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Developing Tribes and Territories

By Paul Blackmore

This article originally appeared in the June 2007 issue of Educational Developments, which is the magazine of the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA), in the United Kingdom. It had been reprinted from the keynote address given at the SEDA conference in November 2006. It is reprinted here by permission of the author and SEDA.

Introduction

I'm immensely grateful to have been given the task today of thinking about development tribes and territories. I want to suggest that there are development tribes who live close by one another on overlapping territories but who rarely meet. There is remarkably little communication. Caricatures are frequently drawn and large and crude assumptions made by one tribe about another.

Emerson said "Who you are speaks so loudly that I can't hear what you're saying", wisely pointing to the ways in which we pay attention not just to the message but also to the messenger. Our perceptions about a speaker make an immense difference to the way we hear or whether we listen at all. That, I think, is part of the apparent problem I'd like to discuss with you today. There are people in this world whose beliefs and values and ways of working make us feel uncomfortable, so that we look away and decline to listen. Some of those with whom we work in universities may make us feel like that too. Where you seem to come from makes a difference.

It has always interested me to note both how similar and how different are the worlds that make up higher education – and to note also the extraordinary myths that one part of the education world holds about another. I remember a colleague at Warwick saying how easy it must be to do educational development in a new university because there everyone does as they're told. Similarly I have often been advised that in old universities no-one cares about teaching. This is an equally daft generalisation, of course. It suggests that we often make up what we do not know.

Notions of identity and community are very powerful aspects of organisations. Every so often something has happened that has, for me, demonstrated the strength of identity and community.

In universities the disciplinary dimension, as we know, is highly significant. One can't understand why things happen the way they do without taking disciplines into account. Some while ago I accepted the poisoned chalice of a presentation to a Mathematics Department to talk about how they might observe one another teaching and offer feedback. I suggested, among other things, that gender might be an area of interest – who says what and to whom and who responds – and so on. You'll not find this extraordinary. The response from one Mathematician was swift and crisp. "I never take any notice of gender", he retorted. "Besides, what's the use of knowing a student's gender – you can't change their gender". I suggest to you that this comment would

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HERDSA Office

Jennifer Ungaro (Administration Manager)
PO Box 27, Milperra NSW 2214
Phone: +61 2 9771 3911
Fax: +61 2 9771 4299
Email: office@herdsa.org.au
Website www.herdsa.org.au

HERDSA News

Editor Roger Landbeck
28/242 Parklands Bvld, Currimundi, QLD 4551
Phone: +61 7 5438 2789
Email: landbeck@ozemail.com.au

Editorial Committee
Maureen Bell and Peter Kandlbinder

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From the Editor

This issue contains several new features. Two HERDSA Fellows were invited to contribute to a new column and one chose to reflect on her journey in preparing a portfolio and how she had subsequently used her experiences to encourage students to be reflective while the other chose to describe her current research with students. Different individuals and different journeys. We look forward to more contributions from Fellows in subsequent issues. Then we have a very honest reflective piece from a student on her undergraduate journey, which will provide food for thought for academic staff. We hope to have more contributions from students in the future. Finally the first of a series of short practical articles on teaching for which we are hoping to get ideas from members via the web site.

Talking of which ... we are hoping this will be operational by the time this issue is published. Back issues of *HERDSA News* from 2005 will be available as downloadable files. As soon as a new issue appears in hard copy the previous issue will be placed on the web. All HERDSA conference papers from 1997 have been now been uploaded.

There has been a change in the Editorial Committee for *HERDSA News* since the last issue. Last year Linda Conrad retired from Griffith University and we wish her well. Christine Bruce was then happy to end her period of service and we send her congratulations on being promoted to Professor at QUT. My thanks to both Linda and Christine for their helpful advice since early 1998 when the committee was first formed. I am happy to welcome Maureen Bell and Peter Kandlbinder as new members of the Committee. They have already provided useful comment.

Articles for *HERDSA News* are not refereed but Editorial Committee members provide useful feedback from time to time. I continue to be most grateful to writers who are prepared to give valuable time to write articles for the News when there is no recognition for this form of publication.

My colleagues who edit HERD, the Societies' international journey have been relieved somewhat by their publishers agreeing to increase the number of issues per year which will help the backlog of articles. We hope members will also take up the opportunity to contribute both ideas and articles for the proposed new occasional publication, Topics in Higher Education.

The leading article for this issue, 'Developing tribes and territories', was originally given as a keynote address at the Staff and Educational Development Association conference in the UK in November 2006.Although written for a UK audience the examination of the different worlds that make up higher education can easily be transferred to the Southern Hemisphere and I am sure that readers will recognise the similarities and find the analysis useful in their world.

Thank you for your support and encouragement for another year, I wish all readers well for 2008. Remember the conference in Rotorua in July and start planning to be there.

Roger Landbeck

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Developing Tribes and Territories

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have been inconceivable in a Humanities or a Social Studies department. Disciplines make a difference.

Disciplinary difference extends to language and all that is associated with it. I spoke recently to a senior Physicist in a research-intensive institution. The University's Postgraduate Diploma in learning and teaching had exposed him to a little light sociology. He, like his colleagues, had found it hard going, till he realised, he said, that in Physics words mean one thing only. In Sociology they can have a whole cluster of meanings. Once that penny had dropped, he felt he could read more freely. His colleagues, he felt, never reached that realisation. Language makes a difference and marks our tribes and territories.

There is an academic and an administrative split. Craig McInnis in Australia has explored the differences between academics' and administrators' views of the university and how it should work. I was once asked by a senior administrator – when our centre was to be moved from the central administration into humanities – how I would be able to find out what was happening in the University. He obviously felt that being surrounded by academics would obscure my view of the administration. You can tell a lot about a person by the way they refer to "the University".

As people with a development role, often uneasily poised between the academic and the management or administrative parts of the University, we can get caught by this very powerful demarcation. Soon after I arrived in Humanities, a senior Professor in a lift expressed concern at my department's arrival. "My colleagues and I have been talking", he said. "We feel that this building is for people like us – it's not for people like you". It is indeed a tribal world.

Imagining Development

Imagine that you had the chance of designing a university from scratch. How would you think of development, and what would you design in to make development happen? This is a "green field site" question that has troubled few people since the 1960s in the UK. A much more pragmatic question that senior leaders have is: you've only so much resource to put into supporting development and you want to make your organisation and your staff work better – so where should you invest and how should you organise?

A recent research study, Developing Capability in the University, drew on 18 international case studies, to show not what was good practice or bad practice but what the choices are when you organise for development and what is likely to happen if you make those choices. It was a very interesting exercise and the report benefited from the detailed feedback of five Vice-Chancellors, among others.

We used the phrase "capability development" as the least loaded term we could find. This is how we defined it:

> …all of the provision and processes that are designed to enrich the practice, and thus enhance the efficiency, effectiveness and well-being of individuals, activities and the organisation.

Capability development here includes:

- Staff skills development;
- Educational development (development of curriculum and assessment);
- Academic development (the development of academics' expertise);
- Faculty development (development of academic staff , usually relating to teaching, in the US); and
- Organisational development (focused at an institutional level).

Notice how broadly development is distributed in the institution. Educational developers do it. Human Resources does it. These are the people with development written on their door. Others do it as part of their brief. The Research Support Office, the International Office and the Enterprise Unit do it, in relation to their areas of work. But also, senior leaders do it, by choosing what to fund and whom to employ. Academic departments do it. Disciplinary communities do it, often by conferences and email. And also – a terrifying thought – development happens without anyone consciously paying attention to it. It is simply a phenomenon that can and often does occur as people go about their work. Most problems are not solved – they just dissolve, or re-form another way.

Developing Tribes and Territories

When we see tribalism in others it often seems bizarre. Here I'd like to take the metaphor of tribes and territories and – perhaps rather riskily – apply it to the development communities. I'd like to point out difference in development tribes and the consequences of the ways we deal with – or don't deal with – difference, in order to start a discussion.

So … what about us? Let's take a quick first look before getting into some detail. Recently I went to another conference – the annual Staff Development Conference – an event very like the SEDA Conference and also quite unlike it. There I heard Rob Cuthbert warn against the dangers of hyper-rationality in trying to understand organisations. I heard a speaker from the BBC talk about the ways that Greg Dyke had tried to make that huge bureaucracy a more creative place, I heard Madeleine Atkins, Vice-Chancellor at Coventry say what she thought were the issues in improving teaching, research and third stream activities in universities. All very interesting you might think.

What was even more interesting was that there were only one or two people at SEDA Conference who were at that conference. So isn't this a little odd? We have a community of staff developers attending one conference and a community of educational developers attending another – yet all are working in the same universities, with the same staff, often on much the same issues.

May I offer you the analogy of the operating theatre in which the surgeon and the anesthetist work entirely independently of each other and never speak. Each may ply his or her trade to the highest possible standard – but the patient will lose from this lack of co-ordination. Actually it's rather an odd metaphor and it leaves you to decide whether you see educational development as surgery or a

form of anaesthetic. You may reject both options perhaps.

It would be easy to see this separation as complete madness – and indeed some universities do put all their formal development function in one place – it's probably the commonest pattern in UK pre-1992 institutions. Can't we get everyone together so we can all work in a coordinated way? Well perhaps. That would be rational – or maybe hyper-rational. A good friend of mine works for a major multinational company that makes very large aeroplanes. He is a designer. He tells me of the constant tussle between design and manufacture. The people in the factory just want to make the plane. "Can we have the drawings now?" "No", say the designers, "it's really tricky work, we've got a lot to think about – there's creativity going on here and you can't have it to order. Solving a problem takes as long as it takes. In the end it's about someone thinking hard till they get it right". Meanwhile the marketing team, who are another tribe again, say "Will you lot get your act together and build some planes because we've just sold 150 of them". You can imagine the tight-lipped meetings. And we haven't even mentioned the estates tribe, the finance tribe, the personnel tribe.

Tribes and territories are natural and inevitable aspects of human existence. Tribes often cohere around what they believe in and value. Territories arise from this because of what we are dealing with and because of resourcing and political advantage. You'll recall the old saying about every Welsh village having two places of worship – the one you go to and the one you don't. We define ourselves as much by what we are not as by what we are. So let's not think we can hyper-rationalise ourselves out of tribes and territories. They will always be with us. And they serve some useful functions.

We may be better employed thinking about the various communities, being more aware of others and seeing what trading can be done and partnerships formed. Or you may take a more radical view.

The History of Educational Development in the UK

Can we learn anything about development tribalism and its effects from the history of educational development in the UK? What a success story this has been. It has been said that at one time you could get all the educational developers in the UK into a phone box. There are now thousands of educational developers, but few phone boxes. So let's celebrate the immense progress that has been made. We have a large and self-confident educational development community that is increasingly able to theorise itself. Almost all new lecturers have to be trained to teach – that's a major step when you think of attitudes even ten years ago in most universities. Much more attention is now paid to the quality of teaching. Its importance is recognised much more. Excellence in teaching is more highly valued, on the whole. We're not there yet by any means – but let's recognise what has been achieved.

SEDA has been absolutely central to this. SEDA is a really impressive example of how people who really believe in something and are prepared to work at it can make something happen, often in the face of apathy or outright opposition. SEDA has provided a point of coherence around concern for teaching and learning and many have gained from this. And SEDA, fascinatingly, has endured, through major changes in the support for teaching at national level.

There have been changes over the years in the way that the educational development community – itself a highly questionable concept – has viewed itself and its role. My personal impression is that fifteen years ago educational development used to be:

- Practised in opposition to research, which was a bad thing. Pedagogic research was not, at that time, much spoken about;
- Entirely focused on the development of individuals (projects came later); and
- Not at all strategic – in the sense of being tied into what the institution was trying to achieve.

It's a little different now. The research-teaching link has become a mainstream concern in the last several years. There is the beginning of an interest in the leadership and management of teaching – but note how recently this has happened. There is an increasing tendency to be strategic; the HEFCE requirement to have a learning and teaching strategy in return for funding has been significant here. So educational development does shift its focus over time.

However, teaching is still at the centre of this world rather than academic work as a whole. So, although there have been some significant shifts over the last few years, I would conclude that educational development remains a rather separate community from a number of others that do development, in a number of ways. So the big question is, just how separate do we – as educational developers – wish to be? Is there ever a time when one would want to review that position?

Often it is focus that produces progress. It may have been that the way that teaching got attention was by singling it out. And that single-minded, almost dogged pursuit of teaching and learning has paid major dividends.

What I would say here, very much in the spirit of the Developing Capability report, is that consequences flow from that single-mindedness – what one might perhaps think of as costs. The first has to do with slipping out of alignment with the nature of academic work in the 21st century, the second with over-separation from development aspects that sit with the other big tribe, HR, the third is the risk of living in an intellectual compartment and the fourth is in separation from the academic heart of the university. I'd like to discuss each of these now – but really in the spirit of saying that these are likely consequences of a particular course. My claim is that the more we think of teaching as separate from other aspects of academic work, and the more we think of educational development as being different from other forms of development, the greater the chances of these things being so.

Academic Work in the 21st Century

How does a concentration on teaching look in 2006 as against 1986? Academic work is becoming more complex in all sorts of ways – I shall pick out only two significant items here.

Firstly, and quite fundamentally, one source of complexity lies in the kinds of knowledge and ways of knowing with which universities now engage. Universities have to find ways of engaging more flexibly with the world and its knowledge beyond the university. Mode 2 knowledge is transdisciplinary, often problem-focused. The growth of

third stream activity blurs previously clear boundaries around teaching and research. Epistemologically it is a less orderly world. Some would see the university's role as being to accept and even encourage this more fluid and turbulent way of being and knowing. Ron Barnett suggests we accept and celebrate "epistemological pandemonium". Research and teaching, he suggests, have changed roles.

> Research … has to be understood as the promotion of supercomplexity in our public understandings … teaching, on the other hand, has to be construed as the production of supercomplexity in the minds of students and as the development of the capacity on the part of students to handle the resulting dislocation.' (Barnett 2003, p. 143)

I'd push it a little further. I'm not sure that I can any longer tell the difference between teaching and research in this world where the academy and the "real" world are dissolving into each other and where knowledges are more varied and more fluid. Are you teaching or researching when you engage in third stream activity, when you act as a consultant to a company, find out what they are doing and advise them how to change and help them how to change? When you gather together a research team with senior and less experienced members, and the less experienced learn from their more established colleagues, is it teaching or research? Bring it home to your own work. When you run an educational development project – clarify some concepts, go out and gather existing practice, develop practice, report back, persuade people to change, evaluate what has happened – are you teaching or are you researching? Or are you slipping continually from one role to another, and using a really rather sophisticated understanding of context, audiences, stakeholders, approaches to change and so on. Isn't what you are really doing working with knowledge and with individuals and communities – is it all knowledge management? I don't know if that is the right term – it has its own baggage – but it seems clear that the terms teaching and research, when used as if they were entirely distinguishable, are most unhelpful, calling to mind the undergraduate classroom on the one hand and the research laboratory on the other. Of course at the extremes one can think of activities that are clearly research or clearly teaching. But an increasing amount of what happens in and around universities is just not that clear cut any more. This is perhaps the train of thought that led Ernest Boyer to his four scholarships.

Given the complexity and tensions in the nature of work in universities, what does this mean for the capabilities that staff in the university require? Some have argued for the need to review these capabilities that are needed in a complex or supercomplex world, with multiple communities of practice. It may be that academic workers need, in effect, a set of broad capabilities that equate to a new academic literacy that spans all aspects of academic (and academic support) work. Certainly the requirement for an ethical code becomes more salient as previously distinct forms of activity start to blend and staff find themselves working in novel situations and relationships.

Another reason for rethinking our separateness is that focusing on one thing means, inescapably, not focusing so much on something else. The something else is academic work as a whole. I take a very clear value position on this. It seems to me that the idea of an academic identity is of immense value. In this ironic and post-modern world I take a modern view that being academic is something of value that needs questioning and debating, but that should be kept alive and strong and constantly renewed.

There is a pretty extensive literature and a lot of empirical evidence that the "traditional" notion of academic role is, to say the least, under some stress, that the "ideal" of teaching, research and administration or service is coming apart in many places – an international trend. We might consider whether an exclusive concern with teaching and learning actually contributes to that separation and whether it simply looks out of date in a world that has grown too complex for the simple certainties of the 1980s.

We are indeed living through major changes – and they are a challenge to the ways we organised ourselves for development back in the 1980s. Separating teaching and research looks outmoded and artificial. Real world engagement prompts us to review our previous certainties about knowledge and about our role in relation to it. In the face of these major changes, the debate over whether new staff should have to do a Postgraduate Certificate in teaching seems just a little backward-looking and unimaginative.

The ED/SD Divide

There is a startlingly obvious disjunction between educational development and staff development. Educational development units tend to be completely separate from HR-based staff development although this is often not so marked in old universities. Now we could have an interesting time analysing why this is so; it's partly about beliefs and values and partly also about power and positioning. For the educational developer there may be benefits but there are also costs in the separation.

Firstly, we risk cutting ourselves off from some of the aspects of an institution that most influence behaviour – induction, probation, review, reward and promotion. CETL colleagues at my own institution have been asking themselves how they can get people with no discretionary time to engage with them. Part of the answer is in the management of incentives but educational developers don't have access to those structures and processes.

Secondly, we vacate areas where we can be of value. In the last five years government got serious about leadership and management development. The work has gone to Human Resources. It got semi-serious about research and third stream activity. In the main, this has gone to HR. So at the moment, it is the Personnel department, in its new guise as Human Resources in many institutions, which is looking across all of the work that goes on in universities and all those who work in universities.

I don't want to make cheap criticisms of HR people – as a head of department I rely heavily on some excellent HR advice about contracts and performance review. But these are of course HR matters. The problem with not engaging with the whole academic role is that the HR community is not, on the whole, knowledgeable enough about universities and what they are and what they do – virtually no-one who works in HR has worked in an academic department, taught a student, published a paper or gained a research grant or contract. And, in a sense, why should they? The weakness of this situation only becomes apparent when HR leads on issues that really require detailed knowledge of some

of the issues above and of the scholarship base that underlies them.

So, by not engaging with these issues, educational developers risk leaving the nature of support for academic work to HR. Note that these areas that are now colonised by HR are the other component parts of academic identity. The educational development community works with but one part of the whole.

Thirdly, we leave it to the "poor bloody infantry" to pull it all together. If we don't work effectively with others who do development work, it will be up to the main grade academic to make it all make sense, which doesn't seem entirely fair.

I should say in passing by the way that we should not assume that it is entirely up to people called developers – of whatever persuasion – to come galloping to the aid of academic staff. Disciplinary and professional communities and associations have a vital role to play, but are not my focus here.

The Intellectual Compartment

Educational developers are thoughtful and inventive and there is now a large and useful literature around issues in student learning and educational development. However, I think there are some missed connections.

Am I the only person to notice a certain circularity in educational development? X cites Y who cites Z who cites X. This may be a sign of a maturing field, generating a high level of agreement around shared paradigms. Or it may indicate an inward-looking culture.

On the whole, the HE pedagogic literature seems less rich and varied than that which is used for pre-16 education. This is not surprising. It is a much younger field of study. One very specific point – at the moment we remain in thrall to an orthodoxy around deep and surface learning that certainly has immense value but needs to be accompanied by more sophisticated psychological and sociological explanations of teaching and learning.

The increasing emphasis on "the student learning experience" – that valuable but dangerous mantra – pulls us away from "the staff academic experience" which I believe should concern us just as much. There is a rich literature about professional learning and we do not use it enough, either in reflecting on our own learning or on those of our academic colleagues or on students in higher education. Again, the literature around academic identity could be used more.

Literatures on organisational development and on knowledge management are also not very widely accessed by those working in educational development.

Losing Touch with the Academy

For me there are two risks here. The first is that, by being concerned solely with teaching, we risk presenting ourselves as being uninterested in, or unsympathetic to, some major aspects of academic work and identity and may thus lose credibility and perceived relevance among academic staff. We need to take note of what people call themselves – in many universities the word "teacher" is not used – nor even "academic". People are far more likely to describe themselves by discipline – as physicists or historians. This tells us a lot about their self-perception. In passing, I should note that exclusive concentration on teaching does not play at all well in old universities, nor, increasingly, in a number of new universities and this may be the biggest single reason that SEDA has made less headway in pre-92 institutions.

I'd also, in passing, note another separation. Just as a lot of HR-based development is not rooted in the academy, neither, I fear, is a lot of educational development work. There is a grave danger that we float off and talk to ourselves. We have a wonderful language to entertain ourselves with – facilitation, dissemination, implementation, community of practice, cognitive gains and, holy of holies, the student learning experience. It's worth remembering that subject centres are praised by mainstream academics and well worth asking why.

So when we talk about making connections among development tribes and territories, we need to remember that it is possible to connect development up and yet have it unhelpfully separate from those actually doing the academic work in the University.

Some Terms for Consideration

So far I've been taking things to pieces. May I now offer something that might help to build things up. Let me put a model in front of you. Let's for a moment clear from our minds the various tribes and territories that exist and instead go back to the start of this keynote when I mentioned greenfield development. I'd like to say something about what it would be good to have, as an approach to development of all kinds in universities.

I offer you the proposition that development should have four aspects. It should be:

Inclusive – recognising that all who work in universities contribute to what universities do. Almost all achievement is team achievement.

Strategic – whilst not swallowing entirely the hyper-rationalism of institutional mission and strategic alignment, I suggest that in making decisions about the kind of development we have, we need to pay attention to what the institution is trying to achieve and to put the resource where it is likely to do most good.

Integrated – here means treating academic work as a number of inter-related activities; teaching, researching, consulting, leading, managing, service, outreach, all requiring broad capabilities and an ethical approach.

Scholarly – perhaps this does not require definition here but for me it would include having a highly developed understanding of the context of a university and of the wider world.

I want to put up for discussion the idea that the development that happens in a university should, collectively, be this. Let's go back to our two communities and see how they measure up.

HR-based staff development tends to be: inclusive, in that it deals with all staff; strategic, for HR strategies are usually tied in very much to an institution's strategic plan; and integrated, because such mechanisms as performance review tend to deal with the whole of a person's activities. However, I would argue they are often not sufficiently contextualised and not sufficiently scholarly.

Educational development tends not to be inclusive, because it does not deal with all staff. It doesn't even deal with all staff whose work contributes to the quality of a student's learning experience. It is not integrated. It is becoming more strategic is increasingly scholarly and is fairly aware of context, although slightly in denial about what many academic staff do for much of the time.

I suggest that these terms may be useful as a means of characterising how we and others approach things. This rough and ready analysis suggests that we may have something to learn from one another.

Some Conclusions

Tribes and territories are part of the human condition – they won't go away. An advanced understanding of tribalism and territoriality is essential as we go about our work in universities. I remember recently saying much the same thing to a group of staff being inducted into higher education. I went on – a bit – about how to deal with and how not deal with academic staff and about the difference that disciplines make. A member of the group became rather cross with me. "I don't want to hear about academics being different", he complained. "I'm from HR and my job is to make everyone the same". He was wrong – we are of course concerned with equity, but that's a different matter and we have to accept and indeed celebrate diversity in the university.

We also need to turn that awareness on ourselves because we too are part of a tribe and we have a territory. We can call it a community of practice and feel much warmer about the whole thing of course! Locations, boundaries and bridges (the title of the conference) are valuable metaphors – where we place ourselves, where our concerns start and end, and how we connect with others beyond – these need continuing attention as part of our professional self-awareness, in relation to both development and academic communities.

In the longer term there are questions that invite exploration nationally, where there is tribalism too. We have two national agencies; the HEA and the LF. One does teaching and the other does leading and managing. It doesn't take a major intellect to spot that there is a significant overlap – teaching needs leadership – yet two tribes were established by government. How helpful is this arrangement?

We can do some practical thinking now. At the level of the institution, are there ways, given existing structures, in which we can build bridges and make things work better?

For Discussion

So some questions I'd like to offer to you to open up discussion:

- What tribes and territories are there in my own institution? How can they be characterised?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the current arrangement?
- How might things be improved?

Reference

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Paul Blackmore is Director of the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at Coventry University.

Contact: p.blackmore@coventry.ac.uk

The Undergraduate Experience: A Personal Retrospective

By Alysia Debowski

I have wanted to attend university for as long as I can remember. As a child, I watched my mother work with her university students and saw the relationship she developed with them. I came to idealise a university education as an opportunity to discuss and delve into the major issues facing humanity. Finally, in February 2003 I commenced as an undergraduate student at the University of Melbourne. As I finally prepare to graduate, it seems apt to reflect on my time at university so far.

Unsurprisingly to most but me, my undergraduate experience has mostly fallen short of my high expectations. In reality, my undergraduate studies have been peppered with disparate experiences of teaching and learning. On the one hand, I have been fortunate to study under highly committed lecturers dedicated to educating undergraduate students. Some of my classes have been taught in small groups (between 10 and 20 students), allowing extensive discussion and the development of a sense of community and collegiality. These subjects have often been challenging, engaging and dedicated to examining contemporary societal issues. Many have featured innovative methods of assessment, such as oral examinations. They have been the highlight of my years at university.

In contrast, the lows of my university career have generally occurred in large group settings, where hundreds of students are lectured simultaneously on subject matter already included as prescribed reading. Discussion is nearly discouraged, as it prevents the lecturer from covering the material in the time available. Feedback was rare, whether in the form of questions during class or written comments. These subjects were frequently assessed by a single examination at the end of semester. It was not unusual for students to never meet their lecturer. This form of teaching and learning seemed to breed apathetic students and staff. As I graduate, this is having further implications for many of my peers. Having never met or had a relationship with their lecturers, it is close to impossible for them to find a referee who is able to attest to their character and academic performance.

My first few years at university were some of the most challenging I have experienced. At a personal level, I struggled to establish a new life in a new state. Nearly 3 000 km from my

family and friends, I experienced regular homesickness and sadness. It was only in my fourth year of studying in Victoria that I finally came to feel that Melbourne was also my home. I had not previously appreciated the emotional difficulties that often accompany being an interstate (or international) student.

I also found it highly challenging to connect with staff and students at university. I was fortunate to live in a residential college where I was able to connect with a number of other undergraduate students. Large classes were generally not conducive to making friends or meeting new people. Further, many clubs and societies seemed unwelcoming to new students. It took a great deal of determination, or an existing friendship network, to find a niche within a university society. However, once established, my niche in university became an invaluable source of information and support. In my second year of study I joined the editorial board of the *Melbourne University Law Review*, which publishes a refereed legal journal. Members of the Review became some of my closest friends. Student groups are an essential aspect of university life and need to be encouraged.

I was also surprised to find that I struggled academically in the early stages of my university studies. In my first piece of university assessment, I was awarded a pass mark and accused of plagiarism as I had not used sufficient footnotes in my essay. I have excessively footnoted my work ever since. It is not unusual for my essays to have 3cm of text and 10cm of footnotes. This, of course, is directly counter to what will be expected of me in my future roles.

I also found it difficult to understand what was required to obtain a good mark at university. Lecturers would often have contradictory expectations of students, further complicating the learning process. The most valuable resource I found at university was a selective collection of past honours exam papers held in the university library. Actually reading a good answer was my key to understanding what was expected of me.

Like many students, it took me about three years to "get it" academically at university, despite attending every class and completing every piece of required reading. Those three years were confusing, frustrating, challenging and, ultimately, rewarding. Having "got it", university became a great deal easier to navigate. However, towards the end of my studies, I began to feel an increasing sense of déjà vu. Many subjects did not recognise prior learning or attempt to provide senior students with more challenging content. Rather, most classes were taught in the same way and had the same methods of assessment throughout my five years at university. I faced the new challenge of personal boredom and struggled to remain engaged.

In my opinion, the key advantage of being a later year student in a professional degree programme is having the opportunity to undertake optional subjects. Many of these optional units became highlights of my studies. However, students were severely limited in how many optional subjects they could undertake. Further, many listed units were not offered at any point in my studies, such as Migration Law. This was of great concern to many students who were keen to specialise.

In one of these optional units, I had the opportunity to undertake an Advanced Legal Research subject in which I completed a year-long thesis, approximately equivalent to an honours thesis. Under the supervision of a very senior faculty member, I was able to closely examine my chosen topic and really engage with a particular area of law. This was a great relief after reiterating countless pieces of information in most other units. Undertaking this research was easily the most engaging and rewarding part of my degree.

Completing my thesis provided my first opportunity to be creative or think independently. Unlike my idealised notion of university study, most assignments I completed were dedicated to regurgitating others' ideas. On the rare occasions that I attempted to advance a new idea, I inevitably performed worse in assessments. Had I not undertaken Advanced Legal Research, I am not sure that I would have ever been challenged to think for myself during my undergraduate studies.

My undergraduate experience diverged significantly from my idealised picture of university life. Mass education seems to have replaced discussion and debate in many areas of undergraduate study. However, over the last five years I have developed strong analytical and communication skills. I am readily employable as a legal professional. And I now look forward to eventually undertaking postgraduate study, where I hope to discuss and delve into the major issues facing humanity…

Alysia Debowski is just completing her undergraduate degree at the University of Melbourne.

Contact: alysia@largestprime.net

Beyond Workshops: A Conceptual Framework for Embedding Development of Intercultural Competence in Business Education

By Lesley Treleaven, Mark Freeman, Betty Leask, Prem Ramburuth, Lyn Simpson, Chris Sykes & Simon Ridings

Background

A Carrick-funded project, *Embedding development of intercultural competence in Business Education (EDIC)*, aims to develop the competence of Business graduates in valuing cultural differences, communicating easily across diverse cultures and acquiring the range of skills and knowledge needed to conduct business globally. Knight (2003) describes the intercultural dimension as "relating to the diversity of cultures that exist within countries, communities, and institutions". While the need for institutional strategies and educational processes to develop intercultural competence in learning, teaching and social contexts is long overdue (Volet & Ang, 1998; Leask, 2005), intercultural engagement and learning is not, however, an easy outcome to achieve. There is evidence to suggest that academics tend to perceive student difference as a barrier to learning and that students tend to focus on problems with teachers, teaching and group work. Moving beyond this deficit orientation requires that the institution or Faculty develop a systemic and integrated approach that enables staff and students to value intercultural diversity. The research literature on intercultural competence generally, and Crichton and Scarino (2007), Paige et al. (1999), Liddicoat et al. (2003) specifically, suggests that intercultural competence is a dynamic, interactive and self reflective learning process involving staff and students with the potential to transform values, skills and knowledge.

Developing Intercultural Competence

Rather than a "bolt on" or "add in" approach to developing intercultural competence, a systemic approach with integrated strategies is required for sustainable outcomes. Thus the project engages with a range of stakeholders in Business education to embed the development of intercultural competence. Specific questions such as those that follow are addressed:

1. *How* can Business academics successfully develop intercultural competence among students? For example, how to assist academics to design and implement group work activities that enable students to draw out culturally different (and/or similar) approaches to working across cultures – in terms of ethics, negotiation, and multicultural, global teams.
2. *How* can Business academic leaders successfully support and embed the development of intercultural competence in Business education programs? For example, as part of the informal curriculum, funding peer mentoring and peer learning programs which include emphasis on developing intercultural competence through mentor training and peer support.
3. *How* can student services staff in Business faculties better interact and support students from diverse backgrounds in their transition into the Australian university academic context? For example, Flinders University's Cultural Diversity and Inclusive Practice Toolkit has a targeted resource *Theory Into Practice Strategies* (TIPS) with helpful tips for student services staff to improve their communication.

It is unlikely, however, that the values, skills and knowledge will be developed in students unless teaching and student services staff embody and embed them into their practice and interactions, and unless academic leaders recognise and provide strong impetus for such initiatives.

Developing Student Competence: Some Common Emphases

A range of approaches that can develop students' learning for a rapidly changing, globalised world are frequently employed in universities. They range from top-down approaches that mandate change to voluntary or bottom-up approaches such as academic development and dissemination of resources. Top-down approaches tend to be characterised by the introduction of new procedures and policies, often meeting resistance in implementation and adoption. Bottom–up approaches have long histories, especially through the provision of workshops, resources and new tools, with variable success. Both approaches discussed below have implications for successfully *embedding* the development of intercultural competence and its systemic sustainability.

Most often attempts to develop student skills begin with providing resources and tools, especially "tips and tricks" that the busy academic can dip into as required. Other often extensive resources and tools are provided for those committing more time to improving their teaching and student learning outcomes. New tools are seen as drivers of change, however assumptions are often made that they

are themselves capable of achieving intended development. In much of our experience, tools and resources alone have proved inadequate for *embedding* change and development. There are a plethora of resources on teaching related to issues of diversity, many websites that provide intercultural communication materials for innovative and creative strategies in classroom and assessment activities. However, to date, whilst these are indeed useful, they have arguably not yet been effective in *embedding* the development of intercultural competence in higher education. Perhaps the expectations accompanying the provision of such resources and tools parallels the expectation of a deep approach to learning simply by providing students with a textbook (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999; Ramsden, 2003).

A second approach has been academic development processes directed to the use of innovative teaching, learning and assessment activities. For example, introducing assessable group work projects completed largely out-of-class and in-class collaborative learning and assessment activities including team-based learning (Briguglio, 2006; Leask, 2005; Ramburuth and Welch, 2005; Michaelsen et al. 2004; Volet, 2004; Volet and Ang, 1998). Group work, for example, has been seen to offer many opportunities for developing students' intercultural communication skills in different ways. Teamwork is one of the employability skills which universities seek to develop in their students and which is highly valued by the employer community (BIHECC, 2007). Although social interaction provides important avenues for learning from others, proximity to other cultural groups does not necessarily ensure intercultural learning or development of competence (Volet and Ang 1998). Thus an integrated approach is needed for sustainable learning outcomes to be developed.

However, a predominant mode of academic development has been in workshops and while they may be conducted with a group of academics, or even a discipline, their outcomes are basically individual in orientation. The experience of coming away from an academic development workshop designed to encourage academics to adopt a change-conceptions student-focussed view of teaching (in lieu of an information-transmission teacher-focussed one), is often limited to renewed enthusiasm to try something new. Yet that enthusiasm and initial impetus is now often lost in the increasing tide of competing and conflicting priorities in everyday academic life, especially as RQF approaches. Not infrequently, successful changes are isolated in the teaching practices of individual academics and their students' learning. Sometimes the developments of innovators and early adopters (Rogers, 1995) conflict with other aspects of discipline practice or faculty policy and procedures, and thus face diffusion and sustainability issues (Ramsden, 2003).

A third approach to broadening the uptake of change and development by staff and students in higher education, and closely related to embedding at the sector level, has been increased attention given to dissemination. Two substantial pieces of work from this perspective have been McKenzie et al. (2005) and Southwell et al. (2005) both nationally-funded by the Carrick Institute. Since dissemination through embedding strategies has been shown in their research to be strongly linked to sustainability of project outcomes and innovations, each application for funding from the Carrick Institute is expected to outline procedures for dissemination.

A Systemic Embedding Approach

The conceptual framework developed in our EDIC project provides a systematic way to address the requisite components for an integrated, systemic embedding strategy. The project methodology is evidence-based and actively engages to develop staff and students' intercultural competence through iterative, action-oriented collaboration at multiple levels across four Business faculties. This methodology is not only consistent with the complexity and self-reflexive nature of intercultural education itself but also with our development of a conceptual framework for embedding.

There are three core components of this embedding framework: first, communities of practice; second, curriculum, policies and procedures; and third, resources and tools. It is the collective nature of communities of practice which underpin and imbue the commitment to systemic change. Thus it is the identification of relevant communities of practice and work within and by them that is crucial to an embedding approach. In effect, an embedding approach reverses the customary approach that provides tips and tricks and workshops that rely principally on individual efforts which are not necessarily systematic and certainly not systemic.

Communities of practice, a term introduced by Lave and Wenger (1991), refers to those groups of people who have a shared commitment to and understanding of the work practices they undertake as a group, as a network, or as a distributed/dispersed group. In the context of a change program, communities of practice are vital as they are the champions who collectively are motivated, on board and take action to encourage and enact change. It is in the process of sharing reflective practice and generating new knowledge that possibilities for change are opened up and supported. For example, universities are realising the importance of being responsive to government and industry needs for graduates with intercultural competencies for leading and managing in a global economy (BIHECC, 2007). Therefore, in the EDIC project we seek to positively engage communities of practices including academic leadership groups (program directors, unit coordinators of international business, teachers of cross-cultural management), members of a diversity working parties, student reference groups, and peer mentoring facilitators.

Policies, procedures and curriculum are the processes through which change can be systematically initiated and or furthered. They include, for example, a university or faculty policy that requires the development of a graduate attribute such intercultural competence. Such policy can be embedded through the procedures for approving new units/subjects or programs/degrees to give attention to the development of intercultural competence through intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities, assessment and assessment criteria. Alignment of these components is therefore as important as curriculum content itself. For example, the development of intercultural competence has been approved in a new core unit of a Bachelor of Commerce. The unit was prepared using a unit of study outline template (and supporting website resources) that embeds the alignment of the curriculum with a range of teaching, learning and assessment activities to develop intercultural competence. This alignment includes the development of specific assessment criteria for self assessment and tutor marking of each assessment task. Curriculum mapping of this graduate attribute across a degree/program enables subsequent targeting to embed this identified graduate attribute throughout the degree as required. The informal curriculum is also an integral part of what is funded and thus able to support students developing intercultural competence as a part of their student experience, for example in training to be a

peer mentor or being a mentee on arrival. Accrediting bodies, particularly relevant to business faculties, have standards and rules which are additional examples of drivers of change.

Resources and tools provide new materials for embedding into the learning and teaching activities as well as new ways of using materials in a system-wide approach and in particular curricula. Thus one common embedding strategy is to make available resources for use in class to staff and students through a range of websites eg group work that encourages a diversity focus for students and for staff in the design, management and assessment of group work. Tools for tracking learning outcomes in a group learning activity through self and peer assessment (eg an online program such *SPARK*) across a unit/subject (eg an online graduate attribute tracking in a software program such as *ReView*) and across a program (eg *Digital Measures*, a software system supporting Business School assurance of learning for AACSB accreditation), complete the feedback loop for a systemic approach to embedding.

Accordingly, our integrated embedding strategy seeks to embed the development of intercultural competence in these three ways where possible in each of the four institutional sites, The University of Sydney, University of NSW, Queensland University of Technology and University of South Australia. However, as each of these sites have unique challenges relating to their particular contexts not all institutions have the same possibilities for embedding at each of the levels.

Conclusion

Our embedding framework has application beyond the intercultural competence context of this project. Indeed, as members of our project team engage in various other Carrick projects across multiple institutional sites, we are finding that it is providing a succinct way of representing the varying stages at which different university partners are commencing in what is a larger teaching and learning project of systemic change within higher education. Furthermore, the embedding framework is proving useful for seeing not only contrasts between differing university contexts but also it is useful for identifying the gaps in an overview of the project framework where embedding is a necessary project strategy.

The authors are project team members of *Embedding the Development of Intercultural Competence in Business Education* funded by the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. For more information about this Carrick project, contact the Project Manager, Chris Sykes on 0402 791 071.

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Leslie Treleaven is a Senior Lecturer and Senior Academic Adviser in the Office of Learning and Teaching in Economics and Business, Faculty of Economics and Business at The University of Sydney.

Contact:L.Treleaven@econ.usyd.edu.au

The HOW TO ... Teaching Series

HOW TO ...
Get Students To Turn Off Their Mobile Phones

By Peter Kandlbinder

There are many annoying behaviours that occur in university classrooms and few are considered as annoying to lecturers as students who forget to turn off their mobile phones in class. While some lecturers, like Kevin Linch at the University of Leeds (Radnofsky 2007), explicitly encourage the use of mobile phone technology in their classes, most consider mobile phones to be a nuisance in the classroom, especially once their carefully crafted lecture is accompanied by the sounds of Beyonce, 50 Cent or the theme from the Pink Panther. For them messaging and checking calls during class is an act of rudeness that distracts others who want to learn, and students who are distracted cannot concentrate and work through complex ideas (Gilroy, 2004).

However, for most of us mobile phones were not commonplace when we went to university. With the increasingly pervasive use of mobile phones every classroom teacher will, sooner or later, need to decide whether fiddling with phones, checking text messages, answering important calls or playing games crosses the line of acceptable classroom behaviour. A survey of the advice on what to do about mobile phones in the classroom shows that lecturers adopt one of three tactics: ban all phones, shame repeat offenders or ignore the behaviour and move on.

Ban all phones. The initial reaction to the problem of mobile phones is to ban them from the classroom, or in the case of some universities in India, ban them from the entire campus. Mobile phones are already banned from a number of places in universities including libraries and examination halls and Marilyn Gilroy (2004) found that 85% of lecturers would support including US university classrooms in a ban on mobile phones. To ban mobile phones would require some written warning that phone use is unacceptable in class and spelling out the range of penalties that are enforceable in your classroom. For example, if someone brings a phone to class and keeps playing with it, take it off them until the end of the class when they can get it back. Mike Austin at Eastern Kentucky University suggests classroom participation marks ought to be negatively affected by mobile phones ringing in class, talking on mobile phones, messaging, or any other sort of disruptive class behaviour (http://insocrateswake.blogspot.com/2007/08/managing-classroom.html). Others on his web site suggest that student attendance can be marked as absent once a student is caught talking on their phone in class.

Shame repeat offenders. University teachers may be sympathetic to the idea of banning mobile phones but few want to police such a ban. Scott Campbell (2006) shows that that the most annoying aspect of mobile phone use is when phones ring in class. Students agree that the use of phones in the classroom is distracting but told James Katz (2006) that if one student is allowed to use their phone in class then they are more likely to use their own phone. The most common advice about students bringing their phones into the classroom is that you can embarrass students into tuning their phones off.

Those who resort to public shaming to curb phone use might start with stopping talking and looking shocked at the student whose phone is ringing, then move to light-hearted remarks like "If that's for me, tell them I busy giving a lecture" or dancing to the ring-tone to defuse the situation. Other suggestions on the "Metafilter" web site (http://ask.metafilter.com/58871/cell-phones-in-the-classroom) include demanding to answer the phone and explain that the student is currently unavailable and to call back after the lecture. One lecturer answers the phone and asks the caller what they can add to the class discussion. Others suggest using peer pressure is the best answer and recommends having the whole class stare and point at the offender.

Part of the problem appears to be that some ring tones are particularly noticeable. One lecturer suggests offenders with noticeable ring tones ought to be made to come to the front of the class and sing the ring tone tune. The New York Times recently reported the unusual lengths one lecturer went to, to drive home the message that he was fed up with being interrupted by mobile phones (Friedmann, 2007). When a student's phone rang during one of Ali Nazemi's lectures he confiscated the phone and proceeded to smash it with a hammer. The incident was staged but the students definitely knew where he stood on mobile phones in the classroom.

Just move on. Lecturers who believe in ignoring mobile phones treat the problem as if it were someone talking in class. They feel that making a big deal to shame a student is certain to distract everyone and most students are already embarrassed enough when their phone rings. In cases where students genuinely forget to turn off their mobile phone drawing attention to a ringing phone is likely to be far more disruptive than if you suggest that the phone should be turned off as soon as possible and move on with

the rest of the class. Students who are constantly messaging should simply be asked to stop and pay attention.

Resisting the invasion of mobile phones. Asking students to turn off their phones rarely works because younger people are much more tolerant of mobile phone use and they don't want to be out of contact with their friends, or if working part-time, with their employers. Many have credible reasons for why they need to take important calls during class time and the majority of students look embarrassed when their phone ring and race to turn them off. James Katz (2006) found that most students who use their phones during class time are checking for calls or messages or looking for a distraction from a boring class. A third of students admit to playing games on their mobile phones during class but felt that it doesn't interfere with their academic performance. A group of students so attached to their phones is far more likely to comply to a request to turn their phones to "silent" than to turn them off and you may need to accept that they'll occasionally be playing with their phone or receiving a text.

While mobile phones have become a major source of irritation, misbehaviour and a source of cheating in exams, without a consensus on how to get students to turn off their phones it appears that the only fair policy is to have the students help define the boundaries of acceptable mobile phone use. What is acceptable is going to continue to be redefined by technology changes as students increasingly use their phones to tell the time, take notes, schedule their day and browse the Internet. Whatever approach you finally adopt ensure that your own phone is off when you set the rules for mobile phone use in your class. Nothing undermines your position more comprehensively than when a phone rings just as you are making your carefully crafted point.

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How to… is a new series that looks at the contemporary challenges in academic practice facing university teachers. Each issue presents a new dilemma in higher education and explores the prevailing attitudes of HERDSA members looking for solutions to these new problems. You can suggest a modern dilemma of academic practice by emailing Peter. Kandlbinder@uts.edu.au and outlining an incident or situation you have come across.

President's Report

By Shelda Debowski

Slowing down…. It's one of the great enjoyments of that December-January period as we farewell the last year and move toward a new year full of fresh promise and potential. I hope your past year has been a successful and enjoyable experience for you and those around you. And equally, I trust that you find the coming festive season a time of renewal and rejuvenation.

Each year presents its own challenges and opportunities. In both Australia and New Zealand we have seen an immense spurt of activity as the national teaching and learning agendas have increased in profile and focus. The advent of *Ako Aotearoa* in New Zealand is an exciting new initiative that opens up considerable scope for collaboration and the promotion of learning and teaching. In Australia the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education has similarly continued to progress its pursuit of enhanced educational practice. The increased recognition of excellent teachers has encouraged greater appreciation of the many people who strive to create a positive learning environment for our students. A myriad of research projects are in progress and there is considerable excitement as the outcomes of those projects become public knowledge. Similarly, the ongoing initiatives relating to teaching repositories and discipline networks will hugely encourage collaboration across the Australian sector.

This increased national focus on learning and teaching, along with a continuing push toward greater research productivity, has stimulated a stronger scholastic community keen to share new research and insights. HERDSA plays a major role in providing an avenue for that knowledge sharing - through its publication of HERD (Higher Education Research and Development) and the annual conference. Many of the new initiatives your executive is undertaking are directed toward increasing the scholastic reach of these publications. Our journal has expanded to keep pace with the burgeoning supply of excellent articles. Refereed conference papers will also be available via our website by Christmas – an important means of increasing citations from those papers. However, we can see the need for even more avenues for publishing. This issue of HERDSA News promotes a new publication that will enable many of you to access a new peer-reviewed channel for publishing. Please take a moment to read and think about how this new publication might best operate to suit your needs.

I would like to thank the HERDSA Executive for their commitment and dedication this year. It has been particularly exciting to see the rapid meld of experienced and new executive members over the last two meetings. Committee members have been assiduous in developing their agreed portfolios to assist our members. Despite being very busy people themselves, they have come together three times this year to plan, review and orchestrate a strong suite of services and strategies to assist you. While an executive helps to guide a society, it is nothing without a strong and committed membership. We greatly appreciate the enthusiasm and engagement of our colleagues – at the annual conference, regional functions and through each individual's ongoing reflection, scholarship and sharing of knowledge. Your continuing support of your society is most valued. We hope you enjoy the new enhancements to the Society's activities as they are introduced over the coming year.

New Year resolutions? The Executive have many! Some personal goals you might like to consider include commencing a HERDSA Fellowship, presenting at the 2008 HERDSA conference, or collaborating with your colleagues to host a regional get-together. If you would like advice on any of these options, please do not hesitate to contact one of us. In the meantime, enjoy your well-earned Christmas break.

Contact: Shelda.Debowski@uwa.edu.au

Proposed New HERDSA Occasional Publication
Call for Suggestions

The growth in Australasian higher education research and development has been very evident for some years as various national initiatives have stimulated research, scholarship and collaboration. At present there are limited forums for publishing the results of that work in creditable, peer-reviewed forums.

Next year HERDSA will launch a new publication. The working title at present is *Topics in Higher Education*. Currently, we are thinking of a themed publication that explores an issue of general relevance to the higher education community. *Topics* would allow commissioned features by leading researchers along with other submissions from those working in the area. The *Topics* series has the flexibility to be produced as an emergent issue becomes of high interest to our members.

At this stage of the concept, we are seeking guidance from our members. There are three questions on which we would like input.

1. Are there themes or topics that you feel would be well suited to our first volume? If you can identify topics, please explain why you feel this would be of interest to the broader membership.
2. For any topics you have identified, can you suggest leading writers / researchers who might be invited to contribute?
3. Do you have any suggestions for guest editors who might be interested in working on the suggested volume?

Obviously, Question 1 is the most pressing at this point, but your advice on 2 & 3 would also be most appreciated. Please feel free to express a personal interest if you feel you are well suited.

Suggestions and ideas should be forwarded to Shelda Debowski at Shelda.Debowski@uwa.edu.au by February 12, 2008.

HERDSA Membership Portfolio

The HERDSA membership portfolio aims to support existing members in HERDSA-related local activities as well as build HERDSA membership to strengthen the organisation.

At the last HERDSA conference (Adelaide 2007) we tried out the idea of a *New Members Breakfast.* We had so many participants that we needed to arrange two restaurants to accommodate everyone! It was a great opportunity for people who were new to the scene to get to know fellow members and break the ice a little. From now on the New Members Breakfast will be a feature at the beginning of every HERDSA conference.

ACT HERDSA Event at UC

This year we have also had several branches and local networks getting into the swing of HERDSA-related activities including the Victoria, New Zealand and Hong Kong branches. HERDSA has also sponsored local activities in the ACT and Wollongong.

Peter Ling, President *HERDSA Victoria* organised a HERDSA-sponsored dinner at the Rydges Hotel Carlton on 25th October 2007 following the national forum "Development of Academics and Higher Education Futures". Thirteen members of HERDSA Vic participated on a complimentary basis along with a number of interstate members. The guest speaker at the dinner was John Findlay, a director of Zing Technologies, who led a lively interaction involving the Zing technology, lubricated with local wines.

HERDSA New Zealand with Stanley Freilick as president is always on the go with lots of activities for New Zealand members (which are reported elsewhere in this edition). Check out the new branch website that was launched in July at: www.herdsa.org.nz for information about the Tertiary Education Research in NZ (TERZNZ) conference November. Planning for the 2008 HERDSA conference in Rotorua is taking up a lot of their time. Those of you who were at the Adelaide conference may have seen the presentation by New Zealand executive members.

HERDSA Hong Kong has had a change of President – Gordon Joughin moved back to Australia last year and the new president is Anna Quan. New members of the executive committee for 2008 are being elected, and planning for future activities such as dinner dialogues is underway. Any Hong Kong HERDSA members who are not involved in branch activities are invited to get in touch with Anna at City University (pdkwan@cityu.edu.hk) about forthcoming activities.

In the *ACT* Robert Kenally organised a HERDSA sponsored get together of about 30 people at UC attended by Shelda Debowski, HERDSA President, who presented a certificate to the second ACT Fellow, Jackie Walkington and Robert reports that everyone ate, drank and was "merry". Incidentally, ACT is organising another event at ANU on 28 November with Kathryn Sutherland (HERDSA NZ) talking about what is shaping up to be an exciting HERDSA 2008 conference in Rotorua along with some brief talks from 2007 HERDSA conference participants and Carrick awardees. At *Wollongong* University HERDSA sponsored a networking opportunity at which Gordon Joughin spoke about the advantages of HERDSA membership.

We welcome your ideas as to how we can further support you, either as an individual member or in your local area. For example you might want to fund a guest speaker, get HERDSA support for a local conference, or funding for a HERDSA networking opportunity. Don't be shy. E-mail us and let us know what else we can do for you as a HERDSA member.

Maureen Bell
mbell@uow.edu.au
Kathryn Bartimote-Aufflick
k.aufflick@usyd.edu.au
Mark Barrow
m.barrow@auckland.ac.nz

HERDSA President, Shelda Debowski presents the certificate to the second ACT Fellow, Jackie Walkington.

Profiles of the New HERDSA Executive Committee Robert Kennelly FHERDSA

This completes the profiles of the new Executive Committee

Robert is a Pioneer HERDSA Fellow and had his Fellowship renewed in Perth in 2006. He currently serves on the HERDSA Fellowship committee and at the end of March 2007 was co-opted on to the HERDSA Executive. His intention is to continue to work and support the initiative on teaching Fellowships. In a particular Robert's research interests include reflecting on teaching, learning and the importance of HERDSA members maintaining a portfolio of their teaching and learning in a collaborative supportive environment. Robert and ACT colleagues are striving to revitalise the HERDSA group in the ACT.

Robert currently lectures and researches in the discipline of management and marketing at the University of Canberra. His practically oriented research is more into teaching than it is to his discipline. With the benefit of a second $20,000 Learning and Teaching Grant from the university He and his research partner are currently introducing a discipline support program for mainstream second language students (NESB) studying Introduction to Management. This is a program, which seeks to develop the academic (including language skills) of NESB students within the context of a discipline unit of study, eg. Introduction to Management. The research will also include planning to develop teaching teams within first year units in the School of Business and Government.

Robert have previously tutored and lectured in Introduction to Management (ITM), Organizational Behaviour (OB), Human Resource Management, Performance Management, and Strategic management within the School of Business and Government. From 1998 to 2004 he was the Co-ordinator of ITM, OB and OBG for the University of Canberra College and in the case of ITM was the first coordinator of the unit in Hong Kong.

Most recently Robert worked as the academic developer at Trinity College in Dublin for 12 months until June 2005. His main activities were:

1. Delivering Introduction to Teaching and Learning for new academics;
2. Pioneering Trinity's first program on Teaching Portfolios with Reflective Practice;

3. Running developmental activities for new Heads of Departments; and
4. Running of workshops for Teaching Assistants on a departmental basis.

His teaching style is learner centred, interactive and based on the belief that students take a deep motivated orientation to units where they have an interest or where an interest can be encouraged.

Contact Email: rmkennelly@homemail.com.au

HERDSA Executive Portfolios

HERDSA Fellowships	Geoff Crisp, Kogi Naidoo, Janet Taylor and Robert Kennelly
HERDSA Membership	Maureen Bell, Mark Barrow, Gordon Joughin; Kathryn Bartimote-Aufflick
HERDSA 2008 conference convenor	Kathryn Sutherland
HERDSA Website	Gail Wilson
Scholastic Publications	Kathryn Sutherland, Ian Macdonald
Visiting Scholar	Deanne Gannaway
Executive Officer	Roger Landbeck
HERDSA Guides	Allan Goody
HERDSA Marketing	Shelda Debowski
HERD	Ian Macdonald and Izabel Soliman
HERDSA Treasurer	Kathryn Bartimote-Aufflick
HERDSA Office Management	Jennifer Ungaro

NB. These are the main contacts, although any member of the HERDSA Executive would be happy to speak on any of the portfolios.

The HERDSA Fellows Column

Editors Note. This article is the first of a series of invited articles by HERDSA Fellows. The invitation was very open ended so that Fellows could write about any topic of their choice. Both Sue and Anna have chosen to include some of their experiences in preparing their portfolios for the Fellowship.

HERDSA is actively seeking feedback from members who have applied for HERDSA Fellowships and is using this feedback to actively develop the Fellowship program. This article from a recently appointed HERDSA Fellow, Anna Chur-Hansen from the University of Adelaide, describes the personal journey Anna undertook during the Fellowship application process. It will be of interest to members who are contemplating the journey themselves, as well as those who have been down this path. Every Fellow's story is different, and HERDSA would like to share some of these stories with you and is grateful to those Fellows who have taken the time to reflect on, and share with others, their Fellowship journey.

Geoffrey Crisp, Chair of the Fellowship Committee of the HERDSA Executive

Applying for a HERDSA Fellowship: Reflections on the Process and the Experience.

By Anna Chur-Hansen

In 2004 I saw an article in HERDSA News about the HERDSA Fellowship Scheme (Landbeck, 2004). I had been promoted to Senior Lecturer in 2000, and was starting to plan for my application to the next level. Thus, I thought that since it seemed to be a prestigious Fellowship, with only 10 awarded at that time, it would be prudent for me to submit a portfolio. I reasoned that the university promotion committee would be impressed by external recognition of my teaching and educational research in Health Professional Education. In addition, I strongly believe that teaching expertise should be recognised as equal in every way to research output, and the philosophy behind the inception of the Fellowship was consistent with that view.

I registered for the Fellowship in March 2004, downloaded the Registrants' handbook from the HERDSA website, and was assigned a Mentor in July of that year. I drafted my first application shortly after contacting my Mentor by telephone (as she was located in Victoria and I am in Adelaide). After our first conversation we had several interchanges via email, when she would answer a specific query or provide formative feedback on my drafts.

In writing drafts of the portfolio I referred to "Reflections on preparing for a HERDSA Fellowship" written by John Ferrier and Kogi Naidoo (2003). Their reflections were very positive: they described writing the portfolio as "one of the most satisfying tasks of my career", "valuable", "rewarding" and providing "a great sense of achievement". There was also an indication that writing the portfolio was "challenging" and "complex", but overall the messages were that this was an enjoyable activity.

There were very few specific guidelines for me to follow in preparing the application, other than the 7 criteria headings and some prompt questions for each, presented in a 19 page Handbook for Registrants. I asked the HERDSA Office for an example of a portfolio to help me, but I was told that there was none. However, I had already prepared teaching portfolios for the University of Adelaide Stephen Cole the Elder Teaching Award in 2002 and 2003, and for the Australian Universities Teaching Committee Award in 2004. In addition, by 2004 I had published 27 papers on teaching and learning in peer-reviewed journals. Thus, I felt very motivated and very determined that I would write an excellent portfolio and optimistic that I would be awarded a Fellowship.

In March 2005 I submitted my portfolio. I had emailed the portfolio to my Mentor, who wrote "[the portfolio is] stimulating, comprehensive, and I particularly love your openness and ability to "say it how it is"'. She advised that it was ready for submission. In April 2005 I was notified that the portfolio had been assigned to two assessors, and that a decision would be made within one month. I waited in anticipation.

In May 2005 I received the assessment, which was jointly written by the two assessors. The two page document noted that the portfolio had some merit, but that "you haven't put in the reflection that we would have thought appropriate for a Fellowship of this calibre". It was noted that I had "adhered almost slavishly to the headings and questions included in the Registrant's handbook". I was very distressed to receive this brutal feedback. I had spent considerable hours on weekends and evenings over many months on the portfolio, and had carefully listened to my Mentor. I had indeed followed the guidelines in the Handbook, and yet this was now presented as a criticism. What I had thought of as honest reflection was interpreted by the assessors as arrogance. As an academic I have of course had numerous rejection letters over the years from journal Editors, along with some quite savage reviews of my work. My

emotional reactions to the assessors' comments on my portfolio were different to the more pragmatic responses I tend to have towards editorial advice though, and I think this was primarily because of the inherently personal nature of the portfolio. I felt a sense of shame and embarrassment. In addition, I did not agree with all of the assessors' comments, as I felt that I had provided what was required, based on the instructions in the Registrants' Handbook, and had been given such positive feedback from my Mentor. I wrote in distress to my Mentor, who replied "What have you learned?" After debriefing with a close colleague at work, I abandoned all hope and put the rejection letter and the application in the bottom drawer of my desk.

In November of 2005 there had been sufficient time for me to start thinking more rationally about the application. I deconstructed the assessors' feedback by listing the criticisms point by point, and considered ways in which I could address each one. At this stage I did not really deeply reflect on the assessors' comments, but rather, simply tried to identify what they were asking for, so that I could provide it. I did a search on the web, by typing in "HERDSA Fellowship", and was excited to find that Dr Gillian Hallam had posted her successful portfolio application on her homepage. I found it to be an extremely helpful way for me to understand what was required – I am someone who learns well by example. Dr Hallam's portfolio was useful for me to understand the application as a whole, and particularly the examples that would be better for me to use in the portfolio than the ones which I had first drawn upon. However, I still lacked confidence and was still smarting from the assessors' feedback, which detracted from any motivation I had, and by July 2006 I had not yet resubmitted my application. In July I received a letter from the HERDSA Office indicating that my resubmission had been due in October 2005, and that if nothing was sent by October 2006 (twelve months grace) my current application would lapse and I would need to start again as a new Registrant. Shortly before that letter arrived I was nominated by my university for a Carrick Citation. In addition, I had submitted an application for promotion, stating that I was "under consideration" for a HERDSA Fellowship. These factors, together with the prompt letter, strengthened my resolve to try again.

I logged in to the Fellowship site on the HERDSA webpage and noted that the Registrants' Handbook had been updated, with the portfolio presentation formatting amended. I felt that the revised Handbook was clearer and made the requirements more explicit. I was also interested to see the Handbook for Assessors, showing the ratings for each aspect of each of the 7 criteria. Using these as a guide I worked on the portfolio, submitting it once again in October 2006. The second submission looked almost nothing like the first. This time I chose not to have guidance from a Mentor, although I noted that in the updated site a Handbook for Mentors with clear guidelines for mentoring had been posted, which I thought was a very useful and important document. I had understood from the outset that the Mentor's role was not to guarantee the awarding of a Fellowship, but the Handbook for Mentors helped me to better understand their role in the process.

I received feedback after several weeks, and this time I was relieved to see that for each of the criteria I had all the "ticks in the boxes". There were some very minor, but constructive points, made by the assessors, and they concluded that "we recommend that the portfolio is complete and has met the required standards. A Fellowship should be awarded". I was asked to resubmit the final portfolio with the amendments, which I did in December 2006. At that time I felt that I had gone through the motions, in order to fulfil the requirements. I did not really feel that I had gained much in terms of developing my abilities in reflection. Nevertheless, in July 2007 it was with some relief that I was able to attend the HERDSA Fellows dinner at the Annual Conference.

As soon as I heard the news that I had been awarded the Fellowship, I informed my Executive Dean and my Head of School. Both were really pleased for me, the Dean writing to say that this was "magic", and I was happy and surprised to discover that he had emailed the entire Faculty of Health Sciences to inform them of this achievement. As a consequence I have had many kind congratulations and several enquiries asking about the Fellowship and how it works. In late 2006 as well as learning that I had been successful in applying for the Fellowship, I also heard that I had been promoted, and I really do think that being a participant in HERDSA and its activities was important in helping me through to Associate Professor. Thus, my original motivations for pursuing a Fellowship – career advancement and recognition of education as important – were fulfilled. Now, in retrospect, I can concur with Ferrier and Naidoo that the experience has been "rewarding" and has provided "a great sense of achievement". However, as I am sure you can tell, had you asked me that at some stages of the process the answers would have been almost entirely negative!

Through the process I felt that I had not gained a great deal with regards to my ability to reflect, as I have indicated. However, in 2006, whilst going through this experience, I decided to introduce a reflective portfolio in two of the undergraduate courses that I co-ordinate. The portfolio exercise aims to provide:

a) An introduction to the concept of maintaining a journal in which thoughts about teaching and learning experiences in class are recorded.
b) Development of critical reflection skills about the course and one's own abilities, including strengths and weaknesses in relation to course requirements, and course aims and objectives.
c) Development of skills in providing constructive criticism to the course co-ordinator through writing in the journal.
d) An understanding that this exercise and these skills may be useful outside the class context – for example, in other courses, in other professional arenas.

This was the catalyst for me to truly understand how I might have improved the initial application. Seeing students' efforts to reflect, and reflecting on them in relation to my own skills was very important for my professional development. Some students are excellent in their abilities to reflect on their teaching and learning experiences, and thus I have been able to learn from them. This has been very humbling for me. The courses incorporate formative feedback, and each student is required to bring their portfolios for discussion before submission for a summative grade. During these discussions I came to realise that I had in fact learned more than I had thought from the experience of preparing the portfolio.

Additionally, with students' portfolios I have been very careful in the provision of positive feedback and constructive - but gentle - criticisms and suggestions, as required. And of course, I may have never considered introducing a reflective portfolio into the curriculum, if I had not been writing one for the Fellowship. I was recently invited to contribute a chapter to a book on critical reasoning and thinking in the health sciences, and as a consequence of the Fellowship application, chose to write about these student portfolios (Chur-Hansen, in press). I have thus gained considerably from the experience, although I am the first to admit that I still have a lot to learn, and further personal and professional development is necessary. In fact, I imagine that my learning will be, as they say, "life-long".

Whilst I have been awarded the Fellowship, I am acutely aware of the fact that this is a developmental process. The Fellowship remains current for three years, after which time it lapses unless one demonstrates professional development of their teaching, participates in mentoring, assesses others' portfolios, and pays the annual fee. I must admit that I am not completely certain about how I will fulfil the first requirement. Clear guidelines and criteria would be appreciated, and of course, for me, an example of a successful demonstration of professional development by an HERDSA Fellow would be extremely helpful.

In closing, if anyone would like to see my portfolio to help them in the process of writing theirs, I would be only too glad to email it to you. I am looking forward to the opportunity of acting as a Mentor for someone soon, and hope to learn from them as well as aiming to provide some useful guidance and support to a colleague.

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Acknowledgements

Thank you to Professor Geoff Crisp for his helpful comments and feedback on this manuscript. It is greatly appreciated.

Anna Chur Hansen is an Associate Professor in the Discipline of Psychiatry, School of Medicine, Faculty of Health Sciences, at the University of Adelaide.

Contact: anna.churhansen@adelaide.edu.au

Reflections of a New Fellow

By Susan Jones

When Roger invited me, as a new HERDSA Fellow, to contribute to HERDSA News, I blithely agreed, knowing that I had written articles for the society's newsletter several times in the past. However, he made the mistake of leaving the subject of this article up to me: a recipe for procrastination and indecisiveness. Hence my dilemma - what should I write about?

Should I write a learned report on my most recent educational research project?

Some of you may have heard me speak on that project at the recent HERDSA Conference in Adelaide. Over the past three years, I have been carrying an investigation of the information literacy skills of our Zoology undergraduates in collaboration with Christine Evans, the UTAS Science Librarian. We were interested to test whether our students clearly benefit from our overt strategy of embedding the teaching and assessment of information literacy into all three years of the Zoology undergraduate curriculum.

To put this project in context, one of my interests is the effective teaching of generic skills. I had previously led a faculty-wide teaching development project that had considered how, and how effectively, information literacy skills are incorporated into teaching We surveyed academic staff across our Faculty of Science, Engineering and Technology, asking them whether they explicitly incorporated information literacy into their unit's learning objectives, content and/or assessment. Then, to investigate whether there were interdisciplinary differences in learning outcomes for their students, we used a multi-part survey to assess the information literacy skills of first, second and third year students in Computing, Engineering and Zoology. These disciplines were selected because the project team (which included an academic from each of these three areas) felt that there were different expectations of graduates in these disciplines regarding their information literacy skills. Analysis of those results showed that the Zoology students performed better overall, presumably reflecting our school's approach to teaching information literacy skills: information literacy is taught and assessed in a problem-solving context in close collaboration with the Science Librarian (Dearden et al., 2005; Jones et al., 2005).

The results of that first, faculty-wide project suggested that teaching of information literacy skills is most effective "embedded into curriculum, linked with assessment and developed incrementally" (Dearden et al., 2005). To test this assumption, Christine Evans, and I decided we needed to follow one cohort of Zoology students from their first to third year of undergraduate study. Using the same survey to assess their information literacy skills, we found that these students did indeed show improvements as they moved through our undergraduate curriculum (Jones et al., 2007). This was indeed a validation of our approach to teaching. However, if you want to know more about that project and its outcomes, you should read our paper (Jones et al., 2007) that may be found

in the Proceedings of the recent 2007 HERDSA conference.

And a comment on the 2007 HERDSA Conference

And while you're there, take a few minutes to browse through the range of papers presented at that conference. Reflecting the sector's current preoccupation with the RQF, a suite of presentations focused on the teaching-research nexus. This year's HERDSA conference was also notable for the many inspiring presentations by current Carrick Fellows and Carrick Grant project teams, including Denise Chalmers' packed session (co-authored with Judith Sachs) on quality teaching and learning in higher education that seemed to sum up the whole reason for us coming together. The only frustration I found was not being able to split oneself between the parallel sessions!

As a Society member, I find the annual conferences provide dynamic interactions with one's colleagues, insights into cutting- edge educational thinking, and fresh perspective upon those core issues that engage us all at some level: enhancing the student experience and/or developing excellence in teaching. Discussions, both formal and informal, with like-minded colleagues may also lead to fruitful collaborations across different institutions. Education conferences provide many of us with that rare quality time and space for reflection on teaching, away from the hurly-burly of semester. I also appreciate the opportunity to test one's ideas in the rigorous arena of peer review that is provided by the HERDSA Conference. For many of us, especially discipline-based academics, having a HERDSA conference paper accepted often represents an affirming first step towards publication of our work in educational journals.

Should I reflect upon the process of gaining the Fellowship?

I have many times reflected upon why a scholarly approach to teaching development has come to be a characteristic of my career path in academia. At a personal level, I find such research rewarding because it enables me to test and validate my educational approach. To continue to improve our students' learning, we need to continue to develop ourselves as teachers. As importantly, I find it stimulating to work with like-minded colleagues, both within and from outside my discipline. Teaching *per se* can, perversely, be a lonely pursuit: rarely do we as university academics observe each other teaching, nor do we often provide constructive peer review for our colleagues. Is this because we don't value such feedback, or is it because many of us entered the profession at a time when teaching was somehow assumed to be something one "just does"? However, despite the potential threats of the RQF, we do seem to be entering a new era. The increased emphasis at the national level upon a reflective and scholarly approach to teaching, and upon our accountability as teachers for the learning outcomes of our students, is reflected in the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund -with all its flaws- and by the founding of the Carrick Institute, which offers exciting opportunities for collaborative research and for national recognition of teaching excellence.

It is worth considering the place of the HERDSA Fellowship Scheme in this panoply. I test my ideas regularly in the arena of peer review through writing regularly for scholarly journals, both within my discipline and within tertiary education. In 2007, prepared the documentation to support my (successful) nomination for a Carrick Citation. Indeed, one of the benefits of being courageous enough to accept such nominations is that one is forced to critically reflect upon one's teaching practice and to articulate one's teaching Philosophy. However writing and presenting the Portfolio for review felt much more personal: it was a challenging, yet ultimately rewarding, experience. While a nomination for a Carrick Citation focuses on one particular aspect of one's work, the HERDSA Fellowship Portfolio requires you to address seven essential fundamental criteria that reflect the philosophy of HERDSA (Crisp 2007). Furthermore, within the context of each criterion, it is necessary not only to describe, and critically reflect upon, what you do or have done, but to also to be "forward-looking": the Portfolio becomes a signpost to the future development of your educational practice as well as an affirmation the journey you have already made. Acceptance of the Portfolio by the Committee and conferral of the Fellowship not only recognises your past achievements and long-term dedication to teaching excellence, but also represents a formal acknowledgment of your commitment towards continuing to develop your own professional practice and your commitment to similarly support your colleagues. HERDSA Fellows work in triads of peers that encourage each other in their on-going cycle of professional development they also mentor others who are working to prepare their own portfolios for submission to the peer-assessment process. If you are thinking about working towards your FHERDSA, I do suggest that you request a mentor. My mentor was truly a "critical friend", whose supportive critique and astute appreciation of the fairly strict requirements for the Portfolio were hugely helpful to me. As Crisp (2007) noted, there are many reasons why a HERDSA member may wish to apply for a Fellowship. However at its core, the Fellowship Scheme reflects the core values of the Society to which we all belong: I urge you to consider it for yourself.

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Susan (Sue) Jones is Head of the School of Zoology at the University of Tasmania. She has won two Individual and one Team Vice Chancellor's Teaching Excellence Awards from her University. In 2007, she was awarded a Carrick Citation for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning, and a HERDSA Fellowship.

Contact: S.M.Jones@utas.edu.au

International Column Exchange - From HERDSA

Challenges and Dilemmas for Australian Academics

By Shelda Debowski

The higher education context in Australia has changed markedly in the last few years. Academics are experiencing many dilemmas as they try to sustain their academic activities in the face of an increasingly bureaucratised sector.

The external pressures on universities have significantly increased as our federal government focuses more intensively on university governance and the outcomes it requires. A major influence has been the Teaching and Learning Performance Fund which allocates funding to universities based on feedback from students and comparative rankings with respect to graduate outcomes. This has greatly increased the focus on teaching and learning in universities with many aiming to lift their rankings to a more positive positioning. Unit evaluation has become a norm across the sector, with most universities monitoring student feedback each semester and addressing poor performing units. In many institutions there has been a shift from university teachers monitoring student ratings for their personal reflection on teaching to a more public data collection from students and subsequent corporate use of that data. Those universities receiving federal teaching and learning funds have been active in pursuing a range of projects to maintain or further improve their ranking, thereby creating more energy around teaching activities. Less successful universities are even more actively addressing their areas of weakness through reviews and interventions.

The Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education has generated a stronger presence of teaching and learning in the higher education community. The status and valuing of good teaching has also been well promoted through the expansion of national teaching awards to encompass a two tier approach. Hundreds of people associated with promoting teaching outcomes now receive citations from the Carrick Institute. The citations have become an important form of recognition which complement the prestigious national teaching awards. The introduction of national teaching fellowships and significant funding for teaching and learning projects have also stimulated considerable activity across the sector.

The dilemma for academics is that teaching and learning, while assuming increasing recognition and importance, is also facing extreme competition from the research role that academics must also manage. At this stage the government intends to institute a new Research Quality Framework based on the British and New Zealand models. Most universities have already commenced the review of their academics to identify those who are research active and those who are not ... Even more challenging is the fact that the data collection is emphasising research concentrations, thereby promoting a stronger focus on research collaboration. This has some very real consequences for those who research as individuals or whose collaborative effort has been marginal.

While these various initiatives are in themselves strong stimuli for enhancement of academic outcomes, collectively they place considerable pressure on many academics. An increasing concern for time and career management, relationship building and time to reflect is very apparent across the entire sector. Early career academics are even further challenged by the reduced access to tenurable positions and the need to perform to a very high level in order to gain continuing appointments. The need to rapidly acculturate into the workplace and build a strong academic profile across both teaching and research is a major challenge for those new to academe. Mentorship and academic induction are critical supports to enable the fast-tracking of a new academic into a high performance focus. This has implications for how we recognise academics who contribute to the ongoing shift of the university culture toward a more nurturing and constructive collegial work community.

In this context the work of academic development has become even more important. There has been considerable concern for how these services can be more strategically focused to make a demonstrable difference. Areas of research concentration across Australia have related to the leadership of teaching and learning and research; the encouragement of academic mentorship as a supportive strategy for junior academics and the development of improved support for new and casual teachers. Another major national project has been a focus on research management to increase the skills of those responsible for people, resources and research outcomes. The challenge, of course, will be to draw the outcomes of these projects into ongoing university programmes and strategies.

Academics are clearly noting the increased pressure to perform in both teaching and research. HERDSA has experienced a big increase in article submissions for its journal and greatly expanded demand for its practical HERDSA Guides. The presentations and papers at its annual conference have also demonstrated a much greater focus on academic challenges, disciplinary concerns and holistic approaches to academic development. The 2008 conference, which will be held in Rotorua, New Zealand, (July 1 – 4) will explore *Engaging Communities* – a very appropriate theme for the academic community as it grapples with the ongoing dilemmas and challenges of working in different and more accountable ways. The next few years will be challenging for many academics. It will be particularly important to ensure that people feel supported and encouraged by their colleagues and university agencies.

Shelda Debowski is President of HERDSA.

Contact: Shelda.Debowski@uwa.edu.au

I.T. in Higher Education Column

Can We Trust Web Based Surveys?

By Roger Atkinson

The topic of web based surveys has been fermenting in background and now it's time for a tasting. One stimulus is Australia's federal election fever (over by the time you read this little contribution) which has embraced the web, and another is the *Journal banding survey* [1]. These are quite disparate topics, but the underlying technology is pretty much the same, and there may be some informative contrasts.

Firstly, political surveys on the web. Take this well-crafted, 'good fun' example from the ABC, 10 Nov 2007 [2]:

> Opinion Poll
>
> Former Labor leader Mark Latham has called it a Seinfeld election, about nothing. Do you agree?
>
> - Yes, both parties are trapped in one upmanship and materialism.
> - No, Mark Latham is irrelevant and out of touch.

Underneath there is some standard HTML with lines like <FORM ACTION="/cgi-bin/common/voting/newpoll.pl" METHOD="POST"> and <INPUT TYPE="RADIO" NAME="vote" VALUE="Yes…"> (that brings back nostalgic memories, I haven't written such stuff myself since about 1998). Upon submitting, I was told "794 votes counted" and that the Noes have it, 57% to 43% (somewhat exceeding the more familiar figures in "two party preferred" polls data :-) Because I do not have to be unbiased, I can say "Well done ABC, better than some others!" Numerous examples, some good, some bad, are easily found in the Australian media. For example, a website [3] associated with Channel 10 contained a survey activity investigating the question "Are you a KEVIN07 True believer?" Of the 8 agree/no vote items, the highest scoring item was "I think Peter Garrett's bald head allows his ideas to come out quicker", with 44 of the 62 responses agreeing. Meanwhile, Channel 7's website included an "Election Poll" question "Did the first half of the election campaign change your views?", with a four point scale, recording "14372 votes since Nov 4 2007" [4]. Channel 9's "Passion Pulse" website offered a daily quote, with 7 November's quote from John Howard, "The Australian public believe that when it comes to controlling interest rates... the Coalition is a better bet than Labor", recording 23520 votes, 46% strongly disagree/disagree and 52% agree/strongly agree. Then SBS weighs in with "Who do you blame for the rise in interest rates?" [5], where in a four item field "The Government" was a runaway winner for a change, scoring 41%, though as SBS didn't state the number of votes counted, we should scratch this entry.

The lovely thing about political and similar surveys conducted on the web by media organisations is that the results are almost irrelevant. The big thing is participation, engaging with your viewers or readers, cultivating their loyalty, providing a virtual social activity for them, and (hopefully) getting a larger number of respondents compared with similar surveys done by your media rivals. The question of "trusting" a web based survey is not really pertinent, the more appropriate measuring scale may be from "very discouraging" to "very encouraging", or from "ratings disaster" to "ratings bonanza", interpreted in a comparative perspective, i.e. against your rivals. The identities or "demographics" of the respondents do not matter, it's just the numbers that count.

In passing, we could note that in recent years technological advances have made things much easier for aspiring web based survey designers. You don't need to get up to speed on things like <FORM ACTION="/cgi-bin/common/voting/newpoll.pl" METHOD="POST">. For example you can use a free to the Internet facility such as *SurveyMonkey* ("Online survey software made easy!") [6] or *PollDaddy* ("Create free polls anywhere online!") [7], or you can run your own survey facility using open source software such as *LimeSurvey* ("The Leading Open Source Tool for Online Surveys") [8]. Much easier than it was just a few years ago (see, for example, the hassles faced by Carbonaro, Bainbridge & Wolodko, 2002 [9]).

Turning to academic research surveys on the web, life is not that easy. The identities and "demographics" of the respondents do matter. Basically there are two types of approaches, one being to authenticate respondents, and the other being to maintain anonymity and use other techniques that enable the researcher to characterise or selectively limit the population being sampled. The first type, authentication of respondents, is illustrated very well by the widespread use of online, web based questionnaires for student evaluation of teaching [10]. Typically, these are unit or course based, and therefore access must be restricted to students enrolled in a particular unit or course, generally by using the same login name and password that a student has for other purposes such as accessing the university's learning management system. Procedural provisions for guaranteeing student anonymity, well-controlled, familiar, you can trust the results. However, the second type, respondents remaining anonymous, is liable to be more difficult. The *Journal banding survey* cited earlier [1] is a typical example, stating that:

> ... your responses to this questionnaire will be anonymous. No information which identifies you in any way will be accessible to the researchers unless you choose to identify yourself in some other way.[1]

This is the point at which web based surveys become really interesting. Having no technologically based procedure such as login name and password that limits access to a specific and known population,

how can the researcher know the nature of the population that is being sampled? If you don't know some of the basics, like who is in and who is not in, population size, and response rate, can you "trust web based surveys?" This phrasing reflects the title of an article by Gosling, Vazire, Srivastava and John (2004) [11], "Should we trust web-based studies?…". These researchers noted compelling benefits underlying increased interest in web based "self-report questionnaires from self-selected samples" [11], but with an important caution being raised:

> However, these benefits cannot be realized until researchers have first evaluated whether this new technique compromises the quality of the data.[11]

Another researcher, Schonlau (2004) [12], gives an explicit definition of the core point of contention, and a different cautionary phrase:

> Whether Web surveys will develop into mainstream survey research tools depends on the possibility of drawing inferences from convenience samples. Conventional survey sampling wisdom holds that inferences cannot be drawn from convenience samples, thereby negating their use—with the possible exception of pilot studies. Still, convenience samples can be used to conduct experiments within that sample…
>
> The possibility of drawing inferences from convenience samples is a contentious issue among survey researchers. The excitement needs to be tempered with rational skepticism. [12]

To amplify the question raised in this column's title, how can we best ensure the quality of data obtained from self selected, anonymous, non-authenticated respondents? Fortunately, many investigators, particularly from the social sciences and health sciences, have published relevant results and recommendations for conducting and reporting web based surveys. An especially comprehensive checklist for authors, reviewers and editors was developed by Gunther Eysenbach, Editor-in-Chief for the *Journal of Medical Internet Research* [13]. Numerous researchers have compared the findings from surveys delivered by both conventional techniques and web based techniques. For example a Swedish group [14] undertook a

> …comparison of a 'gold standard' random selection population-based sexual survey (The Swedish Sexual Life Survey) with an internet-based survey in Sweden which used identical demographic, sexual and relationship questions, to ascertain the biases and degree of comparability between the recruitment methods. [14]

The phrase 'gold standard' is one I'll store in memory, for critiquing investigative methods when doing journal article reviews. In another example, Gosling et al (2004) [11] compared "a new large Internet sample (N 361,703) with a set of 510 published traditional samples". One of their cautions is notable: "As with all research, the best studies will seek convergence across multiple methods." They concluded that

> Our analyses suggest that the samples gathered using Internet methods are at least as diverse as many of the samples already used in psychological research and are not unusually maladjusted. Internet samples are certainly not representative or even random samples of the general population, but neither are traditional samples in psychology. [11]

Whilst this very small sample of research into the question of trusting web based surveys gives positive indications, it's not easy to relate readily to the *Journal banding survey*, named above as one of the stimuli for this column. The survey's public documentation and reports to date [1, 15, 16, 17] do not contain the details one would expect for a web based survey drawing upon anonymous, self selected respondents. For example, initial email publicity for the survey [15] indicated an intention to extend the invitation "to other relevant national and international professional and research organizations related to education." HERDSA members received an emailed invitation via Roger Landbeck on 13 December 2006, but ODLAA and ASCILITE members appear to have missed out! [18]. Some universities reposted the invitation to internal emailing lists, but we don't know how many. Without a detailed record of the actual distribution of invitations, or access to self reported details such as membership of professional associations, it's difficult for readers to assess how well the sample represents the target population. This has been defined by DEST as "Education Studies; Curriculum Studies; Professional Development of Teachers; Other Education" [19]. Being in the latter group, specifically an editor for an "Other Education" journal [AJET, see 20], I'm a bit jittery about the way the RQF is ticking!

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The ranked lists of journals appear in the files:

http://www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/sorti/files/Esteem%20ranking%20by%20area.pdf

http://www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/sorti/files/Overall%20Esteem%20ranking.pdf

http://www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/sorti/files/Overall%20QScore%20ranking.pdf

http://www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/sorti/files/QScore%20ranking%20by%20area.pdf

SORTI's website (viewed 14 Nov 2007) states that "…the RQF journal tier list will be available on this site on Monday 12th November."

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Roger Atkinson retired from Murdoch University's Teaching and Learning Centre in June 2001. His current activities include publishing AJET and honorary work on TL Forum, ascilite Singapore 2007 and other academic conference support and publishing activities. Website (including this article in html format): http://www.users.bigpond.net.au/atkinson-mcbeath/roger/

Contact: rjatkinson@bigpond.com

Higher Education in the Headlines

By Peter Kandlebinder

A summary of the top stories on higher education from the last three months of the Australian Higher Education Supplement (www.theaustralian.news.com.au), Times Higher Education Supplement (www.thes.co.uk) and the Chronicle of Higher Education (chronicle.com) found that teaching quality in UK universities and the privatisation of higher education dominated the higher education press. A range of the themes included: economic value of research, dropping demand for science education, attracting higher education students, changes to Australian government programs, research ethics and academic retirement

Teaching Quality in UK Universities

More than half of the stories on the front page of the Times Higher Education Supplement dealt with the quality of teaching in UK universities. The Times Higher Education Supplement reported a sharp increase in student complaints to Office of the Independent Adjudicator and high levels of abusive student behaviour being directed against academic staff. Meanwhile, lecturers struggling with their teaching reported a lack of support for improving what they did in the classroom and a review of assessment practices found that most would not withstand legal scrutiny. In October the Times Higher Education Supplement reported that six UK universities had fallen below the acceptable PhD completion rates. It is therefore not surprising that large numbers of undergraduates are turning to private tutors because of a lack of support within their own universities. Yet, the Times Higher Education Supplement reports that international students rank UK universities as having the best teaching in the world.

Privatisation of Higher Education

In August the Australian Higher Education Supplement reported an increase in Australian private higher education providers, largely due to

access to student loans and by September this had converted into an increase in student places in private higher education institutions. Simultaneously, Australian public universities are reporting large financial surpluses and a push to attract more students through shorter, more intensive programs. In the US it is home-schooled students who are challenging how they are taught in their universities. In the UK it is expected that the cap on student fees will be removed in 2009.

Economic Value of Research

In August and October the Times Higher Education Supplement reported on concerns for the UK government's requirement for economic impact from funded research and that impact is increasingly becoming an important criterion for research quality. This may partially explain why the new universities in the UK are now more successful at attracting research funding than traditional research-intensive universities. In Australia, the Australian Higher Education Supplement reported that the Government wanted a closer link between university and vocational education and in the US the Chronicle of Higher Education reported a call to shut down Ivy League universities because have become elitist. University research however is still seen as a way of revitalising a local economy, with biotechnology research being the current favourite in the US.

Dropping Demand for Science Education

In the US the Chronicle of Higher Education reported an increase in Math and Science education funding despite the continued inability to attract students to science research. Meanwhile, the prestigious journal "Science" has been withdrawn from a public access archive and in the UK the Times Higher Education Supplement reported that tuition fees may need to be set to reflect the oversupply of arts and humanities graduates in the UK.

Attracting Higher Education Students

In September the Chronicle of Higher Education described how the experience of applying to college shapes students views of their college experience. The Australian Higher Education Supplement reported that Australian students are reluctant to study overseas and are increasingly using social networking software to make choices about which university they'll attend. In the US, the Chronicle of Higher Education was reporting that the expansion of college athletic programs might be at the expense of academic programs. Meanwhile, in Iraq students are just happy to have six new campuses in which they are able to enrol.

Changes to Australian Government Programs

Two changes to Australian government programs were discussed in the Australian Higher Education Supplement over the past 3 months. In September the Education Minister clarified that the Higher Education Endowment Fund was to be used to improve the ranking of Australia's best universities. In October, the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund continued to produce a number of anomalies such as some universities falling 16 places in one year. A review of election promises for the up-coming Australian election found that it there is unlikely to be any increase in funding for universities regardless of who is elected.

Research Ethics

Research ethics was an issue in August when the Chronicle of Higher Education reported a case of research misconduct which lead to the dismissal of an academic and the Australian Higher Education Supplement cautioned that researchers were avoiding legal requirements when conducting online research. In August the Australian Higher Education Supplement called for reforms in how the PhD is examined.

Ranking Universities

Two stories on new ranking systems showed that Australia did have world-class institutions after all, with Melbourne and Sydney ranked in the top 20 university cities and in October the Australian National University topping the latest ranking index.

Academic Retirement

The prospect of mass academic retirements is becoming an issue with the Chronicle of Higher Education reporting a high number of retirements by College Presidents and the Times Higher Education Supplement warning that the current pension scheme for academics is unsustainable.

Peter Kandlbinder is a Senior Lecturer in the Institute for Interactive Media and Learning at the University of Technology, Sydney. His main responsibility is for academic development in the area of assessment and over the past 15 years he has been providing similar support for problem-based learning, postgraduate supervision and other forms of small group learning at a number of universities in Australia and the South Pacific.

Contact: Peter.Kandlbinder@uts.edu.au

Teaching & Learning Centres Contact List

A compilation of links to centre websites is available by going to http://www.developfaculty.com, clicking on the "Online Resources" tab at the left margin, then scrolling down to the two "Teaching & Learning Centres" listings. The first provides access to centres across the globe, while the second focuses on those based in the U.S. only.

Making it Quantitative: Report on the 2007 Teaching and Learning Forum in Economics, Commerce and Business Disciplines

By Martin Davies

On February 9th 2007, the third annual *Quantitative Analysis of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education in Economics, Commerce and Business* disciplines was held at the University of Melbourne. This forum has become the principal quantitative event of its kind in the teaching and learning calendar. Around 80 academics attended from the Australasian region from Economics, Accounting, Finance and Management disciplines, along with tertiary learning skills advisors, and other professional educators. This report will summarise the day's proceedings.[1]

Professor Peter McPhee, the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) of the University of Melbourne once again opened the Forum by emphasising how the Faculty of Economics and Commerce at the University of Melbourne were leading the way in the scholarship of teaching and learning within the disciplines. He praised the work of the Forum presenters is terms of their rigorous scholarship, and their commitment to issues in teaching and learning as an academic concern. He noted that it requires special expertise to combine active research in one's home discipline, with research interests in teaching and learning.

Eight papers were presented under five categories: 1. Managing Learning and Measuring Assessment, 2. Measuring Teaching and Evaluating Learning, and 3. Teaching and Learning in the Professions, and 4. Student Experiences and Perceptions, and 5. Flexible Learning and Technology. All papers were doubled refereed and published in the Forum Proceedings. Papers from the Forum invariably go on to be published in top-tier refereed journals.

Morton and Gent (Lincoln University, NZ) presented a paper entitled: "Determining Demographic Characteristics in Tertiary Education: An Exploratory Study". This paper used factor analysis and a logistic multiple regression analysis on 235 questionnaire results exploring students' attitudes to their studies. Statistical results provided evidence corroborating academic suspicions that *ethnicity, gender and age* are key factors to consider when evaluating students' beliefs and values towards learning and assessment.

Dancer, Morrison and Smith (University of Sydney) presented a paper entitled: "An Analysis of the Effectiveness of Peer-Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) in a First Year Econometrics Unit". This paper undertook an analysis of the results from one unit of study (a first year econometrics unit) in the PASS program. They endeavoured to establish whether the PASS treatment positively affects participants' academic performance, after controlling for ability and other factors. Descriptive statistics do demonstrate that the average mark for the PASS participants is higher than the average for non-PASS students.

Davies, Hirschberg, Johnston and Lye (University of Melbourne) presented a paper entitled: "An Exploration of the Relationship between Quality of Teaching Surveys and the Course Experience Questionnaire". Nation-wide universities are required to be increasingly more accountable in terms of their teaching quality. Local Teaching Quality Instruments (TQIs) are used in conjunction with a national survey, the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ). The former is an important determinant of promotional decisions and staffing changes in departments around the country; the latter is an important determinant of institutional funding. The former assesses students' views of individual lecturers and subjects; the latter assesses students' views of their courses. It is assumed, without evidence, the two instruments reliably correlate. But do they? In this, the first study of its kind, the researchers conducted a survey of all the evaluation practices of each university nation-wide. The researchers devised a way to plot the questions asked by each institution under 18 question types and then defined a similarity matrix between the universities. They conducted a hierarchical agglomerative cluster analysis to establish a relationship between institutions and their questions types.

Arnold (University of Adelaide) outlined her research in a paper entitled: "Alternative Learning Methods in a Business Statistics Course". The method used was an independent learning option (ILO) in a compulsory and unpopular course in which students were not required to attend lectures or tutorials but instead were assessed by means of major assignments. It was assumed that the flexibility of the ILO would permit better performance as students could work in a self-paced manner and not have to review material they already knew. In fact, the results were much worse than expected. The significance of these findings were discussed at length.

Jones and Abraham (University of Woollongong) gave a paper entitled:

"Education Implications of the Changing Role of Accountants: Perceptions of Practitioners, Academics and Students". The study undertook a pilot survey of three groups of participants: accounting academics, students and accounting practitioners. Parametric and non-parametric statistics were used to ascertain the differences in the perceptions of the role of accountants among these groups with respect to provision of skills, life-long learning and the expanding requirements of the accounting profession. The paper explored these differences in some detail.

Havrila and Zhang (Victoria University) presented a paper entitled: "The Experience of Microeconomics Students at Victoria University". The paper examined the student attitudes, expectations and issues encountered during the learning process when studying Microeconomics. Using contingent statistical methods and a qualitative analytical approach in response to student survey data it was found that the academics delivering the subject was one of the most critical influences for students when studying Microeconomics. Other factors such as the importance of using "real world" examples, and the impact of this in obtaining "deep" as opposed to "surface" learning were analysed.

Scarborough and Graham (Deakin University) presented a paper entitled: "Students" Perceptions towards the Role of Economics in Natural Resource Management'. This paper looked at student and staff perceptions of teaching an applied Economics subject. Subjects surveyed were from a wide variety of disciplines. A pre- and post-test analysis was conducted of perceptions of subject relevance over a period of a semester. Results found that some perceptions changed over this period. Implications for the teaching of applied Economics subjects were outlined in detail.

Benckendorff (James Cook University) presented a paper entitled: "Exploring the Flexible Learning Preferences for Business and Commerce Students using a Market Segmentation Approach". The author conducted an empirical study into the flexible learning preferences of a cohort of business students in a small regional university. Even in this environment, it was found that several discrete learner segments emerged with quite differentiated flexible learning preferences.

The Forum concluded, as is tradition, with a fine dining experience at a former professorial residence of the 1850s, now the university staff club … and a good time was had by all.

Dr Martin Davies is a Senior Lecturer in Higher Education in the Teaching and Learning Unit (TLU) in the Faculty of Economics and Commerce at the University of Melbourne and an Honorary Research Fellow in Economics.

Contact: wmdavies@unimelb.edu.au

The annual *Quantitative Analysis of Teaching and Learning in Business, Economics and Commerce Disciplines* Forum, now in its 4th year. The next forum is on 8th February 2008. Register at: http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/teaching_staff/forum/

The TLU has also recently launched Evaluation Central, an online repository of changes to SET practices and question-types: http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/evaluationcentral/

NOTE: Copies of the 2007 Forum Proceedings, and (very limited) copies of the 2006 proceedings, are available for purchase at cost price. Send a cheque for $30 made out to "University of Melbourne" to Ms Sonia Puglielli, C/- Teaching and Learning Unit, the University of Melbourne, Royal Parade, Parkville, 3010 (email: sborg@unimelb.edu.au). Abstracts for papers, can also be sent to the above address and email. These will be considered as submissions for the Forum in 2009. Those interested in attending the Forum in 2008 can send an email requesting to be added to the database.

Endnote

1. The Forum organisers gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance from the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund, and seeding grant funding from the Faculty of Economics and Commerce at the University of Melbourne.

Engaging Communities: HERDSA Conference 2008

Next year's HERDSA Conference in

Rotorua, New Zealand

will explore the theme

"Engaging Communities".

Keynote presentations from noted international and local scholars, such as Etienne Wenger (US) and Pita Sharples (NZ), will explore aspects of this theme, including the following:

- theoretical frameworks of engaging with local, regional and global communities;

- learning with communities and within communities; and

- how staff within tertiary education can foster ongoing development of communities within the workplace.

The conference will encourage wide debate on these themes and will also include a number of social activities to encourage networking and interaction across the conference community.

HERDSA 2008 will be held at The Millennium Hotel in Rotorua, New Zealand, from 1-4 July, 2008 and will be the 31st annual conference in the Society's prestigious series, attracting members and non-members from Australasia and around the world.

The Millennium Hotel is set amongst landscaped gardens close to the Polynesian Spa and the city centre.

Rotorua boasts a range of activities and places to see - from the Redwoods Forest at Whakarewarewa, to the boiling mud and geysers and white water rafting on nearby lakes. For a more relaxed experience you can enjoy the Skyline Gondola, traditional Maori hangi and entertainment, and the thermal spas.

Details of tours, conference themes, keynote presenters and much more will be available on the conference website from late November 2007,

and registration will open on 10 December 2007.

The closing date for all submissions will be 15 February 2008

so we encourage you to start thinking about your contribution now!

Website: http://conference.herdsa.org.au/2008/

We welcome you to Rotorua and hope that you will join us in July 2008!

Co-Convenors:

Dr Mark Barrow, University of Auckland

Dr Kathryn Sutherland, Victoria University of Wellington

Contact: Kathryn.sutherland@vuw.ac.nz