list of references covering important works on learning, reading, academic writing, and "the student experience" round off the book.

Introducing a range of voices and perspectives

The characteristic "voice" of each chapter provides students with a mixture of information about

university life, insights gained from research into specific areas such as reading and academic writing, and strategies that students can use to make the time they spend at university both more enjoyable and more successful.

One very positive attribute of the book is that the author writes about academic learning and work from the student's perspective. Advice, information and practical strategies are followed by comments derived from surveys of second year students who have been given the opportunity to reflect on their first year experiences.

The following extract from Chapter four, "Learning by reading", demonstrates the way in which the book's various voices been interwoven. (Both the extract and the boxed comment that follows on from it can be found on p. 71 of the book.)

However, there is no doubt that many academic staff underestimate the time it takes for their students to understand material. A reading that they may find to be simple is often difficult for the students. It is therefore essential for you to take a strategic approach to reading and to ensure that you make the best use of the time you have available for reading.

Students advising students

> Keep up to date with your reading and note taking. Once you fall behind it's HELL to catch up again. Yajina: Law

The text also features diagrams and tables that summarise key ideas. One that I would like to make use of in my own "Orientation" workshops for students is the diagram on p. 75 of the same chapter. The diagram illustrates the ways in which reading speed is tied as much to reading purpose as it is to reading proficiency. By using the diagram, Cooper is able to introduce students to the idea that while a quick "search" may involve fast reading, critical reading may demand a different pace, one that allows for deeper understanding, reflection and speculative thinking.

Throughout his book then, Cooper explains in some detail the reasons for adopting a certain stance or using one strategy rather than another. The emphasis is on learning to learn rather than on deploying an eclectic bundle of strategies to achieve a quick fix.

Reflecting on the role of generic information, strategies and advice

As Higher Education in Australia experiences rapid massification and internationalisation, resources such as Cooper's book have to offer advice that is general enough to suit many different student audiences. To take just one example, in my own university, in a single unit, Nursing 1, there are mature age students upgrading their professional qualifications, local students straight from high school, and international students from Brazil, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe. Can a generalised resource cater for the needs of such a diverse cohort of students?

The answer, of course, is "Yes". However, generic learning resources can be supplemented with discipline specific materials, information and advice. Even learning, reading and writing approaches can be tailored to meet the requirements of quite specific student groups including discipline-based cohorts (Findlay, 2003; Grbich, 1999; Hart, 2001), overseas-educated students (Lewis & Reinders, 2003), and women entering postgraduate programs (Leonard, 2001).

The intelligent student's guide to learning at university is a useful introduction for students to read both before, and during, their tertiary studies. By reading one small book, students will be able to have at their finger tips various insights into learning as well as many different study strategies. By using this book and some of the other resources mentioned in this review, students will not only survive their university studies, but also take significant steps towards becoming critical and committed learners.

References

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Leonard, D. (2001). A woman's guide to doctoral studies. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Lewis, M., & Reinders, H. (2003). Study skills for speakers of English as a second language. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

About the reviewer: Dr Jo Reidy is an Academic Skills Adviser at the Melbourne Campus of ACU National. ACU's Academic Skills Unit has produced The ACU Study Guide, a resource that is also aimed at offering students easy-to-access guidance on learning, reading, writing and referencing. Currently, Dr Reidy and two of her colleagues, Jacqueline Kapnoullas and Narelle Love, are involved in the QUEST Project. The project aims at offering intensive learning support to overseas-educated Nursing students. Contact J.Reidy@patrick.acu.edu.au

Conference News

First International Conference on Enhancing Teaching and Learning through Assessment 13–15 June, 2005 Hong Kong

Assessment has a profound effect on student learning. What they learn, and the way they learn it, is driven by how they are going to be assessed. From the perspective of the teacher, you write the objective(s) of a subject you are going to teach, you then compile the syllabus detailing the subject content, and then decide upon the most appropriate method(s) of assessment. This approach constructively aligns Objectives, Syllabus Content, and Assessment. Students however, tend to see the situation rather differently, in reverse order, i.e. what will I be assessed on, how will this assessment be conducted, so what do I have to do to pass the subject with as high a grade as possible. This was one of the primary reasons why I am the Principal Investigator of an educational project titled "Enhancing Teaching and Learning through Assessment".

This project aims at enhancing the quality of teaching and learning through designing, implementing effective assessment practices, and the effective use of assessment results. It shares a spirit of a deeper collaboration within the higher education sector locally and internationally. As a consequence, the "First International Conference on Enhancing Teaching and Learning Through Assessment" is initiated by The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, funded by The University Grant Committee of Hong Kong.

The main focus of the conference is to explore issues relating to how assessment can be used to enhance teaching and learning. The Conference Organizing Committee welcomes papers for practice-oriented articles, reports of empirical studies, review or theoretical articles, or case studies. Papers relating to the following themes are invited:

- Assessment in the Workplace
- Authentic Assessment
- Outcome-based Assessment
- IT in Assessment
- Peer- and Self-assessment
- Formative and Summative Assessment
- Criterion- and Norm-referenced Assessment
- Multiple Assessment Methods
- Stakeholders' Perceptions of Assessment
- Impact of Assessment on Teaching and Learning
- Quality Assessment and Implementation Issues
- Assessment to Enhance Life-long Learning

The conference will be held from 13th to 15th June, 2005 in Hong Kong, a dynamic and modern city in the Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. It gathers academic staff, educational developers, staff development professionals and managers of change in universities and colleagues world wide. Colleagues from other post-compulsory educational institutions are most welcome.
You are most welcome to visit our website for continuous updates of the event. We look forward to seeing you in Hong Kong.

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