



## 'Learning for Life'

### THE WEST REPORT

*The West Committee established by the Commonwealth government of Australia to review higher education financing and policy for the next two decades published its report in April 1998. This report is likely to be as influential as previous reports commissioned by the Commonwealth. It therefore seemed appropriate to devote most of this issue to comments on the report. I have tried to commission comments from a wide variety of representatives of the higher education sector. The first article, appropriately, is a personal view from the HERDSA President. Then we have a summary of an article by Simon Marginson which appears in the July edition of the Australian Economic Review. Simon provides a valuable economic and policy critique of the report. There is a part of a response from one University and a view from the NTEU. Finally there are views from two academics. In contrast to all of these comments Gill Tucker, the Dean of Teaching and Learning at Oxford Brookes, provides a view of British higher education following the Dearing Report which was commissioned by the British government like the West inquiry.*

#### Gone West - a personal perspective from the HERDSA President

**H**aving read the early rash of comment on *Learning for Life*, and reread what appears below, I'm struck by how easy it is to criticise. While I see the *Review of Higher Education Financing and Policy* as largely representing an opportunity lost for higher education in Australia, I would like to give credit to Roderick West and his Committee for the work that they have done. The task wasn't an easy one in a period of tight fiscal constraints. Perhaps the sector's capacity and willingness to support the review was not as great as it might have been. Some of the Committee faced a steep learning curve. The demise of the minister who appointed the Committee didn't help. The Committee desperately needed a champion. Vanstone was never likely to carry this responsibility effectively. Kemp came on the scene too late. It wasn't his review. They weren't his people.

Putting 'financing' first in the title of the Final Report reflected a 'blinking' of the

Committee to broader and more fundamental issues concerning the significance of higher education in modern society. The contextual location of higher education seemed to be determined as predominantly economic with only secondary attention to the social and moral imperatives to which higher education should be making a critical contribution. The 'industrialisation' of higher education introduced a nomenclature that further limited the perspective of the review. While this metaphor suited the terms of reference, and current government thinking, more could have been made of that surprising quotation from the 1996 Coalition higher education statement that appeared in the Chairman's Forward: "Universities are not businesses-for-profit and attempts to improve efficiency and effectiveness must be consistent with their unique character".

While applauding the 'student-centredness' of the Final Report I looked for more to be made of the role the higher education institution as a valuable and necessary social

continued on page 3

ISSN 0157-1826  
VOLUME 20 NO.2  
July 1998

### Contents

#### 'LEARNING FOR LIFE' - REFLECTIONS ON THE WEST COMMITTEE REPORT

Gone West! A perspective from the HERDSA President	1
The West Report as National Education Policy Making	3
The Way Forward? A National Teacher's Education Union perspective	5
A University's Response	7
Comments to the Australian Council of Deans of Nursing	9
A Call to Arms! by Michael Jackson	10
British Higher Education Post-Dearing	11

#### IDEAS DOSSIER

The Case of the Flexible but Vanishing Academic	14
---	----

#### HERDSA ACTIVITIES

The Queensland Conference	16
HERDSA International Conference, Auckland, NZ	17
Special Interest Groups	19
Rod McKay becomes Honary Life Member	21
Visiting Scholar - Tom Angelo	22

#### DEBATING IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

THE YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY	26
Teaching science students to manage information	30

#### JACOB'S MUSING ON MEANINGS

Teaching and Learning - and to slash	31
--------------------------------------	----





### HERDSA Executive

<b>President</b> Owen Hicks	(WA)
<b>Secretary</b> Barbara Black	(WA)
<b>Treasurer</b> Sue Johnston	(NSW)
<b>Guides Editor</b> Kym Fraser	(Vic)
<b>Journal Co-Editors</b> Peter Ling & Elaine Martin	(Vic)
<b>1998 Conference Convenor</b> Tony Morrison	(NZ)
<b>Newsletter Editor</b> Roger Landbeck	(Qld)
Gillian Boulton-Lewis	(Qld)
Angela Brew	(NSW)
Gay Crebert	(Qld)
John Dearn	(ACT)
BJ Hamilton	(Vic)
Mary Melrose	(NZ)
Richard Nunes-Vaz	(ACT)
Janice Orrell	(SA)
Alex Radloff	(WA)
Di Thompson	(Vic)
Alison Viskovic	(NZ)
Graham Webb	(Vic)

### HERDSA Office

**Administration Officer** Coral Watson

**Membership and Publication Officer**

Heather Koch

PO Box 516, Jamison, ACT 2614, Australia

Ph: +61 - 2 - 6253 4242

Fax: +61 - 2 - 6253 4246

Email: herdsa.office@effect.net.au

Website: <http://sunsite.anu.edu.au/education/herdsa>

**Editor** Roger Landbeck

32 Monash Road, Tarragindi,  
QLD 4121, Australia

Ph +61 - 7 - 3848 0589

Fax +61 - 7 - 3892 5502

Email [landbeck@ozemail.com.au](mailto:landbeck@ozemail.com.au)

**Editorial Committee** Christine Bruce  
Linda Conrad

**Issue dates:** April, July, November

Contributions for the next issue must reach the editor by 30 September, 1998.

They should be sent to Roger Landbeck at the above address.

Research in Progress reports should be sent to [coral.watson@effect.net.au](mailto:coral.watson@effect.net.au)

Advertising rates: Full page \$300, half page \$150, quarter page \$75. Inserts \$80.

Views expressed in HERDSA News are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of HERDSA. Written material from HERDSA News may be reproduced, providing its source is acknowledged.

Designed by Miller Street Studio, Canberra.

Printed by CPN Publications Pty Ltd

## From the Editor's Desk

**A**lthough this edition is mainly devoted to comments on the West Report there are several other articles covering a variety of topics and I am grateful to those authors who submitted them. It is pleasing to note an increase in the number of submissions. I would especially like to draw attention to the eulogy for Rod McKay who was made a life member of the society at the Auckland conference. Congratulations, Rod.

Christine Bruce (QUT) and Linda Conrad (Griffith) are now assisting me as an editorial committee. We will be using Alan Prosser's valuable ideas for the News and developing a policy to guide the kind

of articles that will be included. Please send in your comments about what you think should be included in the News.

I am looking for people to be HERDSA correspondents who will keep an eye out for activities and news that could be included in the News. No writing is required just the passing on of information to the editor. Ideally I would like to have a correspondent in all institutions throughout our region, so far we have four!

Thank you to those who gave positive appreciation for the April edition, I hope you will find this edition equally worthwhile.

## Whither HERDSA News?



**A**lan Prosser has recently compiled an index for HERDSA News which can be found on the web site. This work revealed to him a number of gaps in coverage over the years so he compiled these suggestions about what he, as a long time member of the society, thought should be included.

1. HERDSA News should be the permanent record of HERDSA policies, issues, submissions, awards, achievements and business in general.
2. HERDSA News should be a record of contemporary issues, values, opinions, reactions, methods, etc., related to tertiary education (broadly interpreted), with a focus on teaching and learning in Australasia (and S.E.Asia and Oceania?)
3. HERDSA News should include substantial news re individual members, eg major awards, appointments, projects, grants, retirements, etc.
4. HERDSA News could also include news items (of educational significance) about institutions eg. new academic units (not just staff development units), reviews of academic units, policies affecting teaching and learning, committees and their decisions/ recommendations. News could also include significant items from government departments, agencies and committees, plus independent agencies such as AVCC or the unions.
5. HERDSA News should include at least a mention of significant teaching/learning innovations from the whole range of disciplines.

### Alan Prosser

*So what do you as a member think about these 5 suggestions? Do you have any additions or suggestions for modification? Please send your thoughts to the editor so that we can develop a useful regular format for the News but without being strait-jacketed.*



## THE WEST REPORT

### 'Learning for Life'

continued from front page

force, contributing to the community, providing a critique of the current social and intellectual order, and challenging government and commercial interests. The terms of reference did not encourage such attention. While agreeing with the Committee that students have the capacity to make appropriate decisions about their education, I would not have gone to the extreme of the Committee's student-centred funding framework (but it fits with the consumerism of the industry metaphor). If universities could be seen as 'commonweal' organisations, as was the case in the organisation theory literature of the 1960s, then a good argument can be made for a broader framework than one involving student/customer choice alone.

Perhaps the greatest contribution the Report makes is its proclamation of "a lifelong learning entitlement to postsecondary education and training" (p.28) for all Australians. For this alone it should be remembered. Given the apparent need to focus on financing, it is unfortunate that so little attention was given to the financial implications of this most laudable statement. It was hardly enough to comment, "We consider that, prima facie, the budgetary impact of a lifelong learning entitlement would be manageable. However, further detailed work remains to be done" (p.29).

Two other areas of concern I found in the Final Report. Firstly, the role of information technology in higher education was seen to be most significant yet the part it would play was quite unclear. There were two dangerous implications in what I read – firstly, information technology was to be the answer to cost-effective provision of first year programmes, and secondly, "a world-class higher education industry" was equated with significant "investments in information technology and infrastructure" (p.15). Such investment may be a necessary condition, but it is certainly not a sufficient one. My second area of concern related to the view of postgraduate education implied in the

report. The apparent conceptualisation of such education as 'research training' was unfortunate and limited the treatment given to such a significant component of Australian higher education.

Charged with the task of developing "a comprehensive policy framework for higher education that will allow universities to respond creatively and flexibly to change, and will ensure that the sector meets the needs of students, industry and society in general as these are likely to develop over the next two decades" (p.1) the Committee chose to develop "broad principles, goals and strategies rather than a detailed blueprint for the sector" (p.16). A comprehensive policy framework is not there, certainly not in a form likely to be taken up by government. However, the Report will have a significant impact on higher education in Australia, though not with the urgency sought by the Committee. After initial largely negative criticism of the document, I would predict that various interest groups across the sector will return to it and find 'gems', pockets of policy direction relevant to the day, consistent with their perspective and interests and worth fighting for. Recommendation 24 certainly shows some promise.

West and his team have done their work. The ball is now back in our court.

The HERDSA contributions to the review comprised a detailed submission (published previously in HERDSA News), a brief response to the Review Committee's Discussion Paper, and a consultation between some members of the HERDSA Executive and the Committee. While it is difficult to attribute influence (the Report makes one specific reference to HERDSA's submission on page 8) it was pleasing, as President, to read the Report and note, in at least some sections, a congruence between views expressed by the Society and directions proposed by the Committee.

**Owen Hicks is the President of HERDSA and Director of the Centre for Staff Development at the University of Western Australia.**

### The West Report as national education policy making

Simon Marginson

*This article appeared in the July edition of the Australian Economic Review. The editor, David Johnson, kindly gave permission for a summary of Simon's article to appear with this collection of articles on the West Report. Readers who are interested in seeing the full text should consult the journal where they will find some other articles of interest to higher education. This summary has been prepared by the editor who hopes it does justice to the original.*

#### Introduction

The article critiques the West Report through the context of the history of government policy making in higher education in Australia and by discussion of the Committee's economic reasoning and the argument it advances for its policies.

In spite of the title of the report 'Learning for Life' the object of the report is the 'creation of a fully-fledged economic market in higher education.' It proposes the introduction of a 'student-centred' system of funding over a decade of "managed reform," (p.34 of the report). This would occur through a series of changes in regulation starting with giving institutions power to set fees. All school leavers and first qualification mature age students would receive an 'entitlement' to government funding, exchangeable at any public or private institution / course in the higher education vocational education and training (VET) sectors.

The article notes that the report is mainly concerned with developing an argument for market reform but this is not backed by a critical analysis of the existing situation in higher education. The Committee derives an ideal-model market system in higher education which is compared to present system and then concludes that it is necessary to introduce reforms that will make the ideal and present systems coincide. Because the market model has support in Canberra this circular argument, which would





## THE WEST REPORT

normally have carried little weight, becomes acceptable.

A number of issues arise from the report, such as whether under the Committee's proposals higher education would become more 'student-centred' but the article chooses to address the issue of higher education policy making. In comparing the previous Commonwealth government reports the West reforms are probably the most radical of all.

### The economic argument for government funding

The previous reports, Murray (1957), Martin (1964), Williams (1979), took the role of government funding more or less for granted. The West Committee's discussion of government funding is less rigorous than that of the Martin Report and rests on different economic premises. Its argument for government funding is tired and unconvincing. It concludes that 'there are no magic solutions to calculate the optimal mix of public and private funding' and that the level of funding 'is ultimately a matter for governments to determine' (pp 51-52).

There are private and social benefits from participation in education. The Martin Committee saw the private benefits as *contained within* the total social benefits and applied government funding to the whole of these social benefits. The West Committee sees the private benefits as largely *exclusive of* the public benefits which it defines as economic spillovers such as the indirect effects of R&D. The West Committee's case for government funding rests almost solely on economic externalities. In contrast to the Martin Committee it has a much narrower definition of public benefits. The result is the benefits of public funding do not have a solid quantifiable base and the government has been provided with a basis not only for increasing private fees but also running down the contribution to higher education funding.

### The scope of the inquiry

Previous reports examined aspects of university life, the Martin Report being particularly detailed. However the West Report is simply oblivious to this kind of policy detail and where the report

mentions specific issues these are mostly connected back to the primary argument for market reform. For example the focus on distance learning as facilitating access for students is treated as unimportant except that this mode of learning broadens access and thus creates a larger market reach.

The Committee claims that Australian universities do not compete with each other, and that they lack incentives to reduce costs, an error which underlines the West's Committee's lack of connectedness to the empirical realities of the higher education system, and its method of deriving its major policy conclusions from a pre-given abstract model.

Despite talking about teaching and research in positive terms a host of important issues in higher education are too difficult for the Committee.

The explosion of knowledge has made impossible any continuing consensus as to the task of the university in relation to some presumed canon of privileged knowledge. There is just too much to choose from. The purpose of the modern university, therefore, must be to open the mind, and create efficient and effective independent learners and knowledge builders (p. 46).

Here the Report takes refuge in an ultra postmodern collapse of meaning, in which all fields of knowledge are seen as equivalent choices within a single consumer market. In this framework, it seems that it is no longer necessary for government to guarantee provision in the fields of professional training in the long term interest of the nation: supply and demand will suffice.

### Retreat from policy making

The article concludes with a concern that the Committee in spite of talking about the need to monitor the effects of fee deregulation could neither explain how to monitor these effects nor suggest criteria by which this will be judged. Lack of objective scrutiny cannot be seen as good government.

The West Report has created a conceptual / policy route of exit out of national policy making altogether, once

the 'final' task of national policy making - the full establishment of the market in tuition - has been completed.

In sharp contrast to the work of the Murray and Martin Committees, and of the Dawkins' Green and White Papers, at the foundations of the West Report there is an extraordinary collapse of national identity and political will.

The nation - building project in higher education has been handed over to the voluntary work of individual universities with a social conscience, and individual academics. If collaborative national policy projects are to be brought back to the centre of public affairs, such projects will have to be rebuilt.

### References

- Dawkins, J., *Commonwealth Minister for Employment, Education and Training 1987, Higher education: a discussion paper (Green Paper)*, Australian Government Publishing Service (AGPS), Canberra.
- Dawkins, J., *Commonwealth Minister for Employment, Education and Training 1988, Higher education: a policy statement (White Paper)*, AGPS, Canberra.
- Martin, L., *Chair of Committee 1964, Tertiary education in Australia, Volumes 1-3, Report of the Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia*, Australian Universities Commission, Melbourne.
- Murray, K., *Chair of Committee 1957, Report of the Committee on Australian universities*, Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra.
- West, R., *Chair of Committee 1998, Learning for life, Review of Higher Education Financing and Policy, Final Report*, Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, AGPS, Canberra.
- Williams, B., *Chair of Committee 1979, Education, training and employment, Volumes 1-3, Committee of Inquiry into Education and Training*, AGPS, Canberra.
- Simon Marginson is Reader and Associate Professor in the Centre for Study in Higher Education, University of Melbourne. He has written widely in the area of policy in higher education. His recent (1997) book is entitled Markets in Education, published by Allen and Unwin in Sydney.**





## The West Review - the way forward?

### **Julie Wells from the National Teachers Education Union discusses the relevance of the West Report to the policy priorities of the current Australian Government.**

**I**n higher education policy terms, the West Report may well prove to be the sleeper of the decade. While its draft recommendations were widely attacked, and the Government has tried to distance itself from the final Report, its recommendations to a large extent mirror the underlying premises of recent reforms to the higher education sector. Indeed, there is good reason to expect the Report and its recommendations will inform the policies of a second-term Howard Government.

Rather than rehash the Report's recommendations - which everyone with an interest in higher education will be thoroughly familiar with by now - I want to discuss the relevance of the West Report to the policy priorities of the current Government (insofar as they are discernible). In doing so, I'll highlight aspects of the Report which are of particular concern to the NTEU, which represents academic and general staff in universities, and which aims to defend and enhance the environment in which staff and students work.

At the heart of the Union's concerns are the set of recommendations which relate to 'student-centred funding'. In summary, under this proposal institutional funding (representing only a proportion of actual costs per student) would be allocated each year on the basis of actual enrolments, with institutions free to set their own 'top-up' fees. The Union, along with others, argues that this proposal would result in a concentration of funding in the hands of those institutions best able to exploit a market-oriented funding system. This won't necessarily be the institutions offering the best teaching or student support: rather, it will be those which can maximise their positional value in the marketplace; whether it be through skilful advertising, exploiting traditional prestige, or offering 'one-off' goodies to

prospective students. It will also result in the kind of funding instability which makes long-term planning virtually impossible, especially in those institutions which sail close to the financial breeze. An analysis of universities' 1995 financial statements by Deloitte Touche found that 15 universities had a dangerously small margin to cope with market fluctuations. Such instability can only be exacerbated by increased reliance on market forces.

### ***The Union, along with others, argues that this proposal would result in a concentration of funding in the hands of those institutions best able to exploit a market-oriented funding system.***

The Report's response to the problem of unfunded enterprise bargaining is to suggest that if universities are free to generate external income, there will be sufficient income to meet the costs of pay-rises without staff losses. In fact, given that the capacity of universities to generate external income varies widely, and that staff costs are the biggest single expenditure item in universities, reliance on unstable markets doesn't represent a sectoral solution. Indeed, the concentration of resources in the hands of a few institutions is conducive to increasing institutional differentials between the salaries and conditions of staff in different universities.

Such concentration of resources is also implicit in the Report's recommendations on research: particularly in the proposal to increase the proportion of funding allocated via the composite index (which will reduce total resources for those institutions which are less successful in attracting research funding) and through the allocation of postgraduate research awards on the basis of a system geared towards 'student choice'. The Report proposes a two-tiered model for such allocation, with institutions' share of postgraduate awards contingent partly on the 'quality of the

research training environment'. Given that we currently lack a reliable set of indicators to measure quality, it is interesting that the Minister has announced his intention to convene a forum on research supervision to improve our understanding of what constitutes a 'quality' research environment. His enthusiasm for performance indicators and 'benchmarks' in schools, and his stated desire to introduce generic skills testing for graduates, suggests that we may well see a proliferation of performance indicators in higher education. Such indicators have many functions but, most importantly, they provide benchmarks for the allocation of public funding and information for 'consumers': both prerequisites for the market-oriented environment envisioned by West.

While such proposals may superficially appeal to students - after all, what's wrong with 'choice'? - in effect, they're likely to result in reduced choices for prospective students. Firstly, the learning 'entitlement' on which institutional funding would be based is finite; which means that students would have access to a limited 'quota' of subsidised higher education. At the moment, access is open-ended, limited only by institutions' entry requirements and students' willingness to incur HECS debts. Choice will also be limited to those subjects which are financially viable in the marketplace, as suggested by, the disastrous impact of recent funding cuts on many Arts faculties. The Minister's recent announcement of a \$1m 'endangered discipline' fund to offset this impact does not represent an adequate or long-term solution to this problem (although interestingly, it is close to the Report's recommendation that low-demand subjects be partially cushioned from the full impact of voucher-based funding, and that additional funds be allocated to these areas on the basis of competitive tendering). Finally, the proposition that institutions be allowed to charge 'top-up' fees to all students would substantially restrict choice and access for some groups: experience of the fee-paying postgraduate market has already revealed how women, Indigenous people





and students from low socio-economic backgrounds are under-represented in fee-paying regimes.

In his response to West (issued as an address to an OECD Conference in Sydney in April), the Minister said that there were 'no plans' to introduce voucher-based funding. However, Government backflips on such issues as the full sale of Telstra and a GST suggest that this view may be revised after a Federal election. More importantly, the extent to which the sector is already being 'softened up' for a competitive funding environment suggests that this is likely to be the case.

This year, the Government has introduced a system for penalising those institutions which don't meet their funded student targets, while funding students

**'no plans' to introduce voucher-based funding. However, Government backflips on such issues as the full sale of Telstra and a GST suggest that this view may be revised after a Federal election.**

enrolled over the funded load at the lowest discounted HECS rate (about \$2500 per student). This represents a significant shift towards funding actual enrolments as opposed to funding target enrolments, and prepares the ground for Stage 2 of the West Committee's proposal for introducing vouchers: that is, moving funding according to movement of students.

There are some positive features in the West Report - for example, the need to improve the status of teaching within the university - but these tend to be overshadowed by the ultimately destructive impact of its core recommendations. We should not assume these recommendations to be 'dead', and pressure needs to be exerted on the government to reveal its full agenda for higher education before the next election.

**Dr Julie Wells is National Policy and Research Officer with the National Tertiary Education Union. She is responsible for undertaking research and providing advice on a wide range of policy matters affecting the work of university staff in Australia.**

## Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

*This book, conceived of as a tribute to Professor John Biggs (a longstanding HERDSA member) who recently retired from the university of Hong Kong, has been edited by Barry Dart and Gillian Boulton-Lewis and contains contributions from both editors and Noel Entwistle, John Hattie, David Kember, Elaine Martin, Ference Marton, Erik Meyer, Michael Prosser, Nola Purdie, Paul Ramsden, Catherine Tang, Keith Trigwell and David Watkins. These 14 authors from Hong Kong, Canada, Scotland, Sweden, South Africa & Australia present points of view from a wide range of perspectives.*

The influence that John Biggs has had on the work of all the contributors, and on higher

education in general, is acknowledged. The book has been loosely organised around the 3P (presage, process, product) model of learning as described by Biggs:

- The **presage** section is concerned with teachers' beliefs about teaching and the impact on learning; and measuring and modelling student individual differences in learning.
- The **process** section is concerned with student learning and assessment; and the Study Process Questionnaire in cross cultural settings.
- The **product** section is concerned with the use of Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes as a basis for testing within learning theory; and the

issue of quality in higher education as it relates to learning and research.

The final section is concerned with the overall model and deals with how the SOLO can be used in higher education as a means of facilitating and assessing learning; and a case study of teaching and learning in one subject. The final chapter sums up, identifies implications and discusses teaching in higher education.

### **Published by**

The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd

Private Bag 55, Camberwell, Vic 3124, Australia

Ph: +613 9277 5555,

Fax: +613 9277 5500





## THE WEST REPORT

### A RESPONSE TO THE WEST REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

**Professor Roger Holmes, Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Newcastle, was invited by the editor to write a comment on the West Report. He kindly supplied an extract from the Universities response to the Report and this is reproduced, unedited, below.**

#### The Way Forward

**T**he University advocates an approach to reform in postsecondary education which acknowledges that education is the means to position this country to continue to be globally competitive.

Higher education under current arrangements is to be funded in real terms from 1998 at decreasing rates with major reductions in net Commonwealth expenditure as a result of increasing HECS payments. Investment in higher education requires a commitment to funding at levels which ensure it can be innovative and dynamic and can make increasing contributions to the country in the global context. The funding of higher education is an investment which stands to benefit the nation as a whole. The University advocates at least maintaining public funding in real terms at the 1998 level into the next century. Under this scenario, operating grants for Australian universities would increase significantly from 1999, thereby allowing for major infrastructure investment for the system overall and increased funded load to assist with improved participation rates in higher education.

Access and equity must be integral components of the system. Rhetoric on the importance of access and equity programmes for students from low socio-economic status backgrounds, indigenous students and those from rural and isolated areas has to be matched by practical measures to improve participation rates. This, too, requires a commitment to funding the sector at a level which will enable it to implement long-term measures to increase participation rates among these groups.

The recognition of the need to reward excellence in teaching is commended. Later sections of this paper refer to research and the need for a concomitant program of recognition and reward in

research and research training. The higher education sector encompasses teaching, research and research training and international trends demonstrate the importance of support for all three fields of endeavour.

Development of accreditation processes which include quality assurance is required. The achievement of a functional continuum in postsecondary education would rely on such development.

***The funding of higher education is an investment which stands to benefit the nation as a whole. The University advocates at least maintaining public funding in real terms at the 1998 level into the next century.***

The Committee's report to the Minister should establish benchmarks in all of the areas covered in this section. The platform for reform should provide the sector with clearer directions through the inclusion of benchmarks.

A program of reform in postsecondary education will achieve more if the Committee is cognisant of globalisation and the importance of positioning this country in the global context.

#### Funding and Financing

The Discussion Paper relies on significantly increased privatisation in postsecondary education. It is argued that growth in the numbers of private providers will create a wider differential in costs, with the potential for students to choose courses at lower costs that at present.

In plain terms, increasing privatisation of the sector will also cost government less. Figure 14 in Appendix 6 (page 116)

indicates that operating grants to universities will remain at approximately 1998 levels into the next century. However, net Government contribution after the HECS liability is taken into account is decreasing every year. That is, Government will contribute in decreasing amounts to higher education whilst anticipating that private providers will fill the gap. By the year 2000, net Government contribution will fall by \$773, in comparison to 1996, the most recent year of highest Federal government investment in higher education. This University strongly supports the maintenance of substantial public investment in higher education and requests that a recommendation for retaining this investment at 1998 levels be forwarded to the Government.

This would have major positive benefits by providing support for major infrastructure investment, particularly in information technology, research infrastructure and flexible learning initiatives.

The current Discussion Paper is driven by financial imperatives in restricting public funding into higher education. This does much to explain why its explication of educational needs is lacking.

If net Government contributions in dollar terms were maintained at 1998 levels, the additional net contribution over predicted levels from 1998 onwards would provide avenues for increasing participation rates in higher education.

#### Access and Equity

Whilst the Discussion Paper indicates that access and equity considerations would inform the policy and financing frameworks, the proposals indicate that there is concern about the potential for decreasing access and equity.

The Discussion Paper relies heavily on the creation of "price differentiation"







## THE WEST REPORT

(page 19) through increasing low-cost delivery options in courses. It is argued that larger-scale use of new technologies will drive down costs in some modes of delivery, thus giving students greater choice. The Paper presents no convincing evidence that this is the case.

### Research and Research Training

The University is particularly concerned about the treatment of research in the Discussion Paper and the inadequacies of the Paper in examining the role of research in higher education nationally and internationally.

The Committee proposes centralised national priority-setting and a system of portable scholarships allocated according to government-determined national priorities. Scholarships would be allocated based on a national merit list of honours graduates, although no mechanism for compiling this list nor for setting the priorities nationally is suggested.

Greater student choice is the rationale for the scheme. If priorities are set at national level, it is difficult to envisage how student choices which lie outside these priorities can be adequately taken into account. Discipline areas in which investment is more difficult to justify publicly than others may be put at the end of the queue: disciplines in the Humanities are an example. There is another problem with disciplines which are suffering from decreasing student numbers, such as Physics, but which are essential building blocks for the development of science and technology. Investment is needed to support areas with declining appeal to students in terms of employability, but with increasing importance to national directions.

The contributions of higher education to social and cultural development are made, in part, through research. A broader focus on the contributions of research to the national well-being and advancement is advocated.

The Research Infrastructure Block Grant and the Research Quantum systems allow for rewards for achievement and excellence in research and for the development of new priorities within individual institutions. The Committee is requested to consider a framework for research which would harness the expertise within the institutions in terms of identifying and supporting research strengths. The Committee has failed to recognise that there has been a significant level of priority-setting and recognition of areas of research strength and demand in individual institutions. This has been driven by the transparency of the competitive grants system and the development of contracted research.

The structure and funding of Co-operative Research Centres and Key Research Centres allow intra and inter-institutional research programs to function in research areas targeted through a nationally-competitive grants system involving strong industry. The Committee is requested to examine the possibilities provided by funding mechanisms which encourage collaborative endeavours with other institutions and with industry and to examine means of enhancing research strengths across the entire, diverse range of disciplines in higher education.

A centralised targeted priority system is attractive in its simplicity but results of similar operations internationally are not indicative of an assured success. A system is required which takes into account the contributions of research to the economy, society and the culture of the nation and which involves stakeholders in the outcomes having a part in the identification of such a system.

**Roger Holmes had a distinguished career in research in the biological sciences before becoming Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) at Griffith University. He is now Vice-Chancellor of the University of Newcastle.**

### Something I have found useful.

**F**or the past two and a half years I have been using an A4 size notebook to record notes on meetings and conferences I attend, lists of things to do, ideas to follow up, notes from telephone conversations, addresses, orders placed and so on. In fact anything and everything to do with work. It naturally arranges itself in chronological order so at the end of the year when I used to have to write annual reports it was invaluable to be able to look back through the pages and remind my self of what had happened and made the report writing a bit easier.

I know all this could go on my computer and it would be good to hear about packages people have found to do the same job but I like my book!

I got the idea from Brad Imrie who has now retired to New Zealand and I gratefully acknowledge his example.

**Roger Landbeck**

### Copies of the West Report are available:

View or download it from:

<http://www.deetya.gov.au/divisions/hed/bereview/toc.htm>

or from the HERDSA office:

[herdsa.office@effect.net.au](mailto:herdsa.office@effect.net.au)

Tel: 02 6253 4242  
(national)

+61 2 253 4242  
(international)

**Check out the HERDSA Web Site hosted by the Australian SunSITE:**

<http://sunsite.anu.edu.au/education/herdsa>





## THE WEST REPORT

### COMMENTS BY RICHARD JOHNSON

**Richard Johnson originally provided these comments on the West Report for the Australian Council of Deans of Nursing and they have been edited slightly.**

**M**ost of the press comment about the West report, and the speech which Minister Kemp made at a conference three days after the release of the report, has been about two points: the West Committee's advocacy of student-centred funding contrasted with Kemp's preemptive rejection of "vouchers"; and Kemp's suggestion of a general test for students in their final year of university study. Neither of these is the most serious matter confronting universities after the report. The most serious matter is the view of universities as just industries like any others, subject to the same pressures and outcomes as industries generally.

In a 14-page speech, Kemp's comment about an end-of-course test took up three sentences: "I will invite interested universities to modify for Australian conditions, trial and benchmark the American Graduate Record Exam. This would provide valuable information on how our graduates and universities compare with other countries. It will help ensure all courses maintain a high standard". People familiar with this exam say it will do no such thing, it was not developed for any such purpose; and the sample questions that have been published in newspapers do not support Dr Kemp's interpretation. If in due course this exam is developed and inflicted on the universities, it will be no more than another irritant.

The argument over funding mechanisms is another matter. The term "vouchers" was used in "Fightback!" and is officially anathema to the ALP and the student union, perhaps because of its possible link to fees. Kemp presumably rejected it because of its association with "Fightback!" and its presumed electoral unpopularity.

What we call it doesn't matter. The West report uses the term "student-centred

funding". Peter Baldwin and Mark Latham, the current ALP spokesman on education, speak of an educational entitlement. The idea is so widespread and rests on such ideological bases that I suggest it will inevitably come. The basic idea is that every Australian should be entitled to public funding to support his or her post-secondary education for some years, to be taken at any time in life. This is a good

***The report sees higher education as an industry; and just as the committee members believe in competition between Coles, Woolworths and David Jones, so they believe in competition between our universities.***

thing in terms of individual development, though that is not the thinking behind it. The ideologies driving this, more than those of equity and social justice, are: the need to develop our people's capabilities, our human capital; the ideology of student choice; and that of competition. The last two in particular are traditionally strong in Liberal rhetoric and are constantly reaffirmed both in the West report and in Kemp's address.

The report sees higher education as an industry; and just as the committee members believe in competition between Coles, Woolworths and David Jones, or between Ford, Holden and Toyota, so they believe in competition between our universities. Competition is claimed to raise quality and to reduce costs, and therefore to be a self-evident good. Furthermore, if Australian universities can match and outdo the overseas competition, it can be even more of an export industry than it is now. Already it is worth more than wheat or wool; but

overseas student enrolments are capable of rising from 63,000 in 1997 to 206,000 in 2010, a \$4 billion export.

While these ideas are strong in the current Government, they are also strong in the Opposition and in the Public Service, in private industry and in the press. We have to recognise that these ideas are going to dominate decisions for a long time to come, and consider how we can make best use of them.

West says that student-centred funding will enable students to go to the university of their choice, and that they will choose on the basis of the best courses and the best teaching, and that universities will respond by devising excellent courses and providing excellent teaching and learning opportunities. Such rational choices are to be assisted by universities providing full and clear information on what they have to offer students, in teaching and learning and in support programs.

Competition will also (it is said) lower costs in higher education. Because public funding will not cover the total costs of courses, there will be a gap which will have to be met by a charge on students - a fee - which can be covered by HECS-type income-contingent loans. Universities will therefore have a strong interest in holding fee levels, and thus costs, down to a minimum. The well-informed student will weigh up the different offerings of various universities, and their different fee levels, and decide what balance best suits him or her - just as with the purchase of a car or any other item.

Costs can be held down (according to the report) by more efficient administration, fewer committees and discussions, more managerial decisions, more intense use of premises, sale of under-used premises. Course development costs can be reduced by more collaboration in development and by using other people's courses. Course delivery costs can be reduced by providing courses to classes of at least 1,000; the West committee has been entranced by Appendix 11 of their Discussion Paper, and appears to have no understanding of the real nature and







## THE WEST REPORT

strengths of the Australian form of distance education.

The report makes sympathetic noises but pays no real attention to students with disabilities – the committee appears never to have seen the Andrews report of about four years ago; nor to rural and isolated students nor students of low socio-economic status. West personally is a warm-hearted man, but seems to have accepted the placebo rather than prescribe the medicine.

### Questions

- So - student choice, competition, cost reduction, an industrial model of management, export income: what do all these mean for institutions?
- What are the possibilities of real, extensive collaboration in course development, to free staff time and to produce the best possible units? Can the number of units on offer be reduced to eliminate unnecessary workload?
- In this era of competition, what does your particular School or Faculty offer to students that is so much better than what others offer? How do you know, how do you evaluate it? How do you proclaim it to the world - especially without denigrating your colleagues?
- Can premises and facilities be used more intensively - courses during vacations, weekends, evenings? What staffing adjustments would have to be made? Are there under-used premises which could be hired out or sold either within the university (to other faculties) or to outside users?
- What is the scope for fee-paying continuing education courses? The title of the West report is "Learning for Life" and it embraces the idea of lifelong learning, but for a fee. To what extent do initial degree courses encourage within students the concept and the desire for lifelong learning?
- And - amidst all this change and pressure - how do you keep your own staff feeling loved and valued and cheerful? West does not address this.

**Richard Johnson is a former Professor of Classics at ANU and a former public servant. He is now in retirement as a Visiting Fellow in the Centre for Continuing Education at ANU and a part-time educational consultant.**

### A call to arms from Michael Jackson

**H**igher education escaped the knife! No additional cuts fell on universities in the Federal budget. Put your ear to the ground and listen to the rumbles. That is the sound of cuts coming. After the next election. In the form of vouchers.

Shortly after receiving the West Report on the future of higher education, Minister David Kemp in a speech to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development emphasised that universities can make further efficiencies. Translation: do more with less or get less to do the same.

The demand for places in higher education has never been higher. More and more school leavers look to universities. More and more adults want to complete their education. In this context it may seem odd that public funding for universities has decreased as much as it has, leaving aside all the number magic. Yet there is an explanation if we take the Budget, the Minister's speech, and the recent *West Report* on the future of higher Education together.

Policy makers like Minister Kemp around the world believe societies like Australia are over-schooled. We have enough people with higher education for all social, scientific, technical, moral, cultural, economic, and other purposes.

According to this implicit argument, higher education has both a public and a private benefit. The public benefit of a higher educated public is saturated. There are no more public benefits in educating more students in arts, economics, science, engineering, technology, music, business, nursing, accounting, and morality. Doing so will not increase invention, decrease the crime rate, increase discoveries, decrease road rage, increase productivity, or anything else. If the public benefit of higher education has been attained then there is no longer any justification for investing public resources in it.

The private benefit remains. As more people have degrees, there is pressure on still others to match these credentials. The

demand for higher education increases at a time when governments reduce funding for it. That is the import of the Minister's speech.

Despite talk of a lifelong learning entitlement (that voucher), the *West Report* justifies further cuts. Hailing itself as the most comprehensive review of higher education since Hector was pup, the *Report* does not explain the public value of higher education. It rests on platitudes about knowledge, and the unknown challenges of the future.

***Vouchers will certainly be taken up after the next election. The logic is overwhelming. Vouchers are democratic, funding students and not hidebound, unresponsive, out of touch, theory palaces called universities.***

What is higher about higher education, and why should the taxpayer keep investing in it? The Report assumes the very thing it had the last opportunity for a generation to explain and defend. The weight of its arguments will not prevent further cuts.

This budget introduced no new cuts in higher education, though those initiated by Minister Amanda Vanstone flow on. Vouchers will certainly be taken up after the next election. The logic is overwhelming. Vouchers are democratic, funding students and not hidebound, unresponsive, out of touch, theory palaces called universities. That will convince the public. The value of the vouchers can be limited in such a way as to cut the public investment in higher education, and that will convince the cabinet. What a one-two punch! Even a Labor Government will find this enticing, though the word 'voucher' would be *verboten*.

The trade-off is that universities will be allowed to set their own fees. That will







## THE WEST REPORT

convince enough of the vice chancellors to prevent the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee from mobilising against vouchers.

Universities with a large student demand will charge fees beyond the redemption value of the voucher. The gap will have to be paid by the private beneficiary: the student.

Those who think the public benefit of higher education has not been achieved

have to do what the *Report* does not: Explain the public benefits of universities. Vice-Chancellors, the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee, professors, lecturers, students, and graduates have to explain repeatedly the public benefit of higher education. It can be done; it has to be done; it has not yet been done. It cannot be done too often.

We have to hit the hustings and convince taxpayers to invest more in

higher education because it benefits that rare, but precious gold, the public interest. Brace yourself, Ray Martin, John Laws, Alan Jones, Brian Wiltshire, here we come!

**Professor Michael Jackson is Director of Centre for Research and Teaching in Civics at the University of Sydney.**

## British Higher Education post-Dearing

**This article by Gill Tucker from Oxford Brookes University has been included to show the different approach adopted by the Dearing Report in the UK compared with the West Report. In particular the emphasis on the importance of teaching stands out.**

**T**he last decade before the millennium has seen sweeping changes in British higher education [HE]. Up until 1992 two branches of HE had co-existed: the universities, funded by central government for teaching and research, with a traditional mix of academic disciplines; and the polytechnics, founded in the 70s, funded primarily for teaching by local government with more vocationally and professionally orientated courses. In 1992 this binary line was abolished, and a single, centrally funded HE sector was established, with all polytechnics being given the title and status of university. This merger came at the end of a period of rapid growth in participation: Britain could now talk about a mass rather than elite system of HE, even though it could still be argued that elitist values continued to underpin the sector.

Alongside these developments government funding for HE was rapidly declining. As the Vice-Chancellors and Principals became more militant in the face of budget deficits and lack of capital investment, some threatened to break ranks and charge "top-up" fees for undergraduate courses, thus breaking the fundamental principle that British HE up to and including first degree was an entitlement, free at the point of delivery. As this funding crisis deepened in the new year of 1996 the Conservative government found it convenient to kick the funding

issue into political touch. In May 1996 a National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education was set up, chaired by Sir Ron Dearing. The Committee was remitted to make recommendations about how the purposes, shape, structure, size and funding of higher education should develop over the next 20 years. The resultant Dearing Report, *Higher Education in the Learning Society*, with its 93 recommendations, was published in July 1997.

**...the government has a parallel agenda for HE, which has a single objective: to raise the status and quality of learning and teaching.**

The contexts in which Dearing was commissioned and published were different in one significant respect. On May 1 1997 a general election had brought a reforming socialist government sweeping to power. With an election cry of "Education! Education! Education!", the Dearing recommendations were immediately placed in a much broader agenda of lifelong learning for all. In February 1998 government produced both a discussion paper *The Learning Age*, which covers all of post-16 education and training, and a *Response to Dearing* focused on HE.

*The Learning Age* sets out a vision where learning is the key to prosperity for the nation, society and the individual. Within this the agenda for HE is largely driven by the need for wider participation and access, and comprises a range of policies which, when taken together, add up to a radical role for HE operating within a nationally established award and credit framework. The objectives of these policies are

- to improve participation rates among under-represented groups - students with disabilities, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, particular ethnic groups
- to provide access to a full range of institutions and subjects
- to close the education achievement gap between those who have a good educational foundation and those who do not
- to close the skills gap between the skills and attributes needed by society and the attributes of citizens and employees.

These objectives are to be furthered through

- the University for Industry - a vision of using modern communication technologies to link businesses and individuals to cost effective, accessible and flexible education and training







## THE WEST REPORT

- higher education institutions [HEIs] making themselves more accessible by exploiting new technology and flexible delivery, with facilities available at times to suit the student. HEIs will become "beacons of learning in their communities"
- HEIs opening up access through outreach, linking into the community through schools, other colleges and community centres, including libraries
- regional strategies, developed particularly through new Regional Development Agencies in which HEIs will have to play their part within a wider regional economic, social and education strategy
- the establishment of an HE focused National Centre for Work Experience.

Alongside this access and widening participation agenda the government has a parallel agenda for HE, which has largely been formed from Dearing. This agenda has a single objective: to raise the status and quality of learning and teaching. This has become necessary as funding mechanisms have increasingly led to research dominated university agendas. Research is dual funded by government: specific projects are funded competitively through individual research councils, whereas research infrastructure is funded through the funding councils. The level of infrastructure funding has been dependent on grades, based on peer assessment of the quality and volume of research which takes place every four to five years. Unsurprisingly competition for funding has been keen and universities have channelled effort into maximising grading so as to maximise funding. The allocation system is highly selective 75% of funding is allocated to only 15% of HEIs, with the top four institutions taking a full 25% of the total budget. However, the "game" must be played because each institution has to run ever faster to maintain its position in the research league. The outcome of this, of course, has been to divert effort away from learning and teaching, and government, building on the Dearing recommend-

ations, has now set about trying to redress the balance.

Both the access and learning and teaching agendas are being moved forward through four mechanisms: funding; quality; a new institute; and special initiatives.

### FUNDING:

Although it is unlikely that government will substantially increase HE funding, as sub-degree education will probably take priority, funding mechanisms will change. Key to these changes is the introduction of fees for undergraduate students. The funding crisis in HE, which originally sparked off Dearing, is to be partially solved by the

***Dearing recommended that one means to improve the status and quality of learning and teaching would be the establishment of an Institute of Learning and Teaching.***

undergraduate students themselves, who will each be paying a fee of up to £1000 per year for their courses: the level of contribution will be precisely defined by means testing. Further a system of loans for students will be expanded, and very like the Australian system, the level and time of repayment of the loan will be dependent on the ultimate salary of the student when s/he is employed. But despite this HE, like other government funded organisations and services, is awaiting a Comprehensive Spending Review to determine whether or not it will be significantly better funded in future. The outlook, at the moment, appears bleak. Universities in Britain are still having to diversify sources of income so that they are less dependent on government funding, and some are now earning as much as 70% of gross income from private sources. Further, promoting wider participation, rewarding excellence and improving the status and quality of learning and teaching will become funding council priorities. It is known that HEIs will be required to have both Access

and Learning and Teaching strategies in place, with evidence that each is being delivered, to merit premium funding against a number of performance indicators.

### QUALITY:

A new national Quality Assurance Agency [QAA] has been established owned jointly by the funding councils and the universities themselves. The development of new procedures to assure the quality and standards of provision has been beset by difficulties. The latest proposals have a detailed programme specification at their heart for each programme of study, making the universities articulate learning outcomes and abilities rather than just course content. This specification comprises

- the main purposes and distinctive features of the programme
- what the "graduate" should know and be able to do on completion of the programme (knowledge and understanding, cognitive skills, specific and transferable skills)
- quality, skills and capabilities profile
- assessment methods
- indicators of quality such as entry requirements and external referents.

The programme would also have to demonstrate that it met threshold standards, defined by subject associations.

There is still lively debate about much of this agenda. There are three main areas of contention

- the validity of generic standards and a fear that if set they may well begin to establish a national curriculum for HE
- the means by which standards will be verified
- the role of the QAA in programme review.

Universities have accepted that they have to be accountable to their stakeholders, but they see the autonomy of individual institutions threatened by the proposals. On the other hand the funding councils are concerned that the proposals may not meet their statutory requirements to ensure quality and standards and to







## THE WEST REPORT

inform funding. Therein lies a tension that, as yet, remains unresolved.

*The Institute for Learning and Teaching:* Dearing recommended that one means to improve the status and quality of learning and teaching would be the establishment of an Institute for Learning and Teaching [ILT] with a remit: to accredit programmes and pathways of training for teachers in HE; to commission research and development in learning and teaching practices; and to stimulate innovation. The ILT will come into being in September 1998 and as a priority will deal with the accreditation of teachers in HE. It is unlikely that this accreditation will be mandatory, but it is clear it will be in the universities' interest to have accredited staff: this because there are likely to be funding and quality incentives for accreditation. At long last teaching in HE will be a recognised profession with standards of professional membership.

### SPECIAL INITIATIVES:

A certain amount of funding will be top sliced as an incentive for the required changes: it has already been announced that the Economics and Social Science Research Council is to run a £10 million research programme into learning and teaching at all levels, from pre-school to HE, and the first projects will start next

October following a call for proposals later this year; already HEIs have been invited to bid for funds to undertake projects within the University for Industry initiative; and it has just been announced that a fund of about £30 million is to be set aside by the Higher Education Funding Council of England to reward excellent teaching.

Within this very broad agenda there is still much more that faces HEIs into the millennium:

- It is clear that regional strategies for economic and social development will become increasingly important and that HEIs will have to find ways to collaborate rather than compete with regional partners;
- The global information age will continue to revolutionise the market for HIE and the way HEIs will have to support and deliver courses;
- Students will come from ever more diverse backgrounds and HEIs will have to tailor courses to suit their needs;
- Ways will have to be found to work with other education sectors, concentrating on admission policies and progression so as participation rates are maximised.

This massive programme of change adds up to very new role for HEIs into the future, establishing their role in the learning age: Dearing has thus turned out to be only a component part of a much wider vision. What British higher education now awaits is a coherent national strategy for the realisation of this vision.

### Gill Tucker

*Gill Tucker is Dean of Learning and Teaching at Oxford Brookes University, where she heads the well known and highly regarded Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development. She is a regular contributor to national debates concerning learning and teaching in higher education and has most recently given keynotes and briefing sessions on the implications of the government's lifelong learning agenda for higher education institutions, as well as the role of communication and information technologies for the furtherance of this agenda. She trained originally as a pianist and musicologist at the Royal Academy of Music and King's College, London University. After a period undertaking research in Germany and Oxford University she moved to Brookes, where she was Head of the School of Art, Publishing and Music prior to her current role.*

Contact email [g.tucker@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:g.tucker@brookes.ac.uk)

## NEW GOLD GUIDES LAUNCHED AT CONFERENCE

Two new Gold Guides were launched just before the dinner at the recent HERDSA Annual conference in Auckland. They will be of particular interest to those teaching science. The guides are available from the HERDSA office for \$10 (HERDSA members), \$15 (non members) plus postage costs.

### Gold Guide No 4

#### Improving Teaching and Learning in Laboratories

by Elizabeth Hazel and  
Caroline Baillie

While many of us can remember an occasion where a laboratory class was particularly memorable or enlightening, we can also probably remember many hours of tiresome exercises which seemed to teach us very little. The design and

delivery of laboratory classes and the forms of student assessment used in them, need to be examined critically for their contribution to effective student learning. This guide is written for both experienced and inexperienced staff who are involved with laboratory classes for science or engineering subjects. The guide can be read in its entirety or specific sections can be reviewed to try to address specific issues. The authors

articulate the goals and potential of laboratories and go on to explore issues in the design and teaching of laboratories, including controlled exercises, experimental investigations and projects, the assessment and evaluation of laboratory programs, detecting and discouraging fraudulent practices and introducing change in laboratory programs.





## IDEAS DOSSIER

# The Case of the Flexible but Vanishing Academic

*Eidos continues the commentary on the West Report focussing on academics as people in the midst of this brave new managerial world and sounds a timely warning.*

It must have been Oscar Wilde who told us that the only thing worse than being ridiculed was not being noticed at all. Post-modernism offers a related truth, neither quite as perceptive nor as whimsical, but cognate to being noticed. We do well to be alert to the changes of discourse. Never ignore changes of the kind when something previously widely spoken about, suddenly becomes unable to be referred to; or when things once visible in public language suddenly become invisible. As in the case of academics.

A whole class of human beings disappears - so it's reasonable to conclude some devilry is afoot. The first clues emerged when a job required me to download the text of David Kemp's OECD address (21 April); the government's first formal response to the West Report. *The total discursive absence of academics in Kemp* naturally led me back to the West Report itself. No surprise - more or less the same thing there (I scanned only the Executive Summary and the 38 Recommendations but that seemed enough). Sherlock Holmes, eat your heart out. What does this all mean?

Trace the disappearance yourself - take either document, armed with highlighter, and mark every mention of either "academic" or "teacher" (in the sense of the *person occupying the role*, rather than the role or the job, as in "teaching" or "researching"). Counting the occurrences won't take long. Academics as persons - as people with needs, interests, desires, demands, lives, careers, skills, virtues - even knowledge - have disappeared entirely. Thank you, Dr Kemp; what did I do to deserve this honour?

They have become invisible - unspeakable, unmentionable - cogs in the manufacturing wheel turning students into graduates. Like wharfies:

dispensable, dismissible, insubstantial, faceless, replaceable non-entities. As industrial commodity they are of significance to Government in one respect alone - their expense. They have an insatiable, unreasonable demand to be paid for their labour.

***There is a compelling body of reasons for believing that loss of intimacy is, in the long term, educationally destructive to teachers, students, and scholarship, unless actively countervailed.***

Still, they remain a mere accounting problem, a budgeting embarrassment, a fiscal burden blighting an otherwise manageable system. Do I exaggerate? My analysis matches perfectly the matrix of the new discourse about universities: Higher Education is an industry (see West); universities are its manu-factories. Invisible, compliant, non-demanding staff are replaceable with others (cheaper of course) at the stroke of the manager's pen on a dismissal order, or an institutional closure edict.

This is the new model, promulgated with care, skill and determination. As we are spoken about, so we are. What we will become spoken as, so we become. The disappearance is managed through language; the rest follows inexorably. And the rest, as the Bard observed, is silence. Try looking at your own institution's policies on flexible delivery - see how often students, educators and other people are mentioned or whether the language is all about the vehicle for the delivery, never the person doing the

delivery; and never the process, the point of it all, learning.

So, I'm an unreconstructed leftie, relic of the 'sixties: that may be so, but this is more than partisan political grievance. Look at two phenomena - each insufficiently recognised and understood - that I see in the changes taking place in today's education world: the *loss of intimacy* and the *depersonalisation of knowledge*.

Peter Scott and David Watson (in *Managing the University Curriculum*, J. Bocock & D. Watson, 1994: SRHE & Open University Press) write "the success of institutions depends heavily on the commitment (and so the morale) of their staffs; and for intellectual reasons ... the management of knowledge, (the institution's) primary resource in teaching as in research, cannot by its very nature be centralised." They then go on to speak of "the invasion of student-teacher intimacy".

It doesn't take a research doctorate to see that mass higher education - ever larger classes, fewer full-time staff, more crowded teaching timetables - means loss of the capacity for one-to-one personal contact between academics and students. The proof of that thesis is simple arithmetic. This is the loss of intimacy. There is a compelling body of reasons for believing that loss of intimacy is, in the long term, educationally destructive to teachers, students, and scholarship, *unless actively countervailed*.

Constructivism, today's theme child in learning theory, tells us that knowledge resides in persons; academics as persons are those who have made knowledge their special business. Knowledge outside persons ("centralised" knowledge, in Scott and Watson's terms) is what A.N. Whitehead called "dead knowledge" (soon emitting the stench of decaying fish). Popper disagreed with that (his "World 3" thesis), but it's worth pondering over.

If true, knowledge dies because it has ceased to be in use, ceased active application and transformation, all of







which spontaneously happen (thus keeping it alive) within the mind and life of the community dedicated to its pursuance. For social-constructivists, in "the conversation". And the revivifying takes place within the dialogue, the interaction, between the mind of the knower and the mind of the learner (and perhaps, my friends tell me, in the 'third mind' - product of two minds plus further understanding generated by dialogue). It probably also happens within the human world engagement we call "problem-solving". I believe knowledge also lives within the transaction we call teaching and learning, between those consenting persons - one who consents to teach, the other to learn.

Libraries, books, journals, the internet itself presumably comprise a mere description, a second-hand account, a lexical guide-map to knowledge ("information" is of course the more accurate term). But it is dormant, lifeless, inert, waiting to be brought to life, until it can inhabit a mind where it can again start to move, regenerate, grow and blossom. The notion that knowledge (living knowledge) exists somehow apart from those who know it, and can by some technology be transmitted from a dead central repository (a book, a web-site) into the minds of students, has to be a patent nonsense.

I respect and honour those distance education experts who - with others - are skilfully managing the move into flexible learning in many institutions today. What I have to say intends no offence to them. But even the drover's dog can see that the press into "flexible delivery" that we are all experiencing is driven - at the top - by

economic expediency. It confuses information with knowledge.

Distance education was the realisation of a dream of equity and democratic rights to education by all. But its poor cousin flexibility, in its inception, at its origins, has nothing whatever to do with quality of student learning. It is concocted to justify downsizing, cuts and resource-rationalising - the splendid clothing of a naked emperor. It is also the way to further undermine the academy by inviting corporations - without any accountability other than financial - into the world of higher education.

"Flexible Delivery" in its own terms must of course fail as a means of actually improving university education. *Unless those who are the invisible ones in Kemp's manifesto manage to subvert it.* I fear, though, that their power to subvert is massively lessened by this planned invisibility.

But, short of that, it seems destined to massively diminish the possibility of human intimacy in the educational process. One of its evident premises is that you can gratuitously destroy at will the living community in whom active knowledge resides (which includes the students of academe, now called customers and clients) and depend upon dead knowledge to short-change new generations of learners.

I wish I were wrong. If I am right, and if we are to find ways to live with the "flexible delivery" press and still remain accountable to our own educational values, we will have to find ways to exhibit the flexibility demanded of us *whilst sustaining (or perhaps re-*

*inventing) mechanisms for honest intellectual intimacy between staff and students.* And we will have to find ways of constantly *resisting the fallacy of knowledge-centralisation (the de-humanising of knowledge, the illusion of knowledge being a commodity).*

The story Socrates tells to Phaedrus, regarding the God Theuth (inventor of writing) and the wise Egyptian King Thamus, is apposite:

"The discoverer of an art is not the best judge of the good or harm which will accrue to those who practice it ... Those who acquire (your new invention called "writing") will cease to exercise their memory and become forgetful; they will rely on writing to bring things to their remembrance by external signs instead of by their own internal resources. What you have discovered is a recipe for recollection, not for memory. And as for wisdom, your pupils will have the reputation for it without the reality; they will receive a quantity of information without proper instruction, and in consequence be thought very knowledgeable when they are for the most part quite ignorant. And because they are filled with the conceit of wisdom instead of real wisdom they will be a burden to society."

Today it is the expensive academics who are perceived and painted as the burden to society. If Plato is right, tomorrow the burden may turn out to be the conceited ignoramuses our institutions will discover they have been producing and calling "graduates". I pray that my discursive sleuthing will turn out to have been mistaken.

**Footnote:** Thanks to several wonderful ADSIG folk who pointed out weaknesses in an earlier draft of this article. Responses of all kinds from HERDSA News readers will be published in a future issue; email them to the Editor.

### Eidos

**Editors note.** *Articles written by Eidos appear on the ADSIG email discussion list prior to publication and the author welcomes comments from those on the list. For details about subscribing to the ADSIG list see the SIG reports in this issue.*

### Gold Guide No 5

***Learning in the Field: A manual for conducting field classes***  
by M.Manning, J.A. Harris, W.A. Maher and K.G. McQueen

Field classes are a powerful means of facilitating learning because they provide concrete experiences in a realistic setting. The term "field class" can be used broadly for almost any learning experience or location outside the classroom, which may or may not include "the outdoors". This manual is primarily intended for application to field-based programs in the outdoors. Nevertheless, it is hoped that many of the ideas and principles developed will be relevant to other outside or extramural education programs. The manual covers the design and planning of field-based learning programs, including the rationale, structure, approaches and objectives. It explores the major planning issues relevant to field classes, such as logistical and financial aspects, health and safety, social and gender considerations, and presents strategies for maximising learning outcomes. A field class checklist is included. Examples of specific programs and an approach to evaluating field-based learning are included.





## HERDSA Activities

### Improving the Quality of Teaching for Learning

#### *The HERDSA Queensland Conference 1998*

**S**eventy participants from Queensland, Northern New South Wales and the Northern Territory gathered at the Sunshine Coast University College on Saturday morning 20th June and spent two enjoyable days participating in presentations on the theme 'Improving the Quality of Teaching for Learning.'

There were three keynote presentations. The first was Tom Angelo's final appearance as HERDSA Visiting Scholar in which he presented his popular workshop on the Scholarship of Teaching. He was followed by John Bain from Griffith University who selected two case studies from the recent CUTSD research project 'Reflecting on University Teaching: Academics' Stories' in which he had collaborated with Roy Ballentine and Jan Packer. The third keynote, which

opened the second day of the conference, was given by Ian Lowe of Griffith University who gave a fascinating look at Education for the Global Century in which he reflected on the present social, economic and political situation and suggested some educational principles for the future.

Three parallel paper sessions took up the remainder of the conference. Papers covered topics in flexible learning, learning assistance programs, transition to university, on line feedback through the Web, the effects of policy changes, part-time tutors, peer review of teaching, nursing education, experiences of Asian students while there were workshops on report writing and facilitating university learning. Some details of the papers are available on the Web site: <http://www.scuc.edu.au>

It is planned to produce refereed proceedings by December 1998 and further information will appear in

HERDSA News.

On Saturday evening a successful conference dinner was held at the Casablanca restaurant in Mooloolaba. One lovely touch of the evening was the gift of a specially made coffee mug to everyone, arranged by Carol Davis, the conference organiser.

No praise can be too high for Carol Davis who more or less single-handed organised the conference. Congratulations to Carol for gaining a special CUTSD award to assist the conference organisation. In these days of 'user pays' it is refreshing to be able to thank the Vice-Chancellor of the University for supplying the facilities free of charge.

**Roger Landbeck**

*Visiting Scholar, Tom Angelo, at the HERDSA Queensland conference*







## Transformation in Higher Education: Higher Education Knows No Limits

# HERDSA International Conference 1998.

*The 1998 HERDSA conference in Auckland began and ended with song, a Waiata. The opening took the form of a Powhiri which acknowledged the Maori tradition of welcoming visitors to their home. For those, such as myself, who are not from New Zealand and have little knowledge of such tradition, the integration of Maori culture was far more than symbolic: indeed, it set the tone of respect for different ways of thinking, of different values and a desire to understand.*

**T**his diversity was highlighted by the many countries represented at the conference and by those chosen to deliver keynote addresses. While a local perspective was provided by the President of the Auckland Institute of Technology, Dr John Hinchcliff, the two other invited keynote speakers came from very different countries and cultures: Dr Pam Denicolo from the University of Birmingham in the UK and Professor Zawawi Ismail, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Malaysia, from Sarawak.

The conference was hosted by the New Zealand Branch of HERDSA and this was a fitting way for the branch to celebrate its 10th anniversary. The venue was the University of Auckland which was a good location in terms of its centrality and meant that delegates could readily find a range of suitable accommodation.



**Prof Ziwawi Ismail, Dr Pam Denicolo, Dr John Hinchcliff, Mary Melrose (President, NZ Branch), Prof Reynold Macpherson.**

In the preamble to the conference programme and abstracts it was explained that the conference theme, 'Transformation in Higher Education', was selected in order to explore a diversity of perspectives on contemporary issues, many of which did not exist ten years ago. The aim of the conference was "to put a positive spin on these changes and to focus the conference on the transformative aspects of these changes".

Clearly the theme with the challenges inherent in it was well chosen for 261 delegates from across the world attended the conference. This, in itself, made the conference a success. However, with such a rich source of participation open to the conference organisers they were faced with the inevitable dilemma of organising a programme that adequately accommodated such contributions, while still allowing the conference itself to develop as participants shared the conference experience and took from it.

Commencing with registration and the welcome reception on Tuesday, July 7th, the conference ended at 3.00pm on Friday, July 10. In that time participants heard three keynote addresses, were involved in six parallel sessions (one of which was in the form of workshops - 'roundtables'), three poster sessions, as well as parallel Special Interest Group and General Interest Group sessions and the

HERDSA AGM. Hence the conference organisers provided a comprehensive programme which was based around the following eleven themes: staff development; curriculum development; teaching and learning; leadership and management; learning support; equity policies, education for indigenous peoples, global educational policy and practice, research directions and development, organisational policy and systems and the subject discipline in society.

Any conference is undeniably both an individual and collective experience. This is evidenced by comments that praise and condemn an identical experience. For instance, while some attendees found the choice enriching, others found it frustrating. To accommodate such choice imposed time constraints with parallel paper sessions of thirty minutes duration. Some appreciated the brevity and range; others bemoaned the lack of opportunity to explore issues in what they regarded as reasonable depth. Moreover, the diversity of strands offered meant that the conference was a unique experience for all participants as it is unlikely that any two people attended precisely the same series of sessions. This was well evidenced by the five who reflected on the conference in the final session for each saw the conference in very different







ways and took from it quite different messages.

The same is true of the questionnaire respondents. While there are some very definite statements, in many cases they are from individuals or small numbers and, while it does not negate the validity of their experience, it does highlight the difficulties for conference organisers who face conflicting needs and opinions. Another aspect of difficulty for the organisers is that in many ways what they are providing is a framework for the conference; the conference itself is a synergistic development of the people who attend. While the organisers provide the space, both physical and temporal, for the presentations, it is the delegates who provide the content. The organisers provided a rich theme, promoted the work of the delegates through the publication of the abstracts and papers using a variety of media including the World Wide Web, paper and CDs, the presenters then took responsibility for working within the framework to share their work and to contribute to the synergy.

However the conference venue itself did not assist presenters model good practice in terms of presentation and it is significant that this was the aspect that was least highly regarded according to the questionnaire responses. Although some people managed to work creatively within the environmental constraints, large, steeply tiered lecture theatres are not conducive to discussion and activity. However the conference committee had to make hard decisions about the availability of that free venue versus the use of any other venue which would have a cost, thus increasing the price of the conference. When there were up to thirteen competing sessions, inevitably most presenters had small audiences and there was some concern that distances between rooms meant that there was inadequate time to move between sessions. Given the amount of preparation that the organisers had put into the conference, it was especially sad that some presenters did not inform the organisers that they did not intend to be present. Further, there were a disappointing number of presentations that relied on summarising the papers, reading from overheads or talking at,

rather than with, the participants. The paucity of meaningful interaction is not a new theme and it has been discussed previously (see for example HERDSA News, July and November 1996) but it should be of concern that, with some exceptions - and it is encouraging to see that these exist - we do not seem to be responding meaningfully to such criticism.

***Some appreciated the brevity and range; others bemoaned the lack of opportunity to explore issues in what they regarded as reasonable depth.***

Despite this reservation, it is important to note that the questionnaire responses indicated that the most helpful and stimulating aspect of the conference was to have a forum to meet and share ideas, thoughts, and approaches with others. That this was such a strong response is an indication of success for the conference. This is reflected also in the evaluation of the sessions which rated the workshops - the 'roundtables' - the most highly.

As well as an academic program, social life is integral to any conference.

The Powhiri effectively set the scene and the lively chatter afterwards meant that the element of enjoyment was already very apparent. The breaks for morning and afternoon teas as well as the hour for lunch again provided time for informal discussion. The conference dinner at the Hyatt Regency Hotel was a-buzz with conversation and laughter. All present shared with Rod McKay as Owen Hicks, in his role as HERDSA President, read the citation that earned Rod his well-merited Life Membership and many will remember the conference entertainment especially for the brilliant madrigal that was dedicated to him.

HERDSA is only as strong as its members and their preparedness to contribute to the activities of the Society. HERDSA members who were able to attend the Auckland conference supported it by their willingness to organise activities such as the SIGs and GIGs, to present and share their ideas in a variety of ways and to chair sessions. The Conference Organising Committee, convened by Tony Morrison (who was unfortunately sick during the conference and not able to be very visible!) who met approximately monthly over a period of 18 months, had a significant role.

***Our thanks to the Conference Organising Committee***

- Mark Barrow** .....UNITEC Institute of Technology
- Nancy de Freitas** .....Auckland Institute of Technology
- Pip Fergusson** .....Waikato Polytechnic
- Stanley Frielick** .....University of Auckland
- Adele Graham** .....University of Auckland
- Jane Gunn-Lewis** .....UNITEC Institute of Technology
- Pamela Hunter-Reid** .....Auckland Institute of Technology
- Phil Ker** .....Auckland Institute of Technology
- Colleen McMurchy-Pilkington** .....Auckland College of Education
- John Melrose** .....Manukau Institute of Technology
- Mary Melrose** .....Auckland Institute of Technology
- Tony Morrison** .....University of Auckland
- Eileen Piggott-Irvine** .....Massey University
- Maureen Reid** .....Auckland Institute of Technology
- Dave Waldron** .....Manukau Institute of Technology

*as well as Barry Williams from the Centre for Continuing Education, the University of Auckland, who was the convenor from the Conference Secretariat.*







From the point of view of someone who attended the conference, and was given the privilege of sharing her reflections on it both in the panel discussion and here, the conference gave over 250 people a valuable opportunity to share their commitment to improve higher education and to further the work of HERDSA. The theme of transformation allowed concerns to be shared and strategies to be explored. While

recognising that not all the recent changes in the sector have been productive, the intended 'positive spin' was present and we were both challenged and encouraged. The Auckland conference experience will be revisited as we implement good ideas and it will be reviewed and enriched when the delegates receive the refereed conference publication.

## Next year

*The 1999 conference "Cornerstones: What do we value in Higher Education?" will be held in Melbourne from July 12 - 15 at the Copland Complex at Melbourne University. While valuing input, the conference organisers have made deliberate decisions to structure the programme in such a way that the possibilities for involvement - output - are maximised. The Copland complex was chosen as it has a number of discussion rooms as well as lecture space in the one compact area.*

Further information and regular updates will be available on the HERDSA (Vic) website at <http://sunsite.anu.edu.au/education/herdsa/vic/cornerstones.html>.

### Acknowledgements

In the preparation of this report I wish to acknowledge the contribution of Brent Challis, a member of the Victorian HERDSA executive, who undertook the questionnaire aspect of the evaluation of the conference. As well the input of the conference attendees was very much appreciated and I trust this report is a fair reflection of their views.

Although only 62 completed evaluation forms were received it is a reasonable assumption that those who contributed this way felt they had a message to communicate. While the detail of their responses is not provided here, the input will be carefully considered by those organising the 1999 conference in the same way that feedback from the 1997 questionnaires led to such changes as the offering of the SIGs twice.

*Di Thompson is president of the Victorian branch of HERDSA which is convening the 1999 conference. She is the Head of the Academic Professional Development at Deakin University, Geelong.*

## 1998 Conference Proceedings on CD Rom

*(includes all abstracts and papers which arrived in time and which were presented at the conference)*

Total cost per copy of CD (covers production, GST and postage costs) is \$14 Australian or \$14 NZ payable by cheque or credit card.

*Invoices can be arranged but full payment must be received before discs will be dispatched*

### Address for orders:

Barry Williams  
Centre for Continuing Education  
University of Auckland  
Private Bag 92019  
Auckland New Zealand.

E-mail address for invoices if necessary:

[b.williams@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:b.williams@auckland.ac.nz)

**Please place your orders by 15 September, 1998**

## SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

### Answering the questions (well, at least some..)

**A**s convenor of the portfolio for Branches and Special Interest Groups, I found myself answering a number of questions about Special Interest Groups (SIGs) at the recent New Zealand Conference. As such, I thought it timely to review in this newsletter what SIGs are and how they are perceived by the executive.

Several years ago, HERDSA recognised that there were a number of sub-groups within the Society with particular interests. Some of these were already operating on a semi-formal basis, while others were "looking for a home". The Executive therefore decided to recognise these groups formally in the new Constitution under Article 4.a, and new members are invited to subscribe to their preferred interest groups on joining the Society. According to the Constitution, members of SIGs must also be members of HERDSA.

The original SIGs were not envisaged as being permanent fixtures, rather they were viewed as a fluid structure which would change as time and HERDSA memberships dictate. New SIGs can form at any time, and some SIG's may dissolve if interest in that area wanes.

The formation of a SIG occurs whenever there are a number of members of HERDSA who are interested in a particular topic and at least one person is willing to coordinate the group. Currently there are SIGs in:

**Student Learning**

**Curriculum Development**

**Language and Learning**

**Academic Developers**

**Higher Education Leadership and Management**

**Visual and Performing Arts**







Unlike Branches, SIGs have no set geographical home, and between Annual Conferences, lead a virtual existence via email discussion lists. To date it seems that SIG's lead a sporadic life, with bursts of energy occurring when a specific issue takes hold and quieter times when members are busy with other things.

At the Annual Conference the SIGs have an opportunity to meet face-to-face, and Auckland was no exception. Each of the SIGs was given a session time although, even with repeating sessions, HERDSA members were only able to attend two sessions. There is no limit on the number of SIG's in which a member can be involved, and the following reports give some contact details for members interested in joining other SIGs.

### The Special Interest Group for Curriculum Development reports

**A** small but appreciative group attended the two arranged sessions of the Curriculum SIG at the Auckland Conference. While Mr Ami Sundar presented a model for the development of a quality course in the New Zealand context, Mr Douglas McMillan commented on the more financially rationalist policies that he had encountered in Australia.

Professor John Hoddinott from the University of NSW gave an erudite presentation on future of curricula, suggesting that the singular may indeed be the result as the "great teacher's" model is distributed electronically and licenced by tertiary institutions which have degenerated to, or evolved to, the virtual classroom.

Douglas McMillan is looking towards retirement in 1999 so he did not wish to continue as coordinator. Professor John Hoddinott has agreed to hold the baton for a period although he will be returning to Canada at some future time. Douglas will be passing on the email list to John. His email address is:

**j.hoddinott@unsw.edu.au**

### Valerie Clifford, the convenor for the Special Interest Group in Higher Education Leadership and Management reports

The SIG meeting at the HERDSA conference brought a group of about 30 people together, our largest group ever. Joan Benjamin taxed our minds with some exercises on leadership and a number of papers on the area were offered throughout the conference.

Tony Koppi of Sydney University set up a Web page for us, which is now ready to use, url:

**<http://www.nettl.usyd.edu.au/leader>**

This is really easy to use and is intended for posting information so that we can see what is happening around the place in terms of courses, research and new developments. You can post your information using your ordinary word processing language, just cut and paste into the Web page. I am really looking forward to seeing this resource bank growing but it all depends on YOU putting your initiatives up there for us to read. Many thanks for this facility Tony.

The email listserv is still in operation for general notices and discussion. Subscribe by sending an email message to:

**listproc@listproc.anu.edu.au**

leave subject line blank and in body of message put:

```
subscribe
siglead@listproc.anu.edu.au
yourfirstname yourlastname
end
```

### Diane Thompson reports for the Academic Developers SIG

**A**DSIG met face-to-face in Auckland at the HERDSA conference last week. In response to requests to provide opportunities for people to attend more than one SIG, two sessions were run with 31 coming to the first and 11 to the second.

The discussion at both was productive and we agreed that:

1. ADSIG was alive and well. At this stage we didn't require a formal mission/vision statement and acknowledged that ADSIG was a loose confederation of interested people and involvement would wax and wane.
2. The SIG list was working well (thanks go to Erika Martens who has offered to continue as list moderator) and there was more involvement than was immediately apparent. For example, reference was made to sending messages to non-SIGers and there is a happy band of 'lurkers' who enjoy the discussion without feeling the need to contribute.
3. To encourage contributions one person at the start of each month will open an issue. If the discussion doesn't take off then that's the decision of the group and the person concerned doesn't have to feel pressured to keep it going. Also this in no way precludes other people opening discussion - we need this to happen. We have five volunteers to take us through to the end of the year.
4. It is important to establish a web presence and this will fulfil a different need from the email conversation. For instance, providing brief bios along a basic structure (eg backgrounds, work area, current interests - including research, recent publications) would assist people network for specific reasons and it would be preferable - especially for access and updating - to have this on a web-site. As well, resources such as recent papers could be included as well as links to individual Home Pages.

ADSIG now has a new convenor. Barbara Grant from the University of Auckland offered to take over from me. I hope to keep my involvement in ADSIG alive - most especially by meeting many of you face-to-face at our next conference in Melbourne from July 12-15.







As the newest SIG, **Visual and Performing Arts** is looking to gain more members so if you are interested in this area, contact the convenor, Nancy de Freitas

(To subscribe, send the message 'subscribe vipasig' to majordomo@ait.ac.nz)

The **Student Learning SIG** would like to see more activity in their email discussion. To subscribe, send an email message to

[mailserve@qut.edu.au](mailto:mailserve@qut.edu.au)

Leave the subject line blank, and in the body of the message put:  
subscribe HERDSIG your email address.

To subscribe to the **Language and Learning SIG**, send an email message to

[Localist@uws.edu.au](mailto:Localist@uws.edu.au)



Leave the subject line blank, and in the body of the message put:

subscribe UNILEARN yourfirstname  
yourlastname

On a final note, a few members suggested that there should be a SIG on Flexible Teaching and Learning. If anyone is interested in convening such a group, please contact me:

[B.Hamilton@aquinas.acu.edu.au](mailto:B.Hamilton@aquinas.acu.edu.au).

*B.J. Hamilton*

## ROD MCKAY BECOMES HONORARY LIFE MEMBER OF HERDSA

**R**od McKay was made an honorary life member of the Society at the AGM of the HERDSA Conference.

The President, Owen Hicks, read the following citation that he had prepared:

It is a rare for the Society to confer Honorary Life Membership. The Constitution provides for the Executive to elect honorary life members from people who have made a distinguished contribution in teaching in higher education, in the study of learning, teaching and policy in higher education, or because they have served HERDSA well over a significant period. Honorary life members have voting rights but are not required to pay prescribed fees.

Honorary life membership is being conferred upon Mr Roderick I McKay, particularly in recognition of his long and distinguished service to the Society. Having joined HERDSA in 1975 he took a critical role in the establishment and continuation of the New Zealand Branch. Described by many as 'the office' of HERDSA New Zealand, since the mid-1980s he handled membership lists, banking, mailings, distribution of publications, etc, etc. His New Zealand experience later proved invaluable in the negotiation for and establishment of the current office of the Society in Canberra.

In this context he helped define and clarify the roles for our employees, negotiated contracts with AAACE and facilitated the transfer of New Zealand business to Canberra once the office had been established.

His work on the Executive of HERDSA commenced in 1985 and, with a few short breaks off the Executive, he was still involved with Executive business up until 1997. During that time his fulfilled many roles including Assistant Treasurer, Occasional Publications Committee member, member of the Office Working Party, member and chair of the Administration Portfolio.

Rod has been one of our constitutional experts over the years, giving guidance on the old constitution then contributing to the writing of the new constitution and by-laws. Also, his communications expertise was put to good use in the establishment and moderation of HERDSA email, the listserver and early World Wide Web pages.



*The HERDSA President, Owen Hicks, with Rod McKay*

Besides his hard work for the Society for many years, Rod is recognized as one always finding time to contribute to discussions, always responding to requests for ideas, thoughts and assistance, always being present at meetings, and most of all, always contributing constructively and thoughtfully for the good of the Society.

*Owen Hicks  
President*

*Dated this 9th day of July 1998.*





**HERDSA VISITING SCHOLAR 1998 — DR TOM ANGELO**

**Dr. Tom Angelo, Associate Professor and Higher Education Program Coordinator at the University of Miami, USA, was the HERDSA Visiting Scholar for 1998. He conducted 47 workshops in Australian and New Zealand universities and polytechnics during May and June. Here are two reports about his workshops, one from New Zealand and one from Australia, which show great similarities in interests between the two countries.**



**New Zealand**

We celebrated the end of the power cuts in the Central Auckland Business district with Dr. Angelo's arrival in Auckland!

The most requested workshop in NZ was "Making Real the Scholarship of Teaching". This was popular because of an increasing appreciation for the work of Charles Boyer on scholarship, coupled with a desire need to improve or begin a systematic inquiry into classroom teaching and learning, as expressed by many teachers in our tertiary sector.

Dr. Angelo emphasised an action research approach to classroom investigations and provided a wealth of examples, case studies and anecdotes to illuminate the way ahead. As an expert on assessment, Dr. Angelo also showed how the evaluation of learning, which provides valuable data for reflection and action, did not have to involve time-consuming formal surveys. He provided a repertoire of ways to collect data and a framework for the critical examination of the ways in which teachers generate and test hypotheses about learning and teaching in their classrooms and subject areas.

At the HERDSA NZ evening seminar in Auckland, "Seven Shifts and Seven Levers" on May 12, Dr. Angelo provided a US perspective on trends in higher education. Dr. Angelo examined some assumptions, goals and roles in higher education. He discussed moves in the US towards an inclusive vision of scholarship, the use of a research base on learning and teaching, cooperative and collaborative learning and competency based education. Some current NZ concerns such as funding based on equivalent full time students, student loans and the cost of higher education for the individual and the community, the national qualification framework and units of assessment was

illuminated by some of the thinking about higher education in the US and by Dr. Angelo's humorous but insightful interpretation. Changes had come about as a result of what Dr. Angelo described as "being mobilised by crisis". It was interesting to hear of Dr. Angelo's involvement in moves to form a consortium of higher educational institutions to provide competency based assessment for professional areas such as electronics and to assess students' portfolios relating to these competencies. We have become used to assessment of prior learning in the NZ polytechnic sector. It seems as if higher education in the US is ready beginning to mobilise in that direction.

Dr. Angelo's visit was particularly timely at the Auckland Institute of Technology as grants for a raft of "Innovative Teaching and Learning Projects" had just been announced and a new "Teaching and Learning Centre" was being planned. Dr. Angelo's visit as HERDSA scholar has left us with memories of the experiences and advice that he shared with us, reflections from the interactive discussions that he facilitated and a network of colleagues who will help us improve our own scholarship into teaching and learning. Thanks, Dr. Angelo.

**Dr Mary Melrose**  
*Auckland Institute of Technology*

**NEW ZEALAND**

There was little doubt what, for most NSW academic developers, was considered the burning issue they wished to see addressed by the HERDSA Visiting Scholar. As Coordinator for the visit by Dr. Angelo to six different campuses in NSW, it soon became clear to me that 'Making Real the Scholarship of Teaching' was the topic of most interest to the academic

development units (ADUs) submitting requests for his sessions. In the end, four of the six universities went with this topic, with two other institutions (University of NSW and University of Technology, Sydney) opting for sessions on 'A Teacher's Dozen' and 'An Academic Developer's Dozen' respectively (both on aspects of how to use research findings to improve - or help others improve - student learning). The universities in the Sydney region varied their choices so that their staff (mainly those from the ADUs) could attend different workshops given on other campuses. Staff from Wollongong attended the University of Sydney session; people from Newcastle came to the Macquarie workshop; and staff from both Sydney and Macquarie attended his sessions at UNSW and UTS. This enhanced sense of inter-university collegiality and reciprocity was a particularly welcome outcome of Dr Angelo's visit.

I was able to attend three different sessions in the Sydney region. In every one, the need to integrate scholarship and research into our approaches to teaching and learning was the common, interwoven thread, and it was a theme to which the university audiences were keenly responsive. The wide range of pragmatic techniques and approaches brought to our attention by Dr Angelo was also much appreciated. The undoubted receptiveness of Dr Angelo's academic listeners to his 'message' was - interestingly - not mirrored by some elements of the higher education media. As he wryly noted to his audience in Sydney, one journalist had begun her interview by asking what made him think Australian academics needed an American to tell them how to teach.

The University of Sydney gave Dr Angelo's session a high-profile treatment by presenting his interactive talk in the context of one of their Vice-Chancellor's





**Gay Crebert, co-ordinator of the Visiting Scholar program, with Tom Angelo**

Forums on Teaching. Although the VC did not stay for the session, his introductory words (*possibly* influenced by the briefing notes supplied by the Centre for Teaching and Learning) made reference to the need for university teachers to move away from what he called 'passive post-hoc evaluations, resented by students, at the end of the year' and for teachers to focus instead on continuous efforts to enhance the quality of their teaching in the classroom itself.

Dr Angelo began by outlining the various historical developments which had led (in the USA) to a re-focusing of interest on teaching. He noted in particular the influence of Ernest Boyer's (1990) view that teaching would never be taken seriously in the research-dominated environment of traditional universities unless it could become 'scholarly, public and portable'. It was on the first of these characteristics of teaching - namely that of scholarship - that Dr Angelo's sessions concentrated. Jointly with Patricia Cross (1993) he has formulated a powerful aid for teachers to help them in that scholarly endeavour, namely the use of Classroom Research (including Classroom Assessment) to systematically observe, understand and ultimately improve student learning.

Features I recall from his presentation at the University of Sydney include the following:

- His use of a Demographic Assumptions quiz to highlight to us the importance of acknowledging that students approach their learning with a whole set of prior assumptions; and there is a need for us as teachers to explore ways of first ascertaining and then dealing with such assumptions.

- The showing of a memorable video clip of confident, articulate Harvard graduates disclosing their fundamental ignorance of basic science, and the conclusion we were led to draw from that: 'Much of what we teach students in higher education does not even touch their prior learning';

- Our participation in analysing the case of Leslie - an intelligent, hardworking student determined (to her teacher's frustration) to drop maths - and what this taught us about the range of possible reasons behind her decision. From this point we were led to consider how a systematic approach to Classroom Research would then involve the formulating of hypotheses for investigation, searching the literature, collecting further information in the classroom, developing research questions, and so move towards a deeper understanding of the teaching and learning issues involved.

- Another major theme in his presentation was the crucial importance of working out our goals as teachers. To help focus our attention on this issue, we were directed to the self-scoring Teaching Goals Inventory, available on the Web.

One of the most engaging aspects of Dr Angelo's sessions was his skilful use of a wide range of materials and activities with which to engage participants' active involvement with the issues, thus modelling for us how we might ourselves begin to make our own teaching both more interactive and more varied. In a

large, tiered lecture hall containing over 70 people, he persuaded us to read texts, discuss issues with our neighbours, reflect quietly on our own teaching practice, ask and answer questions; complete a written quiz, and comment on a video clip. We were given a substantial bundle of resources to take away with us, as well as some useful Web site addresses to investigate in our own time. Anecdote and passing insights also clarified issues for the audience. As an academic developer, for example, I was amused by his comment that academics often only become concerned about the quality of teaching in higher education when their own sons and daughters begin attending college, and bring home horror tales of the bad teaching encountered there.

At the University of Sydney I have observed tangible outcomes from Dr Angelo's thought-provoking interactions with us. At the Excellence in Teaching seminar given just a couple of weeks later, several of the awardees made explicit reference to issues he had raised, and one had already devised her own version of one of his models in order to apply it to the further development of her teaching. Both in our higher education Graduate Certificate course, and in our regular workshops, the academic staff of the Centre for Teaching and Learning have made explicit use of his suggested techniques and approaches, with very positive reactions from participants to whom they were new.

At the University of NSW he delivered his 'Teacher's Dozen' workshop on research-based guidelines for improving teaching and learning. In a set-up very different from that at the University of Sydney - namely with participants sitting around small tables - there was a different dynamic, with a lot of interactions in and between small groups. Dr Angelo took us through most of the points in his comprehensive pack of practical resources. In addition to reiterating some of the points central to his previous presentation - such as the importance of goals for both teachers and students - he introduced a number of other research-based concepts and techniques with which to go about the task of improving student learning:

- The fact that students are often overwhelmed by large amounts of





content, and confused by not knowing what is important and what is not, means that for them a professor is often seen as little more than 'a giant, ambulatory highlighter'.

- The usefulness of both the 'Minute Paper' and the 'Muddiest Point' techniques to help teachers investigate where the students are in their learning. With the former technique, students are asked at the end of a class to write down what was the most meaningful thing they learned in it, and also what question remains uppermost in their minds. With the latter, they are simply asked to write down what was least clear. Both these techniques are now widely used on US campuses, and in the Angelo and Cross book (1993) there are guidelines on the variety of ways in which the techniques may be used.

- If the Minute paper and Muddiest Point help ascertain how the students are going, what about how their teachers are doing? Dr Angelo outlined a technique known as Group Informal Feedback on Teaching (GIFT) where, since students are asked to specify ways in which their teacher hinders their learning, he added the salutary caution that in this case 'Don't ask if you don't want to know'.

- Particularly helpful, I thought, were the suggestions made for how to deal with attitudinal issues involving potential controversy. As well as using the Demographic Assumptions quiz mentioned above, Dr Angelo proposed using forms of self-assessment to help students identify their own views and deal with those of others while not feeling exposed to risk. One of these methods involved writing down one's view on a card, exchanging cards with others until the original author was untraceable, and finally reading out some other person's comment. Further activities would involve doing research into, and then having to defend that view, irrespective of one's own.

- Not afraid to be challenging, Dr Angelo drew our attention to the fact that the US research highlights students' interactions with one another as a major influence on their learning, suggesting that this raised an 'ethical dilemma' for teachers - once teachers are aware of these findings, how can they ethically avoid doing group work with their students?

The final session I attended was the 'Academic Developer's Dozen' workshop at UTS. The response to the advertising of this workshop had earlier raised the question of what exactly is meant by the term 'academic developer'. Apart from staff at UTS's own Centre for Learning and Teaching, and staff from ADUs at several other institutions, there were also enquires from teaching staff at UTS who were simply interested in improving teaching within their disciplines, departments and faculties. This latter group included some quite senior academics. The UTS organisers took the sensible view that all such people were real or potential academic developers, and were thus welcome to attend. Dr Angelo's own view of this definitional dilemma is spelt out in an article (Angelo, 1994) included in the workshop resource pack, namely that he sees academic developers as local change agents - 'professionals knowledgeable about and skilled at improving teaching and learning'.

Once again putting forward some challenging perspectives, Dr Angelo led us to actively reflect and share our own views on such issues as the following:

- Few academics ever attend academic development programs, and those who do are usually the ones who do not need to.
- Actual, long-term improvements to teaching and learning are very difficult to measure and there is often little evidence that they are happening at all.
- The model of academic development most commonly used is a 'scattershot, additive approach to learning', where improvement is assumed to result from academics merely attending as many workshops as possible. What is

needed, instead, is a 'transformative' model.

Having identified some of the barriers to effective development, we worked to devise ways in which we could shift the focus and come up with different approaches. Dr Angelo's own suggested strategies are outlined succinctly in his 1994 article. Pragmatic as always, one of the suggestions he made in the workshop involved allocating prized on-campus parking places to outstanding teachers, rather than (for example) handing out cash rewards. Other approaches included getting senior academics involved in the issue; focusing on the specific needs of particular disciplines; and above all shifting the focus from a concentration on 'remediating academics' supposed deficiencies towards a focus on what really matters - improving student learning. Many of those present in the workshop had reached similar conclusions in their own thinking about this issue, but perhaps the single most persuasive message to come out of the discussion was the need to focus on positives rather than negatives - something which in our current climate it is often difficult to do.

#### References:

**Angelo, Thomas A.** (1994) 'From Faculty Development to Academic Development'. *AALL Bulletin*, June 1994, 3-7.

**Angelo, Thomas A. and Cross, K. Patricia** (1993). *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

**Boyer, Ernest** (1990). *Scholarship Reconsidered. Priorities of the Professoriate*. Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

*Dr Christine Asmar was the NSW Coordinator for Dr Angelo's visit. She is a Lecturer in the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at the University of Sydney. The CTL still has spare copies of the handouts from Dr Angelo's session on 'Making Real the Scholarship of Teaching'. If you would like a copy, please contact her:*

**Dr Christine Asmar**  
Email: [C.Asmar@ctl.usyd.edu.au](mailto:C.Asmar@ctl.usyd.edu.au)





## NEWS FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

*The HERDSA Executive Committee held two meetings during the Auckland conference. Some of the key outcomes of the meetings are listed below.*

### **The Strategic Plan.**

There has been significant achievement of objectives outlined in the plan formulated in 1995. A new strategic plan for HERDSA will be developed at the November meeting of the Executive.

### **The Society's Budget.**

Income from membership fees continues to generate a significant proportion of HERDSA's income. However, a decrease in sales of HERDSA publications and increased costs in such items as desktop publishing, postage and overheads led to an anticipated actual budget deficit of \$10,000 for the 1997-8 financial year. The Executive put forward a balanced

budget for 1998-9, which was approved at the AGM held during the conference. In addition, approval was given for the Executive to invest \$2,000 from the Society's asset base to promote and improve sales of its publications

### **HERDSA and the International Consortium for Development in Higher Education (ICED).**

It was agreed to continue membership and thank Tricia Weekes for her work as editor of the International Journal for Academic Development and to ratify her involvement as representative of HERDSA. The Executive also supported in principle the possibility of an ICED conference being held in Australasia (possibly in Perth in 2002).

### **Accreditation of University Teachers.**

There had been diverse and opposing reactions to the discussion paper on accreditation (available on the HERDSA

Web site). As a way forward it was agreed to explore the development of a 'certificate of recognition' in relation to programs of development in higher education teaching and learning

### **Research portfolio.**

Angela Brew would develop a plan for encouraging research within HERDSA following the roundtable discussion at the conference.

### **Keeping HERDSA members informed.**

It was agreed that from now on minutes of Executive meetings would be made available through the HERDSA Web site.

### **Teaching Innovation Evaluation Checklist.**

It was agreed that HERDSA develop a Teaching Innovation Evaluation Checklist and that funding assistance be sought from CUTSD for the development of such a checklist.

## HERDSA Conference 2000 Convenor Wanted

**A**lthough expressions of interest have been received for convening some conferences beyond the year 2000, at the time of writing there are no offers to organise the conference for the year 2000! Would anyone like to undertake this task? The annual conference is a very important feature of HERDSA, providing an opportunity not only to present and hear papers but also a valuable time to network with others engaged in teaching, learning and research in higher education. Hosting conferences provides an opportunity for your institution and conference committee members to gain greater visibility on the higher education 'map'. It would be most unfortunate if the conference could not be held especially in the auspicious year 2000. If you could possibly host this conference, please contact the HERDSA secretary, Barbara Black. Her email address is <bblack@csd.uwa.edu.au>

## Glossary of OZ Terms

This issue has been mainly devoted to the West Report and the articles have assumed knowledge of Australian abbreviations and politicians. For the benefit of readers living outside Australia we offer the following glossary. Apologies to those who knew it all anyway.

<b>HECS</b>	The Higher Education Contribution Scheme by which students contribute to the cost of their higher education
<b>DEETYA</b>	Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs
<b>CUTSD</b>	Committee for University Teaching and Staff Development
<b>ALP</b>	Australian Labour Party, currently the Federal Opposition Party
<b>Liberal-National Coalition</b>	currently the Government Parties
<b>Fightback</b>	An earlier proposal for the introduction of GST to Australia

Senator Vanstone and Dr. David Kemp - successive Ministers of Education in the current government.





# Debating in Tertiary Education

*Margaret Carmody discusses the importance of debating in a university and provides practical advice on introducing it into teaching.*

## **Debating as we know it**

We are all familiar with the outrageously humorous, contrived and mannered public debating often seen on television. Many of us have horrible memories of high school debating with the endless hours of preparation and desperate struggle to defeat the opposing school. Debating is the last thing most of us want to get involved in yet it has a lot to offer university students.

## **Debating on a different plane**

Debating in tertiary education tends to be completely different from either of these sorts of debating, so if your experience of debating has not been good so far, don't give up yet. Debating at university is always humorous, sometimes more effectively than others, but it is never the contrived comedy of experienced comedians. There is a large amount of formality, varying with the style, level of competition and the cultural background of the debaters, however, it is rarely the sort of mannered speech making as seen on television. There is in high school debating a very strong sense of opposition, that is a desperate desire to defeat the other school, with prizes and school spirit at risk. The animosity of the rugby field is all too easily transferred to the debating scene and the intense involvement of high achieving parents is a factor too often detrimental to the speakers. University debating is on a different plane from rugby, and the parents don't come.

## **Importance of debating**

Debating has both social and serious purposes at university. This paper seeks to analyse the importance of debating at

university and to provide readers with sufficient background to be able to participate in debating at university, whether as a debater, an adjudicator or in one of the support roles, for instance, chair, coach, or timekeeper.

## **Social purpose of debating**

The social side of debating is that it is enormously entertaining, and cheap entertainment at that. In contrast to most forms of entertainment, where we are consumers, debaters make their own entertainment. Debating is a way for students on campus to get together, typically on cold winter's nights, and to socialise. In my observation of university debating, the atmosphere of collegiality and friendliness is quite remarkable. Also remarkable is the support that the different universities give to each other, with advice, information and mentoring. Debating is a form of addiction, its adherents are closely bonded and very welcoming to newcomers. There is nothing a debater likes better than to meet another debater. On a personal level, it provides an opportunity for students who may not be involved in sport to participate in intervarsity events. It gives the quiet student a safe venue to learn public speaking and it makes the normally verbose student carefully express themselves, within a time limit. Membership in a debating society clearly indicates to a prospective employer that this student has specific skills and that they are good at cooperative, team activities. This is a student who has taken the time to participate fully in university life.

Debating provides a friendly informal link between the universities, not just in any given city, but also between states and even nations. It crosses all sorts of boundaries which normally separate students and it establishes a network which is always useful. It is enlightening, particularly for smaller universities to meet students from other universities, on an equal basis. In these present often

depressing times of hardship, uncertainty and difficulty not only for the universities themselves, but also for young people in our community, the students involved in intervarsity debating are ironically acting in a peculiarly collegial, non competitive and positive way. Lastly, debating makes students realise they're just as good as other students from different courses or universities or indeed countries: it is truly a universal activity.

## **Serious purpose of debating**

The serious purpose of debating at university is that it is a useful way to physically demonstrate the two sides of an argument. It is very difficult to get students to consider seriously the two sides of any argument, whether it is a statistical analysis of Department of Social Services spending or the social costs of smoking or the causes of the French Revolution. Students generally consider only one side of an argument in any depth and more worryingly, may only present their own, familiar point of view, having never considered the possibility of the efficacy of another point of view, without ever engaging in critical thinking. University education has as its prime purpose to teach students to think and debating forces both the debaters and those listening to the debate to think about the issues, to understand that, on any given topic there can be two perfectly reasonable points of view. This represents a considerable challenge to many people, and debating is a safe, structured venue for that intellectual challenge to take place. Because the two sides of the argument are physically on either side of the room, it is easy for the participants, both debaters and spectators to see that there are two sides. On issues close to our hearts, we tend to forget that another view even exists. Debating forces people to take a position, and it may not be the one they would normally take in their everyday lives, as in the debate where I had to argue in favour of smoking. It forces the speakers and the spectators to clarify their own views, to





justify their position, not just assert it. Debating forces people to question, to analyse their own views. The speakers must be able to adequately demonstrate that the point of view is valid, by means of examples and analogies and logical examination of the opposition's case, all of which is useful in a philosophical sense.

Debating actually requires students to construct their own knowledge on a particular subject. They must do the investigation, consider the options and put together their argument. Furthermore, debating takes that knowledge construction one step further, and causes the students, both speakers and spectators, to critically examine their knowledge, in a way that it is very difficult to do with transmission mode learning. Lastly, the student then has the opportunity to reflect on their learning, through the feedback they get from the adjudicator and later with their coach, especially if the debate has been videoed.

Another useful aspect of the serious side of debating at university is that it makes the students aware of communication theory, and as a bonus, they develop oral skills. The skills involved in debating are those of public speaking, thinking on their feet, listening skills and notetaking skills. They must work as a team with other people or indeed with another team, depending on the style of debating. They must assist each other, cooperate and coordinate the parts of their argument. My proudest moment, when our team was competing in the Australasians nearly two years ago, was when the adjudicator described them as, 'Smooth, like a train'. They gain confidence, they become competent in oral presentation to an audience, which is a particularly useful skill for presentations in their university course and later in the workplace. It is possible, by videoing debates, to provide close analysis of a speaker's performance. Debating has a secure text form or genre, this is a great discipline for the speakers, as anyone who has been third negative speaker will know. Each speaker has specific duties and these must be satisfactorily completed. There are strict rules about timing and the language that may be

used. Personal abuse is never allowed. There is a defined way of going about debating and this restricts the speakers, however, it also makes it much easier, particularly for the novice speaker. Debating encourages the skills needed to fully process a line of argumentation, seeing all sides and being able to arrive at a publicly defensible position. One of the educational benefits of debating on campus is the general improvement in the standard of presentations among students, because the debaters model a particularly good form of presentation, which it is easy for other students to emulate. Furthermore, debating allows some students to achieve in an area in which they have talent. These may be students who find some other aspects of academic life difficult.

### Styles of debating

There are two main styles of debating. The one most people are familiar with is Team Debating or sometimes called Oxford Debating, which has two teams, each consisting of three speakers. There may or may not be reply speeches, more about this later. The other style used in intervarsity competitions is Parliamentary Debating, in which there are four teams, each with two speakers, two teams on each side. There are points of information, and generally this is a lively, vigorous style. There are other forms, which are useful when training speakers. These include Pairs Debating, where there are two teams, each of two speakers and Singles Debating, where there is only one speaker on each team and there are reply speeches.

### Getting started

If you are seeking to do debating as part of a course, or as a social activity, it is worthwhile contacting an experienced adjudicator or the debating society from a nearby university and asking for their assistance. There are training courses for adjudicators and sessions for debaters. Undoubtedly, the best way to learn how to debate is to observe some good debates and then have a try at it. There are, however, a number of basic principles of oral communication which

are essential and it is useful to begin with some introductory exercises with the members of a debating society: Ann Majkut's Chapter 'Oral Presentations' (*ACU Study Guide 1998*) is helpful for general guidelines about speaking in public. The most important thing, however, is to make the students consider what their *action* is when they get up to speak, that is, to persuade, to convince, to inform, and so on. They must then decide on the *intention*, that is, to persuade logically, or to persuade entertainingly, and so on. Once they have a particular action, with intention in mind, their voice and body language will follow. Of course, it is obvious if their action is something like 'to wish the floor would open up and swallow me'. A very satisfactory way to demonstrate the importance of non verbal communication and of the action of a speaker is to get students to recite the alphabet with a particular action in mind. Such actions might be to teach, to ask, to plead, to sympathise, to pressure, to beg, to pray, to explain. Listeners have the task of identifying the action of the speaker, on the basis of non verbal communication.

Another useful exercise is to go around the group and ask each person to say their own name and something interesting about themselves, or what they were doing at three o'clock yesterday, or what they hope to be doing in five years time. A variation on this is to give each student a table topic, which they must immediately speak about. Such topics are usually something like 'My favourite time of day', or 'If I could rule the world for one day', and so on. A more advanced form of this is *instant debating*, where a speaker is given a topic and must take a side and then the next speaker must oppose the first speaker. This is done without any sort of preparation, and so encourages thinking on your feet.

Topics are chosen which do not place either team in the position of having to argue for an ethically untenable or morally controversial position. Such morally neutral or lighthearted topics, for which two opposing views can be considered and which require thinking and analysis might be:







- That there is no point in making a fuss
- That only mugs work
- That it's none of your business
- That trading hours should be unrestricted
- That we should all eat meat
- That women should rule the world  
(*Gunther, 1972, The Lively Art of Debating*)

More advanced sessions could include three minute and then five minute presentations, and include use of the whiteboard or OHP. This is very helpful preparation for student presentations.

### Debating procedure

The essence of debating is the polite style used. Persuasion is essentially by means of the power of language. It is possible to be politely derisive without being personally insulting. If unsuitable style or language is used, the adjudicator will call 'order'. Definitional debates, where the teams do not agree with the definition of the topic, are similarly not allowed.

The length of time allowed for the teams to prepare their cases varies with the style and level of competition. The teams must prepare separately. Sometimes the topics and sides are announced a week before the debate. Or the topic is announced, but the sides are not announced until 30 minutes before the debate. This has the benefit of forcing the teams to consider both sides of the argument in their preparation, however, it is a lot of work. It also has the advantage in a big competition, that if some debaters don't make it, or if extra debaters come, then there is a pool of debaters who are ready to take either side. It is quite common to make up teams at the last moment, sometimes even combining two different universities.

During the debate, it is essential that all team members listen carefully and make notes on what is being said, looking for ways to refute points made by the other team, and in particular, looking for inconsistencies between speakers or

between points that are made. Notes are passed between team members, thus all team members are involved throughout the debate. The roles of each speaker are clearly set out in publications such as 'The Rules', from Asker, J (1996). *The Handbook - 1996 Australasian Intersvarsity Debating Championships* and in Hollway's *Preparing Debates* (1997) The important points are that the Case must be clearly defined and then divided into two discrete areas for the First and Second Speakers, that the Third Speaker must bring in no new line of argument and that the opposition's case must be effectively refuted.

Because debating requires close cooperation of all team members for effective rebuttal, and the coordination of the three speeches, it is a good example of cooperative learning and of inclusive learning, as the different skills and areas of expertise of the team members come into play.

The topic needs to be carefully chosen so that it is something that can be debated. Examples of such topics are:

- That man is the measure of all things.
- That knowledge is virtue.
- That equals should be treated equally and unequals, unequally.
- That the end justifies the means.
- That we should wear black.
- That life is like an icecream, you have to learn to lick it.

### Adjudication

The adjudication can be performed by one or several people, usually three, five or seven. The marking system varies with the style of debate, however, the usual criteria are: matter 40%; manner 40%; method 20%. The average mark will be 75%, and most debates will be won with a margin of less than three points. It is rare for the scores to be more than seven points apart. It is important that the adjudicator uses the summing up as a time of encouragement and instruction for the speakers. Novice speakers quickly become competent with wise, reflective

adjudication. It is helpful to begin with praise, make a suggestion for improvement and then praise again each speaker. The aim is to assist the teams to improve their standard.

### Resources

There are many resources you may find useful in assisting students to learn how to debate and to adjudicate. There are notes and rules for debating which are typically produced by AIDA and by the various university debating societies and there are books such as Gunther's *The Lively Art of Debating*. General texts on communication theory and specific ones on oral communication are also useful. Most university debating societies run training sessions from time to time, which students from other universities can attend. The Australasian Intersvarsity Debating Association certifies adjudicators. There is, however, only one way to really learn how to debate and that is by doing it. With careful adjudication, most speakers will rapidly progress from novice to experienced in a short time.

### Final remarks

There are many things that one could say about the place of debating in tertiary education. One could talk about the shy, quietly spoken student who finds their voice in the structured approach of debating. Or one could consider the usually verbose, confident student who is required to clarify their views and learns to listen more carefully by doing debating, or one could talk about the friendly atmosphere amid coffee and Tim Tams on cold winter's nights, as over thirty debaters gather at ANU for the ACT Opens. And one could theorise that, far from being a destructive, competitive learning experience, debating is a lesson in cooperative, critical constructivist learning. It is important to remember that debating at university is all of these things, however, the most significant aspect of debating is that it teaches everyone, the speakers, the spectators and the support persons to think clearly and critically.







## References

AIDA (1996) *Constitution of the Australasian Intersarsity Debating Association*, AIDA, Canberra.

Asker, J. (1996) *The Handbook - 1996 Australasian Intersarsity Debating Championships*, AIDA, Canberra.

D'Cruz, R. (1996) *Rules of Debate of the World Universities Debating Championship*, Australasian Intersarsity Debating Association, Rules Committee, Melbourne.

*Report to the 1996 Annual General Meeting of AIDA sitting as Australasian Council, Canberra, Australia*, AIDA, Canberra.

Freebody, P. & Luke, A. (1990) " 'Literacies' Programs: Debates and Demands in Cultural Context", *Prospect*, Vol 5, No 3, pp 7-16.

Gleeson, B. (1995) 'An Integrated Approach to Teaching Literacy and Numeracy: Exploring the Relationships in 'Theory and Practice'', *Numeracy in Focus*, ALIO NSW & ARIS VIC.

Gunther, N. (1972) *The Lively Art of Debating*, John Wiley, Sydney.

Hollway, B. (1997) *Preparing Debates*, ANU Debating Society, Canberra.

Johnston, K. (1990) 'Dealing with Difference', *Education Links*, Vol. 38, pp 26-29.

McGuirk, J. & Johnstone, B. [1996] *Numeracy and Literacy - Integration at all Costs?*, Foundation Studies Training Division, TAFE NSW.

Majkut, A. (1998) 'Oral Presentations', *The ACU Study Guide*, Australian Catholic University, Sydney.

Thompson, W. N., (1978) *Responsible and Effective Communication*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

Whelen, J.D. (1985) *Debating for Schools*, n.p., Melbourne.

**Margaret Carmody is an Academic Skills Adviser at the Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus.**

## HERDSA BRANCH CONTACTS

### New Zealand

#### Mary Melrose

Centre for Staff & Educational Development  
Auckland Institute of Technology  
Private Bag 92006  
AUCKLAND  
New Zealand

Phone: +64 9 307 9999  
Fax: +64 9 307 9984  
Email: mary.melrose@ait.ac.nz

### Queensland

#### John Lidstone

Faculty of Education  
Queensland University of Technology  
Kelvin Grove Campus  
Victoria Park Road  
RED HILL QLD 4059

Phone: +61 7 3864 3289  
Fax: +61 7 3864 3986  
Email: j.lidstone@qut.edu.au

### Western Australia

#### Alex Radloff

Teaching & Learning Group  
Curtin University of Technology  
GPO Box U1987  
PERTH WA 6001

Phone: +61 8 9266 2292  
Fax: +61 8 9266 3051  
Email: radloff@cea.curtin.edu.au

### Australian Capital Territory

#### Di Adams

CELTS  
University of Canberra  
PO Box 1  
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

Phone: +61 2 6201 5386  
Fax: +61 2 6201 5172  
Email: da@isd.canberra.edu.au

### Victoria

#### Di Thompson

Centre for Academic Development  
Deakin University  
GEELONG VIC 3217

Phone: +61 3 5227 8192  
Fax: +61 3 5227 8177  
Email: diana@deakin.edu.au

Membership:  
JLyons@florence.nu.rmit.edu.au

### Hong Kong

#### Catherine Tang

Educational Development Unit  
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University  
Hung Hom  
Kowloon  
HONG KONG

Phone: +852 2766 6289  
Fax: +852 2334 1569  
Email: etcttang@polyu.edu.hk

### South Australia

#### Jan Orrell

Staff Development & Training Unit  
Flinders University of South Australia  
GPO Box 2100  
ADELAIDE SA 5001

Phone: +61 8 8201 3853  
Fax: +61 8 8201 5169  
Email: janice.orrell@flinders.edu.au

### New South Wales

Currently no branch

### Tasmania

Currently no branch

### Northern Territory

Currently no branch





**THE YEAR OF LIVING  
DANGEROUSLY: TEACHING  
SCIENCE STUDENTS TO  
MANAGE INFORMATION**

**K**athy Fowler describes the first run of a new course in information skills she planned and taught with a science lecturer and an information technologist.

"Why don't we"; -- these dangerous words were spoken in early 1997. A science lecturer and I were discussing the information skills a graduate scientist or post-graduate science student needs to succeed in research, publication and presentation. Our idea, incubated in the pioneering pressure cooker of James Cook University Cairns campus, eventually bore fruit with the third year science course Managing Scientific Information. A small entry, certainly, but a huge leap for the principle of giving university sanction in terms of credit points to the academic literacy and general skills which are so hotly debated in government circles (DEETYA, 1998).

We gathered a team of a science lecturer, myself (a research librarian), and an educational technologist to team teach the course. My role as course coordinator was a new and exciting experience, as I am the first librarian to teach information management for credit at James Cook University. We decided to focus on three main areas of concern: information retrieval and management, preparing research proposals and communicating research results.

The course was hands on and problem oriented. Most of the sessions were a combination of structured demonstration and individual practice. In information retrieval and management, there is simply no substitute for 'doing it'. Assessment was designed to test mastery of the processes: production of a Procite database; creation of a genuine research proposal; the text of an article formatted precisely to the specifications of the Journal of Economic Entomology; and a ten minute seminar presentation based upon the research proposal. Students were encouraged to investigate areas of

continued next page

**First Torres Strait PhD Awarded**

**Editors Note:** *This article, kindly supplied by Linden Woodward, is a little different from the usual articles in HERDSA News but because of its historical significance it seemed well worth including. On behalf of HERDSA members I offer congratulations to Martin.*

The Cairns Convention Centre rang with enthusiastic cheers when Martin Nakata received his PhD at James Cook University's graduation ceremony in May. Martin is the first Torres Strait Islander to be awarded a PhD in Australia - an achievement he and JCU are justly proud of.

Martin Nakata began his bachelor of Arts in the early days of JCU in Cairns and completed his honours degree and postgraduate studies on the Townsville campus. His thesis explored the interface of Western systems of knowledge and Torres Strait Islander positions and experiences. "I studied a hundred years of literature on Islanders while looking for a different angle on what constrains things today in classrooms," he said.

Dr. Nakata argues that education departments must listen in a different way to Indigenous communities if they want to achieve better results. "We've moved on from the missionary days and 'rescue' modes but they still need to learn how to open their ears and not their mouths," he said. "Instead of patronising people because they are different,

educators must learn how to make a difference."

Dr. Nakata now works as a research fellow for the University of South Australia in Adelaide, researching curriculum development. He has accepted ministerial appointments to the Council of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and the Council of the Australian National Maritime Museum.

More than fifty of Dr. Nakata's family and friends joined him in Cairns to celebrate, many travelled from the Torres Strait and around Australia for the ceremony. "Many people gave up a lot of time to help me along the way, so this is their achievement too - not just mine," he said, "I dearly hope that indigenous families who have worked tirelessly over the years to support their children's education will take a bit of the glory today, and give themselves a pat on the back."

His message to the young students of today: "Do what you want to do, do it well, and make sure you give it your best shot. Pursue your dreams, yes, but always listen to your mother."

**Linden Woodward**

*Linden Woodward is Media Liaison Officer for the Cairns campus of James Cook University. He can be contacted by email at [Linden.Woodward@jcu.edu.au](mailto:Linden.Woodward@jcu.edu.au)*



**Martin Nakata with his mother Cessa, on graduation day**





### continued from previous page

personal interest, and the resultant databases, in some cases, will support honours projects next year.

It was interesting to watch the reactions of the students who took the unit as they were drawn from areas in which they felt competent into areas in which they were not comfortable. The various computer applications (Procite, Powerpoint, Excel) and the use of the scanner and digital slide maker, gave few, if any problems. However, the principles of effective graphic communication proved more of a challenge.

Translating the research proposal into a successful ten minute seminar presentation proved the most challenging exercise of all. Students seemed to want a formula similar to the 'material and methods, discussion, and results' template of the journal article format, and struggled to put the audience ahead of the data.

Watching the videotaped presentations gave students genuine, if painful, feedback on their 'presentation style'.

At the end of the course the students completed Student Assessment of Teaching surveys, and the unit ranked with the top 5% of Biological Sciences ratings. Problems with new software compatibility in the computer laboratories were criticised and an overhaul of the assessment weightings and composition was suggested.

I must admit it was a 'baptism of fire' for me. There were times I did wish I had never suggested it. There were times we were flying blind in trying to articulate what the science lecturer said had cost him many painful experiences as a new researcher to learn. But in the end the students said "We really found this valuable". My fondest hope is that the first time they stand up at a conference to report their research, they will remember us.

### References

DEETYA, 1998. Research on employer satisfaction with graduate skills: interim report. [Online]. Available from: <http://www.deetya.gov.au/divisions/hcd/highered/eip98-8/eip98-8.pdf>, [Accessed 29 June, 1998].

Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs.  
Government and Social Research Team & A C Nielsen Research Services see DEETYA.

*Katharine Fowler is Science and Education Faculty Librarian at the Cairns Campus of James Cook University. Her field of interest is tertiary literacy skills and the 'first year experience' and she has just completed a project on incoming second year science students' academic literacy/general skills requirements at James Cook University Cairns Campus. For her sins, she is starting an M.Ed. on a related topic. email: [katharine.fowler@jcu.edu.au](mailto:katharine.fowler@jcu.edu.au)*

### Jacob's Musings on Meanings - Teaching and Learning - and to slash

**H**ere is the second contribution by Jacob. Is the author 'a cynical old B' or is there point to the assertions. Comments please!

Some years back (how many?) academic staff developers started to add "and learning" whenever they referred to "teaching" - probably as a deliberate strategy to emphasise the link between the two and to emphasise the point that the purpose of teaching (the only legitimate purpose?) was to have students learn. By doing this they hoped to prompt teaching staff with whom they were working (or staff that they were 'developing' - a topic for another musing?) to think about the impact their teaching might have on how and what students learn - and on how their teaching might influence the way in which students approach learning.

After a while some folk - in an attempt to make the 'message' even stronger - dropped the 'and' and replaced it with the slash - the new term becoming 'teaching/learning'. Perhaps this form also had the intention of returning some credence to the rather dated (these days) idea of the community of scholars - we are all learners and in any good teaching the

teacher should learn as much as the students - as they all embarked on a learning experience (perhaps yet another musing?). As an aside I suppose that equality also applies to bad teaching? It certainly fits with the (very) old adage that one of the most effective ways to learn something is to attempt to teach it to others.

Later teaching/learning seemed to become a mantra and an automatic form wherever the term 'teaching' would previously have been used - but now without any of the initial purpose and indeed without any obvious meaning. I've even seen the form teaching/learning alternated with learning/teaching in much the same way as one approach to de-gendering language alternated his/her with her/his as one way of achieving the desirable goal. In the case of learning/teaching I'm still puzzling as to what it might mean.

Perhaps it had resonances to the old lower working class caricature: 'I'll learn ya!'

Somehow this prompted memory of an 'interchange' at a conference at Byron Bay five years ago in which the opening Keynote was a rousing call by one of our

'technofreaks' who finished his 'paper' with a prediction that by the year 2000 (such predictions were still all the rage then) the vast majority of tertiary students would be learning from 'packaged' material incorporating modern technology - as an aside, for those of you who remember my last "Musings", well before the Flexible Learning imperative hit us. The second day's Keynote was rather different and was more like an 'address in reply' but also finished with a prediction; this time that "In seven years time (which, of course, was 2000!) the vast majority of university teaching will be by means of mass lectures, mainly 'talk and chalk', with the most modern technology in evidence being the overhead projector"

So much for teaching/learning - but I'd hazard a guess that the technology approach would have much in common with the 'talk and chalk' as forms of instruction - as distinct from education. Was the addition of 'and learning' just an attempt to return to 'education' from an era of 'instruction'? Whatever - it seems to have turned into yet another case of a term developed to express a good idea turning into a meaningless slogan - or am I just a cynical old B?

**Jacob**





# HERDSA Annual International Conference

Melbourne, Australia  
July 12-15 1999

## Cornerstones What do we value in Higher Education?

The 1999 Annual International Conference of HERDSA will be hosted in Melbourne by the Victorian Branch from 12 - 15 July, 1999.

The purpose of the conference is to promote research and development in Higher Education and to explore a diversity of perspectives on contemporary issues that affect the missions of teaching/learning and research.

As a unifying theme, "Cornerstones: What do we value in Higher Education?" will focus on the underpinning values of the work we are doing. As we move towards a new century and millennium it is especially appropriate that we analyse and reflect on what are the significant constituents of our philosophy and practice. Highly regarded national and international speakers will be invited to lead plenary and parallel sessions. There will be several sessions designed for all the delegates as well as parallel streams of sessions for those with special interests.

This conference will build on the tradition of past conferences by providing an outstanding venue for the dissemination of 'cutting edge' research, techniques and knowledge in all aspects of the field of Higher Education.

A pre-conference workshop exploring aspects of commodification and privatisation in Higher Education will be held on Sunday 11 July in Ballarat, Victoria. Ballarat is about 100 km northwest of Melbourne.

Information is available from the conference secretariat:  
[conprof@netspace.net.au](mailto:conprof@netspace.net.au)

