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A Step in the Journey: Reflecting on the HERDSA Fellowship as part of a Developmental Process

by Peter Jones

I thoroughly enjoyed reading the articles by Anna Chur-Hansen and Susan Jones in the December issue of *HERDSA News* where they both reflected on the experience of applying for a HERDSA Fellowship (Chur-Hansen, 2007; Jones, 2007). So when I was invited to contribute something to the same column, my first thought was that I would follow their lead and write about my experience of this process. The more I thought about this however, the more I realised that applying for the Fellowship was just one step in a longer journey that I have been on, and that it might be worthwhile setting this particular step into the context of the overall journey, as a way of thinking about developing skills and knowledge around teaching and learning.

My professional background is in social work, and I came to university teaching almost by accident. I had done a little bit of casual tutoring in the Department of Social Work and Community Welfare at James Cook University and, about 10 years ago, was invited to "fill in" for a semester, on a part-time basis, for a staff member who had taken unexpected leave. I found that I really enjoyed teaching and, to my own surprise, I seemed to have some talent for it as well as I received lots of positive feedback and good student evaluations. So I've stuck around.

Whether it was because of the manner in which I slipped into academia, or just the way things were at the time, I remember that one of the most difficult aspects of beginning to teach at university was that there was very little support or guidance available on the teaching process itself. You were acknowledged as having some experience and expertise from the field, which lent legitimacy to your role as a teacher, but for me at least, there was no guidance on the most effective ways to teach or the range of issues that should be taken into consideration.

In hindsight, I guess I relied partly on my own experiences as an undergraduate, thinking back to the teachers who had been particularly influential for me, partly on tips and suggestions from more experienced colleagues, and partly on my skills as a social work practitioner, which luckily included an emphasis on effective communication. So I seemed to get along alright, and didn't spend too much time thinking about the processes of teaching and learning, tending instead to remain focused on the desired outcome of producing students ready to enter professional practice. I should hasten to add that

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HERDSA News

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From the Editor

Quite by chance in this issue we have three articles relating to different paths academics have travelled in their careers, which I hope will be of interest to readers in our rapidly changing world. I, myself, eventually settled into what could be called academic development after working and teaching in medical physics, teaching physics in an African university and working in secondary school science curriculum development and I am sure many of you have similar varied experiences.

We have a fascinating article about Threshold Concepts by Caroline Baillie, who spent some time at the University of Sydney, but now heads up an innovative centre at Queens University in Canada. Those of you who wrestle with trying to help students enter into the mysteries of your discipline should be very interested to follow up the growing literature on the topic. Some of you may be fortunate enough to attend the conference in June, especially those in the geosciences, as there is a session set aside to explore the threshold concepts in that area.

It is pleasing to see the development of activities in the ACT in Canberra. HERDSA members there have enjoyed getting together to discuss teaching and learning. A report of their activity can be found in the article about local branches. There is a reminder in this article that there are funds available to help members who wish to run similar events. Please avail yourselves of such funds.

Although the Research Quality Framework has been abandoned in Australia it is very useful at this time to have some insight into ways that are developing to "measure" research, namely the use of Bibliometrics, and this is the topic of our regular column about IT in Higher Education.

The annual HERDSA conference to be held this year in Rotorua, is shaping up to be really interesting. Although the deadline for paper submissions has passed there is time to take advantage of early bird registration so log on to the website and register soon and look forward to a great time in New Zealand.

As a new academic year gets underway I wish all readers a satisfying and successful year and encourage you to send me articles of what you are doing to share with others through these columns. I have appreciated what I have received but I could always do with more!

Roger Landbeck

The How To…teaching Series

I regret that the second article in the series of HOW TO has had to be held over until the next issue. If you have an issue that would be useful to discuss in this series then please contact Peter Kandlbinder - Peter.Kandlbinder@uts.edu.au

The HERDSA EMAIL List

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A Step in the Journey: Reflecting on the HERDSA Fellowship as part of a Developmental Process

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these days, JCU provides great support for new academics, with formal teaching induction programs, a Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Teaching and an excellent teaching and learning development team.

Social work is an interesting profession, with its foundations in moral philosophy and a clearly articulated set of core values and ethics. The knowledge base of social work draws on theory from a range of other disciplines as well as theory and knowledge generated from within, and about, social work itself (see, for example, Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2005). One of the key concerns of the profession, from both an academic and practitioner viewpoint, is the concept of praxis, the ways in which social work students and practitioners translate theory into practice. Social workers often work with the most disadvantaged and powerless members of society, and social workers themselves may be in positions of significant power relative to service users, particularly in areas such as child protection, income support, and mental health services.

It is entirely appropriate then, that social work places a great deal of emphasis on worker accountability. I often say to my students that they should imagine an invisible observer at their shoulder who may interrupt their practice at any time and ask "why did you do that?" and "why did you do it in that way?". As professionals, they need to be able to answer those questions effectively, going beyond simple common sense and intuition, and this must involve being able to articulate the connections between specific practice activities and the values, ethics and knowledge base that underpin social work.

I'm sure that other people have also experienced those occasional disquieting moments when you become aware of leading a "double life", that there is a disjuncture between what you are saying, or telling others, and what you yourself are doing. One of these moments had arrived for me as I became painfully aware that should an invisible observer interrupt my teaching practice with the questions "why did you do that?" and "why did you do it in that way?", I would struggle to provide adequate answers. I certainly had a very good grasp of social work theory, and could articulate a thorough rationale for practice interventions, drawing on and integrating social work values, ethics and knowledge, but I realised that I had very little to draw on when making decisions about, and implementing strategies for, my teaching and learning practice.

And so began my quest to become a more informed, critically-conscious, and reflective educator. I began to read in the scholarship of pedagogy, I took advantage of professional development activities whenever the opportunity arose, and in 2003 I actually presented a paper at a HERDSA conference, looking at transformative learning in social work education (Jones, 2003). I must admit that this was quite an intimidating experience as I felt that I was surrounded by people who knew so much about teaching and learning, while I was struggling at the very beginning of such an understanding, but I was relieved and delighted by the support and encouragement which emerged in the discussions following the paper. In 2004 I completed a MEd in Adult Learning and Global Change from UTS (the so-called "intercontinental masters", taught collaboratively from universities in Australia, Canada, South Africa and Sweden), a process which allowed me the opportunity to engage with a wide range of research and scholarship in the field of adult education and to engage in critical discussions with other students from around the globe.

One of the great things that emerged from my forays into the research and scholarship around teaching and learning was my realisation of the parallels that existed between social work and adult education, both in terms of theory and practice. Even ideologically, I discovered the existence of a critical tradition in pedagogical thought that closely reflected the critical/radical tradition in social work, even drawing on many of the same theoretical inspirations such as the work of Freire and Habermas. It hadn't occurred to me previously, but I now realise that almost all social work practice involves some element or aspect of adult learning, and that there is much of value that can be shared between both these disciplines.

So it is from within this broader context of a commitment to developing my knowledge and skills in the areas of teaching and learning that I became interested in the HERDSA Fellowship scheme.

I found the process of developing an application to be both frustrating and rewarding, and suspect that, to some extent, these feelings need to go together. When I first read the guidelines and criteria, I thought that they seemed straightforward enough, but when I sat down to begin addressing them, they suddenly appeared less clear and more complex. My mentor was very helpful, offering some constructive and insightful feedback, but also holding back and making me work things out for myself. The most frustrating aspect of the process was the uncertainty as to whether the understanding that I was taking from the guidelines actually matched what the assessors were looking for.

The rewards flowed from the necessity of both reflecting on practice and the need to provide evidence of the ways in which my teaching and learning practice actually addressed the assessment criteria. We so seldom have the opportunity or time to make the space in our lives to critically reflect in a focused and intentional manner, and engaging in the Fellowship process motivated me to create that space for myself. When the assessor's report came back with a list of areas that I needed to address more effectively, I was disappointed but also excited because I could see more clearly what they were looking for and where I hadn't adequately addressed the criteria. And so there was a great deal of satisfaction in finally receiving the news at the end of 2006 that my application for the Fellowship had been successful.

The process of applying for the Fellowship certainly helped me to extend my skills in

critically reflecting on my own teaching practice, and I was able to apply these again in my successful nomination for a Carrick Citation in 2007. But I tend to see the real value of the Fellowship process as providing another important step in my journey to develop knowledge and skills in teaching and learning, particularly as being a Fellow commits one to engaging in an ongoing process of professional development and mentoring. I certainly found the process valuable and worthwhile and would encourage others to take up the challenge. I would be very happy to discuss the Fellowship process and to share my portfolio via email with anyone who may be interested.

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Have you published in HERD?

The Editors of HERDSA's refereed journal, *Higher Education Research & Development*, are interested in receiving submissions of research-based articles and proposals for Special Issues from members and their associates, on the theory and practice of higher education. Please refer to the Notes for Contributors on the inside of the back cover of any recent issue of the journal.

At this time we are also interested in receiving submissions on the following range of topics:

- The external influences on universities;
- The relationship between universities and the professions;
- Privatisation and the rise of "for-profit" tertiary education;
- Changes in academic work as a result of changes in funding;
- Decline of collegiality as a result of changes in management structures;
- Academic freedom;
- Scholarship of teaching and learning as it applies to institutional criteria for promotion and tenure;
- Experience of issues related to equity, social justice, social class, ethnicity, gender, and disability;
- Access to tertiary education and the effects of fees;
- Issues around internationalisation;
- Issues around transnational education;
- Development and use of instruments related to teaching and learning across cultures and regions;
- Academic standards, are they changing, how do we know, does it matter; and
- Issues around peer review of teaching and learning.

Submissions of articles should, in the first instance, be emailed to office@herdsa.org.au where they are given a document number and then sent to the Editors.

Proposals for Special Issues may be sent to Leo Goedegeburre, Special Issues Editor lgoedege@une.ed.au

Please send any further inquiries to isoliman@une.edu.au

Izabel Soliman
On behalf of the Editorial Team

Shape-Shifting in Academia: Medieval Literature Morphs to Higher Education

By Susan Carter

The Loathly Lady is the topic of my medieval literature PhD. Women are distinctly on top in Loathly Lady tales. She insists that the hero, who is young, handsome and aristocratic, have sex with her. She gives advice that he must follow. She is always right. Loathsome at first, sometimes with talons and tusks, sometimes be-snotted, her hair a clotted blob of grey, a waistless globby mountain of a woman, enormous, old and ugly, she becomes beautiful once the man she fancies obliges her sexually and does what she tells him. This is a transformation story. Rather oddly given its early origins in the late medieval period, it is one where the moral for the male audience is that if you can handle grotesque female sexuality when survival means you must, and take advice from a woman, you will win all: the kingdom and the beautiful lady. The story has a happy ending. Like most, though, the transformation to beauty and bliss is not free of suspicion: the Irish Sovereignty Hag, the earliest extant Loathly Lady, is a symbol for the experience of sovereignty, so that the shape-shifting female body is actually constructed to the service of male power politics. However, Chaucer's proto-feminist Wife of Bath tells a story with a Loathly Lady, so he quickly appropriates the motif to serve gender power politics. My doctorate explicates this motif. It has not transformed the world, but it was fun to write. And it has transformed me: I am now an expert on the Loathly Lady.

The world does not have a great demand for such expertise. In New Zealand where I live there is very little space for medieval literature at our universities; it is not a boom industry. Actually, colleagues have found it hard to get medievalist work elsewhere too. The line from the Tarantino film *Pulp Fiction* "I'm gonna get medieval on your ass" (said grimly by big black criminal when released from scrawny white male sexual bondage as the tables of power are turned) markers medievalism as violent, shot through with dark menace and cruel ironic humour (Dinshaw, 1999). Given this, you might expect there to be more interest in the topic. Maybe it is the neo-liberal drive, the economy of the knowledge of economy that sidelines medievalism and lets it drift off the curriculum as medievalists retire. It took me years to get myself into the shape of a medievalist and I was shy about coming out of the closet and declaring myself to be one. But now here I am hopping back into the closet of transformation and intending to come out educational. Like the *Grapes of Wrath* family, you need to follow work opportunities (Steinbeck, 1954).

My desire for transformation is happier than Steinbeck's since I got a short-term job which is now permanent: I work in a Student Learning Centre coordinating a doctoral programme. It is a great job, deeply rewarding in all kinds of ways. The scope for personal growth and satisfaction is as wide as I would possibly want. To take full advantage of the richness it offers me, however, I need to continue with my process of transformation, shape-shifting from a medievalist to a higher educationalist. A well-established higher educationalist with a good publication record. I'm keen to shape-shift.

I confess that I crave the endorsement hit, the compulsive, sometimes self-destructive desire for academia's affirmation (Martusewicz, 1997). Cronin (2005) considers the "reward system of citation" endorsing Franck's observation that the reward of academia is attention (Cronin, p. 5). Franck explains that "You do not become a scholar to become rich. Nor is the satisfaction of curiosity enough to make you a successful researcher. Success is rewarded by attention" (55); Martusewics says this more directly in her title's demand: "Say me to me". Mostly the professional persona tries not to look too patently demanding; yet my hunch is that we are flawed obsessives beneath our institutional disguise, hooked on hits of recognition. If so, how do we ensure the supply lines?

The self-protection practice of fencing off research time looks sensible, and yet I'm still not sure about this. I've profited so much from collegial support and still do. The best hits, warmer and fuzzier than the selfish endomorphs of publication, come from collegiality: the intellectual and moral support I have had from colleagues (see for example Grant, 2006) is something that I would like mentioned at my funeral. I like the door open.

So in the meantime, hankering for hits, I am busily absorbing the language of a new discourse: higher education. My recent find is phenomenography, a rather lumpy word which seems to stand in for something that I can do as an erstwhile literature scholar: close-reading of metaphors.

Phenomenography research is the collection and differentiation of human experience: "The differentiating categories of description which arises from the data captures the richness of the data as a whole and renders it meaningful" (Brew, 2001). By interviewing 57 researchers, Brew has gathered data on how researchers experience their work, and thus has identified four main categories of researcher experience. These are the domino variation, the trading variation, the layer variation, and the journey variation.

In a literal sense, researchers *do* experience research differently because they work differently: some peer through microscopes, some dig at archeological sites, some decode old manuscripts. A few wear rubber gloves or goggles. "Research" is an abstract noun, however, and if you invite humans to describe not the literal experience of their work but their overall experience of "research", metaphors are the only way of doing this. Phenomenography seems to me an inflated label (backed by such ponderous scholarly apparatus) for the process of close-reading the metaphors used in researchers' description of their experience. I'm not against close-reading—it can uncover psychological insights—but my heart sinks at yet another bulky theoretical term: "phenomenography". Do we have to package useful insights like this?

Let's look on the bright side. Close reading is fun, and it's illuminating. And metaphors are powerful (Bartlett & Mercer, 2001; Reynolds, 2001). In my job I am interested in the way that metaphors can help doctoral students to conceive of their larger process, so I'm interested in Brew's researcher metaphors. Her variation terms could be reconsidered: "Layer" is ambiguous—eggs or onion peel layers?—and "domino" is usually used negatively to describe escalating disaster rather than to describe the pleasure of lining up dominos till they are ready to be toppled in a chain.

It's important to get the right metaphor. We need to know ourselves. The right metaphor can rescue someone foundering amongst dysfunctional metaphors, or so despondent that their metaphors have run dry. Providing functional metaphors is, I suspect, how snake-oil merchants, evangelists and many counselors and advisors (and higher educationalists although seldom medievalists) work effectively to make the world a better place in quite real terms.

Can I put metaphors into practice in the current identity crisis I am in as I forsake my old discipline of medieval literature, index finished, book going to press, and commit myself to higher education?

I come from a family whose females seem genetically programmed to wrap parcels. Before they can walk our girls are to be found thoughtfully wrapping small items in tea-towels, napkins or discarded clothing. Mobility enables them to wrap things in many layers, more interestingly, with ties. Our adult females regularly present each other with second hand often unusable items that are wrapped with originality and flair: great parcels. The habit condemns us to living amongst junk, but we understand that the gift is the gift of artistic wrapping.

Higher education is a discipline that might suit parcel-wrappers. At worst it wraps up junk with clumsy elaboration. Sometimes the content is good, as it is with Brew's researcher metaphors. Couldn't the pre-loved method of close reading, with its identification of useful metaphors, be presented in a more attractive package than "phenomenography"? The shape of higher education might just suit me with a little more wriggling.

Referemces

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Susan Carter completed her BA and MA at the University of Auckland, and her English literature PhD at the University of Toronto in 2001. She has published on Chaucer's "Wife of Bath's Tale" (2003); the Green Knight and Ragnelle as monstrous testers of Sir Gawain (2005); Spenser's Loathly Lady Duessa (2005); a pedagogy method SHNID (2006); Galadriel and Morgan le Fey (2007); mnemonics (2007); punctuation (2007), and a New Zealand perspective of the Bologna process regarding doctoral students (2007) with forthcoming articles on the doctoral oral examination and medieval mnemonics for thinking about thesis structure (as well as on the medieval Digby play on the Mary Magdalene, the sociopolitical work of early romance tales, and the English Loathly Lady tales).

Susan coordinates the Doctoral Program at the University of Auckland Student Learning Centre, while convening an extramural course, "Mythology and Fantasy," for Massey University, Palmerston North. Having almost cleared her desk of work on literature, she focuses her current research interest on higher education, particularly doctoral support, and tertiary learning advisor identity.

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We Did It Our Way! Narratives of Pathways to the Profession of Educational Development

By David Gosling, Jeanette McDonald and Denise Stockley

Introduction

> My first teaching gig was launched in my elementary years, in our basement, where I lined up desks and ran a "school" for younger siblings who I enticed to attend with snacks and a long recess.
>
> I've always thought of myself as a teacher. My mother tells me that, as a toddler, I neglected my toys to play school, where I was always the teacher and the pillows and cushions were always my students, errant ones who needed scolding and (gasp!) flogging.

Clearly educational developers begin young! And what is their destination? What are they most proud of?

> I love the process of helping others to better calibrate their actions to their goals by introducing theories and strategies related to assessment, experimentation, and reflection on practice.
>
> What I have learned and relearned all along the way is that POD [*Professional and Organisational Development Network*] has been, is, and, always will be dedicated to creating a professional space that is generative, renewing, based on discourse across boundaries, and offering mutual support, collegiality, and community in every sense of those words.

These quotes are from the personal narratives written by a group of 13 international educational developers who came together in Ottawa, Canada from June 23–29, 2007. Their goal was to develop an international "pathways" research agenda for educational development. The seed for coming together was planted by Jeanette McDonald of Wilfrid Laurier University (Canada) whose doctoral studies addressed pathways into educational development from a Canadian university perspective. Based on this work, she believed that there was an urgent need to understand better why individuals make the decision to become educational developers, and that researching this question would require a concentrated and collaborative effort by developers from around the world.

Each member of the group was asked to write a "position paper" about their identity as an educational developer (Stefani, 1999), including a career biography in preparation for the week long seminar designed to plan the international research project. These papers provided some fascinating insights into how each person within this group of people drawn from the USA, Canada, UK and Australia saw their personal journey into this "profession". What was it that took us down the "path less travelled"?

The Narratives

Not surprisingly, each of our pathways is unique. In the absence of a common career structure developers within our profession represent a truly eclectic group of professionals (Weimer, 1990). We have varied educational backgrounds, disciplinary allegiances, and academic standing. We have different types of appointments (for example, programme coordinator, educational developer, manager, director, vice-president/provost), remits and responsibilities, orientations to practice (e.g. facilitator, broker, researcher), institutional values, local contexts, and career motivations. As a result, there is no one position profile that captures who we are or what we do. There is no such thing as a typical educational developer.

Yet some common themes did begin to emerge from our stories. The excerpts below have been taken from the position papers written by those of us who met in Ottawa (but with the names omitted to preserve confidentiality). Let us examine what these themes were.

Commitment to Teaching

Something that was very clear, as the opening quotes in this article illustrate, was the interest in teaching long before the person made the commitment to enter the profession of faculty or educational development:

> I think I have been an educational developer throughout my entire career although I have not always used this name.

Even at this early stage in their career there was evidence of what was to come later:

> Thus began my entry into teaching at the post-secondary level of the education system, albeit one that is markedly different from the one I was to adopt later. I taught English, Literature, Speech and Drama, and something called "Teaching Methods". More importantly in terms of my personal journey into my current profession, I became actively involved in formal efforts to improve the common curriculum and assessment.

For many in North America, the period of being a teaching assistant was critical in stimulating an interest in student learning and teaching:

> From the beginning I organized TA training days for new Psychology TAs within my department and participated as a workshop facilitator in our university wide Conference on Teaching for TAs.

For one person, the principles about learning that she learned as a graduate have stayed with her for the whole of her career:

> We were one of the few institutions that used contingency management techniques for the undergraduate courses. This involved things like mastery learning, small steps in development, reinforcement contingencies, specification of learning objectives, and so on. As a graduate student I was the teaching assistant for one of the courses using that design. As a result I became very interested in and knowledgeable about instructional design and the application of psychological principles to it.

Virtually everybody in the group early in their careers showed an interest in activities that they would later recognise as educational development even though at the time they were not aware that this is what they were doing:

> I expect my career path was evolving long before I was mindful of it. As a teaching assistant in undergraduate biology courses, I was struck by the different worlds of learning in most classrooms and learning and working in many labs.

Some of the group progressed directly from their postgraduate studies into higher education, but several had their

first experience of teaching outside of universities:

> My first teaching was as a volunteer in Nigeria in 1964 before I went to X University where I studied philosophy. After my masters, I became a Liberal Education Lecturer in a Further Education College, studied to gain qualified teacher status and then moved on to teach English at a "comprehensive" secondary school in Yorkshire.
>
> I studied English literature as an undergraduate at Y University and my love of that particular subject led me to think of becoming a secondary school teacher inet al that subject. I took a postgraduate course at the University of Z to train as a teacher of English and Drama and then taught in secondary schools in Manchester and London.

For one of our group the teaching was not within a traditional institution at all:

> Just after graduation I was offered a fulltime counselor position with Upward Bound, a federally funded education development program for minority or low income youth.

But this interest in teaching normally meant a commitment to a discipline, not to faculty development. Most of us started out with aspirations of entering traditional academic careers within a specific area of study or discipline, for example; Psychology, Biology, Philosophy, English, Organisational Behaviour:

> I was initially trained as a Psychologist with my area being educational psychology specifically focusing on higher education. For 15 years I was a Preceptor in the Psychology department.

Even those who began to take an interest in teaching and learning did not immediately consider becoming an educational developer:

> Although not yet a journey, I was taking a few day trips in conversations with a small number of colleagues who shared my interests. I still thought I would be a biologist.

Nevertheless the significance of these early interests in laying the groundwork and increasing people's receptiveness to opportunities that would present themselves later cannot be underestimated.

Serendipity and Career Decision Making

The reasons for turning away from their originally planned career were various. One factor that resonated for us most as a group involved various chance events or "serendipitous" moments – critical incidents that led us down one pathway (some straightforward, some not) versus another (and possibly away from an existing one). Within our limited sample, this seemed to be the norm, not the exception.

Cabral and Salomone (1990, p. 6) define chance as "the particular people who influence an individual, as well as the timing and context within which life events occur"; Miller (1983, p. 17) defines happenstance as "an unplanned event that measurably alters one's behaviour"; while Betsworth and Hansen (1996, p. 93) define serendipity as "events that were not planned or predictable, but that had a significant influence on an individual's career".

The importance of serendipity within career decision making is increasingly reflected in the study of career development. While historically the career development literature has been rooted in the work of Parsons (1909) and a modernist approach to career decision-making that is systematic, rational, and linear (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnston, 1998) in matching individual knowledge, skills, values and interests with various career options, more recently, theorists and researchers in have begun to examine the concept of serendipity and its influence on career paths (Betsworth & Hansen, 1996; Bright, Pryor, & Harpham, 2005; Cabral & Salomone, 1990). But it would seem that both choice and chance are relevant.

So how did chance enter into our narratives? Sometimes it was a move to another college, maybe because a partner had taken a post there, that led to a meeting with people who would become influential in their career:

> My partner at that time was on the faculty at College G and I had already met the two people who would eventually become important mentors…

For several the turning point was being offered a post, even one that they had not initially considered or one they took for less than altruistic reasons:

> I got involved for a couple of years and when the Director of the Unit retired I took over as the Director on a part-time basis. (At the time this was a route to gain promotion I have to confess.)

As Cabral and Salomone's definition begins to suggest, one has to be willing to act upon or seize those serendipitous opportunities that present themselves, whether externally or internally directed. Indeed, the "context of chance events and the interaction between such events and the person's 'readiness' to incorporate chance events into his or her career decisions" (Williams et al., 1998, p. 379) cannot be dismissed. The following excerpt illustrates this "readiness" factor in one developer's career decision making:

> After being accepted as a full-time doctoral student at University A in 1974, I was awarded a graduate assistantship to supervise student teachers. Desperately seeking supervision strategies, I walked over to the Clinic to Improve University Teaching and never turned back.

Becoming involved in networks was a critical step for almost everyone, though they sometimes found these networks by accident:

> I recall discovering in my first month on the job that my predecessor had committed the University to hosting the conference of the International Society for Teaching Alternatives (ISETA) the next year. Since I had never heard of ISETA, I first panicked then recovered enough to arrange to attend that year's conference that was merely three weeks away at Ohio State University. It was then that a whole new world of other associations and conferences, of which I had never heard, opened up for me: Lilly, POD, STLHE [*Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*] and the annual meetings of the "Instructional Development Officers".
>
> In that new mind set, I was off to W in support of the "nation's business". STLHE intervened again as the conference was held at the University of M that year, and I reconnected once more with "the network".

Becoming involved in a network enabled people to feel less isolated and part of a wider enterprise that had purpose and common values:

> During that time I took part in a series of meetings in London of a fairly informal but lively and enthusiastic small group of people who were involved in what they called "educational development". This group was called SCED (the Standing Conference on Educational Development) and was later to become SEDA [*Staff and Educational Development Association*]. We felt then a rather beleaguered and ignored group of evangelists.

But lest we think that the decision to enter educational development was straightforward, two members of the group recalled their misgivings about taking this step. Firstly because of the fear that focusing on teaching would count for less than going into a research-orientated post:

> Even though the criteria were exactly the same as for promotion to Associate which I had already earned, I still dreaded the process because of the institutional myths and legends that I had heard about tenure, one of which was that teaching excellence did not count…

And secondly, because of the low profile of "development" posts:

> …at my university this position had typically been marginalized, occupied by a sessional instructor or even when a permanent position had been created for the director the position had a very low profile within our university.

Motivation to Join and Stay in Educational Development

So, given that these disincentives existed, what motivated people to make the step into educational development? Some saw it as a refreshing and exciting field that would always offer new opportunities:

> One of the wonderful things about education and education development is that "experimenting" is an essential part of our role. Design an intervention, evaluate and improve there's not a lot of opportunity to become bored!

A key factor for many was the rewarding nature of the networks they found themselves working in. They found a level of collegiality and support that encouraged them to continue in this field.

Almost every member of the group spoke of key individuals or groups, who had influenced their thinking and who had provided informal mentorship in their career. Many spoke of being "honoured" to meet inspirational individuals, and how they had "admired and learned from" them and were grateful for the "opportunities to learn from (and with) my colleagues".

The group members in turn continue to enjoy contributing to fostering those same networks that had been so important to them in their early careers. They take pride in a shared sense of purpose and values:

> Because most of us were the only individuals in faculty development on our campuses, all our professional contacts and support had to come from the outside. Those of us in POD very consciously cultivated the idea that we had to share to survive. We worked at developing an atmosphere of support and sharing, in which you could call on any other member for advice at any time. We shared advice, ideas, materials, without much thought to intellectual property rights. We had more important issues to worry about than who said what first.

So what emerges is a group of people with very different backgrounds and academic disciplines who nevertheless shared a common passion for improving teaching – their own and subsequently that of others. Chance events often intervened to allow this latent interest to be transformed into a career path. For some the path was tortuous and unpredictable, for others it followed a "straight-line" from their graduate studies.

Setting a Pathways Agenda

Educational development in its relatively short history (Moses, 1987) has progressed from a set of activities to a scholarly field of study and practice. Its scope has expanded from a focus on improving teaching and learning through staff development activities to a broad range of educational initiatives and research activity. It now seeks to advance and support teaching and learning in higher education at all levels – national, institutional, departmental, and individual. Educational development units have come to play an increasingly central and expanded role within institutions as change agent and policy leader (Gosling, 2001; Havnes, 2006).

At the same time, the educational developer has become a recognised professional role which has moved from the fringes to the mainstream of higher education (Kahn & Baume, 2003; Kahn, 2004). Like other specialised occupations in colleges and universities, the educational development movement has evolved in response to a variety of internal and external drivers. Among these have been a growing recognition of the importance of the quality of teaching in attracting and retaining students, programme reviews and other quality processes, government policy and funding directives, national reports such as Smith (1991) in Canada, and Dearing (1997) in Britain, calls for accountability, diversifying the student population, and the explosion of educational technology and research on teaching and learning in higher education to name a few.

Yet, despite this growth, at this time there is no prescribed pathway into educational development. There are no common educational requirements, graduate programmes or formal career paths, what Lynn McAlpine calls "academic structures" (2006). Indeed the idea of "developing the developers" is in its infancy and according to some very recent research on attitudes to entering the profession, there is some resistance to having formal entry requirements (Fraser, 1999; Chism, 2007).

Clearly we need a better understanding of how individuals within higher education become educational developers and what attracts them to the field. What draws people to the profession? Why do they get involved in educational development activities? What are the routes that facilitate their entry and advancement? What are the contexts in which this happens? We need to consider both those on the periphery of the field looking in (potential educational developers/ champions of educational development) and those who are already well established in the profession in primary appointments.

This enquiry is given greater urgency because there is evidence here in the UK, in North America and in Australia that appointing people to educational development posts is proving difficult. Even as a specialised occupation within higher education, the vocational awareness of educational development compared to other occupations and professions within and outside of the post-secondary arena is limited. Although the number of posts and opportunities is growing (Sorcinelli et al., 2006), there is not an equal supply of new entrants into the field. This is one reason why appointments are often filled from outside the country advertising the post. Educational development appears to be a highly mobile profession – at least across the English speaking world, as this person's career illustrates:

> My career to date has been an interesting one for me. I have worked in the UK and Hong Kong as well as the US and Australia. I am always surprised at how similar the issues are, regardless of the country or the type of university.

In order to take account of this mobility any study of this phenomenon must take an international cross-cultural perspective.

The evidence we have briefly reviewed above suggests that educational development is at a turning point. So it was fortunate that a rare opportunity to bring an international team of experienced developers together to consider these matters was made possible through an International Opportunities Fund Development Grant from SSHRC (Social Science and Humanities Research Council, Canada) and the support of two partner organisations – the Institute for the Advancement of Teaching in Higher Education (IATHE) and POD.

Together we achieved the following five outcomes:

1. Shared position papers on the educational development scene in our home countries and our own pathways in the profession
2. Offered a professional development workshop and panel to new educational developers at the first International Institute for New Faculty Developers happening at the same time
3. Prepared an international research proposal to submit to our local funding agencies to foster ongoing cross-cultural collaborative scholarship
4. Developed the framework of a book for new developers providing a cross-cultural perspective of educational development pathways and perspectives
5. Developed a website (http://www.iathe.org/pathways) that will shortly be accessible to the development community to disseminate our position papers and forum reflections.

As a result of coming together in June, we have already submitted conference proposals to the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and received invitations to present at POD (United States) and SEDA (United Kingdom) to promote the pathways agenda and collect data. Through our project co-applicants on the first grant, we have further advanced the "pathways" agenda with other regional educational development groups such as STLHE, SEDA, POD and the International Consortium for Educational Development (ICED) – all four of which are partner organisations supporting the latest SSHRC research grant proposal.

Charting your Pathway

The seeds of interest in exploring and understanding educational development are sown and the Pathways team has applied for additional SSHRC funding through the International Opportunities Fund Project Grant to continue our work. In addition, we have obtained ethical clearance to conduct focus groups, face-to-face interviews, and online position papers to explore:

1. Why do people get involved in educational development activities?
2. What enables (or inhibits) some individuals to enter into and progress within the field of educational development?
3. What enables (or inhibits) them to commit to a primary appointment in educational development?

We are inviting three types of participants: (1) those who are situated within the field of educational development and consider themselves to be full-time educational/faculty developers; (2) individuals (i.e. graduate students, faculty, administration, *etc.*) who are on the periphery of educational development, but are aware of it as a field of scholarly study and practice, and; (3) individuals who were in Educational Development as a full-time career and have left the field (i.e. returned to their discipline, retired, consultant, *etc.*).

If you are interested in charting your pathway with us, we would like to know about your personal pathway into the profession. Please consider contributing to our research and visit our website at http://www.iathe.org/pathways/.

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Threshold Concepts from Theory to practice

By Caroline Baillie

So what are they, these mysterious concepts which have been discussed with increasing fervor in the last few years, in secret corners, coffee shops and seminar rooms, amongst educators of economics, engineering, design, English grammar….? Luckily, and rather unusually for education research, *threshold concepts* are actually what they sound like – concepts which are threshold to some students and not to others. These fascinating beasts were introduced to us by Erik or Jan (take your pick) Meyer and Ray Land some six years ago, as part of the outcomes of the Enhancing Teaching-Learning Environments project funded by the Teaching and Learning Research Programme of the UK. The project sought to understand the factors that lead to high quality learning in five subject areas and Meyer introduced the term to distinguish between core concepts and other concepts which might mark "seeing things in a new way". Since then there has been an increasingly loud buzz around this issue with more and more teachers locating threshold concepts in different disciplinary areas.

Threshold concepts have been described by many as a sort of *portal* or gateway through which students can pass – and if they do, they come out the other side with new ways of seeing, and furthermore, new areas are opened up to them. Other students however, will get stuck and are unable to pass through this gateway. They become disillusioned and often take up surface approaches to mimic what they see other students doing. Meyer and Land suggest that the threshold concepts are likely to be *transformative* i.e. that they mark a shift in the perception of the subject by the student, *irreversible, integrative, bounded* and *troublesome.* This latter refers to Perkin's (1999) *troublesome knowledge* as

1) *Ritual knowledge* – routine and rather meaningless character such as following procedures in arithmetic. In an attempt to make a concept seem more understandable, teachers sometimes create a naïve version of the concept and students enter into a form of ritualised learning or mimicry. When the students show no signs of understanding the concept teachers simply ask them to do more of the same. This can seem very dull to students who often describe learning in these areas as boring.
2) *Inert knowledge* – not integrative nor seemingly related to real life. Integration is troublesome because students need the "bits" before they can be integrated but after this they need to be persuaded to see the whole in a new way. Hence often new knowledge remains as disconnected pieces which are therefore void of life.
3) *Conceptually difficult* – what we often notice as teachers is that in an attempt to learn difficult concepts, students mix "expert" views of the concept with their own misconceptions. Often the intuitive belief resurfaces in any other context than the exam room.
4) *Alien knowledge* – knowledge can often be counter intuitive , e.g. the notion of objects in motion, asking students whether heavier objects will fall at the same rate as lighter ones will often result in confusion.
5) *Tacit knowledge* – understandings are often shared between a community of practice but not often explained or exposed e.g. a person coming into a new community or country may not pick up the nuances of different concepts which are "common sense" to the old-timers.
6) *Troublesome language* – discourses have developed within disciplines to represent ways of seeing – but these can be troublesome for the newcomer especially if the words have a common usage as well e.g. "elasticity". The problem we have is that no concepts can exist outside the system of thought and language. It is entirely possible that a concept can be understood on one way in one country (or discipline etc.) and very differently in another for this reason.

Meyer and Land suggest that where difficulties exist, the learners may be left in a state of *liminality* (Latin "limen" - a threshold). Liminality may refer to an individual or a group - a suspended state in which understanding approximates to a kind of mimicry. The transition is problematic, troubling and often humbling, and students often mimic the new status without understanding the meaning of what they are doing. They may oscillate back and forth but once entered the student cannot return to the *pre- liminal* state. This is compared by Meyer and Land to cultural initiations or to adolescence, however in education as with other contexts, it is clear that students may not reach the transformed status and become stuck. Thus we could understand dysfunctional development of a child who does not enter adulthood is similar to the dysfunctional learning of a student who attempts to mimic the conceptual understanding and may have some preliminary grasp but is only interested in reproduction (i.e. as with the "surface approaches" described earlier).

As an education developer and researcher who works within a discipline (engineering) and also researches engineering, I have found the idea of threshold concepts to be extremely useful both to myself and in my development work. For some reason it is one of those very powerful ideas that comes along from time to time and you just cant help but stop and say "but that's obvious – why didn't I think of that?" It appeals to the most hard bitten researcher who couldn't be less interested in introducing buzz groups into lectures and doing small group work to encourage a deep approach. Suddenly this anti-teaching-teacher is talking about those annoying blocks in the knowledge that students just keep banging their head against. They are intrigued because when they mark assignments they keep coming up against the same problems, the same horribly done questions, problems which they could solve so easily, so why can't their students? Suddenly this group of paper-writing people are interested in student learning! Its all about knowledge building after all. John Bowden and Ference Marton have been saying for many years that learning is the link between teaching and

research – learning which is new for the students and learning which is new for the world. Threshold concepts appear to give us the key to unlock the door and to pass through our own threshold – in knowledge building.

I personally think that the "concept" part of the term is not quite right. Clearly the idea can transcend that which is a concept to *ways of thinking and practicing* as Meyer and Land suggest. *Thresholds* then, rather than *threshold concepts* might help us use the notion a little more broadly. Another current issue worth exploring is the idea that there are "ways of practicing and thinking" that we want students to learn – to become "initiated" into the discipline. I am, on the other hand asking students to do just the opposite. In a course "Engineering and Social Justice", I am asking engineering and social science students to critique the very foundations of engineering, the very texts that they have been using in their other classes, to question how engineering might contribute more to social justice than to profit making. When we consider that engineering enabled the industrial revolution and facilitated the efficient production model which it now places itself in most countries, we see that these are not easy questions. The threshold that students have to pass through is associated with re-thinking the dominant discourse that they have been brought up with – to question whether everything actually has to be about money. Once they look with new eyes on their own practice they are free (the sort of Freedom that Amartya Sen (1999) evokes in "Development as Freedom") to make their own choice about what actions to take and how they might affect the future of the world. Big stuff. All sorts of troublesome knowledge arises – this is counter intuitive to them, certainly alien and involves much troublesome language and tacit knowledge. Clearly we are talking about a threshold through which they must pass.

What is and what is not a threshold concept in different disciplines, how we help students actually pass through the portal, how we might use this notion in education development and how it relates to other educational theories and practices, will be the topic of much avid discussion in the forthcoming *Second International Threshold Concepts Conference* to be held at Queens University, Canada from June 18th to June 20th.

Further information

The 2008 conference website: http://thresholdconcepts.appsci.queensu.ca

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President's Report

By Shelda Debowski

Changes to national government are rare events in Australia so we have been watching the outcomes with great interest and some concern. While higher education is not a high priority on the government agenda, there have already been some interesting shifts that signal a stronger commitment in the long term. Initially the government instructed the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education to reduce its annual budget substantially as a contribution to the whole of federal government cost-cutting. Good advice from our Go8 leaders and other vice chancellors led to the major cuts coming from the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund - a reward scheme that has been plagued with criticism of very dubious metrics and integrity. This is a major win for the nation, as a body like the Carrick Institute is a major force in promoting quality teaching and learning across the nation.

The decision to shelve the Research Quality Framework and to revert to a simpler system which still emphasises quality has been strongly welcomed by universities. While we are yet unsure of the overall requirements, indications are that the new system will be more cost effective and less challenging to manage. It will still place pressure on academics to teach and research in a balanced manner, despite reduced resources. HERDSA has long recognised the challenge for those whose research is teaching-related. Our decision to commence an occasional papers publication reflects our efforts to build some additional credible publishing avenues. We are also in active discussion with Taylor and Francis about seeking ISI recognition for our journal: *Higher Education Research and Development*. I would like to acknowledge the efforts of our two editors Ian Macdonald and Izobel Soliman in ensuring we reflect the criteria with respect to an international editorial board and timely publication. The journal has been strengthening rapidly as we refine the systems and decrease submission times.

An interesting theme has started to emerge that runs through discussions about government funding and the lack of focus on higher education. I have seen a number of comments about the fact that higher education is not seen as a major political issue and will therefore not gain great consideration from policy makers. It has

been suggested that we need to build stronger connections between the wider community and education so that there is pressure from the community rather than vice chancellors. It is argued that people need to see how universities and VET matter. They need to think about what is contributed to the economic, social, spiritual and overall good of the country. This raises a good challenge for us all to consider. What messages do we promulgate about our sector? and who do we speak to? Each of us could play a part in this process - and need to.

Which brings us to the next conference in New Zealand, where the theme is, coincidentally, **engaging communities**! This is ideally timed for us to think about our sector's image, effectiveness and relevance. It also offers a valuable chance to consider engagement from many different perspectives: How do we connect with our students? Our colleagues?, Our wider community? The conference promises to bring some very innovative ideas to the fore.

If for some reason, you are unable to make it to the conference, why not convene a mini post-conference and invite any local speakers to re-present their papers? It's a great way to engage at a local level and in many areas has become an important event in the local professional calendar. Don't forget that HERDSA has a small budget to support local community meetings and events. Just write to Jennifer Ungaro at the HERDSA office (office@herdsa.org.au) to seek guidance on how funding operates.

I hope your work this year is both exciting and fulfilling, and that you have some good successes in your research activities. And don't forget to share your excitement about higher and tertiary education with anyone you can. We need to get the message out there: Education is essential for the long term.

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Threshold Concepts Conference
Queens University Canada - June 2008

(Some extracts from the Conference website.)

The first conference on Threshold Concepts with the Disciplines, held in Glasgow during August of 2006, demonstrated the excitement and energy of this emerging new area of research. In the few years since the first discussions of threshold concepts in 2002, we see the emergence of work on thresholds in many varied disciplines.

The keynote speakers will be the founders of Threshold Concepts, Jan Meyer and Ray Land. Jan Meyer is a Professor of Education and the Director of the Centre for Learning, Teaching, and Research in Higher Education at the University of Durham in the UK. Ray Land is currently Professor of Higher Education and Director of the Centre for Academic Practice and Learning Enhancement at the University of Strathclyde. Together they are developing an associated conceptual framework on Threshold Concepts that can be used to enhance learning and teaching environments across the disciplines.

Apart from being a fascinating and important area of research, it is evident that the idea of threshold concepts appeals to many practitioners and teachers. Academics who are intrigued by their subject knowledge will engage with discussions about thresholds for their students, when conversations about 'teaching' have never been appealing. It is proving to be an important area of progress for curriculum development and discipline-based educational development.

As well as ongoing theoretical discussions we are particularly interested in exploring practices and improving student learning based on theoretical studies of threshold concepts. How has knowledge of these areas of the curricula caused improvement in student learning? What faculty developments have been introduced to help individuals construct more effective courses and assessments and departments construct more appropriate curricula?

HERDSA Local News March 2008

The Western Australia HERDSA branch held their AGM in January with about 20 members attending and representation from nearly all universities in the state. Iris Vardi from Curtin University was elected President and Shelley Yeo, also from Curtin University, was elected Vice President. This year the branch will profile West Australian research into teaching and learning in higher education through a seminar series Scholarship Profiled: Cutting Edge Investigations into Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. The popular HERDSA Rekindled will run again in August which showcases WA presentations made at the national conference.

HERDSA Hong Kong Members and Friends got together for a lunch meeting and a good chat during the Teaching & Learning Symposium organized by Hong Kong University of Science & Technology in December. A Dinner Dialogue with visiting member of HERDSA executive and HERDSA Fellow Robert Kennelly from the University of Canberra, Australia was also held in December 2007. Robert introduced the HERDSA Fellowship Scheme and how it contributes to the development of reflective professionals. A further Dinner Dialogue was held in January 2008 with Professor Andy Kirkpatrick from the Hong Kong Institute of Education. Andy met with HERDSA members & friends to discuss the topic: "English as the international language of scholarship: implications for the dissemination of local knowledge". The next Dinner Dialogue will be on 12th March with Dr Jill Brown from the Faculty of Education, Monash University, Australia who will address the topic Implications of study abroad for home and host institutions.

The Hong Kong Branch meets for dinner

The ACT HERDSA Chapter was restarted in August last year and at the end of November hosted a meeting with two speakers from the Carrick Institute and two HERDSA Conference speakers. Twenty-six HERDSA colleagues were present including Kathryn Sutherland, co-convener of the 2008 HERDSA conference in New Zealand. At the end of the seminar there were lots of drinks and ideas were exchanged about plans for 2008, including establishing potential research/project alliances/partnerships; creating a Carrick Interest Group to investigate alliances for research submissions; and bringing together current and potential members interested in preparing a HERDSA fellowship portfolio. A joint ADFA/HERDSA seminar on workplace learning is planned for 25 March at University of Canberra. A number of ACT members are excited by the possibilty of making a start on their HERDSA fellowship portfolios and the chapter is hoping to welcome Dieter Schonwetter (expert in teaching philosophies and reflective practice) to Canberra in 2008.

HERDSA New Zealand Branch News

The annual TERNZ (Tertiary Education Research in NZ) conference was held in Auckland on 29–30 November. Now part of HERDSA NZ's annual activities, the conference attracted record numbers (74 participants and 25 presentations). Full details including abstracts of presentations are available on the HERDSA NZ website http://www.herdsa.org.nz/Ternz/2007/home.html

Professor Stephen Rowland gave two HERDSA seminars in Dunedin (November) and Auckland (December) on the topic "Intellectual Love and the Integration of Teaching and Research". The full text is available at the HERDSA NZ website http://www.herdsa.org.nz/

HERDSA NZ has developed a strong working relationship with Ako Aotearoa (NZ equivalent of the Carrick Institute). The significant contribution of Neil Haigh in establishing the Centre was publicly acknowledged by the Minister of Tertiary Education at the launch of Ako Aotearoa in November. HERDSA members play an active role in the regional hub structures and are participating in funded projects. A number of joint activities with Ako Aotearoa are planned for 2008, for example in mentoring and developing new applicants for project funding, running seminars with teaching award winners, and generally implementing the mission of the "best possible outcomes for all learners". Ako Aotearoa are a major sponsor ($30,000) of the 2008 HERDSA conference. Otherwise, the bulk of the branch activities continue to be focused on planning for the 2008 conference which is shaping up to be an excellent event!

Other branches –Victoria and South Australia are gearing up for 2008.

Branches or local groups are not in operation in New South Wales, Queensland, Northern Territory, Tasmania or Singapore. HERDSA would be pleased to support local inititives in any areas so if you would like to get something started in one of these places please email mbell@uow.edu.au.

News prepared by Maureen Bell, Mark Barrow, Kathryn Aufflick; who make up the HERDSA Membership Portfolio.

International Column Exchange - From STLHE

Quality Higher Education Across Borders

By Joy Mighty

One of the major changes in higher education over the last half century has been the phenomenon of massification (Scott, 1995). Previously, higher education was the domain and assumed prerogative of the gifted and, for the most part, the elite - those who could afford to pay for it. Not anymore. With the rise of the knowledge economy in which knowledge has replaced physical resources as the main source of economic growth and power, higher education has become not only more desirable but absolutely essential for personal advancement. Participation in higher education has become the universal norm rather than the exception. Moreover, increasing globalization and the concomitant competition among institutions for students have made it possible for almost everyone who wants a post-secondary education to gain access to one. As the demand for higher education has increased worldwide, we have witnessed a simultaneous growth of higher education providers, new methods of delivery, and cross-border initiatives. Cross-border higher education is defined as "a multifaceted phenomenon which includes the movement of people (students and faculty), providers (higher education institutions with a physical and/or virtual presence in a host country), and academic content (such as the development of joint curricula). These activities take place in the context of international development cooperation, academic exchanges and linkages, as well as commercial initiatives." (http://www.unesco.org/iau/p_statements/index.html)

In 2004, in light of the increased diversification in the provision of higher education, the International Association of Universities (IAU), the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), drafted a statement of principles to guide the adoption of cross-border higher education. After widespread consultations with member associations throughout the world, the draft statement was adopted and subsequently endorsed in 2005 by over 35 higher education associations worldwide.

Entitled "*Sharing Quality Higher Education Across Borders: A Statement on Behalf of Higher Education Institutions Worldwide*", the statement describes a set of principles which the signatories believe should guide not only cross-border initiatives by higher education institutions, but also policies and negotiations by governments. The principles include the need for higher education across borders to:

- contribute to communities' economic, social and cultural well being;
- strengthen the higher education capacity of developing countries to ensure worldwide equity;
- develop learners' capacity for critical thinking so that they might engage in responsible citizenship locally, nationally and internationally;
- increase accessibility for qualified students who are in financial need;
- ensure equally high standards of quality regardless of where it is delivered;
- be accountable to all stakeholders including students, governments and the public;
- facilitate the international mobility of faculty and students; and
- communicate clear and full information about the education being provided.

The statement goes on to recommend specific actions that should be taken by universities, colleges and other public, private, or for-profit providers of higher education; by non-governmental associations worldwide; and by national governments and their intergovernmental organizations. As we prepare for the 2008 STLHE conference with its aptly chosen theme of "A World of Learning", let us reflect on these principles and the recommended actions to determine what roles we might play, individually and collectively, in realizing the potential of quality cross-border higher education for enhancing equity and access for the common good.

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Joy Mighty is currently President of the Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE), which is based in Canada. She is based at Queens University, Kingston, Ontario.

STLHE is a society similar to HERDSA The society sponsors an annual conference. an electronic bulletin board, a national teaching and learning awards program, and publishes a tri-annual newsletter, a membership directory, and the Green Guides, which are similar to the HERDSA guides.

For further details see http://www.mcmaster.ca/stlhe/

I.T. in Higher Education Column

Bibliometrics: An IT perspective

By Roger Atkinson

My last column, in *HERDSA News* 29(3), concluded with a worry, "…I'm a bit jittery about the way the RQF is ticking!" [1] Well, relax, it stopped ticking. As announced tersely on the DEST/DEEWR websites:

> A new Government, led by the Leader of the Australian Labor Party, the Hon Kevin Rudd MP, was sworn in by the Governor-General on 3 December 2007. [2]
>
> …
>
> The Australian Government announced on 21 December 2007 that it would not be proceeding with the former Government's Research Quality Framework (RQF) project. [3]

Given that the principal recent stimulus for an interest in bibliometrics, the RQF, will "not be proceeding", why revisit bibliometrics, and why an IT perspective? To begin with, there are the "I'll be back" [4] and "Be prepared" [5] concerns. Here is a succinct potential early warning from a medical researcher in the UK:

> From 2008, state funding for academic research in the UK will be calculated differently. The research assessment exercise, which is based substantially on (high intensity, high cost) peer review, will transfer to bibliometric scoring. Such metrics include journal impact factors … [6]

So bibliometrics should remain on the agenda, though this brief column will concentrate on highlighting and awareness raising rather than a systematic exposition, recognising that deep interest in the topic will be mainly from librarians, editors [7], publishers, and specialist researchers, for example in cybermetrics and webometrics [8]. An IT perspective is especially relevant because information technology could be aptly described as the "engine room" for modern bibliometrics, in particular for the two main topics I wish to explore. Firstly, in recent developments in citation analysis services, *Scopus*[9] and *Google Scholar*[10] are challenging the *ISI Web of Knowledge*[11] and related products including *Web of Science* from Thomson Scientific, the owners of the well known ISI journal Impact Factor [11]. Secondly, many publishers have developed website services which automatically deliver links to articles that cite the article or abstract you are viewing on screen, and to related articles. These two areas are linked, in the usual titillating ways that you might expect, namely money, because *Scopus* and *Web of Knowledge* cost you (or your poor library) serious amounts, whilst *Google Scholar* is for free, and "academic ego", because most of us feel that it's nice to know who out there has or has not cited my papers.

To begin at a straightforward level, a growing number of papers in the library and information sciences literature are investigating comparisons between the "majors" in bibliometrics, and other topics in citation reporting and analysis. Staying with my "highlighting and awareness" purpose, here is a very, very small sample of titles of articles from recent browsings:

- Trends in the usage of ISI bibliometric data: Uses, abuses, and implications [12, Cameron, 2005]
- Deflated, inflated and phantom citation counts [13, Jacso, 2006]
- Sources of *Google Scholar* citations outside the *Science Citation Index*: A comparison between four science disciplines [14, Kousha & Thelwall, 2008]
- Google challenges for academic libraries [15, MacColl, 2006]
- Impact of data sources on citation counts and rankings of LIS Faculty: *Web of Science* versus *Scopus* and *Google Scholar* [16, Meho & Yang, K., 2007]
- Comparing alternatives to the *Web of Science* for coverage of the social sciences' literature [17, Norris & Oppenheim, 2007]
- Pointing users toward citation searching: Using Google Scholar and Web of Science [18, Schroeder, 2007]
- For your citations only? Hot topics in bibliometric analysis [19, van Raan, 2005a]
- Citation analysis: A comparison of *Google Scholar, Scopus*, and *Web of Science* [20, Yang & Meho, 2007]
- The agony and the ecstasy—the history and meaning of the journal impact factor [21, Garfield, 2005]
- A solution in search of a problem: Bibliometrics and libraries [22, Wallace, 1987]
- Fatal attraction: Conceptual and methodological problems in the ranking of universities by bibliometric methods [23, van Raan, 2005b]
- Research Performance Measurement is revving up [24, de Mooij, 2007]
- Bibliometric profiles for British academic institutions: An experiment to develop research output indicators [25, Carpenter et al., 1988]

To digress just a little, the last five are listed mainly because the titles are prepended with a nice catchy phrase (or are just catchy, like *RPM is revving up*), or in the case of the last title (dated 1988!), a historian may wish to lay claim to an article title with just a subtle suggestion of cynicism, *The RQF: An experiment to develop research output indicators*.

Going back to the main topic, one impression is that a "bibliometric skirmish" could be brewing. For example:

> The combination of the inflated citation count values dispensed by *Google Scholar* (GS) with the ignorance and shallowness of some GS enthusiasts can be a real mix for real scholars. [13, Jacso, 2006]
>
> Because *Google Scholar* is freely accessible from the Google site, students and faculty are finding and using it. They

> are beginning to ask librarians for their professional opinions of its efficacy. [18, Schroeder, 2007]
>
> …*Scopus* offers the best coverage from amongst these databases and could be used as an alternative to the *Web of Science* as a tool to evaluate the research impact in the social sciences. [17, Norris & Oppenheim, 2007]
>
> …*Google Scholar*'s wider coverage of Open Access (OA) web documents is likely to give a boost to the impact of OA research and the OA movement. [14, Kousha & Thelwall, 2008]
>
> …[*Google Scholar*] contains all of the elements of the sort of search service which we in our libraries are trying to provide by purchasing federated search tools. ... for known item searching - for *that paper by this author on this topic for instance* - it is often as good as any of the abstracting and indexing services we take, and better in that it is *Google* - easy and free and used by everyone. [15, MacColl, 2006]

Whether this kind of "skirmishing" becomes a "war" remains to be seen. Some may hope that it does develop into the only kind of war I like to see, namely a *price war*. After the bibliometric heat has been on *authors*, it could be time for *publishers* to have a turn. An executive with Elsevier's *Scopus* made a sympathetic comment about authors, when writing on new alternatives to the Thomson ISI Impact Factor [11]:

> Originally it [the Impact Factor] was intended as a collection management tool, but has since evolved into a metric used for evaluation of science at all levels as well as evaluation of authors. This can have far-reaching consequences for an author's grant applications, promotion and tenure since the metric is directly influenced by the performance of specific journals and is thus for a large part beyond the author's control. [24, de Mooij, 2007]

However, the publishing and bibliometric scenes are also displaying some interesting trends towards collaboration. This takes us to the second of my main topics, publishers developing web page links to a citation service. To begin with, here is a simple but important illustration from *SAGE Journals Online*, publishing the AERA's *Review of Educational Research*. At this point we really need screen delivery for this column, but let's try anyway. For an example I selected Hattie and Timperley (2008) [26], partly because many members of HERDSA could be or perhaps should be interested in its content. The website display of the article's abstract [26] includes a menu comprising about 22 items, among them four links to *Google Scholar*. For example, click upon "Articles by Hattie, J." and the underlying HTML enables the HTTP call: http://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=%22author%3AJ.+author%3Ahattie%22 and the reader receives *Google Scholar*'s output from a search for articles by "author:J. author:Hattie" (of course it works best with uncommon names). Click upon "Citing Articles via Google Scholar" and the call returns "Results 1–10 of 10 citing Hattie: The Power of Feedback" (by the time you read this, John Hattie's citation count could be larger!). A third *Google Scholar* link is to "Search for Related Content". Of course you could go off to *Google Scholar* and type in the search strings for yourself, but the "one click" thing is rather nice, and it does suggest that *SAGE Journals Online* has developed some respect for *Google Scholar*. However, they have an each-way bet, also having a link to "Citing Articles via ISI Web of Science" (alas, it won't work for me).

For another example, consider van Raan (2005b), the "Fatal attraction…" article in *Scientometrics* [23]. The menu accompanying the display of the abstract [23] includes the information, "Referenced by 19 newer articles" (maybe higher if and when you look), each of these listed in a conventional way (first author, year, title, journal) with a hypertext link to an abstract for the citing article. For example, one of the links is to Yang and Meho (2007) [20] (though date is given incorrectly as 2006), published in a Wiley Interscience journal, *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*. That's a rather nice "one click" thing for the reader, delivered in this case via *CrossRef* [27], a collaborative service created by numerous publishers. As in the previous example, citation counts and links to citing articles are created and updated automatically by IT "engine room" processes.

To conclude, I should confess on the subtitle, "An IT perspective". This column is really "A search engine perspective", mainly *Google* and *Google Scholar*, and occasionally a publisher's website search engine. Without IT, and very rarely visiting a university library, how else could I find such interesting and relevant reading on a topic that I knew little about?

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Higher Education in the Headlines

By Peter Kandlebinder

A summary of the top stories on higher education from the last 3 months of 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 changes to the work condition of academics in UK universities and assessment of research output dominated the higher education press. Other themes included: increasing diversity in student demand, election promises, studying overseas, the student experience of higher education, university administration and three reviews of government agencies.

Working in the UK

Over the past three months the Times Higher Education Supplement focussed on a number of issues related to the changing nature of academic work in UK universities. In November it was alarmed by the small pool from which vice-chancellors were being recruited. In December it classified a quarter of male academics as now being in a high-income bracket but lecturers with PhDs as "overqualified" due to the trend towards teaching-only roles. In addition, demographic changes promise a shortage of laboratory technicians as a large number are due to retire. In January the Times Higher Education Supplement returned to the question of the value of the humanities in a 21st century university.

Research Outcomes Assessment

In November the Times Higher Education Supplement reported a dramatic increase in the proportion of academics excluded from the research assessment exercise while research-intensive universities in the US and UK continue to fill the top places in international rankings. It noted that a new excellence standard for research required three times the average number of citations. At the same time, the Times Higher Education Supplement reported that the global, information-sharing society had universities re-evaluating the significance of intellectual property. Meanwhile, the Australian Higher Education Supplement reported the new federal Government would review research and development tax concessions to encourage more collaboration between industry and universities. In January it was announced that there would be a closer relationship between the assessment of research quality and the Australian Research Council.

Increasing Diversity in Student Demand

In November the Chronicle of Higher Education reported that many students felt inadequate and inept at university at a time when large numbers of people returned to college in their 40s and 50s to retrain for less physically demanding jobs. In December the Australian Higher Education Supplement reported that entry scores for teaching courses are predicted to fall while engineering and science experienced a growth surge. Maths departments however were struggling to receive funding promised by their institutions. In January the Times Higher Education Supplement explained why universities can not turn their backs on the league-tables while the Chronicle of Higher Education reported that the U.S. Congress' was pressuring higher education institutions to keep tuition increases in line with inflation.

Election Promises

Australia had a federal election in November and in the lead up to that election the Australian Higher Education Supplement reported the absence of universities from the Government's election promises while the Opposition promised to abolish full-fee places for domestic undergraduates. After the election questions were raised over whether the fee rollback could be achieved. In December the Australian Higher Education Supplement reported that universities were calling for a larger Higher Education Endowment Fund to cover infrastructure costs, while in the US the Chronicle of Higher Education reported that in the university staff where supporting Barack Obama rather than Hillary Clinton

Studying Overseas

In November the Australian Higher Education Supplement reported that not all Australian universities were receiving income from international students while the Chronicle of Higher Education saw the number of international students attending US universities bouncing back to near-record highs. However, on study-abroad programs, the Chronicle of Higher Education reported a decline in participation due to the falling value of the US dollar and the risks involved in faculty-organized foreign field trips. In January the Time Higher Education Supplement reported that international students were open to exploitation as they were finding it hard to meet the costs of their courses

The Student Experience of Higher Education

In December the Times Higher Education Supplement reported which universities offered the best all-round student experience based on a large-scale student survey. The Chronicle of Higher Education described how and when colleges in the U.S. should inform students of potential dangers, such as school shootings and in January a debate started on the relationship between college athletes training and their education. Also in January, the Australian Higher Education Supplement reported the first national tribunal to handle student complaints and the Times Higher Education Supplement reported the level of top-up fee income universities provided Britain's disadvantaged students.

University Administration

In January the Times Higher Education Supplement argued that many successful universities had a world-class scholar at the helm while the Chronicle of Higher Education reported that a cloud hangs over university president of West Virginia University because of his political connections. The trends in endowment management and spending for the 2007 where published in the Chronicle of Higher Education along with a call by the US government for increased spending of endowment funds. In the UK, libraries were being criticised for dumping two million volumes to make way for more digital resources.

Reviews of Government Agencies

Three reviews of government services were announced over the past three months. These were the U.S. agency responsible for reviewing college accreditors, the Australian Research Council and the Carrick Institute for Higher Education Teaching and Learning.

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