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**JULY 1994**

## Editorial

### Margaret Buckridge



*In the lead-up to writing this editorial, I had planned, in a vague way, to revisit the quality round. There are, I think, a number of issues sitting around waiting to be editorialised. The results of the first round have inevitably brought developments in their wake; the concentrated focus this year on teaching and learning poses some interesting questions about longer term commitment. In addition, there are fascinating collision paths developing in some institutions between the various quality agendas and the still-mysterious juggernaut of enterprise bargaining, now on the on-ramp to higher education.*

*But what I've decided to write about instead is something much more micro-level. It's a heartening, 'good news' story, and I suspect that one of the nice things about it is that it's just one of hundreds that are very quietly but very surely revolutionising higher education. My institution, like a number of others, now offers a Graduate Certificate in Higher Education for which the major client group is current academic staff members. The work for this program is largely anchored in two areas of thinking that have been important in informing higher education over the last decade or so - student learning experience and reflection. Against this backdrop, the academics do a small practicum. They are asked to involve themselves with the learning of a small group of their students in order to explore issues of interest to them as teachers.*

*For three of these academics, I was the contact person. It is the work of one of them that I am drawing on in telling this tale. This staff member was a casual appointee on a big first-year teaching team brought together to offer a new subject. She had it in mind initially to explore gender effects in the student learning experience and was hoping to get at this by having students talk to her about two things: their outcome understandings of a couple of key concepts in the subject she was teaching and also their grasp of the procedures of analysis by which they would apply their understanding. The concepts were myth (particularly) and ideology (some never got to this); the students were chosen partly because they had achieved at very different levels on the previous assignment; the text for the interview was a richly complex still frame from an aboriginal film-maker's work.*

*In the event, interest in gendered effects came in a poor second to a rather more overwhelming discovery. None of the six students, even those who had achieved highly, was clear about their understanding of myth - in fact, the more specialised technical meaning that the curriculum had sought to develop had collapsed for them under the weight of the pre-curriculum popular meaning. The*

*students' grasp of procedures for analysis were similarly startling - they could make the first three moves, (identifying key signs, describing what was denoted by these signs, exploring connotations) with some prompting, but could do very little at the first crunch point where an effort of synthesis and a process of reference to a social context became necessary.*

*For the academic involved, this was obviously of concern. What had gone wrong? The subject had an excellent reputation among students for being interesting; indeed the interviewed students were themselves quite evidently fascinated by their new (and far from fully achieved) relationship to texts that they had previously seen as transparent or 'natural'. Two factors emerged from the staff member's somewhat demoralised reflection on the pedagogic strategies of the subject. The first was that, in relation to the concept of myth, there had probably been disproportionate emphasis in the curriculum on example at the expense of explanation or definition. The second was a bit harder to get at but finally emerged in this form: the beginning procedural analytical knowledge (the part that the students were able to do) was made explicit and practised; but the latter parts of the analytical process were left implicit - possibly partly because explicitness may have brought debate within its wake, but also because this knowledge is, for most of these practising academics, implicit. So the students were faced with a learning situation in which they did not have a definitive idea of certain key concepts and in which the procedural knowledge suddenly took a deep dive into the implicit. With this light on it, the students' difficulties were understandable.*

*The story does not have a happy ending yet, but the results will be fed back into the teaching team. For me, it was fascinating to be an observer and a sometime coach in this process as it moved towards its highly productive conclusions. I think I was perhaps surprised by the engagement that is generated by having to genuinely confront students' failure to learn: you are really serious about finding answers as you comb over the teaching that should have succeeded. Watching it, I could not help but feel that this is an experience that all university teachers should have. Soon.*

# Five Fatal Falacies About Studying at University

The following article is the text of the opening address, presented by Dr Lee Andresen, of the Professional Development Centre at the University of New South Wales, on the occasion of the inaugural First Year Undergraduate Students' Conference. The one-day conference took place on 13 April this year, and was sponsored by the Learning Assistance Centre at the University of Western Sydney, Nepean.

## INTRODUCTION

I have become aware of several fallacies, all concerning students and how they learn at university, that I wish to tell you about. Of course, a fallacy simply means a logical mistake, a wrong way of thinking. But not just *any* mistake. It's rather a particularly *attractive* or *seductively* wrong way of thinking. And it's something that's wrong regardless of how many people believe in it. Popularity doesn't mean truth. I really suspect *lots* of people believe these five fallacies – not just students, but staff and administrators alike. Therein lies the problem.

You may ask "Why does it matter anyhow **how people think?**". It matters because the way we think about things is one (though only one) of the causes of **how we act**. Getting people to think right should mean they are more likely to act sensibly. (Other factors affect how people act – feelings and habits play a major role – so what I'm proposing is definitely *NOT* a panacea for all student problems – but it's probably a good starting point.) So I reckon that if students *AND* their teachers begin thinking correctly about these issues, **and then acting upon them**, studying at university might be a very much more successful and satisfying thing for all of us.

Here are the fallacies as I see them ...

- The Fallacy of **Professionalism**
- The Fallacy of **Responsibility**
- The Fallacy of **Incompetence**
- The Fallacy of **Competitiveness**
- The Fallacy of **Knowledge**

### 1. PROFESSIONALISM *What's the fallacy here?*

First, it's widely believed that when people **need ordinary help** – i.e. they have a problem that's hindering them from studying well, maybe a personal, emotional or relationship problem, an unhappiness, a suffering or a distress of some sort – for these people the first stop should be to a **professional** who can help them. Second, it's widely believed that the only people who can be **helpful** in these cases and who should ever be trusted to **offer help** them are professionally trained people.

I think both these are wrong, at least as applied to the *vast majority of ordinary problems, unhappinesses, distresses and concerns that students have at university*. I must make it absolutely clear that I'm not talking about pathological problems, mental illnesses or things like serious depression, phobias, suicidal feelings and the like. People suffering these things need professional care and their first stop should be a qualified practitioner. I'm talking about all the other things that

reasonably sane, well-balanced and coping people suffer that make their lives difficult, painful, rotten and really miserable for them from time to time. Such day-to-day things are substantial enough to interfere with their capacity to study well.

My argument is that the people who can help us most when we are experiencing these kinds of *ordinary problems* are in fact other *ordinary people* like ourselves who also have similar problems. That means other students – or other staff, if you're a staff member. And none of them are professionals. There are simply masses of sound and convincing everyday evidence to support this proposition. Ordinary, reasonably-adjusted and more-or-less adequately coping people like you and me each possess all the intelligence necessary for finding a brilliant way out of our own problems. And in finding our own way we grow. Moreover, virtually all the hurts and wounds that we regularly suffer from the way life treats us are in fact self-healing – *provided* we do a couple of sensible, simple things about them.

The most powerful effective, simple and sensible think is to simply talk about our problems and our distresses to one another. One talks while the other person simply listens, without judging, criticising, evaluating, without offering any advice whatever to us, and without ever repeating the discussion outside. The process is sometimes called co-counselling. Any two, three, four or more people – ordinary people, not professionals – can help one another any time they wish simply by Learning a few ground-rules for how to do it effectively, safely and well.

What I'm talking about is a particular, proven kind of peer-support or mutual-help group. Guidelines for how such groups can run are readily available (Jackins, 1986; Andresen, 1993). The point is that we are one another's best helpers and healers.

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*Only one of these factors is the amount of work students put into studies. . . . The point is that no amount of even the hardest work can compensate if other factors are missing.*

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Some of my good friends and respected colleagues are counsellors and clinical psychologists. They have great professional wisdom and skill for doing what they alone can do best – healing and helping people who are seriously hurt, emotionally incapacitated, or

pathologically ill. Students, however, can take power into their own hands by Learning how to help one another and help themselves in regular day-to-day matters that do not need that kind of professional attention.

### What Can Students Do?

They can form peer-support groups – pairs for a start, but groups can operate with larger numbers like ten or twelve. Find out about and practise the ground-rules for giving co-counselling (which is simply talking and listening to one another for agreed periods of time, taking turns, no judgement and no advice given). Maybe get someone with experience in the technique to demonstrate it, then take over by yourselves. And agree to meet regularly or periodically to do this kind of helping-one-another together.

### What Can Staff Do?

They can encourage students to set up peer-support networks, supply them with literature and sound guidelines, suggest or offer time and space for peer-support meetings, even practise, model and recommend the techniques in class time.

Perhaps more importantly, they can become sensitised to the role of emotional blocks and barriers to good learning and start taking these into account in their teaching. And of course they can set up their own peer-support groups among staff using the same co-counselling principles.

## 2. RESPONSIBILITY *What's the fallacy here?*

It is widely believed, among both students and staff, that if I'm not performing well enough academically it logically **must be my fault**. If I'm failing or under-achieving, I'm the **only one responsible**. I'm **responsible for it all**. And it's **my job alone to do something about it**.

But research has shown us quite clearly that this notion is absolute rubbish. It needs to be totally debunked – among students and staff alike. We now know with considerable confidence that the conditions that make for successful learning are **multiple**. A whole heap of quite different conditions or factors operate to determine whether students will do well or do badly at university (Biggs, 1991).

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*. . . you give students questionnaires to fill in. . . You then add together all these fragments and pretend that you have the collective view. . . How can you say you know the **group's opinion** if the group has **never met to talk about it?***

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**Only one** of these factors is the amount of work students put into studies. That's important, of course. I'm not denying that students need to work hard! The point is that no amount of even the hardest work can compensate **if other factors are missing**.

One factor is the **background or previous experience** students bring with them. No amount of hard work can alter that. But good teaching can take it into account and compensate for it. Another is the **learning styles** students bring with them. No amount of hard study can change a long-established Learning style. But good teaching can encourage development of alternative styles. Good teachers can recognise and make accommodation for existing learning styles. Another is the **support and resources** available for learning – the total learning environment. No amount of hard study can alter that – but teachers and the institution can change it if they have a will to do so. And if they put their money where their mouths are.

### What Can Students Do?

Let's not pretend – it's almost impossible for any students alone, all by themselves, to say to their teacher "OK – I'm failing, sure, but what you have to do is consider all these other factors!". That's going to read like blatant evasion of personal responsibility! No average academic is likely to listen seriously. But there's strength in numbers, and wisdom in sometimes attacking the system indirectly. In every class, stream or year-group students can form feedback groups or **feedback teams**. These are volunteers who regularly meet, just for a short while, to spot deficiencies in the total learning environment and feed these back – bring them to the notice of staff and administrators. Maybe, if someone acts as leader, a whole class can do the job – but generally not enough are interested and the task falls to a motivated few. The greatest strength of all lies in networks of such teams – across the institution, across years, faculties and classes. There's real power there – power to potentially change the Learning environment into something that makes it possible for hard work and dedicated study to actually make a difference in results and achievement levels.

### What Can Staff Do?

First, staff can themselves examine the total learning environment and not continue (in defiance of the research) to blithely place all responsibility for outcomes on student efforts. Secondly, they'll suggest, promote and encourage **feedback teams** to form and regularly report on how they see the total learning environment operating. They'll explain how these can function and maybe even offer class time for meeting.

They'll also show an interest in and dedication to making up deficiencies and shortfalls in their own teaching methods, and in the resources and facilities provided for students. They'll facilitate the formation of institution-wide student networks to monitor the conditions for good Learning and they'll actively welcome whatever information these generate.

In their own teaching they'll find out about and seek ways to accommodate different student backgrounds and learning styles. And they'll add to their teaching repertoire ways of rewarding alternative learning styles – particularly where these involve a preference for collaboration and group work.

## 3. INCOMPETENCE *What's the fallacy here?*

There's a widespread belief that students are actually pretty incompetent to make judgements, or have serious well-informed views, about some very important things.

Here are two of those things.

First, students are not supposed to be competent to judge how well they are being taught. "Hold on!" I hear some academics say "We do have student evaluations of teaching you know. Doesn't that show we respect student views about the quality of teaching?"

OK, so you give students questionnaires to fill in – that's good, so let's give credit where it's due. But in doing that – and nothing more – you reduce each student to an isolated person – an atom, a fragment. You then add together all these fragments and pretend that you have the collective view! That's a fallacy in itself – reductionism of the work kind. How can you say you know the **group's** opinion if the group has never met to talk about it?

How many teachers invite the class to discuss what they fell about the quality of their teaching? By talking about it, by listening to one another's views, all kinds of better-informed views can emerge. An authentic collective wisdom might even make its appearance. Very few academics dare to do this – it's very threatening. They prefer to deny that a class as a group has any competence to make a **collective evaluation** (Gibbs, 1982). And that fallacy diminishes and depletes the richness of evaluative data staff can obtain about their teaching. And it keeps students isolated from one another at a time when they actually have a valid **collective interest**.

The second thing students are not supposed to be competent to judge is how well they are learning. They're not capable of **assessing** themselves or assessing one another on what they are supposed to have learned. That's a lie. Research shows clearly that, under appropriate conditions, students can indeed assess one another and themselves – very competently. I am NOT trying to argue that students should be the **only** assessors – merely that they are **able to become competent assessors** and that they should learn and practice this competency from time to time as part of their professional education.

The really important thing about learning to assess oneself and one's fellow-students is that through doing it **you become a better learner** – you actually improve in your grades and exam results and you are likely to become a more competent and adequately-prepared professional when you graduate (Boud, 1986). So by clinging to this fallacy of student incompetence, academics are actually limiting or diminishing the quality of learning outcomes in courses they teach.

#### What Can Students Do?

First, they can suggest (demand, if necessary) that **group discussion-based evaluations** of teaching be periodically carried out in addition to individual questionnaire surveys. They are easy to organise; it can be best (though not entirely necessary) to have a neutral facilitator – a person to organise and conduct the discussion and who reports the outcomes to the teacher. They're a bit like the "focus groups" used widely and effectively in marketing research.

Second, they can suggest (demand if necessary) that from time to time they study, as part of each of their academic courses, how to engage in **self- and peer-assessment**. The rules and guidelines for it are very well researched and readily available. Students can

even give their teachers the appropriate literature and say "Here – read this – it works, what about trying it with us? We need it!"

#### What Can Staff Do?

Pretty obviously they can do both these things without waiting for students to ask them for it. If they need help, in the form of documentation, advice or support, they can approach their educational development personnel on campus who will probably be delighted to play a part.

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*The result of directly confronting and contradicting the competitiveness fallacy will be better learning all round.*

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#### 4. COMPETITIVENESS *What's the fallacy here?*

There's a widespread belief that the more competitive we make the learning environment the more likely we are to stimulate high quality performance. Make the whole scene mega-cut-throat, the story goes, and you'll get top results and fantastic learning achievement. People believe that competition unfailingly challenges, motivates and brings out the best in students – and the fiercer the competition the better for learning.

This is a complete travesty of the truth. And particularly dangerous because it contains an element of important truth. I'm not against competition as such, nor against medals and honours for top performers – there's little or no evidence that such things do any harm and they probably even do some good.

Where the competitive ethic fails the truth test is when competitiveness sets students against one another, creates suspicion, and divides the student group into an array of private, jealous, envious, suspicious and mistrustful individuals. When that is allowed to happen (it's actually encouraged to happen in some institutions and some classes) research tells us that the outcome is likely to be actually diminished performance, lower grades and poorer learning outcomes for many students (Goodlad and Hirst, 1989; Collier, 1980).

#### What Can Students Do?

They can suggest (demand if necessary) that at least **three things** be present in their learning environment.

1. Opportunity for **working collaboratively** from time to time in every subject – that means group projects, share assignments, joint essays, collective problem-solving, and so on.
2. Opportunity for **teaching one another** from time to time – pretty regularly, actually, is best. That means testing out how well you understand something by trying to teach it to another student. Or advanced students who have already mastered some set of skills being the tutors who introduce novices into those skills.

3. Opportunity and encouragement to form a variety of **study groups or study syndicates** which meet regularly outside class in each subject and there students help one another, share ideas, talk about what problems they're finding, and actually enhance one another's learning and raise one another's standards.

These three ideas are most definitely NOT consistent with rampant competitiveness – they run slap right in its face. But each of these three strategies has been shown to actually raise learning achievements and performance across those who are involved in them.

#### What Can Staff Do?

As before, they can simply start implementing the first two of these ideas. They can introduce some collaborative assignments, team tasks and group projects in which assessment results are either shared equally or divided in some other way among the group. And they can build into their classes time for students to practice teaching one another.

And as for the third, they can "sell" the idea of study syndicates, suggest and support them, and maybe even arrange time and spaces to facilitate the formation of productive study groups among students in their classes. The result of directly confronting and contradicting the competitiveness fallacy will be better learning all round.

5. **KNOWLEDGE** (or, more correctly, "**KNOWLEDGE TRANSMISSION**")  
*What's the fallacy here?*

The fallacy is believing that when Learning takes place in a subject the teacher's "knowledge" about the subject is somehow "transferred" to the students. This is complete nonsense; nobody's knowledge can ever be transferred to anyone else.

Knowledge is something we each construct for ourselves. It forever remains our own – and it's demonstrated through our thinking and through our acting. It's not a saleable product or a commodity – our knowledge is an intrinsic part of **who we are**. Students "learn" by constructing **their own knowledge** about the subjects they study – partly as a result of being exposed to information about the teacher's knowledge. And if their learning is of a good quality, their "knowledge" might even bear a reasonably close resemblance to that of the teacher. But the knowledge never "jumps" from one brain into another! Information might be "transmitted", but knowledge is another matter entirely.

Probably the longest existing tradition of educational research – dating right back to the nineteen twenties and thirties – tells us quite indisputably that one of the most powerful stimulating factors enabling students to construct high quality knowledge of their own in university studies is – wait for it – **discussion** (Jaques, 1991). That finding applies right across the whole range of subjects – even mathematics and the most technical of disciplines. And it applies across all levels – from first year undergraduate right through to post-doctoral studies.

#### What Can Students Do?

One of the commonest ways for students to be "taught" is in large lecture classes where teachers talk. That's

NOT (normally, anyhow) a place where knowledge is likely to be constructed. Sometimes however students are taught in a **sub-grouped** class, where a large year group is broken up into smaller groups and called "tutorials" or "seminars" or "workshops". Now that's a more hopeful situation for knowledge-building but it's still no guarantee that it will happen!

Even in such smaller class groups students have to **demand** that they be permitted to engage in the one powerful learning activity that such smaller-sized groups are best for – which is students talking to **one another** as well as to the teacher. If this student-student discussion is actually not encouraged, or not even permitted as a regular part of class activities, the educational value of such classes is massively depleted. On economic grounds alone it would probably be best not to run classes in small group sizes unless students can regularly interact in this way – with one another.

If the teacher is going to do all the talking, large classes are as good as any other sized group. If students are solving problems individually most of the time small class groups serve little or no useful function – it is better then for students to work alone outside class and bring work privately to be corrected.

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What students have to do is demand that whenever small or smallish-sized classes are formed, they must be given opportunity to do in those classes the things that small classes are best for – the things that lead to best quality knowledge construction. That means – among other things – plenty of discussion, talking about and demonstrating to one another whatever knowledge we presently think we have, listening to others doing the same, and collectively building up our grasp of knowledge by this process of discussion, debate and sharing of ideas.

#### What Can Staff Do?

Pretty obviously they can ask themselves the fundamental question – what is the empirical link between class size and learning outcomes? "What is it that I can do when I am teaching a class of this particular size that will maximise the likelihood of quality knowledge construction among the students?". They can find out how to answer that question by reading in the readily available literature on teaching methods in higher education, and by consulting their academic staff development personnel for advice (Andresen, 1993). The more teachers talk about **teachers' knowledge** the more class time they use up and the less time is left for students to get on with the more important job of building up and constructing **students' knowledge**.

## ENDNOTE

I hope you have noticed how one theme underlies my choice of these particular fallacies. Out of all the things I could have chosen to talk about, these five fallacies have a **common thread**. It is that all the possible actions that would or might result from correcting our thinking about each of them are actions that would **bring students together** – into collegial groups, into networks, and into contact, sharing and joint support.

That's the really important value of 'thinking right' about each of these issues. I'm not a conspiracy theorist, but it does seem as though by perpetuating wrong thinking about each issue our universities actually keep students apart, isolate them, divide them, make them into enemies of one another, and as a consequence inhibit quality learning. Time has come to reverse that process.

Students working together for their own good is not a mere "touch-freely" romantic notion, a throw-back to the 'sixties', nor is it a mere ego-trip for the underdogs of the campus. Research tells us it's an **investment in quality learning**. And every institution these days that seriously wants to be a "quality" one has to understand that this must be an indispensable part of their mission.

Lee Andresen  
Professional Development Centre  
The University of New South Wales

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## Review

Isaacs, Geoff. (1994) *Multiple Choice Testing*. Green guide No. 16, Campbelltown: HERDSA.

This booklet offers an overview of the procedures used in the development and use of multiple choice items together with the rationale underpinning these procedures. The booklet does not attempt to promote the use of multiple choice testing as superior to other forms of assessment. It promotes multiple choice testing as one of the number of appropriate strategies in student assessment. It shows how assessment objectives can be achieved through multiple choice items and provides a discussion of the issues in their development and use.

The value of the booklet lies as much in the advice provided on assessment generally as in that given specifically on multiple choice items. The role of multiple choice testing as well as the criteria for the development of valid and reliable items/tests are discussed in the context of wider assessment issues.

The booklet discusses the range of types of multiple choice items, and provides a discussion of the suitability of the options in various contexts. A range of strategies in the development and presentation of distractions is included.

The book contains a chapter which describes the classical statistical procedures involved in the analyses of items and tests. It describes a number of analyses

which can be undertaken using sub-tests and explores ways of weighting sub tests in different ways to obtain profiles on individual students and to use different weights to combine the sub-tests to obtain alternative estimates of total scores. The use of item discrimination indices and distracter analyses in identifying weak items is also discussed. This section cautions users as to the pitfalls in combining scales which are not related (highly correlated) and the effect of this on the final rankings obtained. This chapter also provides some advice on how simple statistical analyses may be undertaken by teachers who do not have access to the standard computer programs which are usually used for these analyses. The last chapter provides advice on the preparation of students for multiple choice testing and on where to go for further information when the basics covered in this booklet are understood.

The strength of this guide lies in the way it introduces the ideas and concepts of multiple choice testing in the context of the objectives of an overall assessment program. The author clearly believes that an appropriate assessment program uses a range of tools of which multiple choice testing is only one. Also, his approach is not dominated by the use of the statistical information which is so easily generated in the analyses which are available to users of this type of testing, a criticism which could be levelled at some of the classical texts on this topic.

Bruce McBryde  
Griffith University

# New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit Structure and Operation

Australian members are now somewhat familiar with the structures and functions of the quality audit process that has been adopted in Australia. New Zealand, in the meantime, has not been idle, but has been developing a somewhat different set of procedures. In this article, David Woodhouse, who is the Director of the new Academic Audit Unit, describes its history and its brief.

The New Zealand universities have a long-standing commitment to academic quality, and to establishing appropriate internal and external procedures and mechanisms to ensure and enhance their quality. Noting that academic audit is gaining acceptance internationally as an effective procedure for addressing quality assurance, the universities decided to set up and fund a new, independent, body, called the New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit.

## THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

A major re-structuring of education was effected by the Education Act of 1990. The Act gives 'tertiary institutions as much independence and freedom to make academic, operational and management decisions as is consistent with the nature of the services they provide, the efficient use of national resources, the national interest and the demands of accountability'. It will be noted that there are several 'time bombs' in here. Since it is impossible ever to prove that an educational institution is operating as efficiently as possible, the government could at any time reduce funding on the grounds of inefficiency. Furthermore, although the Act later guarantees academic freedom in very strong and comprehensive terms, the reference to the 'national interest' raises a possible area of conflict, especially since the exercise of this academic freedom is to be 'consistent with the proper use by institutions of resources allocated to them'.

A second purpose of the Act was to reform educational administration so as to establish 'a consistent approach to the recognition of qualifications in academic and vocational areas'. It therefore established the NZ Qualifications Authority (NZQA) for this purpose. However, it also recognised the different nature of universities and degree courses, and recognised the NZ Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) as a legal entity with explicit responsibility for that sector of tertiary education.

## THE NEW ZEALAND VICE-CHANCELLORS' COMMITTEE (NZVCC)

The functions of the NZVCC include setting up inter-university course approval and moderation procedures; and exercising in relation to universities the powers of the NZQA to approve courses and to accredit institutions to provide them. These functions may be seen as part of a developing pattern in which separate bodies have responsibility for course approval and accreditation in the various sectors of tertiary education. Each of these bodies must be consulted by the NZQA on the policies and criteria it should establish, and must

then apply the relevant criteria. Note, however, that whereas the NZQA delegates the powers of approval and accreditation in the non-university sectors, the NZVCC has these powers by virtue of the legislation.

## COMMITTEE ON UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES (CUAP)

To carry out its course approval and accreditation functions under the 1990 Education Amendment Act, the NZVCC set up the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP), and all university proposals for new degree courses must be put to and approved by the Committee before they can be introduced (NZVCC, 1993). The CUAP also acts more generally for the NZVCC in consulting with the NZQA on policies and criteria for the approval of courses of study and accreditation.

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*the audit process begins with a formal invitation from a university to the Unit to carry out an audit (although the seven universities have each undertaken to be audited once within the first four years of the existence of the Unit).*

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## ACADEMIC AUDIT UNIT (AAU)

There were several reasons that led the universities to establish yet another external quality body. One is that the government, through the Minister of Education, has expressed the view that the quality of academic performance of the universities is not sufficiently transparent to external constituencies; a second reason is the universities' recognition that the perceived quality of their programmes and qualifications is an important element of competitive advantage; thirdly, the universities are concerned to protect legitimate academic autonomy in their operations; fourthly, although the CUAP's procedures are widely recognised to be extremely rigorous, it is a committee of the NZVCC, not independent therefrom; fifthly, a body operating at institutional level for the universities would complement the course-oriented role of CUAP and parallel corresponding developments in other sectors; sixthly, independent external institutional review is becoming accepted practice world wide; and seventhly, external review of institutional quality mechanisms is

being introduced for other degree-granting institutions in NZ (through the NZQA).

### **Functions and Foci**

The principal functions of the Unit are to review each university's mechanisms for monitoring and enhancing academic quality and standards, and to comment on the extent to which they are applied effectively in relation to the university's stated aims and objectives, and in relation to international good practice in quality assurance. The Unit is also expected to identify and commend to universities good practice in regard to the maintenance and enhancement of academic standards at national level. The Unit will focus on five areas, namely the design, monitoring and evaluation of courses; teaching, learning and assessment; the appointment and performance of academic and related staff; research; and feedback mechanisms.

### **Characteristics**

In selecting the academic audit approach, attention was paid to analogous structures in the UK. However, the NZ Unit will not simply be a UK clone, but will be developed as appropriate for NZ. Thus, for example, account will be taken of existing structures and agencies (such as NZQA, CUAP, the Audit Office), legislative requirements (such as charters and statements of objectives), Treaty of Waitangi obligations, the characteristics of a university (as generally accepted and as set out in the Education Amendment Act 1990), and the relatively small scale of the system.

### **Structure of the Unit**

The Unit, which was established on 1 February 1994, comprises a secretariat, headed by a Director, a Board, and a Register of auditors. The Board, which is appointed by the NZVCC, includes nominees of the national students' association, university staff association, employers body and trade union body, professional associations, the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, and the community. The Board is advisory to the NZVCC and the Director, exercising general governance of the Unit within the policy guidelines established by the NZVCC. It approves the operating procedures of the Unit, and confirms that they are carried out.

The Director is responsible for the operation of the Unit and ensuring that its terms of reference are fulfilled. The Director interacts with the universities and other agencies; prepares the operating documents and implements the operating procedures of the Unit; makes recommendations to the Advisory Board on the appointment of auditors to the Register and provides for their training; plans and assists in the audits; and prepares the audit reports and the annual report of the Unit to the NZVCC.

Auditors, appointed to the Register by the Advisory, receive an appropriate training. Auditors include both currently employed academics and other people of appropriate experience, including some from overseas.

### **The Audit Process**

The audit process begins with a formal invitation from a university to the Unit to carry out an audit (although the seven universities have each undertaken to be audited once within the first four years of the existence of the

Unit). A date is scheduled, about nine months ahead, for an audit visit. From the Register, the Director and the Chair of the Board select a small audit panel, bearing in mind any special characteristics of the university. A typical audit panel comprises two NZ academics, two people from NZ industry or commerce (including a senior quality manager and a person with experience of the work of graduates in industry), an overseas academic and the Director. One of the NZ academics acts as panel chair. Meanwhile the university undertakes a self-review. The form this takes is the responsibility of the university, but it could implement a self-audit, asking itself questions implied by the Unit's terms of reference, such as, What are the internal quality procedures? Are they appropriate? Are they effective? How do we know?

The AAU will require information in relation to the five focal areas mentioned above, and the university's self-audit may well use the same foci. The schedule allows up to six months for the self-audit, which results in a written submission to the Audit Unit that may comprise brief answers to these questions, supported by existing university documentation relating to its quality assurance procedures. The university also submits (a summary of) reports and recommendations of external, university-initiated reviews or reviews by professional bodies that have occurred over the preceding four years, together with an indication of the university's actions on the recommendations of such reviews. The intention is to minimise the extra documentation required by the AAU's audit process. The university's quality assurance processes should already be documented and their effectiveness should be evident from other existing documents. All that should be new is a self-reflection on the existing system.

The audit panel examines the submission, seeking further information and clarification, if desired. About three months is allowed for this, during which time a programme for the visit is mapped out by the Director in consultation with the panel chair and the university. The panel then convenes, and identifies specific topics for investigation or approaches to adopt. This will include sampling and detailed investigation of some departments or courses or processes. It then visits the university for about three days. During the visit, the panel meets a range of staff and students, including the Vice-Chancellor and members of the main committees, and 'sample' departments and faculties. If possible, graduates and employers are included in the discussions.

Following the visit, a report is produced which describes the panel's findings in relation to the issues it has considered. A draft of the report is sent to the university for comment on fact and emphasis. When finalised, the report is sent to the university, and is made public a few weeks later. Although the Unit has no authority to impose sanctions, the universities have embarked on this new procedure voluntarily and responsibly, and intend to address any shortcomings revealed. It is anticipated that the public nature of the report will, in a competitive environment, provide an adequate further incentive, should this be necessary. The Unit will carry out two trial audits in 1995 to test out its procedures, and carry out the seven substantive audits from 1995 through to 1997.

### **Other Agencies**

The Unit is expected to interact with other agencies that monitor university performance, in order to minimise

duplication of assessment and incompatibility of requirements. One such agency is the government Audit Office, which audits each university's annual Statement of Service Performance, in which it reports on the achievement of stated objectives, in terms of performance measures that have been agreed with the government. Another agency is the NZQA, whose interest has been referred to above.

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*Although the Unit has no authority to impose sanctions, the universities have embarked on this new procedure voluntarily and responsibly, and intend to address any shortcomings revealed.*

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### Other Activities

The last two of the Unit's terms of reference refer to 'good practice'. The composition of the audit panels as described will contribute to the dissemination of good practice both into and within New Zealand, as will the audit reports. However, since there will only be seven such events in four years, the Unit will also address this matter more directly. It will compile and distribute information on good practices, and on quality assurance developments more generally, and will maintain the international links, both through the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education and otherwise.

### Review

Towards the end of the first four-year cycle, the Unit will itself undergo an independent review. It will make recommendations to the NZVCC on a further cycle of audits, and any other relevant matters, in the light of this review, the situation of NZ higher education at that time, and international developments in quality assurance methods.

### CONCLUSION

Many variants of external review are used around the world. Some operate at departmental level, some on

institutions and some on disciplines across institutions. In some the result of the review affects the financial input, and in some it results in a ranking or classification (as, for example, in the recent rather rushed, quality review process in Australia). Most countries acknowledge that the prime responsibility for quality rests with the institutions themselves, and that the two-fold role of an external body is to assist the institutions in quality improvement and in meeting their obligations for public accountability. (Some external bodies also have a planning and/or funding function.) There are many unanswered questions, such as whether one body can successfully achieve both these tasks, how to measure 'value-added', what is meant by quality, and the relation between quality and standards. Correspondingly, external review bodies are quite varied in character, and tend to evolve and change over time.

It is clear that the NZ education system is changing. There are definite decisions and directions, but there are also issues that are still subject to discussion and negotiation, and there are some basic differences of principle and philosophy that will not easily be reconciled. The task of the AAU is to fit (seamlessly!) into the framework of quality-related organisations and procedures, assisting the universities to maintain and enhance their academic quality. It will be some years before the whole picture of quality assurance in New Zealand higher education settles down into a firm pattern.

### REFERENCES

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Dr David Woodhouse  
Director

New Zealand Universities Academic Audit Unit

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## Conferences

### Seventh International Symposium on World Trends in Science and Technology Education

**Theme** Science and Technology Education in a Demanding Society  
**Place** The Netherlands  
**Date** 24 - 31 August, 1994  
**Information** Associate Professor Graham Mulroney, RMIT.  
Phone: 03 468 2497; Fax: 03 467 3089.

### Phenomenography, Philosophy and Practice

**Theme** Theoretical and Practical Perspectives on Phenomenography  
**Place** Brisbane, Australia  
**Date** 7 - 11 November, 1994  
**Information** Rod Gerber, CAESER, Locked Bag No. 2, RED HILL, Q. 4059.

# Language and Learning

HERDSA Executive has formally endorsed the formation of interest groups as a desirable form of further development for the Society. The following item provides details of an emerging group.

**A proposed Special Interest Group (SIG) of HERDSA for those interested in Academic Language and Learning Development**

## INTRODUCTION

The initial meeting of TELL, (an acronym for Tertiary Education Language and Learning), was held at NCELTR, Macquarie University in 1990, at the instigation of Sandra Gollin. At that time the potential membership of the Sydney geographical group consisted of about 25 people working in academic support areas who believed they could benefit from an informal sharing of experiences and ideas. At the first meeting of 1991, 13 members attended. Over the years there have been many fruitful meetings at various venues attended by increasing numbers of enthusiastic people from disparate disciplines and from wider geographical areas, including Bathurst, Newcastle and Wollongong. Meetings have been held at different universities: Sydney (City & Cumberland), UTS (Broadway, Haymarket & Kuring-gai Campuses), UNSW, Western Sydney (Hawkesbury, Nepean & Westmead Campuses) and Wollongong. We have tried to accommodate members by moving the venue to different institutions and so far it has been successful although sometimes problematical for members because of time and distance. We unanimously agreed to hold one of our 1994 meetings at Charles Sturt University so the barrier of distance does not appear insurmountable. Broadening our network of members will greatly increase opportunities for sharing resources and ideas.

## PROPOSAL FOR A NEW SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP OR 'BRANCH'

From the 1980s there have been numerous discussions about formalising the network of educators interested in the links between language and learning. The idea for a more formal association has bubbled to the surface on various occasions. At various conferences colleagues have urged the need for an effective wider network and mulled over the idea on return to their respective institutions. The idea was again mooted at a 1993 TELL meeting held at the University of Western Sydney. Finally, at the University of Wollongong meeting in December 1993, the membership enthusiastically endorsed the proposal that TELL (or other acronym) should become a professional association. It was suggested that we could contribute and gain by becoming a Language and Learning SIG (Special Interest Group) of HERDSA, a professional organisation to which many of us belong. Competency, quality of programs, assessment, the links between teaching and learning, and the crucial importance of language are all common concerns.

Professional development will doubtless be strengthened by membership of HERDSA which plays a key role in Australasian higher education research and development. We anticipate that the synergistic effect

of a combination of the TELL special interest group and HERDSA will strengthen both associations.

## OBJECTIVES

What might some of our objectives be as a Language and Learning Special Interest Group? These will be decided upon with input from members. While our areas of interest are diverse, the following objectives may be considered:

- Dissemination of information on language and learning issues to members**
  - to publish a special interest newsletter
  - to organise regular meetings for members to share research and resources
  - to promote and represent professional interests
- Development of guidelines for best professional practice**
  - to promote strategies to help students achieve their academic potential - whether through orientation programs, collaborating with lecturers on programs for effective teaching and student learning, assessment practices, providing input into curricula, bridging programs, seminars and workshops for students.
- Promotion of research**
  - to participate in research/programs with other academic staff
  - to document information on research in progress
- Facilitating communication between members and providing a supportive network of professionals working in academic development/skills services**
  - to gain members' views of relevant activities and topics of concern
  - to facilitate communication through email
  - to organise SIG activities within the HERDSA Annual Conference
  - to investigate and discuss relevant educational issues
  - to provide lists with members' areas of interest/research

Extending the network to other Australian states and to New Zealand will offer major benefits - some of these networks have already been made informally through previous visits to HERDSA and other conferences. Future objectives will no doubt reflect issues relevant to the rapidly changing educational climate in Australasian universities.

## ACTIVITIES

Activities of TELL have been diverse, ranging from workshops, a review of common concerns from the perspective of different academic support centres, presentations, and exchange of resources. Typical of the format of meetings was that held in March 1994, at the Learning Assistance Centre, University of Sydney, where we discussed general business; listened to an invited guest speaker, Dr Martin Hewings from the English for Overseas Unit, University of Birmingham; followed by 2 mini-presentations by Jenni Brackenreg, School of Nursing and Health Administration, from Charles Sturt University and Howard Lukeman,

Learning Centre, University of New South Wales. Past meetings have focussed on:

- **Issues in relation to improving students' literacy skills, such as**
  - Developing strategies for teaching literacy skills at various levels
  - Assessment of language proficiency
  - Language issues and the needs of NESB students
  - Developing accreditation for 'English for Academic Purposes' programs
  - Language entry requirements for Universities in NSW
  - The application of systemic linguistic theory to the teaching of literacy skills in universities
- **Issues in relation to the integration of Learning/Study Centres within Universities**
  - Evaluation processes within Study Skills/Academic Development Centres
  - Cooperation and collaboration with other academic departments
  - Working with Faculties
  - Programs and development
  - Providing adjunct tutorials and engaging in cooperative teaching
- **Issues in relation to DEET objectives**
  - Response to the national goals for an Australian Literacy and Language Policy
  - The impact of governmental policy on Quality in Higher Education

#### WHO CAN JOIN?

Present members come from many different backgrounds but the crucial importance of language and the learning process in the tertiary sector are common concerns. Some have previously worked as academics in Faculties such as Arts, Business, Education, Nursing,

or Science; others have been attached to Student Services. At this time TELL members generally work in academic development centres, variously called individual learning centres (ILC), learning assistance centres, student learning centres, learning development centres, or study skills units. Their range of disciplinary interests is wide and includes mathematics, linguistics, psychology, education, amongst others. If you believe some of these activities or objectives are relevant to your interest or expertise, you are welcome to attend the next meeting of the group.

Lesley Ljungdahl,  
Student Learning Centre,  
University of Technology, Sydney.

#### For further information, please contact:

**Alex Barthel,**  
ELSSA Centre, University of Technology, Sydney,  
(to include your name on a database of members)  
Telephone: (02) 330 2325; Fax: 330 2321  
e-mail: a.barthel@UTS.edu.au

**Rosalind Martins,**  
University of Western Sydney  
Telephone: (02) 772 9200; Fax: (02) 773 5543

**Terri Morley-Warner,**  
Student Learning Centre, UTS  
Telephone: (02) 330 5160; Fax: (02) 330 5556

**Dr A.E. van der Wal,**  
Learning Skills Unit,  
University of Newcastle, Newcastle NSW 2308  
Telephone: (049) 21 5890; Fax: (049) 21 6994  
e-mail: ALAEV@cc.newcastle.edu.au

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## Conferences (continued from page 10)

### Sixth Annual Convention and Conference of the Australasian Association for Engineering Education

*Theme* Inspiring Integration - Futures in engineering education in Australia  
*Place* University of Technology, Sydney  
*Date* 11 - 14 December, 1994  
*Information* Faculty of Engineering, UTS. Phone: 61 2 330 2603; Fax: 61 2 330 2714

### Inaugural Australasian Women in Engineering Forum

*Theme* Integration and Inclusion  
*Place* University of Technology, Sydney  
*Date* Saturday 10 December, 1994  
*Information* Faculty of Engineering, UTS. Phone: 61 2 330 2603; Fax: 61 2 330 2714

### Society for Research into Higher Education 1994 Annual Conference

*Theme* The Student Experience  
*Place* University of York  
*Date* 19 - 21 December, 1994  
*Information* Francoise Vassie, Centre for Continuing Education, Uni. of York.  
Phone: 0904 433900; Fax: 0904 433906.  
E-mail: FV1@uk.ac.york

### International Conference on Strategic Decision-Making in Higher Education

*Theme* Strategy, Quality and Direction  
*Place* Holiday Inn Sunspree Resort, St Laurent du Var, Nice, France  
*Date* 24 - 26 February, 1995  
*Information* Dr Chris de Winter Hebron, H&E Associates, 12a Church Street, Stiffkey,  
Nr. Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk NR23 1QJ, England.  
Phone: 328 8303 55; Fax: 328 8303 39

## Higher Education Research in Progress

Welcome to the inaugural column of Higher Education Research in Progress. This is a new feature of HERDSA NEWS, designed to keep you informed about research activities in which colleagues are engaged. If you are doing research into any aspect of higher education consider sharing details of your project through this column. Information about how to contribute appears after the abstracts.

### 94.1

**Project Title:** Students' Conceptions of Learning in Specific Contexts

**Researcher(s):** The project is being undertaken by the TRAC (Teaching, Reflection and Collaboration) sub-group referred to as the USL (Understanding Student Learning) group. TRAC is a program set up by the Academic Staff Development Unit at QUT to provide a supportive and collaborative network for staff interested in improving their teaching and learning environment.

*The project aims to provide lecturers with information about the different ways in which students in specific contexts understand learning. Together with an understanding of lecturers' conceptions in the same situation, the information will be instrumental in making learning more stimulating, challenging and rewarding. The contexts being addressed include: a first year nutrition unit (School of Public Health); a first year anatomy unit (School of Life Science); a third year engineering unit (School of Civil Engineering); and a third year construction unit (School of Architecture, Interior and Industrial Design). For data collection and analysis the project is being guided by a phenomenographic focus, i.e., one which concentrates on the qualitatively different ways in which people experience the world around them.*

**Key Words:** Conceptions, student learning, phenomenography, context.

**Funding Body:** Teaching and Learning Development Small Grants Scheme - 1994 (QUT).

**Name and Address for Correspondence:**

Ms Jill Franz, Lecturer  
School of Architecture, Interior & Industrial Design  
Faculty of Built Environment & Engineering  
Queensland University of Technology  
Gardens Point Campus  
GPO Box 2434  
BRISBANE, QLD 4001  
Telephone: (07) 864-2674  
Facsimile: (07) 864-1528

### 94.2

**Project Title:** Understand Designing in the Interior Design Context: A Second Order Perspective

**Researcher:** Jill Franz

*The project aims to identify and describe the qualitatively different ways in which designers conceptualise designing in the interior design context. Specifically, this will involve an investigation of the*

*referential aspect of the various conceptions, i.e., the general meaning attributed to designing by designers, as well as considerations of the most distinctive characteristics of the conceptions, i.e., their structural quality. The project is based on the belief that for research to be effective in the practice context, it must concentrate on "how" designers understand design (a second-order perspective) rather than on the "what" of design as it exists removed from the human experience (a first-order perspective).*

**Key Words:** Interior design, designing, conception, qualitative research, phenomenography.

**Name and address for correspondence:**

Ms Jill Franz, Lecturer  
School of Architecture, Interior & Industrial Design  
Faculty of Built Environment & Engineering  
Queensland University of Technology  
Gardens Point Campus  
GPO Box 2434  
BRISBANE, QLD 4001  
Telephone: (07) 864-2674  
Facsimile: (07) 864-1528

### 94.3

**Project Title:** Facilitating a reflective, collaborative teaching development project in higher education: Reflections on experience

**Researcher:** Patricia Weeks

*A rapidly changing social, educational, political and economic context has meant that teaching processes in universities are having to change from the traditional didactic, lecture method to a more problem-based, student centred active approach to learning, in order to promote and encourage the development of creative, analytical, flexible, lifelong learning skills in graduates. This PhD study was based in and limited to the Queensland University of Technology where teaching is a highly valued part of the mission and an Academic Staff Development Unit was established to provide support and assistance to lecturers.*

*The purpose of this study was to examine process of facilitation in the teaching development project. This study explored the processes involved in encouraging lecturers to join and sustain their involvement with a voluntary collaborative, cross-faculty teaching development project (TRAC) which promoted an alternative method of teaching development. This teaching development project offered lecturers an opportunity to move out of the traditional forms of teaching development by becoming reflective practitioners. Narrative inquiry was used as the mode of research in this study as it was a viable means of understanding an experience in which the researcher*

was an active participant and for capturing the complexity of improving teaching in higher education. As facilitator of the project, the researcher kept a journal and data was collected through a series of unstructured, conversations with lecturers involved with the TRAC project. Observations took place of group meetings and documents relating to the reflective, collaborative teaching development project were collected.

By engaging in reflective inquiry, the researcher learned more about her role and responsibility as a teaching developer and the potential promise and possible pitfalls of helping others engage in studying their teaching practice in higher education. She came to understand more about engaging in reflective practice. The findings highlighted the processes involved in facilitating a university-wide collaborative, reflective teaching development project for lecturers in higher education, which was aimed at improving the quality of university teaching.

**Key Words:** Facilitation, Teaching Development, Higher Education, University Teaching, Reflection, Narrative Inquiry.

**Name and Address for Correspondence:**

Patricia Weeks, Senior Lecturer  
Academic Staff Development Unit  
Queensland University of Technology  
GPO Box 2434  
BRISBANE, QLD 4001  
Telephone: (07) 864 2697  
Facsimile: (07) 864 1805

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#### 94.4

**Project Title:** Factors that affect Academic Success in Law School

**Researcher:** Lyndal Taylor

The project considered the effect of student study approaches and factors about the students to determine what matters affect academic success (G.P.A.) at Law Schools.

Factors considered included:

1. features about the student that cannot be changed such as age at entry, gender, previous education, tertiary entrance score
2. features about the student that might be able to be changed such as work commitments, enrolment classification, alienation, exam anxiety, career choice, satisfaction with legal education
3. features about the students' personal life such as family support, hours spent in recreation, marital status, domestic responsibilities, parental background
4. features about the students' study approaches including motivations to study and attributions for success, study habits and study approaches.

The research was undertaken by way of a questionnaire administered to 575 law students across four years of the law degree at the Faculty of Law at Queensland University of Technology. A number of analyses were undertaken to determine the significance of these features including regression analysis, discriminant analysis and correlation analysis.

**Key Words:** Academic success, alienation, anxiety, study approaches, motivation, study habits, socioeconomic

**Name and Address for correspondence:**

Lyndal Taylor  
Faculty of Law  
Queensland University of Technology  
GPO Box 2434  
BRISBANE, QLD 4001  
Telephone: (07) 864 1519  
Facsimile: (07) 864 2734

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#### 94.5

**Project Title:** How students learn at the University of the South Pacific

**Researchers:** France Mugler and Roger Landbeck

A pilot project into how students learn in a third year linguistics course has been undertaken at the university. The major themes emerging from the project have been the transition and change experienced by students as they adapt to university life and their descriptions of learning and understanding.

The next stage is to extend the interviews to students in other disciplinary areas in the university to see what similarities and differences can be found. Recent investigations into student learning have been undertaken in a number of non Western cultures and researchers have looked for descriptions of learning conceptions in these cultures. This work in Fiji provides an opportunity to extend the research to a very mixed cultural setting as USP has students from 12 Pacific nations and there are cultural differences within each national group. However we have tried to describe the learning of a group of students at USP rather than to make cultural comparisons which would not be warranted given our small sample size.

The work is being carried out in co-operation with Ference Marton. In addition we have explored the validity of using the Gibbs approach to study inventory in conjunction with John Richardson from Brunel University.

**Name and Address for Correspondence:**

Roger Landbeck  
Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching  
The University of the South Pacific  
Suva  
Fiji  
e-mail Landbeck\_RC@usp.ac.fj

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#### 94.6

**Project Title:** A Question of Quality: Conceptions of Quality in Student Learning by the TAFE Stakeholders.

**Researcher:** John Ferris

This project is a thesis being undertaken for PhD study at QUT on a part-time basis while the researcher works in TAFE as a teacher. TAFE is moving toward quality assurance but quality in student learning may be a key element in this quality process.

Currently a detailed literature search is being undertaken, together with a pilot study conducted with TAFE students. This initial work should generate some emerging perceptions regarding quality in student learning that will assist with the future direction of the PhD study.

(continued page 18)



# HERDSA'S NETWORK

## Herdsa Now Has An Electronic Network

It's been set up by the HERDSA Executive for the use of all HERDSA members, state and regional branch members, and members of special interest groups.

To subscribe: send an email message to  
<listproc@listproc.anu.edu.au>  
saying

<subscribe herdsa@listproc.anu.edu.au your name>

Once you're a subscriber you will automatically receive all posted notices relating to HERDSA activities, and you'll be able to communicate with all other subscribers by addressing messages to  
<herdsa@listproc.anu.edu.au>

Eventually, we hope the network will also be a vehicle for electronic publishing

### **Please note: this a moderated network**

This means the moderator reviews all messages sent in for transmission, is committed to being selective, and may sometimes combine messages. Messages should never be longer than two pages and where-ever possible should be less than one. All of which means, the HERDSA network won't ever get cluttered with the multitude of unnecessary and unenlightening exchanges that tend to make other networks' subscribers unsubscribe.

For more information, contact:  
Malcolm Pettigrove, CEDAM, ANU, Canberra, ACT 0200  
Phone: (06) 249 0060. Fax: (06) 249 4023  
Email: <Malcolm.Pettigrove@anu.edu.au>

# An Architecture Faculty's Response to the 'Course Experience Questionnaire'

The Course Experience Questionnaire is being widely used (and possibly mis-used) as institutions scramble to get some sort of comparative sense of the quality of the courses they offer. This comment from a professional course at the University of Adelaide sounds a timely warning note about balancing the numbers with interpretation and judgment.

The Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) was used in an Australia-wide survey of recent (1993) graduates of Australian universities. The survey was carried out by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) for the Graduate Careers Council of Australia. The release of the results of the survey has raised concerns in a number of disciplines that their educational goals are not adequately measured by the CEQ.

The Department of Architecture and the Faculty of Architecture and Urban Design at the University of Adelaide have obtained the mean results for responses for each of two undergraduate degree courses: the Bachelor of Architectural Studies (B.Arch.St.) - a first, 'liberal' studies degree - and the Bachelor of Architecture (B.Arch.) - a second, professionally-oriented degree. Although these figures refer only to the Adelaide courses, Australian architecture courses generally fared poorly in the survey, and it is likely that comments regarding the Adelaide course would be relevant to many other courses.

We are alarmed that our courses have been evaluated using such an inappropriate instrument. It is considered good practice to evaluate courses using questions which relate to the educational aims of the course. In the following outline of how we see the questionnaire as having failed to do this, we will concentrate, for brevity, on the Bachelor of Architecture course, but many similar comments could be made about the Bachelor of Architectural Studies course. Although the published CEQ results combine the two degrees, we have been able to obtain the mean results for individual questions by degree course. These figures provide the basis for the analysis which follows.

The 1992 University of Adelaide Calendar sets out the objectives for the BArch course at the time; these are displayed in Table 1. Only a minority of the questions in the questionnaire relate directly to these educational objectives. These questions are:

2. Problem solving skills;
5. Analytic skills (but note that this actual word is not a good choice re our objectives);
9. Ability to work as a team member;
10. Tackling unfamiliar problems;
11. Written communication;
22. Ability to plan own work.

Our students' mean response to every one of these questions was positive. However, a comparison of the course objectives with the questionnaire reveals some serious omissions. Leading among these are consideration of ethics, problem-definition, designing,

and communication and documentation of designs. While we wonder whether a concern for ethical considerations is not an issue of wide educational concern, presumably a discipline-specific questionnaire would be needed to cover most of these omitted objectives. The fact that the CEQ does not do so calls into question the appropriateness of any general evaluation instrument.

In the questionnaire there are a number of other questions which have some relevance to the course, though their precise wording is perhaps inappropriate to our course. These include the three questions used for the appropriate assessment scale (Questions 8, 12 and 19). For all of these a negative answer indicates appropriate assessment, where appropriate means (roughly) emphasis on understanding rather than on memorising facts.

Our students' responses to these three questions were all good (ie. negative).

Hence, though it is disappointing to see poor responses to questions such as 3, 7, 15, 17, 18, 20 and 24, and we are by no means complacent about the responses, we do need to recognise that, despite these negative perceptions regarding staff, the students do see the course as achieving its educational objectives in so far as the questionnaire addresses these. We can only assume that, as appears to be common in problem-based learning, students see themselves as achieving even without the staff support they would like. This is a worrying irony of the problem-based approach.

Responses to many of the other questions can be understood in the light of a recent study on the evaluation of teaching in a problem-based learning context (Mullins, 1994), because the architecture course of 1992, while not fully problem-based, was largely design project-based, and hence was much more similar to a problem-based course than to a traditional lecture-based course. Mullins concluded:

*The evaluation of teaching in PBL [problem-based learning] has special problems due to:*

- the need to evaluate teaching against the particular goals of PBL;
- the changed role of the 'teacher' in this context and student perceptions (and misperceptions) of this role;
- the difficulty of distinguishing between the influence of the teacher and the self-directed efforts of the students ..

The results of the two studies described in this chapter show that there is the risk that teachers in a PBL context will be evaluated against inappropriate criteria, and suffer by comparison with teachers operating in a more traditional didactic context. (Mullins, in press)

There is a danger that when teachers are operating effectively as facilitators, are choosing appropriate design problems, and are in general supporting student learning, the students will see the staff as having done nothing, and will think that they, students, have learnt all by themselves.

**Table 1: Educational Objectives of the B.Arch (1992)**

**Educational Objectives**

The curriculum and teaching of the degree will have both substantive and instrumental objectives. Substantive objectives pertain to knowledge of the nature of architectural practice. Instrumental objectives pertain to skills and techniques relevant to operating as an architect.

**Substantive Objectives**

*The profession of architecture*

Ethics and the environmental, social and legal responsibilities of the profession of architecture.

*Architectural services*

The recognition of situations where an architect can contribute, the formulation of appropriate strategies, and appropriate pre-design, design, project management and post construction services.

Processes in developing designs, including the development of a brief, and the outline, assessment, detailed design and costing of proposals in conformity with codes and other requirements.

The organisation, management and documentation associated with building construction and the administration of building contracts.

The marketing of architectural services.

*The technology of architecture*

Building planning, construction, structure and services as they relate to new buildings and alterations to existing buildings.

*The architect in relation to other professions, organisations and the building industry*

The relationship of architects to builders, structural and building services engineers, landscape architects, interior designers, urban designers, planners, and others involved in the creation of the built environment.

The relationship of the profession of architecture to statutory authorities and to the building industry.

**Instrumental Objectives**

*Designing*

The practice of architectural design, emphasising the pervasion of design from planning to detailing and the interrelationship of aesthetic, economic, environmental, legal, societal and individual reactions, and technical factors, and the nature of design as a group activity.

*Surveying*

Land and building surveying.

*Communicating*

The communication and documentation of designs as a part of the individual and group design process and for clients, construction, public presentation and statutory authorities.

The preparation of professional reports.

*Managing*

The management and operation of an architectural practice and the activities of an architectural practice.

Mullins suggests peer assessment as a method of over-coming this problem of evaluation. In fact, the accreditation panel which reviewed the Adelaide courses in 1993 said:

*"The obvious enthusiasm of the staff and their commitment to the students and their teaching programs as a whole impressed the Panel."*

*and*

*"The impression gained from the students was of a general satisfaction with the course structure and content and their ability to interact with staff." (Visiting Panel Report, 1993)*

The questionnaire results are also at variance to the individual subject (as distinct from overall course) evaluations routinely conducted by the Faculty over the past 6 years. This survey is relatively simple, consisting of three questions, and is designed to indicate the overall success of a subject and to signal any problems. The first of these questions is:

*"All things considered, how would you rate this University subject this Semester?"*

*Answers indicated on a 7-point scale. (7 equals outstanding)*

Statistical analysis of this question for the BArch. final year subjects for the years 1991 & 1992 show overall satisfaction with the course (Table 2). The survey was conducted at the end of the students' final year and received a better response rate than the CEQ for the same students. For better or worse, the students' response to the Faculty survey is less likely to be affected by their success in gaining employment. These figures also illustrate that the failure to report the mode value in the CEQ results, particularly in the cases where the standard deviation translates to almost one voting interval, can give misleading impressions.

One final aspect of the CEQ deserves a mention because of its inappropriateness to an architecture course. Design projects are always open-ended - it is always

**Table 2: Student Evaluations of B.Arch. final year subjects, 1991 & 1992**

Subject	1991			1992		
	Average	Std. Dev.	Mode	Average	Std. Dev.	Mode
A	4.7	1.1	5	4.5	1.4	5
B	4.8	1.5	6	3.9	1.3	4
C	4.7	0.6	5	Not Available		
D	3.3	1.6	3	2.4	1.4	1
E	4.8	2.4	7	4.7	1.6	4

possible for students to feel that they need more information (on structures, construction, costs, user needs) or that they should try just one more new design idea in the hope that they will come up with a brilliant solution. Staff can control work loads to some extent, but not to the extent that they can in traditional, lecture-based subjects. So there would always be a likelihood of negative responses regarding the work load (Q's 4, 14, 21, 23) in an Architecture course. We recognise that it may need attention, but we do not imagine that work loads in design projects will ever be fully under staff control.

Finally, we are puzzled that the question on the overall quality of the course appeared at the end of the CEQ - we understood that it was good practice to put global questions such as these at the beginning of the questionnaire, so that responses will not be biased by the emphasis of the later, more specific questions.

In summary we note that to the limited extent that the course experience questionnaire does address the published educational objectives of the BArch course, it elicits a positive response from our students. However, the survey does not address our main educational objectives, objectives which are likely to be shared by many architecture courses. The above discussion has shown how the questionnaire emphasises aspects of the course for which there are good reasons to expect

relatively poor responses for any architecture course. For these reasons we believe that the course experience questionnaire is biased against architecture courses. It may well be that other professional disciplines, especially those taking a problem-based approach to learning, should examine closely the responses of their students to individual items in the CEQ in seeking an explanation of their overall results.

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- Mullins, G. (1994). The evaluation of teaching in a problem-based learning context, in *Problem-Based Learning: Reflection and Consultation*, University of Newcastle, in press.  
 Visiting Panel Report (1993). *Report of Accreditation Visit: Department of Architecture, The University of Adelaide*, The Commonwealth Association of Architects, The Royal Australian Institute of Architects and The Architects Board of South Australia.

Susan Coldicutt and Terry Williamson  
 Faculty of Architecture and Urban Design,  
 The University of Adelaide.

Gerry Mullins  
 Advisory Centre for University Education,  
 The University of Adelaide.

from page 14)

*The proposed methodology for the study is phenomenography. Conceptions of student learning that (are held by the TAFE stakeholders together with the outcome space derived from these conceptions will form an important part of this study.*

**Key Words:** Learning and Education, Higher Education and Learning, Quality and Learning, Quality and Higher Education.

**Name and Address for Correspondence:**

John Ferris  
 PO Box 101  
 LUTWYCHE, QLD 4030

Society members and other readers of this column are invited to send new project details to:

Christine Bruce, Editor, Higher Education Research in Progress  
 Centre for Applied Environmental and Social Education Research (CAESER)  
 Kelvin Grove Campus (QUT)  
 Locked Bag No 2  
 RED HILL, QLD 4059  
 Fax: (07) 864 3986  
 E-mail: c.bruce@qut.edu.au

Please use the following headings: title of project, name(s) of researchers, funding body (if appropriate), description of project (approximately 250 words), key words, name and address for correspondence.

Abstracts may be forwarded at any time of the year. However the deadline for the next issue of HERDSA NEWS is 30 September 1994.



**1995**

## **Higher Education Blending Tradition and Technology**

Central Queensland University  
Rockhampton

4 – 8 July 1995

### **Preliminary Announcement and Call for Papers**

**Theme Session:** organise a presentation of 1 - 2 hour in length incorporating 3 - 5 presentations either as grouped papers, panel discussion or other style of presentation. Suitable for topics in which there is a diversity of opinion or approaches and a desire to involve audience discussion.

**Verbal Abstract:** 5 minute presentation with potential for a discussion period of 10 minutes. The conference organisers will plan to group several of these together to promote consideration of related items.

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Fax: +61 (079) 30 9871  
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# ABSTRACTS

HERDSA Abstracts are based on a regular survey of relevant literature. They are intended for use by tertiary teachers, research workers, students, administrators and librarians. The abstracts are classified into the same groups used by the Society for Research into Higher Education in their quarterly publication *Research into higher education abstracts*.

The *Abstracts* attempt a coverage of current English-language publications in Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Hong Kong. Publications describing research, teaching, administration, staff and students in tertiary education are abstracted.

Educational or other non-profit organisations may reproduce a limited number of these abstracts in their own publications provided that HERDSA receives suitable acknowledgment.

HERDSA is most grateful to the editors of the journals abstracted. The *Abstracts* are edited by Professor Amy Zelmer, Dean, School of Health Science, University College of Central Queensland, Rockhampton M.C., Queensland, 4702.

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## A. GENERAL

**Wilson, Brian & Armstrong, Douglas A Computerised System for School Report and Record Writing, Computers Education 21:4 (1993) 321-330**

This article highlights some of the problems experienced by teachers in writing school reports and in formulating records of achievement, and indicates how computerised technology can assist in the production of high-quality reports and records. Attention is drawn to perceived advantages and drawbacks in using a computerised system. Suggestions are made for the implementation of computerised report and record writing systems in schools and possible future developments are indicated. (Journal Abstract)

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**Huntington, Annett Women's Work, Nursing New Zealand 2:3 (1994) 20-22.**

Nursing research has been undervalued in the same way that nurses and nursing knowledge have. But such research is unique because of the special nature of nursing practice and it has a lot to offer both nurses and other health professionals. (Journal Abstract)

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## B. SYSTEMS AND INSTITUTIONS

**Poole, Millicent E Reviewing for Research Excellence: Expectations, Procedures and Outcomes, Australian Journal of Education 37:3 (1993) 219-230.**

This paper described the process by which the Humanities and Social Sciences Panel of the Australian Research Council (ARC) gives effect to the principle of funding 'research excellence'. A member of this Panel for four years, the author provides an account of the ARC Research Allocation Policy,

what criteria assessors are asked to use in judging each research grant application, and the quality controls operating within the system. Peer review is identified as the central element in assessing the excellence of the research proposal, the possibility of a significant conceptual advance and the quality of the researcher(s).

Particular comment is made about the success of educational researchers in obtaining ARC funds for research and implications for the future. (Journal Abstract)

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**King, Bruce Open Learning in Australia : Government intervention and institutional response, Open Learning 8:3(1993) 13 - 25.**

In this article, Bruce King, Director of the Distance Education Centre and Associate Professor at the University of South Australia, provides a comprehensive and critical overview of recent developments in that country. He sets out the background to the establishment of the Open Learning Agency of Australia in terms of government objectives and institutional response, and examines the range of positive and negative outcomes which are likely. National economic needs and higher education policy provides the overall framework, with Fordist, Neo-Fordist and Post-Fordist concepts acting as explanatory themes (Journal Abstract)

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**McNamee, Peter The Limits of equity : an analysis of higher education access and equity bridging courses, UNICORN 19:2 (1993) 33 - 38.**

Since the introduction of the Commonwealth Higher Education Equity Program in 1985, there has been a proliferation of higher education access and equity bridging courses. Access and equity bridging courses aim to improve the lot of disadvantaged persons by equalising access to higher education and the associated benefits and outcomes. This paper explores two expressions of equity - equity of opportunity and equity of outcomes - that underwrite the Higher Education Equity Program and how these impact on the policies and practices of access and equity bridging courses.

It argues that these two expressions of equity are disparate and competitive, and that it is the role of access and equity bridging courses to mediate between them, to facilitate greater access to opportunities and more just outcomes. However, in practice these courses are limited in realising either social justice aim by the way that they employ meritocratic student selection procedures. (Journal Abstract)

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**Au Yeung, Y.N, Ho, W.F, Sivan .A, Gow.L, & Ledesma.J. Attitudes Towards Industrial Training in the BEng. Course in Building Services Engineering at Hong Kong Polytechnic, Studies in Higher Education 18:2 (1993) 205-226.**

Co-operative education involves teaching students both through formal lectures within educational institutions and placement in appropriate industrial undertakings. At the Hong Kong Polytechnic, one form of co-operative education is sandwich courses. Because of the difficulty in locating appropriate and adequate placements, and the seeming ineffectiveness of the industrial training experienced, some of the departments are reverting from sandwich courses to full-time studies, or offering the option of full-time/sandwich modes. This change of structure has not been evaluated. A study was carried out to evaluate the academic and non-academic values of the system and the needs of local industries, using the building services engineering (BSE) course as a starting point. The opinion of the BSE Department

staff, industrial sector, current and past students in the course were surveyed. Recommendations were discussed.

(Journal Abstract)

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### C. TEACHING AND LEARNING

Farrow, Margaret **Knowledge - Engineering Using Hypercard: A Learning Strategy for Tertiary Education**, Journal - of Computer - Based - Instruction 20:1 (1993) 9 - 14.

Computer technology, and especially the new Hypermedia programs, have been predicted to change the nature of computer-based instruction. Constructing a hypermedia document has been suggested to be a form of knowledge-engineering. Knowledge-engineering has been reported to provide valuable learning experiences for tertiary students. This study investigated the nature of learning experiences and quality of learning achieved by tertiary students when they organised information into a Hypermedia computer program, HyperCard. Designing and constructing HyperCard stacks was found to be a valuable learning strategy which provided qualitatively different learning experiences from a traditional learning strategy, class tutorial presentations.

It was also found that HyperCard stacks could be used by lecturers to identify students who hold misconceptions about relationships between sets of information on a topic.

(Journal Abstract)

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Dean, A. F. & Mahony, Mary Jane **Pro Bono Publico - Strategic Thinking in Distance Education**, Open Praxis, Vol 2, 1993 16 - 18.

This shortened version of the full paper begins by stating that although the authors write from an Australian base, they believe that the challenge facing distance education in the higher sector is universal. That is, to change from a take it or leave it view in which the provider calls the shots, to one in which the distance learner is treated as a valued customer. While the provision of education at present remains in the producers 'paradigm rather than the consumers,' the writers discuss the fact that times are changing.

(Summary)

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Fawns, Rod & Nance, David **Teacher Knowledge, Education Studies and Advanced Skills Credentials**, Australian Journal of Education 37:3 (1993) 248-258.

It is argued that appraisal of advanced skills in teaching should be based on the pedagogical content knowledge which good teachers, in biology for instance, could be expected to possess and which a well-trained biologist would not. Public acceptance of this claim is the key element in any argued case for a career restructuring which rewards the development of teaching expertise in schools and universities. Several initial schemes employed in Victoria for appraisal of Advanced Skills Teacher 1 are critically examined. An alternative to the competency-based approaches is presented, founded on research into the development of practical reasoning of teachers.

(Journal Abstract)

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McKinlay John **Critical Educational Science: Fine in Theory, Doomed in Practice**, UNICORN 19:2 (1993) 56 - 63.

The 'teacher-as-researcher' movement has enjoyed a surge in popularity of late. Both the positivist and interpretative views

of educational research have fallen from favour as critical educational science plunders the other camps and unfurls its activist and emancipatory banner.

This article argues that classroom teachers will not rally to this worthy cause for four reasons: most teachers do not have the necessary grounding in educational theory and research; there is no catalyst for the enlightenment necessary for emancipation; too few staff bodies have access to the type of facilitator necessary to initiate teachers' critical reflection, and constant critique will be too threatening to teachers; schooling institutions are intrinsically undemocratic and administrators will oppose the process of empowerment anyway.

(Journal Abstract)

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Spence, Deborah **The Curriculum Revolution : Can Educational Reform Take Place Without a Revolution in Practice?** Journal of Advanced Nursing 19:1 (1994) 187-193.

Nursing scholars from around the world have written extensively in the past decade of the need to transform current health care systems and of the role of nursing education in achieving this goal. Proposals for change abound in the literature and are beginning to emerge in practice but not without difficulties. Having examined new curricular developments, this paper will discuss barriers to further progress. It is suggested that emphasis on reforming schools of nursing and teaching practices has tended to overlook broader institutional influences, in particular the clinical settings in which 50% of nurse education occurs. This paper will outline the major themes of the curriculum revolution, examine the ways in which educational institutions, health care settings and nursing organisations hinder the progress of curricular reform, and discuss possible solutions and their limitations.

(Journal Abstract)

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Margetson, Don **Current Educational Reform and the Significance of Problem-based Learning**, Studies in Higher Education 19:1 (1994) 5 - 19.

The present predicament of higher education resulting from government-imposed reforms is, it is argued, partly a consequence of the education to which members of government have themselves been subject; consequently, higher education carries some responsibility for the nature of the reforms. Government and higher education share a conception of knowledge, understanding and education which, paradoxically, predisposes the parties to act in opposed ways in regard to educational reform.

Problem-based learning, understood in a problem-focused way, avoids significant features of the conception and points to more constructive ways of thought and action. Problem-focused understanding is significant for the light it throws on the general nature of current reforms and their implementation, for the prospect it offers of dealing constructively with changes resulting from reforms, and for longer-term benefits for both education and the wider community.

(Journal Abstract)

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Mihkelson, Ann **Total Quality Management in Higher Education - A Pilot Study on Improving Science Education**, UNICORN 19:3 (1993) 75-88.

The emphasis on quality in higher education, now so often reflected in university mission statements, has directed the attention of educators to quality management processes used in industry. Implementing quality is a strategic issue and until now higher education has been slow to recognise the potential of quality processes and the implications of change in the

university culture. The Queensland University of Technology probably was the first university in Australia to implement changes based on Total Quality Management. One of the recommendations was a pilot study to improve the quality of the Service Teaching in the Faculty of Science. The findings of the pilot study are reported here. (Journal Abstract)

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#### D. INFORMATION NETWORKS

Pennington, Martha C **Computer-Assisted Writing on a Principled Basis: The Case Against Computer-Assisted Text Analysis for Non-Proficient Writers**, *Language and Education* 7:19 (1993) 43 - 59.

This paper makes a case against the use of computer-assisted text analysis (including style analysers and grammar checkers) with non-proficient (second language or 'basic') student writers. The evaluation is made according to a framework that recognises the special characteristics and needs of non-proficient student writers and that presupposes a humanistic teaching philosophy.

It is shown how the inaccuracy of analysis, the limited scope of feedback, and the type of revision behaviour encouraged in student users may make the current generation of text analysis tools inappropriate for use with non-proficient student writers. (Journal Abstract)

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Ma, Jian **Problem - Based Learning with Database Systems**, *Computers Education*, 22:3 (1994) 257 - 263.

Recent research has shown that students' academic performance depends not only on their own efforts but also on the total environment in which they study. To stimulate students' interest and encourage them to participate in the whole learning process, methods of problem-based learning (PBL) have been introduced in teaching database subjects in the School of Computer Science and Engineering at the University of New South Wales. This paper reports an experiment with PBL. In a database subject, students were first exposed to a practical problem in the form of a project and were asked to design and implement a database system to solve it. They were required to work in groups and to acquire other skills and knowledge not taught in the class room. Formal decision theory was used in designing and obtaining the assessment criteria for evaluating the outcomes of PBL.

The method invited students to participate in the evaluation process, creating a non-threatening environment for learning and providing a fair method of assessment. Their approaches to learning have been analysed using the Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ). The statistical results show that there is a significant line relationship between students taking a deep or an achieving approach to learning and the outcomes of their projects. (Journal Abstract)

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#### E. STUDENTS : GENERAL

Greenwood, J. **The Apparent Desensitisation of Student Nurses During Their Professional Socialisation: A Cognitive Perspective**, *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 18:9 (1993) 1471 - 1479.

It is argued that the structure and processes of traditional patterns of preregistration nurse education in the United Kingdom led to an apparent and relative desensitisation of student nurses to human need.

The processes underpinning this apparent desensitisation were those which promoted both a 'compartmentalization' of concepts for theory and concepts for practice in the cognitions

of student nurses and their habituation to examples of poor nursing practice. These processes are described and their nursing pedagogical implications are discussed. It is suggested that unless clinical learning environments are deliberately manipulated to foster the construction and utilisation of 'appropriate' action schemata, the considerable opportunities offered by the implementation of Project 2000 to improve both nursing education and nursing practice could be wasted. It is further suggested that this deliberate manipulation should include nurse tutors teaching theory and practice in clinical areas if they are seriously concerned to render nursing care more intelligently responsive to human need. (Journal Abstract)

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McRobbie, Campbell J. & Fraser, Barry J. **Associations Between Student Outcomes and Psychosocial Science Environment**, *The Journal of Educational Research* 87:2 (1993) 78 - 85.

Past research on classroom environment was extended to science laboratory class settings in an investigation of associations between student outcomes and classroom environment. The sample consisted of 1,594 senior high school chemistry students in 92 classes.

The Science Laboratory Environment Inventory was used to assess student cohesiveness, open-endedness, integration, rule clarity, and material environments in the laboratory class, and student outcomes encompassed two inquiry skill and four attitude measures. Simple, multiple, and canonical analyses were conducted separately for two units of analysis (student scores and class means) and separately with and without control for general ability. Past research was replicated in that the nature of the science laboratory classroom environment accounted for appreciable proportions of the variance in both cognitive and affective outcomes beyond that attributable to general ability. (Journal Abstract)

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Falk, Ian **The Social Construct of Adult Literacy Learners' Needs: A Case Study**, *Language and Education* 7:4 221 - 234.

This paper reports a theory-driven, critical case study of the stated needs for literacy of 11 adult literacy learners. The literacy 'needs' of adult learners are argued to be social constructions. These stated literacy needs of adult learners are influenced by the external environment of the workplace and the particular workplace literacy requirements, and societal demands. However, these needs are also influenced by the adult learners' reconstructions and memories of schooling, and the views of significant others whose discourses on literacy affect the adult learners' perceptions of their 'reading failure'. The hypothesis generated by this case study, then, is that notions about literacy acquired in the context of acquisition of that literacy will be represented in the subsequent requests of the adult learners for these literacy needs. (Journal Abstract)

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#### F. STUDENT SELECTION & PERFORMANCE

Pudlowski, Zenon J. & Rados, Michael A **Computer - Based Aptitude Test for Electrical Engineering**, *Computer Education* 22:3 (1994) 239 - 250.

Based upon successful research results, a computer-based version of the Electrical Engineering Aptitude Test (EEAT) has been developed in the Department of Electrical Engineering at The University of Sydney, Australia, over the past few years.

It permits the easy testing of high school students in order to measure their aptitude for electrical and electronic engineering studies with particular emphasis on circuit theory. This paper presents a thorough overview of the research and developmental work concerning the implementation of computer technology for testing student aptitude. Several stages of this work are demonstrated and discussed. These include the presentation of the structure of a computer program, as well as its important features and functions.

(Journal Abstract)

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## H. STAFF

**Kugel, Peter How Professors Develop as Teachers, Studies in Higher Education 18:3 (1993) 315 - 328.**

Like the learning abilities of their students, the teaching abilities of college professors seem to develop in stages. In this paper I want to offer an account of how this development sometimes, and perhaps often, proceeds. Typically, when they begin their teaching careers, professors focus their concern primarily on their own role in the classroom (stage 1: self).

When they have mastered this role, at least to their own satisfaction, the focus of their concern shifts, first to their understanding of the subject matter they teach (stage 2: subject) and then to their students' ability to absorb what they have been taught (stage 3: student). With this last shift comes a more general shift of focus from teaching to learning, that begins, in stage 3, with a focus on helping their students become more absorbent (stage 3: student as receptive). Concern then typically shifts to helping students learn to use what they have been taught (stage 4: student as active) and then to helping them to learn on their own (stage 5: student as independent). My account of this development is based on the informal observation of a few cases and it suggests a framework for thinking about the development of professors as teachers. With further work, it might lead to theories that will describe what does happen and predict what will happen.

(Journal Abstract)

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**Wunsch, Marie A Mentoring Probationary Women Academics : A Pilot Programme for Career Development, Studies in Higher Education 18:3, (1993) 349 - 362.**

Recruiting and promoting qualified women in academic staff positions challenges not only those universities with a commitment to support equal opportunity and positive action, but also those which are concerned about effective staff-development in an era of change and expansion in higher education. This paper describes a 2 year pilot programme implemented in a public research university in the USA for mentoring new women academic staff from the time they enter the institution as probationers. The programme emphasises individual professional development, but also attends to the institutional factors which influence women's advancement.

The activities include colleague-pairing, mentor training, the use of a mentoring agreement, and a multilevelled series of academic career development workshops, seminars and networking activities. The assessment and research component includes a needs determination study, pre-and post-participation perception of barriers studies, programme assessment, and the start of a longitudinal study of mentees from entrance to tenure or end of probation. It is suggested that the experiences of women academics in US universities and those in the United Kingdom are remarkably similar and that this type of mentoring programme could be adapted in a wide number of types of universities.

(Journal Abstract)

**Ehrich, Lisa Catherine A Mentoring Programme for Women Educators, School Organisation 14:1 (1994) 11 - 20.**

This paper contributes to the growing literature on mentoring for leaders in schools. Because of women's underrepresentation in educational administration and their lack of access to traditional mentoring relationships, a particular type of formal mentoring programme is advocated for women educators who are actively seeking leadership positions within schools. Some key issues are raised in relation to the conceptualisation of a professional mentoring programme and recommendations are offered.

(Journal Abstract)

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**Abbott-Chapman, Joan, Radford, Ruth & Hughes, Phillip Researching Teacher Competencies. Teacher Competencies - A Developmental Model. Research Project 3, UNICORN 19:3 (1993) 37 - 48.**

The third study commissioned by the National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning into competency-based standards for teachers is described in this paper. The research approach used drew on a complex set of methodologies which allowed the research team to link the beginning teacher's experience with that of competent teachers. The suggested model developed from this approach identifies three 'competency areas': teaching competencies, organisational competencies and educational competencies.

It is argued that all three types of competency are needed in the performance of the teacher's many tasks but that by developing a 'hierarchy' of teacher competencies it may be possible to define more clearly a dynamic approach to career development for teachers.

(Journal Abstract)

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## N. CONTINUING EDUCATION

**Grace, Margaret, Meanings and Motivations : Women's Experiences of Studying at a Distance, Open Learning 9:1 (1994) 13 - 21.**

Margaret Grace of the Faculty of Education at Queensland University of Technology, Australia, reports on research into the experience of women studying at a distance. She interviewed 17 students, and concentrated particularly on the encounter with distance education in a social setting which was culturally very different from that which women students were accustomed to.

Her findings revealed that for this group of students at least, gender constituted the strongest single factor affecting cultural distance between personal context and institution.

(Journal Abstract)

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## ABSTRACTORS:

Jenny Ulyatt  
Amy Zelmer  
Faculty of Health Science  
Central Queensland University  
Rockhampton Qld

## Stop Press

### An Invitation to Join a *Special Interest Group of HERDSA* on Language and Learning

At the recent HERDSA Conference at the Australian National University, the HERDSA Executive welcomed the formation of a Special Interest Group for members with a particular interest in the role of language (literacy and oracy) in student learning.

Some activities to be considered by the group include:

- regional network meetings and seminars/workshops
- a newsletter
- a regular section in HERDSA News
- special interest group sections at the HERDSA National Conference

*(Also see article on pages 11 and 12 of this issue)*

If you are interested in joining the **Language and Learning Special Interest Group**, please send your contact details to:

Alex Barthel, ELSAA Centre,  
University of Technology Sydney,  
P.O. Box 123 Broadway NSW 2007

Fax: (02) 330 2321

E-mail: a.barthel@UTS.edu.au

If you are not currently a member of HERDSA, please let us know and we will send you a HERDSA membership application form.

### Deadlines for future issues

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