A Transition Pedagogy: The First Year Experience Curriculum Design Symposium 2009

by Sally Kift

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Introduction – The Contemporary First Year Experience

If we in higher education were to take the education, success and retention of our entering first year undergraduate cohorts seriously (Tinto, 2009), how would we progress that agenda? In 2009, efforts to enhance the first year experience (FYE) may draw on an impressive body of established research, practice, and policy in attempts to answer this question. And yet, as Tinto has recently observed (2006-7, 2), "substantial gains in student retention have been hard to come by" and "there is much that we have not yet done to translate our research and theory into effective practice".

However challenging it has been in the past to move from research and theory to effective action and practice on this front, this challenge is now set to increase exponentially. With the federal government's recent endorsement of the Bradley Review's widening participation targets – that 40% of 25-34 year-olds should attain at least a bachelor-level qualification by 2025 (currently at 32% attainment) and that 20% of low-SES students should be enrolled in undergraduate higher education by 2020 (currently around 16%) – what is our considered pedagogical response? How do we propose to support, include, retain, and graduate student cohorts who will enter our programs with even greater diversity in preparedness and cultural capital than ever before? Quite fundamentally, we will need to consider changing, both culturally and structurally, the prevailing character of the first year student experience to ensure that student success is not left to chance, at least in those aspects that are within our institutional control.

ALTC First Year Experience Curriculum Design Symposium 2009

Over two days on 5-6 February 2009, 400 academic and professional staff attended a FYE Curriculum Design Symposium convened at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) to address these issues. The Symposium was framed around research conducted under an Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Senior Fellowship

From the Editor

Welcome to the first issue of HERDSA News for 2009. A year of interesting times for higher education as noted by the President, Shelda Debowski in her report. Shelda has done a great job in her four years as President from which she will stand down at the AGM during the annual conference in Darwin in July. Shelda has kept members up to date with the activities of HERDSA and its role in higher education through her column in the News and as Editor I am grateful for her regular contributions.

It is interesting to note that there are now several regular columns like the President's report appearing in the News and in this issue these regular contributions make up half the issue. I am very grateful to those who regularly write contributions to each edition. So it was with real pleasure that I accepted an offer from Bob Cannon to produce a regular feature on humour in academe. We could all do with a dose of humour during these times. Bob has called his column `Meanderings.'

Bob has been a member of HERDSA since 1975 and was for many years Director of the academic development unit in the University of Adelaide. Currently he is based in Jakarta working on a large education project for the government of Indonesia. He has also contributed a second article to this edition on the diseases of educational development, which although light hearted, contains important underlying truths.

Another regular feature, which had fallen by the wayside recently, is the International Column Exchange in which the President's of HERDSA and the two North American equivalent societies write in turn a short article on higher education in their part of the world. In this issue Virginia S Lee, the President of the POD Network in the US writes a North American perspective on educational development.

The ACT Branch of HERDSA has been having some great meetings lately encouraged with great enthusiasm by Robert Kennelly. They formed a group to talk about Teaching and Learning called TATAL, and they have written about their experiences in this issue. I hope the article will inspire others to do similar things in their area. HERDSA will provide some money to support such activities, just contact the office. You don't have to form a branch to get the money, just advertise it as a HERDSA activity.

There has been a sharp rise in the number of papers submitted to HERD and it has been possible to negotiate with the publishers to increase the number of issues from four to six per year. This has brought other problems in being able to review the papers in a reasonable time. Hence you will find a call for more Associate Editors in this issue.

After a decline in sales a few years back the HERDSA Guides are selling really well and I expect there will be a big demand for the revised edition of `Conducting Tutorials' due shortly. Check on the web for availability.

Speaking of the web *HERDSA News* is now available as a PDF file for downloading. The contents of issues going back to 2005 are available and if there are any articles that readers might like then providing I am not swamped with requests (highly unlikely!) then I will email you copies on request.

The December 2008 issue contained tributes to John Powell one of the original members of HERDSA who passed away last year. Earlier this year Peter Karmel, a HERDSA Life Member, also passed away. Professor Karmel made very significant contributions to higher education in Australia and we acknowledge these and are grateful for his work.

Roger Landbeck

HERDSA Conference – The STUDENT EXPERIENCE
Conference host: Charles Darwin University
6–9th July 2009
http://conference.herdsa.org.au/2009/

A Transition Pedagogy: The First Year Experience Curriculum Design Symposium 2009

that has investigated the articulation of a research-based "transition pedagogy".

Specifically, the Fellowship has sought to reinvigorate the sector's approach to enhancing the critical undergraduate FYE by harnessing cross-institutional partnerships between academic and professional staff focussed on curriculum engagement. A major Fellowship outcome has been the development of a guiding philosophy for intentional first year curriculum renewal – a "transition pedagogy" (Kift & Nelson, 2005) – that seeks carefully to scaffold and mediate the first year learning experience for contemporary heterogeneous cohorts. The premise here is that, in all their diversity, and acknowledging their multiple identities and changing patterns of engagement, it is within the first year curriculum that commencing students must be engaged, supported, and realise their sense of belonging. In this way, the curriculum, which frames the educational conditions in which we place students academically and socially, has an important role to play in first year transition, success, and retention.

The Symposium program offered delegates a smorgasbord of eminent national and international keynotes, the chance to network with and learn from colleagues, and the opportunity to discuss and debate the big FYE issues in the sector, to share further examples of good practice in parallel sessions and via a FYE Showcase, and to put major FYE issues to the panel of assembled keynotes. An eBook of the 42 FYE Showcase exemplars is available on the Symposium website for those who are interested (http://www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/), together with keynote audios and videos, PowerPoint presentations, papers, and a range of other resources. A DVD that seeks to capture the essence of the presentations and deep thinking over the two days is in final production – provisionally titled *Symposium: The Movie!* – and will also be available shortly on the Symposium website.

The Symposium was opened by Professor Richard Johnstone, Executive Director, ALTC, who commented specifically on the efficacy of bringing together people from so many different positions and fields of expertise to talk about matters of common interest. The buzz and sense of excitement to which he referred in his opening remarks were certainly sustained over the two days and many delegates commented in their feedback on the goodwill, collegiality, and commitment so clearly evident, and that the "50/50 split of academic and professional [staff] was really heartening".

A "Transition Pedagogy"

The "transition pedagogy" referred to above has been framed around the identification of six First Year Curriculum Principles. These interconnected organising principles – Transition, Diversity, Design, Engagement, Assessment, and Evaluation and Monitoring – provided the Symposium's structure and the event opened with some snapshots of the Australian sector's feedback in response to Fellowship disseminations of them and the overarching pedagogy they support.

In particular, delegates were presented with six meta observations, drawn from an analysis of prolonged sectoral engagement under the Fellowship's auspices, to the following effect –

- Sustainable partnerships between academic and professional staff are crucial to the efficacy of contemporary FYE work;

- However, these partnerships are hard work and institutions are struggling with whole-of-institution integration, coordination and coherency;

- An obvious way to sustain widening participation and its attendant diversity is through coherent, intentional, supportive, and inclusive first year curriculum design;

- There is considerable evidence of momentum for a sector-wide consensus;

for a "response that is unified and consistent" to "assist individual institutions and change agents open up discussions that lead to action" (Fellowship feedback, 2008);

- That normalising and validating are as important for staff as they are for students: for example, "[k]nowing that every other institution is also grappling with the new and diverse cohort helps to foster collegiality on the issue of FY and what is best practice in the sector for FY" (Fellowship feedback, 2008); and

- That the scope of this work is both professional *and* personal for students and staff, for whom the learning and teaching experience can be very good or very bad or sadly mediocre: there is much still to be done to ensure that good practice in the FYE is supported, valued, recognised and rewarded.

However, to conclude this aspect on a more positive note, the prevailing mood of the feedback reported was to the effect that "We are all vectors for transmitting the virus of FYE … each of us can change our institutions if only in small ways or in some programs" (Fellowship feedback, 2008).

Symposium Presentations

The Symposium's tone was set from the outset by QUT's Col McCowan, OAM, who reminded delegates quite poignantly of the very personal and individual transition journey many commencing students make from their known, comfortable world to a brand new and unknown university-world in which they are frequently far from confident or secure.

With the generous sponsorship of the ALTC, Professor Vincent Tinto, Distinguished University Professor, Syracuse University, USA, drew on his years of experience, writing and research in student retention and equity, and exhorted us to engage in curriculum renewal that holds students to high expectations for their success, provides curriculum-embedded academic and social

support, gives frequent and timely feedback about their performance, and requires students to engage actively with their peers.

In the context of widening access and participation, Professor Tinto also astutely observed that "access without support is not opportunity". Professor Marcia Devlin (Deakin University) continued that theme in her keynote, drawing particular attention to the alienating effects the "hidden curriculum" can have on inclusion and engagement for equity group students, especially Indigenous students and students from low SES backgrounds. She further highlighted the necessity to enhance the quality of staff-student interactions and the need to "help students to help themselves" as critical factors in retaining these students to graduation.

The University of Strathclyde's Bill Johnston, drawing on his recent, rich experience of having worked on the Scottish Quality Assurance Agency's First Year Enhancement Theme, spoke directly to the efficacy and transformative potential of a transition pedagogy in the contemporary and "near-future" context. In this regard, he framed a transition pedagogy as having an influential role to play in the context of the 2008 credit crisis, the constant striving for lifelong learning, and at the intersections between higher education and an information culture. Bill is a persuasive advocate for the conceptualisation of the FYE as an initial field of curriculum inquiry that can be developed to transform the nature of whole degree courses.

Professor Kerri-Lee Krause (Griffith University) challenged delegates on the very meaning of "engagement", when it comes to how, why, when (and even if) students learn in their first year of university study. Drawing on recent research (Krause & Coates, 2008), she pointed to broad scales of engagement – such as in-transition, academic, with peers, staff-student, intellectual, online, and beyond class – and explored some of the implications of the engagement construct for first year curriculum design. Similarly to Vincent Tinto, the need to challenge first year students was raised, with Kerri-Lee also warning that disciplinary differences may influence design and assessment, and to be wary of making non-evidence based assumptions in the curriculum (for example, around first year students' use of ICTs for learning).

The efficacy of ICTs' use in the design of and support for early learning environments from both the staff and student perspective was a theme of Professor Ron Oliver's keynote (Edith Cowan University), as might be expected from an Australian leader in learning technologies. But again, care and caution were urged: technology is but one of a myriad of tools and resources available to us to manage the potentially "hazardous conditions" under which first year students learn, such as large classes, few friends, and with little individual support. In his presentation, Ron provided several cogent examples of ways in which technology might be usefully harnessed in aid of sustainability, manageability and flexibility to support diverse entering cohorts to be better learners with better learning outcomes.

The Symposium was bought to a close with a hefty dose of reality from Professor Lynne Hunt (University of Southern Queensland) who specifically addressed the ever present elephants in the room of change management and sustainability under the intriguing title "Is it an improvement when a cannibal uses a fork? Critical enquiry into the sustainability of outcomes from first-year experience interventions". Lynne's key message was that "sustainable outcomes in change leadership arise from holistic planning" and emphasised that learning leadership is required in universities "to get the context right for staff to get the context right for students". To illustrate her thesis, she reviewed her own institution's approach to sustainable planning for change, with the support of the student learning journey as a focus.

Conclusion

While there are many challenges ahead in our own sectoral FYE learning journey and practice, the Symposium provided a very broad and firm foundation on which further work can continue to build. The sheer energetic engagement of so many academic and professional staff was one of the most positive outcomes, while the dedicated colleagues who presented in the parallel sessions and at the FYE Showcase, who are not mentioned by name above, symbolise the momentum that currently exists across the sector to enact curriculum as the academic and social "organising device" and the "glue that will bring the broader student experience together" (McInnis, 2001, 9,

11). Those colleagues especially deserve our respect, gratitude and support.

I conclude with one comment made in the course of Symposium feedback that perhaps nicely encapsulates the positivity with which I think the sector approaches the critical next phase of this work –

I came cynical of the value of the symposium, and have left as another carrier of the FYE virus – will certainly attempt to incorporate into my teaching practice.

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Sally Kift is an ALTC Senior Fellow and a Professor of Law at Queensland University of Technology. Resources developed under her ALTC Senior Fellowship are available on the ALTC Exchange at http://www.altcexchange.edu.au/first-year-experience-and-curriculum-design and on the FYECD2009 Symposium website at http://www.fyecd2009.qut.edu.au/.

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President's Report

By Shelda Debowski

Few of us would deny that these are interesting times for tertiary education. Here in Australia we are awaiting the next federal budget with anticipation and high anxiety as the economic downturn eats into any potential resources that might be allocated after decades of under-funding. In tandem, there have been strong indications that the Federal Government will adopt many of the Bradley Review recommendations – possibly without significant resourcing to assist new initiatives that will be required. Of particular note is the push to encourage higher proportions of students from under-represented equity groups to gain an undergraduate degree.

Recent higher education conferences have grappled with these issues. How can universities entice under-represented groups to attend university? Should there be stronger linkages between technical and further education and higher education? What would this mean for federal-state relations and their interaction? Does higher education need to become more focused on job-ready outcomes? What are the implications of work-based learning in encouraging greater support for our graduates? What is happening in rural tertiary communities? Are they better placed coming to large regional or capital

campuses or does a local rural campus offer good benefits? Along with these issues relating to domestic students, there is a real focus on how the international student experience can be best enriched. How might international students gain maximum value from their time in Australasia or through their association with an Australian or New Zealand university?

In tandem with these very vigorous discussions, the various conferences also grappled with the implications of damning statistics on the slippage in Australia's performance as a knowledge nation. Research performance has shifted markedly from our previously creditable positioning in OECD rankings. Michael Gallagher's paper from the AFR Higher Education Conference makes particularly compelling reading. (See: http://www.go8.edu.au/storage/go8statements/2009/AFR_HE_Conference_2009.pdf)

While Minister Carr has agreed that research needs to be appropriately funded, we remain uncertain as to how and when that will be remedied. Early indications are that this could take a very long time to be addressed.

What does this mean for us all in the meantime? Already universities are examining their performance on equity

performance indicators. The possible deregulation of places across the sector through the student voucher system will open up considerable focus on marketing, reputation and outcomes. At least fourteen Australian universities are undertaking significant curriculum reform in an attempt to improve their student experience and to position their offerings as desirable in a very competitive market. And of course, we are all being encouraged to publish more, get grants and increase our profile across the nation.

Amidst all this noise, we need to keep focused on the reasons that we are in education. The experience of learning in a passionate and vibrant community; the excitement of sharing and acquiring new knowledge that can be imparted to others; the opportunity to work with others who love the quest for intellectual enquiry… these are but a few of the reasons for working in the academic world. Each of us plays a part in engaging others and in preserving the heartland of tertiary education.

These are interesting times. But they are far more interesting if we focus on how we can enhance the learning experience – for our students and the whole community.

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New HERDSA Guide

Conducting tutorials, 2nd edition (2008)

Jacqueline Lublin & Kathryn Sutherland

This publication will be released for sale shortly

Conducting Tutorials addresses the common experiences of tutors and students in a variety of group learning situations. This second edition of HERDSA's best-selling guide has been redeveloped around the framework of the characteristics of scholarly work, identified by Charles Glassick and colleagues: Clear goals, Adequate Preparation, Appropriate Methods, Effective Presentation, Significant Results, and Reflective Critique. It offers research-informed perspectives and practical advice on, for example, how to approach the first tutorial or how to deal with silence, combined with discussion of the underlying attitudes and expectations of tutors and students which affect their behaviour in groups. The relationship between the way in which a tutorial is structured and the appropriate or inappropriate learning processes which are thereby encouraged is discussed, and possibilities and strategies are given.

Order online from www.herdsa.org.au

Diseases of Educational Development

By Robert Cannon

You probably think that educational development is a theoretical construct that exists "out there", don't you? Let me assure you that educational development has life; it lives and dies, and experiences bouts of robust good health and debilitating disease like other living organisms.

In human beings, "disease" is often used to refer to a condition that causes pain, dysfunction, distress, social problems, and possibly death to the person afflicted, or similar problems for those in contact with the person.

My first encounter with the disease concept as it affects education was from an illuminating paper by one of the doyens of medical education, Stephen Abrahamson. In this pioneering work, titled *Diseases of the Curriculum,* Professor Abrahamson identified 13 pathological disorders, many of which, despite recent advances in treatment, remain today. Not only that, they seem to have spread to the broader field of educational development and, in particular, to the field I now work in, which is education in developing countries. There are striking parallels between developing educational quality in a university and in large educational systems.

What follows is a light-hearted description of my observations of diseases in the field of educational development, but with a serious intent. The focus is largely on the systems meant to be supporting development – the donors, project implementing contractors, development centres, academics and consultants.

In development work, **Blurred Vision** is best summed up as not seeing the wood for the trees (or vice versa) or having a distorted perception of reality. Philip Jones makes the important point in an analysis of commitments to enrol all children in school by asking what is the value of getting kids into really poor quality schools that may actually damage children's experience of learning (Jones, 2008). In other words, the apparently sensible "vision" of enrolling all children in school is blurred by a failure to consider what is actually going on in so many of them.

Blurred Vision was common in the early years of higher education development. It manifested itself in many ways. In universities, often unsupportive of the idea of improving learning and teaching, some educational developers' vision became blurred as they sought to build acceptance by a tendency to focus on either too many things at once or the wrong things exclusively, leading to weakened capacity, perceptions of irrelevance by others, and even to the death of at least one educational development centre.

An extraordinary faith in educational technology at that time was manifested in the vision that if only everyone would use the OHP[1] properly, the quality of lectures would improve and, ergo, the overall quality of university education would improve! That disease appeared to have been cured with the demise of the OHP only to reappear again with the spread of PowerPoint.

Pragmatic Language Impairment (PLI) is a disorder where people face special challenges with the semantic aspects and appropriate use of language. It can display as pathological talkativeness, deficient access to vocabulary, and atypical choice of terms.

Language is fundamental to communication. But academics are often not clear in what they are communicating in educational development. It is as if language has mutated into some kind of verbal "ritual dance" among an increasing number of specialists. It is well to remember, as my English teacher was fond of saying, that the word "jargon" derives from late-middle English where it meant a twittering or gibberish.

Now working in Indonesia, where English is not the first language, but nevertheless used extensively in education, encouraging the use of clear language is essential. It is a sad loss to development that so much written English these days does not communicate its meanings at all clearly to huge numbers of potential readers here. I really do not understand why professional educators write such convoluted material that clogs too many journals today, effectively rendering them completely inaccessible to non-native users of English. At a time when much attention is given to the idea of *inclusion* in education, far too much written English *excludes* potential audiences. This phenomenon is linked to **Development Schizophrenia** (see below).

PLI is a disease that afflicted me early in my academic career. A vigilant editor committed to the extraordinary goal of clear writing effectively treated me. Brief bouts of recurrent PLI emerged a little later but these were firmly dealt with by uncomprehending medical educators who, at the time, had an aversion to language that included such awful educational jargon such as "behavioural objectives" and "cognitive". PLI is like contracting malaria; you can recover but will sometimes experience a relapse.

My treatment regime for PLI was so effective that I set out on my own campaign to publicly denounce the inappropriate use of the term "pedagogy" in higher education, insisting that writers desist from using it because of its etymology and sexist connotations (Cannon, 2001). I have to report that in this campaign I was a spectacular failure, as the increasingly frequent use of "pedagogy" in today's literature on teaching in higher education testifies.

PLI, sadly, often occurs concurrently with blurred vision. This results in individuals and organisations, not knowing where they are, where they are going, and completely incapable of asking for directions.

Often found to co-exist with PLI, **Development Echolalia** is the repetition of vocalisations made by another person or the repetition of nonsense syllables and acronyms. The development community finds practitioners doing the same in response to information overload. Having myself just grasped the idea of "knowledge sharing", I now find this may be an outdated concept already supplanted by the new idea of "knowledge translation" (Knowledge Translation, 2008)! It is, of course bad academic practice not to explain acronyms, but please excuse this brief list normally encountered on any working day in educational development in Indonesia: PAKEM, SBM, SPM, SISWA,

SWAp, MGPBE, BEC-TF, MoNE, MoRA, BERMUTU, POM, PAM, PIM and a few rather ordinary ones you may know about such as ADB, UNICEF, UNESCO, JICA, GTZ, EU, EC, AusAID and USAID.

Sadly, Development Echolalia has been known to lead to paralysis. This point is illustrated by the wonderful Indonesian interpretation of the acronym that summarises all this nicely – NATO: "No Action Talk Only".

A good medical dictionary will tell you that those afflicted with **Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD)** are self-centred, exaggerate their talents, set unrealistic goals and may take advantage of others to achieve these goals. There is an inability to recognise or identify with the viewpoints of others - particularly those with specialist training and experience in the field.

Given high levels of school participation these days, almost everyone seems to know exactly how to manage education, construct curriculum and how to teach. Opinion pieces in *The Australian* newspaper often demonstrate evidence of NPD in the alarming confidence that journalists have in their own judgements about complex educational issues such as curriculum and performance ranking of schools.

Government Ministers of Education suffer from this disease acutely and, according to reports, so do some Vice Chancellors and their Deputies. Incredibly, NPD is transmitted instantaneously when a prime minster allocates ministerial portfolios following an election. It astonishes me that no one has ever thought to do research into this instant acquisition of expertise. Think of the time and money to be saved on education if we could exploit the transmission of this disease. Instead of the inconvenience of going to school and university, students would be inoculated with NPD to become instant experts. It adds a new dimension to the idea of the "inoculation theory of education" attributable to Postman and Weingartner, in their book *Teaching as a Subversive Activity,* Penguin, 1971.

Atherosclerosis is a disease in which blood vessels that carry oxygenated blood from the heart to other parts of the body, become narrowed, and calcified. As the flow of blood to the affected organs is restricted, heart attack or stroke may result. Observation suggests a strong similarity between this medical condition with

occurrences in various educational and development organisations. **Administrative Atherosclerosis** is a disorder in which the management processes of an organisation - the rules, regulations, processes, and accountability requirements - form a plaque of unread reports, submissions, budget documents and strategic plans. This plaque eventually blocks the whole administrative process, causing disease and possible death to the service-delivery organs of development implementation that the bureaucracy was actually meant to be sustaining in the first place. Ultimately, the whole organisation is weakened and dies. This disease is particularly prevalent in universities and countries like Indonesia. It is thought that the condition may be a clinical reaction to an over-dose of mistrust and otherwise well-intentioned administrative actions to improve governance, planning, budgeting, monitoring, accountability, occupational health and safety, knowledge sharing, performance management, good practices, professional development and equity. Whether the primary cause of it in Indonesia is heat or corruption is not clear. What is clear is that there is a very strong link to **Blurred Vision** (see above).

Development Hypochondriasis is described as a condition where an abnormal anxiety about the health of education is manifested in frequent trips to the "doctor"; this is also known as **Development Dependency**.

This disease has two forms. One is at the institutional level. In this form of the disease we can see signs in the number of reviews of higher education in Australia. An interesting research exercise would be to count the number of higher education reviews by government since the Murray Report in the 1950's until the present Bradley Review. In Indonesia, we found in a recent review conducted for the World Bank (Cannon and Arlianti, 2008) that there had been 35 different projects to improve the quality of basic education since 1998. Another measure of Development Hypochondriasis is that just one donor among many, the Asian Development Bank, had funded 20 different projects between 1975 – 1992 to the tune of US$981 million. The Bank has also been very busy since then deepening the dependency.

There is evidence of **Development Hypochondriasis** occurring at the personal level as well. I am sure that anyone who has

provided support services to academics will be familiar with the small number of people who make frequent visits to centres to check up on their teaching or this or that issue that has emerged and who also usually attend most workshops. Remedies for this disease are unknown. It is believed that research to investigate the condition is systematically blocked by interests wishing to ensure that things remain exactly as they are.

Then there is **Development Schizophrenia,** which is the breakdown between thought and behaviour and withdrawal from reality. A bad case of this disease was identified in a development project in Indonesia designed to demonstrate "demand-based funding" in a bottom-up, decentralised context. But this project then actually <u>gave</u> money in a top-down, centralised manner for expenditure on items strictly specified from the top!

And finally, **Development Diarrhoea** is a disease worthy of mention. An incredible outpouring of publications, many of dubious quality, manifests this disease. Not content to treat Development Diarrhoea, educational institutions and development agencies seem to be actually encouraging it by demanding ever more "reports", pouring larger amounts of money at it, and even promoting staff on the volume of their productive efforts.

I can conclude these light-hearted musings in no better way than to apply two serious points made by Stephen Abrahamson in his analysis of disease. The first point is that there is no systematic data collection of development efforts in Indonesian education and related pathologies. In the absence of data, the space is filled with internal reports, opinion, and rhetoric aimed at sustaining treasured points of view, and defending the status quo. With accurate data we begin a process of a more reasoned approach to giving kids the chance of a better education.

The second and final point, as Abrahamson notes, is that humankind survived millennia without understanding diseases and their causes. But in today's knowledge society it is no longer acceptable to plough on without a sound, research-based understanding of the pathological processes of educational development, processes for which we all share some responsibility.

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Endnotes

1   For those too young and innocent, an OHP or Overhead Projector, is a device for projecting images onto a screen behind the teacher.

Robert Cannon is an education consultant who has worked in Indonesia with the University of Indonesia, the Asian Development Bank, AusAID, The World Bank, UNICEF and USAID, (a case of Development Echolalia?). He was Director of the Advisory Centre for University Education at the University of Adelaide from 1977 until 2001. Emailed information concerning outbreaks of new and mysterious development diseases can be sent to: cannon@indo.net.id

Talking about Teaching and Learning (TATAL)

By Coralie McCormack and Robert Kennelly

Introduction

Talking About Teaching And Learning (TATAL) is a network of ACT region learning and teaching leaders co-sponsored by ACT HERDSA (branch of the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia) and the Promoting Excellence Initiative at the University of Canberra *Making Room to Lead* (an Australian Learning and Teaching Council funded project). The program is facilitated by the President of the ACT Branch of HERDSA (a HERDSA fellow) and the University of Canberra Promoting Excellence Initiative manager. (See page 12 for a photo of the team).

The program has its geneses in the desire of a number of HERDSA members to reconstitute the ACT HERDSA Branch to encourage greater collaborative scholarship in teaching and learning amongst the universities of the region. The new branch has been going for nearly 2 years. Current membership is 51. Over this time the branch has presented a number of activities including sharing perceptions of the 2008 HERDSA conference, a networking event and the TATAL program.

In relation to TATAL, two motivations coalesced: a need to encourage specific focus on the improvement of student learning; and a need to support academic and teaching-related staff in preparing a promotion application; faculty, institutional or national teaching award applications; institutional teaching grant applications and HERDSA fellowship applications.

How does it work?

TATAL sought to establish and maintain a collaborative cohort of reflective practitioners who meet regularly to articulate a portfolio of their teaching and learning. The vision was to establish a supportive collaborative group who would work together over a year to produce a teaching philosophy statement and a teaching portfolio. Specifically, the program objectives were to:

- Provide a safe collaborative environment in which to investigate the challenges and successes of teaching and learning;

- Develop enhanced skills and confidence in writing and sharing teaching and learning experiences; and

- Provide support for colleagues preparing applications for:

  - Faculty/Institution/ALTC awards and grants.

  - ALTC fellowships / HERDSA fellowships / UC Teaching and Learning Centre fellowships.

  - ASCILITE awards and mentoring program.

Action research and reflective practice provide the framework for the program. Action research in this context is a systematic way of investigating teaching practice with the aim of improving student learning and then undertaking further investigations to find out the outcomes of the changes implemented. Reflective practice is defined as a *robust, on going interrogation of one's teaching and one's students' learning* (Kennelly, 2004).

The program began in September 2008 with fourteen colleagues from three Canberra universities meeting for one and a half hours (see table below). In 2009 the program continues with seven participants meeting monthly for two hours.

Competing priorities led to most participant withdrawals. Sometimes the competing commitments related to work and further study (a PhD and postgraduate coursework qualification) or research publication. As two participants noted:

> I was afraid this was going to happen this year ... my study and work commitments mean that something has to get pushed off the end of the perch... TATAL was my reflective practice and peer coaching time ... I have really enjoyed and appreciated the sessions.

> Currently, I am working around 70 hours per week and I imagine I will be finalising the papers and sending them off until the very last minute of the due date. I do value the discussion that takes place around the practice and scholarship of teaching and have enjoyed

being involved with the developing community of practitioners who are committed to teaching and learning.

A family caring responsibility or a clash of the meeting time with teaching sessions could also lead to a re-prioritisation of commitments as one participant commented:

You will hardly be surprised to hear that my competing priorities and commitments are winning at present... I note that TATAL has moved to Fridays at 3-5pm. I'm afraid that this time will not work for me as it conflicts with a class that I teach.

One participant left academia to return to private practice in 2009.

Participants met four times in 2008 and have continued to meet monthly in 2009. The following table presents the timing and the session agenda for each meeting. Developing a teaching philosophy statement was the focus for the 2008 meetings. The focus for the 2009 sessions will be on developing a teaching portfolio.

Session timing	Session agenda
TATAL 1 September 2008	Introductions: Program aim/objectives, participants, key program elements Process of reflective practice underpinning this group's work What is a teaching philosophy? A teaching portfolio? Free writing activity: Why are you a teacher? What personal experiences inform/motivate my teaching?
TATAL 2 October 2008	Review first meeting and ground rules Share writing activity from TATAL 1: Why are you a teacher? Ingredients of a Teaching portfolio (inc. a statement of philosophy of teaching and learning) Free writing activity: What do I believe about teaching? What do I believe about learning?
TATAL 3 November 2008	Sharing views: What do I believe about teaching? What do I believe about learning? What is a teaching philosophy statement? Further discussion. Three ways to get started on your statement Three ways to continue to work on your statement Preparing for TATAL 4
TATAL 4 November 2008	Collaborative conversations about teaching philosophy statements: Read, reflect, respond Collaborative feedback on philosophy statements Assessing your philosophy statement, Looking forward to teaching portfolios Reflection on expectations & look to the future Over summer continue work on teaching philosophy statement and post on program Moodle site in preparation for TATAL 5
TATAL 5 February 2009	Workshop facilitated by visiting scholar Dr Dieter Schonwetter (Schonwetter et. al., 2002): Framework for a teaching philosophy statement Assessment of philosophy statements including general feedback from Dieter across the group's philosophy statements (Each participant also received individual and private feedback on their philosophy statement from Dieter) Components of a teaching portfolio
TATAL 6 February 2009	Reflection: Where to with teaching philosophy statements? TATAL for 2009: Review ground rules, expectations of participants and facilitators and development of 2009 program: timing, content, processes Preparing for collaborative inquiry into your teaching: discussion of action research, critical incident analysis Presentation of a case study story from facilitator's teaching practice and feedback to facilitator Reflect on critical incident for discussion in first story Preparation for TATAL 7: Write first teaching story
TATAL 7 March 2009	Reflect on TATAL program so far Begin collaborative inquiry by sharing a written critical incident story. Small group guided discussion: 1. What did you do? 2. What were the results? 3. What did you learn? 4. Finally what will you do next? Collaborative group discussion of stories
TATAL 8 April 2009	Participants continue to share their first story Participants share reflections on first story and process Discussion: writing up stories and support for this process Participants reflect on possible second stories to share Reflection on group processes

What are the results so far?

Program evaluation to date suggests outcomes for participants align with their expectations (table below). Four themes have emerged: group characteristics, enhancing teaching and learning, personal/ professional learning, and recognition and reward.

The emerging themes suggest the TATAL program, with its grounding in action research and reflective practice, combined with its emphasis on collaborative group processes, as well as the outcome of a teaching philosophy statement, is different from *most common approaches to writing a teaching philosophy [which] offer descriptive lists of questions regarding one's beliefs about students, the role of the teaching, and the outcomes of higher education.* (Beatty, et. al., 2009, p.100). The process appears to be as important as the outcomes. As Beatty et. al., (2009, p.112) also note:

> Because one's teaching philosophy is such a core element of one's identity as a teacher, direct criticism of one's teaching philosophy is akin to a direct assault on

the self and will shut down any king of learning dialogue ... a shared discussion ... can help build community.

Through TATAL we are developing communities where this on going shared discussion can take place. The success of the first TATAL has prompted us to start a new TATAL which has met twice. Please watch this space, as with the editor's agreement, we will keep you posted on our progress.

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Emerging themes	Participants' expectations	Participants' outcomes reported to date
Group characteristics	Sharing perspectives Share experiences Collegiality (collaborative cohort) Collaboration	Safe sharing Support for a community of teaching and learning interests Direction and dynamics of group Diverse group, great networking making for creative conversations That I am excited about TATAL and working with the others to improve teaching and learning at UC Collegiality (motivating, like-minded colleagues) Shared perspectives Luxury to engage in this process (implicit/explicit)
Enhance teaching and learning	Improve practice Motivate students Sharpen teaching skills Share and receive feedback on teaching problems Assessment that encourages depth of learning	This activity connects with my learning and teaching goals Reflective practice consolidated Teachers have common concerns/issues/ideas regardless of discipline I plan to help other academic staff benefit from reflection on their teaching/assessment practice and their underlying motivations
Professional / Personal Learning	Consolidation of information on teaching portfolios and develop a philosophy statement Develop a teaching portfolio	Teaching philosophy statements developed (7 participants) Opportunity to keep moving on the T&L journey I learnt to write the "big" version of my teaching philosophy first then cut it down to a shorter version for my specific purpose. I thought about the things that will help me carry on with the teaching philosophy part of the journey and two things came to mind: a metaphor and goals. These propelled me to move on to the next stage of my thinking. I have learnt that I need to be more systematic and less descriptive when writing about my teaching and that I need evidence to support my claims. I learned that though I have been teaching for a very long time. I have been teaching, without having ever asked myself why I am doing this as a profession. I wonder whether I am not reflective enough.
Recognition & reward		One participant has registered for a HERDSA Fellowship; another has begun working towards a fellowship application. Another member has been awarded a University of Canberra Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning (the application included the teaching philosophy statement developed in TATAL). The participant has been nominated for an ALTC award.

HERDSA Fellows Column

The Role of the HERDSA Fellowship Programme in the Development of Academic Leadership

By Merran Govendir

This article is one in a series whereby HERDSA Fellows discuss their experiences undertaking a HERDSA Fellowship. In a previous column, eloquently written by Peter Jones (Jones, 2008), he describes his experience of undertaking a HERDSA Fellowship, which is not unlike my own. Like Peter, I found the "process of developing an application to be frustrating and rewarding". I too found reading the guidelines and criteria through initially "straightforward enough, but when I sat down to address them, they suddenly appeared less clear and more complex". I too was encouraged by the comments of the assessors' reports on my submitted portfolio as "I could see more clearly what they were looking for" and it was at this stage I can remember my relief when my thoughts finally fell into place. However throughout the process of developing my recognition portfolio for a HERDSA Fellowship, I was frequently motivated with the famous line attributed to John F Kennedy: "we choose to ….. do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard", and recognised that one of the reasons that I was undertaking a HERDSA Fellowship was to develop and further utilise academic leadership skills.

There are many definitions of leadership, however the definition I identify with, is viewing leadership as an everyday process of supporting, managing, developing and inspiring colleagues by changing the way people look at challenges and how they relate to each other (Ramsden 1998, Vantage Point Consulting 2000). Furthermore leadership is not about a "somebody" but it is a about "something" - a process. Additionally leadership is not exclusively performed by those who bear titles, or are at the highest echelons of an organisation, or carry the greatest responsibilities, but is performed by everyone (Ramsden, 1998). Collecting these ideas provides a definition

of leadership that aligns effectively with undertaking and maintaining the HERDSA Fellowship qualifications. There are some distinct components associated with this model of leadership which involve i) creating a clear vision of what is to be achieved both in the present as well as in the future ii) experimenting and taking risks iii) being a good role model iv) recognising the importance of, and delivering effective communication v) appreciating the importance and being proactive in developing satisfying interpersonal relationships and vi) the leadership process is outcomes focused (adapted from Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Zenger & Folkman 2007).

On a broader level, the HERDSA Fellowship Programme's (HFP) very purpose is to encourage leadership in "improving the quality of education practice across the higher education sector" (HERDSA, 2009). Consequently Fellowship candidates are expected to demonstrate, and provide evidence for, how they meet HERDSA Fellowship criteria on the principles of good teaching practice. On a personal level, embarking on the HERDSA Fellowship programme required that I examine my idea of "what learning is", my vision of the quality of student learning that I was trying to achieve from my teaching practices and whether my teaching practices achieved my expectations and my students' expectations. Additionally I needed to take into account how my own learning, as a result of participating in the HFP, would impact of my present and future vision of learning and teaching.

The HFP encouraged experimenting and taking risks. Responding to each of the set seven criteria of the HERDSA Fellowship recognition programme, required that I considered aspects of my teaching and learning in new ways. Sometimes I had great difficulty in responding to some of the criteria, I felt totally blocked and

consequently resorted to scholarly articles, attending learning and teaching seminars, listening to colleagues' ideas and bearing some inner thoughts to mentors. However as a result of such activity, inspiration eventuated and suitable strategies evolved. Some of these ideas worked well and others were only partially effective or failed altogether. However even those concepts that didn't work were lessons in themselves. The most recent experimenting and risk taking which I have embarked on, is writing about my teaching and learning experiences such as this column and along with some across-faculty colleagues, we have submitted a "scholarly" paper for the '09 HERDSA conference. As my research discipline is in the sciences, it is a relatively new and daunting experience to write for the specific "learning and teaching" audience.

In undertaking the HFP, you accept that you are going to put yourself "out there" and attempt to act as an exemplary model for not only improving your own learning and teaching practices but also encourage best practices from others, aligning with the idea that successful leadership experiences are transformational for participants (Ramsden 1998). However HERDSA Fellowship requires personal discipline and commitment; you recognise the need to communicate ideas in a variety of mediums and forums, the need to encourage or be involved with, learning and teaching collaborations across schools, faculties and institutions, provide mentorship for those that seek it and demonstrate best practices for those that don't.

The HFP is about exchanging of ideas in order to improve teaching and learning practices. As a participant in the programme you have the opportunity to exchange your ideas with an assigned mentor (a HERDSA Fellow) and / or other local colleagues. You receive feedback from the assessors on your portfolio and once awarded a HERDSA Fellowship,

an exchange of learning and teaching ideas continues with other HERDSA Fellows within a triad. Such exchanges align with the leadership process; as the interchange of ideas between participants, the active listening to ideas, and either the delivery or reception of positive or negative (non-personalised) feedback to further fine-tune ideas, all of which are encouraged by the HFP. The exchange of ideas naturally leads to another aspect of the leadership process which implies that you can't do either the HFP or engage in the process of leadership, alone. Both leadership and the HFP are social processes and pursuits. I made a decision early in undertaking the programme that I needed to reach out and request a formal mentor to assist me with my reflections. I also asked a faculty colleague to listen and provide feedback on my ideas. The conversations I had with my mentors without a doubt enhanced my learning during the programme. Once you have achieved a Fellowship you are teamed up with other Fellows and work in a triad and the collective learning and respectful communication continues.

The last concept I would like to explore is the idea is that the success of any leadership process is assessed by its outcomes. Has my engagement in the HFP resulted in satisfactory personal outcomes and satisfactory outcomes for my faculty and what is the evidence to support this? I am the first to admit that I continue to experience success and failures across the gamut of academic pursuits including learning and teaching tasks; however through engagement with the HFP I recognise the requirement to set learning and teaching goals and to evaluate the impact on learning when these goals are achieved.

For a variety of reasons undertaking a HERDSA Fellowship was challenging, but a rewarding experience. I was totally unaware that a HERDSA Fellowship would encourage my experiences with the leadership process until I engaged with the process. I look forward to the opportunity to utilising these leadership skills in the future, as in due course I may be requested to take the role of mentor for a new candidate, or a portfolio assessor. I will continue to incorporating leadership skills in my teaching and other academic duties. On a lighter note, in the course of preparing this article I couldn't help "googling" to find an apt quote on leadership to include in this column. Unfortunately most quotes were about leaders and very few about the process of leadership. I conclude with one of the stranger quotes, attributed to Adlai Stevenson, I presume it has something to do with being confident taking on a leadership role, but I like to think that it alludes to risk taking?

> It's hard to lead a cavalry charge if you think you look funny on a horse.
>
> http://www.wisdomquotes.com

Thank you to my fellow triad member Professor Geoffrey Crisp for his feedback on this article.

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Merran Govendir, BVSc, PhD, MEd(HigherEd), MACVSc originally practiced as a veterinarian before returning to further tertiary study and completing a PhD. She is now a senior lecturer in veterinary pharmacology in the faculty of Veterinary Science at The University of Sydney. In 2005 she completed a MEd and completed HERDSA Fellowship in 2007. Besides undergraduate teaching and supervising postgraduate students, she is Associate Dean for Postgraduate Studies for the Faculty of Veterinary Science, overseeing all aspects of both postgraduate research and coursework degrees at a faculty level. In 2007 the faculty Postgraduate Education Research & Training Committee (which she chairs) was awarded the Vice Chancellor's Award for Supporting the Student (Postgraduate) Experience.

She is interested in all aspects of learning and teaching at both the undergraduate and postgraduate level. Areas that have particular interest include the pedagogy of on-line learning, the process of leadership and encouraging postgraduate students to engage with such concepts and developing relevant assessment tasks for large cohorts of undergraduate students.

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Left: Talking About Teaching And Learning (TATAL) Group at Workshop on Assessing Philosophy Statements.

Front: Dieter Schonwetter, Doug Jackman, Judy Stone, Amy Taylor, Donna Hodgson, Barbara Cram.

Back: Coralie McCormack, Jim Cumming, Robert Kennelly, Monica Kennedy, Ting Wang, Andrew Read, Barbara Cram.

Absent: Francis Miley.

Meanderings

By Robert Cannon

Late last year a colleague enquired about the publication date of the first issue of HERDSA's journal, *Higher Education Research and Development* (HERD). Volume 1 Number 1 of HERD appeared in 1982 – I know this to be true as I have the journal sitting beside me on my desk here in Jakarta. It makes fascinating reading and provokes many thoughts about the history of educational development. As I look back, I remind myself of that Herman cartoon where Herman, drawn as the elderly father, is gloomily reading his young son's bad report card on a history examination. The son's retort to his father is "Sure you were good at History, you were *there* for most of it!"

Sadly, I note the observation made in that first edition of HERD in 1982 by Simon Prokhovnik in his article *Learning to Teach* that "… anything I can say about university teaching and testing has been said almost ad infinitum by the professionals working in the field" has not stopped said professionals saying things, but rather, they seem to have been hugely encouraged to say even more ad infinitum through the ever-expanding opportunities presented by new journals, the web, and academic conferences over the ensuing years.

The first editor of *Higher Education Research and Development* was John Powell. John passed away late last year. The last issue of *HERDSA News* for 2008 contained a wonderful tribute to John's enormous contribution to HERDSA in particular and to university teaching more generally. I think all who knew John would be touched by the heartfelt tribute presented there by his former colleagues. They generously acknowledged the outstanding scholarship and personal style of one of the "founding fathers" of HERDSA. I will not try to add more to their words here. Apart from his fine editorial work, John included a regular section called *Browsings* in the early editions of HERD and this present column is unashamedly modelled on that stimulating work, partly as a tribute to John, and partly because I think his humorous approach is worth trying to replicate as both a fun thing to do and to lighten-up the otherwise serious

tone of so much academic publication in the increasingly gloomy world we live in. I am sure John would approve and also have some devastatingly witty comment to add. Which leads me to academic humour…

This column is intended to be a meander through the absurdities, oddities and, above all humour, to be found in the work of academics. Contrary to popular perceptions, academics do display a lively sense of humour and John was a master of the art.

Academic humour can be of many kinds: humour about the academic life such as funny stories and jokes, humour in the routine work of the academic disciplines and it can also be about the serious study of humour itself. Not surprisingly, the last of these is a topic that appealed to John Powell and his colleague Lee Andresen. They wrote a serious review of humour in teaching and this appeared in *Studies in Higher Education* (10, 1, 1985). I plan to have a look at this particular paper as well as some of the more recent research on humour in teaching in future columns in the *News*.

All of us who studied economics at some time in our lives will be familiar with its descriptor "the dismal science". I also thought Chemistry was a pretty dismal subject when I studied it, but it turns out that this view of Chemistry is not justified at all. I was surprised to learn of some of the humorous (and perfectly scientific) names given to certain compounds – especially acids, among them erotic acid, comic acid, moronic acid and diabolic acid. Many other names of compounds are not worth risking in a polite journal such as this one, but crapinon and uranate will give a clue as to the direction an extended catalogue of such names would take us in! My source for aspiring chemical humorists is: http://www.chm.bris.ac.uk/sillymolecules/sillymols.htm.

Einstein is reputed to be among scientists with a good sense of humour, for it is claimed he observed that two things are believed to be infinite in size: the universe and human stupidity, but he was not 100% sure about the universe!

Academic journals used to provide a good source of humour and much of it was unintentional. Regrettably, too many journals have moved away from this tendency, perhaps wisely so as some of the issues addressed in papers seem rather "odd" to say the least from today's perspective! For example, D.H. Schuster reported in the *Journal of the Society of Accelerative Learning and Teaching* (8, 3 – 4, 1983) that a vibrating chair did not significantly enhance verbal learning above that found when learning words using a conventional chair. This is probably a good outcome as the costs – to say nothing of the environmental impact – of teaching large lecture classes seated on vibrating chairs does not bear thinking about. And what of the power costs and carbon-footprint of such a mechanised activity?

Medical educators have had a long and strong interest in improving education and the medical curriculum was renowned for its time demands on students. Perhaps the potential to take advantage of time wasted resting and sleeping prompted a study reported in the *British Medical Journal* (287, 24-31 December, 1983), which was also interested in verbal learning. The study was prompted by a preliminary study that found "… that little or none of the content of the lectures … was actually retained for more than 0.3 kilo seconds, and that recall was inversely proportional to the prevalence of sleep or dreaming among the audience, or both".

It is pure speculation, but perhaps the outcome of this second study may have been different if the audience had been seated in vibrating chairs! The title of the paper, incidentally, is "Dreaming during scientific papers: effects of added extrinsic material". Think about it! I am still not sure if this paper may have been one that "slipped through" the peer review process. Correspondence on the subject will be welcome.

To conclude, I recall seeing a list of Murphy's 15 other laws the other day, one of which states that "light travels faster than sound - this is why some people appear bright until

you hear them speak". Or, perhaps I should add here - before you do - until they write!!

As I append the usual formal bio, I vividly recall one brave contribution in a prestigious management journal which read along the lines of "Joe Doe has a diploma from the Excelsior School of Driver Education and prefers wooden to wire coat hangers. When not sleeping or playing with his children, Joe is Professor of Organisation Behaviour

at Harvard University" (or some such illustrious university). I wish writers and editors would try such originality more often!

Me? I have been a member of HERDSA since 1975 and was Director of the (then) Advisory Centre for University Education at the University of Adelaide from 1977 – 2001. I am now a consultant to the World Bank, USAID and to UNICEF

in the development of basic education in Indonesia, a nation with a population of about 250 million. Despite the enormous challenges of educational change and development in such a huge system here, it has never been as difficult or dispiriting as working in an Australian university as the obituaries to John Powell in the last News *amply illustrated.*

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THE HOW TO ... TEACHING SERIES

HOW TO…
Teach People Older Than You

By Peter Kandlbinder

Many cultures believe that age brings with it wisdom. This makes it easy for younger academics to feel inferior simply because of an age difference with their students. Older students may be unaware of the effects they can have on younger academics, who report feeling intimidated by the greater life and work experience that older students bring into the class, some of who come from running departments or senior positions in industry. Research suggests that there are solutions for those suffering self-doubt in front of older students (Gravois, 2007). Nesler, Aguinis, Quigley & Tedeschi found that as well as age, many people associate confidence and leadership with expert knowledge. Without the perception of authority that being older can bring, a younger university teacher might:

Promote an image of expertise. Making sure that their class knows about their formal education, relevant work experience, and significant accomplishments relevant to the subject. Command of subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge is necessary if they are to establish their expert authority as a professional educator.

Act confidently and decisively in the classroom. Students like teachers who "take charge" and appear to know how to direct a group when it is coping with a

problem. They still need to listen carefully to the concerns and uncertainties of their older students, who often have to juggle home and work responsibilities, and make sure that they address their older students concerns.

Avoid threatening the self-esteem of older students. Mitchell & Spady argue that legitimacy in education is based on a teachers' ability to encourage student learning which can only be achieved by helping students develop feelings of worth and security within their classroom. Don't infantilise older students by lecturing to them in a condescending way or convey the impression that they are ignorant. Value the contribution that older students can make by involving them in planning their learning activities, work together to establish their study goals are help them accomplish their goals.

Confront those who doubt their abilities. Some academics find it empowering to directly address those who question their presence in the classroom. Rather than fume in silence about having their right to teach questioned, they let the person know that remarks about their age are inappropriate. If unsure of how to do this, a younger academic might need to consider assertiveness training on how to stand up

for themselves without being defensive or aggressive.

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Add your comment on this issue and other dilemmas of academic practice on the How to… web site of HERDSA News: http://herdsanews.wordpress.com/

HOW TO… is a 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 for this series by emailing *Peter.Kandlbinder@uts.edu.au* and outlining an incident or situation you have come across.

THE PHILOSOPHER'S COLUMN

Making Wisdom: Plato's "Common Touch"

By Ann Kerwin

Do they sound familiar?

1. *Whirr whirr slosh*

2. *Bang Bang Bang Bang*

3. *Neigh neigh whinny clatter clatter*

4. *Grunt long moan grunt brief low moan in-breath sigh faint cry*

Do you recognise them?

1. Water-whirled, miraculous, a vessel rises in a potter's hands

2. Building, a carpenter's progress

3. Rounding a corner, avoiding a pedestrian, one imperturbable charioteer steers two massive horses forward

4. Labour ceases; mother and midwife smile as baby greets them.

They are sounds of philosophy. At least Plato thought so. You will have heard of Plato.

He was born in 427 B.C. into a prominent Athenian family. Both parents descended from Solon, the illustrious lawgiver whose reforms presaged the fragile democracy of Plato's day. If we could access Google Earth while going back in time to view the Athens Plato knew, we would find much to admire, for fifth century B.C.E. Athens was proud and prosperous, architecturally, intellectually and culturally magnificent. We could glimpse outdoor premieres of plays by Sophocles, Aeschylus and Aristophanes---drama read and performed across the globe today. We could zoom in on Phidias' fluid sculptures, gracing a glistening Parthenon. We'd likely surmise: nowhere in all the mighty, populous realms of Aegean and Mediterranean civilisation combined did science, medicine, mathematics and philosophy flourish as in the comparatively small Attic city-state of Plato's birth.

But, glittering though she was, Athens was also fractious.

Plato was young when his father died. His mother, a literate cultured woman whom Plato revered, re-married. Her second husband and his sons were wealthy political men---sometimes powerbrokers, sometimes imperilled. Plato's full brothers and uncle opposed his step clan in civic strife, civil war, and their tense, bitter aftermath.

Plato knew turmoil.

Over the course of his life, aristocrats had deposed democrats; democrats exiled rivals; Athens, Sparta and mighty Persia had sparked and sparred. While Plato championed pure, incorporeal Ideas, he also pondered politics. His *Republic* asserts: how we live, what we value, and how we forge polity are vital for us---and hence, for philosophy. But Plato did not join the "family business". He did not become a public man.

Plato despised tyranny. Yet he distrusted democracy.

In his youth, Plato had apprenticed himself to the controversial civic interrogator, Socrates. He had stood in the *agora* (the central marketplace) with other young aristocrats to witness the aging philosopher render his self-declared "service to the state"---public philosophy. Despite their own political differences, generations of Plato's family and step family had admired Socrates for his unimpeachable integrity, courage in battle, and fair-mindedness. Son of a bricklayer and a midwife, war hero and impoverished free thinker, this unpaid, unaffiliated teacher was a philosopher in the old sense: a "lover of wisdom". He elected to serve the body politic as "gadfly". He buzzed, bit and riled the morally somnolent. He stung the hypocritical, uncritical, and self-satisfied. Socrates did it not to call attention to himself, nor to stir for stirring's sake. The old man knew: under democracy or oligarchy, tyranny or laissez-faire, individual and common good rest not on wealth, power or pretension, but on lived truth and goodness.

Thus he examined. He pestered.

Some so "blest" smarted. Some swatted. Some went for the kill. On the day 501 citizens of the young democracy condemned his mentor to death, Plato offered, over Socrates' objection, to pay a fine to save his teacher's life. It was refused. Plato wept. Nevertheless, he exacted unlikely revenge on Athens for "its crimes against philosophy".

Young Plato recorded for posterity Socrates' riveting rebuke of Athenian complacency and vindication of his life work (*Apology*) contained in three extemporaneous speeches Socrates delivered, in his own defence, at his trial. For twenty five hundred years, readers across continents and cultures have savoured, discussed and admired *the Apology*. But it was not good P.R. While the charges against Socrates were ludicrous and neither jury nor city fathers wished him harm, the old man wouldn't "play the game;" he wouldn't please, plead or placate. Each address provoked, not allayed, the jury's ire. The verdict, death by poisoning, was patently unjust. As Socrates' stunned supporters mourned, he consoled them.

What would he, an old man, suffer for his service to the state?

Death, only that.

Death---he reminded them-- is our shared fate. His enemies would die. His friends would die. At 78, Socrates would soon die. The state could kill him. But it could neither pain nor humiliate him. Contrary to his accusers' intentions and fond imaginings, the philosopher would not depart cringing or disgraced. For its part, Athens would take on the task Socrates had assigned: it *would* examine itself. Proceeding against him, on charges even rabid critics found baseless, Athenians had revealed themselves to a watching world. They had acted on their values. Athens, mighty Athens, had chosen: it had disgraced itself.

Men of means and influence, Plato, his family, and prominent citizens across political spectra conspired with anxious city fathers and lovers of philosophy abroad

to bribe willing officials to let the aging activist slip away, at night, by sea, to reside---honoured and pampered---in foreign palaces, and return when tempers cooled. Steadfastly Socrates declined stealth and safe haven. Let democracy prevail, he insisted. On prison visits, Plato took careful notes of philosophical conversations between the condemned man and friends. Plato's uncle and brothers attended the final discussion---on death. It concluded when the jailer presented Socrates with a cup of poison, high praise, and advice on how to die quickly. With good cheer, Socrates accepted the former and followed the latter. Although Plato could not bear to visit that night, he published the _Apology_, _Crito_ and _Phaedo_ (prison discussions).

Thus Plato ensured Socrates was not silenced.

Although he wrote nothing and died a criminal, through Plato, Socrates' message, character and moral challenge survive. To this day, glittering, glorious Athens is called to account as the trial and death of Socrates, recounted by Plato, are read and re-read across the globe.

Plato went further.

He immortalised his beloved teacher as a character in a brilliant series of remarkably readable philosophical dialogues which issued from Plato's own questing mind long after his mentor's demise. Plato paid due tribute to his lineage, to Socrates and his teacher Diotima: he became his own man. Neither egotist nor pedant, Plato lacked the outsize personality, panache and pugnacity of his provocative mentor. He was, by all accounts, modest, humorous, deferential, thoughtful and generous. Poet, dramatist, mathematician, theorist, ethicist, educator and mystic, Plato was profound and playful, earnest and exploratory. He wrote not treatises, but conversations. They sparkle with life.

Whether you count yourself philosophical or not, Plato will have touched you. I agree with Richard Kraut:

> By any reckoning, one of the most dazzling writers in the Western literary tradition and one of the most penetrating, wide-ranging, and influential authors in the history of philosophy …he displays in his works his absorption in the political events and intellectual movements of his time, but the questions he raises are so profound and the strategies he uses for tackling them so richly suggestive and provocative that educated

readers of nearly every period have in some way been influenced by him…[1]

So great is his reputation ("…the European philosophical tradition is [largely]… a series of footnotes to Plato", [2] Alfred North Whitehead pronounced) that, alas, we may hesitate to engage. Allow me to suggest just a few reasons HERDSA lovers of wisdom might enjoy this ancient sage.

1. It took courage to publish the early dialogues. Wealthier and better-connected men than Plato had been exiled, imprisoned or executed for less. At risk, Plato gave Socrates a posthumous forum. He enriched us.

2. Plato was the first academic. He founded the Academy, an interdisciplinary haven for free inquiry. It was learner-centred. Diotima, the female philosopher of love and Socrates' teacher, advised_: love shapes you, so choose what you love with care; embrace it, enact it … and plan to upgrade._ Plato loved learning. He used his wealth to buy vacant land north of the city at Akademia, a site dedicated to Athena, goddess of Wisdom , there to build a sanctuary for passionate, unfettered learning. Our terms "academe", "academic" and "academy" derive not from some ancient citadel of pristine intellection but from the place name of Plato's original, extraordinary exploratorium. He created a place where students avidly pursued what **they** loved.

Plato did not clone, he inspired.

Consider a celebrated pupil who "found himself" under Plato's tutelage. Plato had written: our senses cannot perceive what is real. Nor can language convey it. Experience we naively take as real, data we rashly accept as true---such things as: sensible existence (change, appearance, bodies, biology)---are not Really Real, though we may be forgiven for thinking so. The world we observe and manipulate---all we see, hear, sense, touch, draw and describe---imperfectly reflects a timeless, immutable and incorruptible Source and template---a realm of Pure Ideas, accessible by soul and intellect. To know truth, for Plato, is to overcome illusion, to focus progressively on the Otherworldly. Plato believed this passionately. But so actively did he disdain discipleship that Aristotle stayed twenty years at the Academy, kept a floral and faunal menagerie on the grounds, experimented and wrote extensively about biology and the natural sciences, repudiated Plato's politics,

metaphysics and epistemology in print, positing opposing theories. Plato loved it.

3. As a writer and thinker, Plato grew. He changed his mind. He let others have their say. Plato developed his own voice. He told tales, created myths and explained the abstract in vivid extended concrete metaphors and allegories. My own former undergraduates--- general education conscripts, not philosophy students---loved Plato's prose for its beauty, sincerity, dignity and inspiration. They read it aloud. It moved us. To be sure, some writings will interest chiefly philosophers, or linguists, political scientists, classicists or theologians. Some early "dialogues" feature a witty, loquacious Socrates pouncing on pundits and interrogating friends and strangers. They are not dialogues but monologues, wherein Socrates "does his thing" (one guesses, as he did in life): dancing, dazzling, jousting, overwhelming stunned participants who quickly lose their bearings only to gasp, at rare intervals, "_Yes, that is so, Socrates_, "_By Jove, you are right, Socrates_", "_You got me there, Socrates_". I suspect Plato was "finding his voice" as philosopher, dramatist, and humourist. He began, as many of us do: emulating mentors.

But, as he developed, Plato drew upon the art of conversation and his own remarkable powers as philosophic storyteller. I cite but two examples.

- Witty, pithy, plucky, conceptually acute, his "Tale of the Ring of Gyges" is a great exercise for teachers and students today. A pointed moral assessment tool, it applies from boardroom to bedroom, across culture, language and time. "Transparency" is not a passing fad.

- Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" features a lone slave who escapes life-long captivity in a dark subterranean cave, stumbling one fine day into the sun-blest world above---the world you and I inhabit. His prior experience (hence his conception) of Reality derives solely from distant garbled sounds and flame-distorted shadows observed by prisoners chained together since childhood facing a craggy wall with no direct view of the teeming world above. From such flawed data had slaves constructed a shared account of reality. Now face-to-face with the world-as-it-is, he is blinded by unaccustomed sunlight. Without familiar markers, disoriented---the escapee is worse-off

than before. Slowly he adjusts. Confusion recedes. He perceives reality directly, undistorted. The tale continues, but not before we grasp that *we* are shackled slaves---confined in our material prison, ignorant of our ignorance, content to dismiss abstract, ideal and otherworldly Reality in favour of mundane distortions. Plato bids us escape. And see anew.

His art is wondrous.

Initially preposterous, Plato's invitations to leap from the box-we-don't-know-we're-in intrigue. He relays the Abstract in terms so familiar and compelling, we get it. From cosmology to consciousness, Plato uses philosophic parables and lively tales less to instruct than entice: to get **us** into the game.

4. You may have heard: Plato privileges abstract knowing and disembodied Forms. Less well known: he extols *techne*, knowing by doing. Our HERDSA tribute ends as it began: with Plato's sounds of philosophy. Diotima and Socrates focused on soul craft: how to make ourselves excellent humans----happy, honest, caring, a pleasure to know---choice by choice. The mature Plato added statecraft: how to make societies which enhance soul making. But who teaches it? For Plato: potters, builders, weavers, soldiers, farmers, charioteers, midwives, musicians---practical folk blessed with the genius of making. They don't teach by telling. Plato knows this. As they craft, they embody, thus they impart.

Plato enjoins: ***Observe them in process. Take in their tacit knowing and tactile elegance, their lofty standards and subtle inarticulate prowess. Notice their skill. Appreciate. Ask yourself: how might I apply this to my art, craft and making---to living-craft, teaching-and-learning craft, to theory-craft as well?***

Although Plato located ultimate truth beyond change, decay and things of this world, he embraces both *theoria* and *techne*. Importantly his dialogues reveal genuine respect, not condescension, for common wisdom. Cobblers, carpenters and charioteers teach philosophers. Their felt wisdom, their capacity to produce and transform, their dogged integrity and exacting standards in practice instruct. Expert practitioners attest: what we do, how we do, constructs us. We build a self; we hammer it, shape it. We build communities. Ritual transforms us. It's hand on, minds on, embodied practice.

Making sense: it's a form of making, an activity.

Like stringing a bow.

Like stalking a bison.

Like weaving a basket.

We make a bow. We make a container for grain. We make a feast.

We make sense of our world. We call this philosophy.

We are *homo faber*: beings who make.

Among labours more physical and exacting, we work to make sense of existence. We fashion it. We make our way. Plato knows this: much depends on our making it well, as best we can. By its well-doing, HERDSA adds to the delightful sounds of philosophy. Were Plato around, he would applaud, surely. *Ann Kerwin, Philosopher's Column, HERDSA NEWS, April 2009*

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Higher Education in the Headlines

By Peter Kandlbinder

A summary of the top stories on higher education from the last 3 months of the Australian Higher Education Supplement (www.theaustralian.news.com.au), Times Higher Education (www.thes.co.uk) and the Chronicle of Higher Education (chronicle.com) found that the review of research performance dominated the higher education press while in Australia the focus was on the Bradley review of higher education. Other themes included: university finance, student demand and complaints, infrastructure spending and the response to the US election.

Research Performance

In November, the *Australian Higher Education Supplement* reported the falling Australian dollar was affecting projects that needed expensive imported equipment and there was a call from the Group of Eight universities to restrict funded research to their universities, with the VC of Melbourne University seeing merit in a US-style community college network. Meanwhile in the UK, the *Times Higher Education* was reporting a similar threat to split the sector so that some universities became teaching only and the plan to introduce low-cost bachelor degrees by Further Education colleges. In the US, *the Chronicle of Higher Education* reported on a rationalisation of doctoral programs targeting low-rating programs. In December, the *Times Higher Education* reported that jobs, funding and reputations all hinged on the RAE results and in January that the focus on "top" research units must be rethought. Throughout January the *Times Higher Education* reported problems with RAE reviewers including too many top scores, game playing by universities to inflate ratings and a new category of "internationally recognised" research to receive public funding. In February, the

Times Higher Education reported that research stars at teaching-led universities were being headhunted to improve the research performance of elite universities, and Post-92 universities could lose cash for PhD students.

Aust. Government Higher Education Review

In November, the *Australian Higher Education Supplement* reported on a higher education sector deeply divided over the review of higher education and in December vouchers were reported as the only way to boost participation rates while the lines between the higher and vocational education sectors where expected to blur. In January, the *Australian Higher Education Supplement* reported price caps would stay for student fees and with the release of the review, the Group of Eight universities split with the other universities over its recommendations. However, in February a degree of reconciliation was reported in the interests of securing increased long-term funding from the Government.

University Finance

In November, the *Times Higher Education* reported a drop in university income due to exchange-rate shifts. In the US the Gates Foundation announced it was focusing on improving completion rates in higher education but in December the *Chronicle of Higher Education* was reporting concerns over funding from foundation grants and income from investments. In January, an increase in grants for high-achieving, low-income students still fell short of demand. Also in January, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* discussed the economic aspects of data storage for U.S. universities and in February reported universities were looking for budget improvements through increased energy efficiency and facilities development.

Student demand higher education

In November, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* discussed high enrolments despite the US economic crisis even if in December

the *Times Higher Education* was concerned that the UK was becoming low-waged high-skilled economy. In January, the *Australian Higher Education Supplement* also reported an increase in student demand with science courses having a significant increase and in February the international student demand also increased despite predictions of a slump. In January a call was made to restrict the number of accounting degrees by Australian universities to overseas students to prevent university exploitation.

Student complaints

In October, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported on a poll that found students are less engaged with issues than most thought and in November the *Times Higher Education* was calling for robust measures of teaching performance. In December, the *Australian Higher Education Supplement* reported the complaints process in many universities is not trusted by students and in February the *Times Higher Education* found student complaints at a university increased when relations with staff soured. In January, the *Times Higher Education* reported the resignation of a vice-chancellor was likely to impact on student tuition fees and revealed in February that the VC left over bullying allegations.

Infrastructure spending

In December, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported some universities had outlined plans for growth and changes to the physical structure and a change in Psychology Departments infrastructure was being brought about by neuroscience research. In February, the *Australian Higher Education Supplement* reported universities lobbying the federal Government to approve ready-to-go building projects.

Response to US election results

In January the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported scientists were celebrating Barack Obama's policy for the federal treatment of science and the new administration's embrace of university expertise.

Prepared 3 March 2009

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I.T. in Higher Education Column

E-theses: Will online change the thesis tradition?

By Roger Atkinson

There are a number of somewhat diverse reasons for revisiting this particular e-topic, so soon after writing my last column, titled *E-books, eBooks, freebooks: Will online replace traditional books?* [1] The question is slightly different because the key feature in relation to theses (according to the particular technological "warp" in my vision) is not "replace" but "change". This takes me to the first reason for this particular e-topic. In a weak moment (it may have been at the ascilite Melbourne 2008 Conference [2] welcome reception, facilitated by the generous supply of fine wines) I agreed to be a thesis examiner. And not long ago, the thesis arrived, by courier, very neatly presented in its temporary binding, though quite bulky with its 1.5 line spacing, single sided A4 format. As I sharpened a few pencils left over from my retirement eight years ago, I thought some more about my very strong preference for reviewing research documents on screen, in word processor format. Very definitely we need to update the traditional approach to thesis examinations! Now, let's get onto the bigger question that this opinion engenders: what influences are the new technologies for publishing exerting upon theses and higher degrees by research?

I'll return to that theme, but first some digressions, hopefully illustrative, into the diversity of other reasons for e-theses rising to the top of the "ideas in tray". During my routine review checking upon a recent submission to *AJET* [3] from a Pakistani author, I had occasion to browse in the Pakistan Research Repository [4], hosted by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, using *EPrints* repository software [5]. This repository contains about 2122 PhD theses awarded by the universities of Pakistan, most are post-1990 but are few are much earlier, including some from the 1930s and 1940s. One example dated 1942 was especially interesting, as the Introduction indicated that the thesis *Studies in Indian Diptera* by Dr Bhatia,

accepted by the University of the Punjab, Lahore [6]:

> … comprises the main conclusions of [the] author's published and yet unpublished papers … It indicates the extent to which the author has contributed to the advance of knowledge about Diptera of the Indian Empire … Most of the species dealt with are either pests of considerable economic importance or are efficient predators of insects of economic importance … A major portion of the work has been done in the laboratory of the Imperial Entomologist [6, Introduction, p.2]

To me this example is interesting from at least six perspectives. It represents a progressive model, based upon published papers (doctorate by publication), not constrained by the usual PhD requirement of "supervised research" within a university context. It is quaintly old fashioned, the *Indian Empire* and the *Imperial Entomologist* belong to a long time ago, but the topic has high regional and international scientific and medical significance (the order *Diptera* includes flies and mosquitos). The repository copy comprises page images in PDF file format, taken from an original which looks like the fourth carbon copy done on a worn out old typewriter. A *Google Author* [7] search finds Dr Bhatia's thesis, but shows no citations recorded. Finally, in recent times international media attention to Pakistan has focused on terrorism, so observing a high standard national repository for PhD theses makes a refreshing difference.

My comment about a "high standard national repository for PhD theses" is based on only a small number of comparisons, so I needed to refresh my memory by checking with sites that I visit more frequently, usually in connection with copy editing of reference lists for AJET and other publications. These are the *Australasian Digital Theses Program* (ADT) [8] and the *Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations* (NDLTD) [9]. The case for e-theses is put succinctly by the ADT:

The experience in all academic libraries is that very few hard copy theses are ever consulted and fewer still consulted frequently. The ADT experience on the other hand is that digital theses are consulted frequently and from over 100 countries – some have led to jobs or research projects. [10]

The NDLTD made a similar point about limited use of traditional hard copy versions in 1997:

> Circulation data from the Virginia Tech library indicates that the average number of times a thesis or dissertation is checked out per year is small (2 or 3, respectively, during the first 6 years after completion). [11]

Browsing further, you will encounter recently invented phrases such as *retrodigitisation of theses* [DART-Europe, 12] and jargonised action items such as *Born-digital theses harvested from institutional repositories* [EThOS, 13]. DART-Europe provides succinct, technology oriented definitions of the variety of forms an e-thesis can take [14]:

- It may be an electronic version of a recently produced printed thesis. A typical example would be a text-based piece of work produced in Word and converted into PDF.

- It may be a text-based thesis produced some time ago that has been scanned and converted into PDF.

- It may be a digital thesis that includes audio or visual material and it may not even be designed to be read in a traditional linear format. A thesis of this type, which incorporates multimedia as an integral part of the work, may not have a paper equivalent.

- It may be a publication-based thesis which includes only a limited amount of text followed by the bibliographic details of the associated publications (including links to electronic versions of the relevant journal articles etc). [14]

However, definitions are not standardised. For example, compared with "publication

based thesis", the terms "doctorate by publication" and "PhD by publication" appear to be used more frequently in the literature. The terms "e-thesis" and "digital thesis" are both used widely. The acronym ETD, electronic theses and dissertations, is often used, for example in the following announcement (powered by big sponsors!) [15]:

> Amsterdam, 2 June 2008 - Elsevier, world-leading publisher of scientific, technical and medical information products and services, is proud to announce the winners of the first awards for Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETD) with the NDLTD-ETD Awards Powered by Scirus. Elsevier Journals Publishing and Scirus, the most comprehensive science-specific search engine, conducted the awards competition in partnership with the NDLTD (Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations), the international organization dedicated to promoting the dissemination and preservation of electronic theses and dissertations, to sponsor this year's first-ever NDLTD-ETD Awards, which seek to recognize outstanding contributions to the body of electronically available ETD research. [15]

The awards "… recognize excellence in grey literature and highlight Elsevier's dedication to the future scientific leaders" [15]. Whilst the term "grey literature" has a more or less agreed technical definition (see, for example, the NLA's definition [16]), one interesting point is that 10-12 years ago the embryonic e-thesis movement had concerns about whether publishers such as Elsevier would perceive its open access character as a threat. Take this somewhat defensive example from NDLTD in 1997 [11]:

> Theses and dissertations are very different from other forms of publication. They are much larger and more detailed, and as electronic works can easily include multimedia files, databases, simulations, and other components that may consume large amounts of space. While reviewed by a group of local advisers, they are not refined and certified though a peer review process. These characteristics, especially their very size, makes it unlikely that free access to ETDs would hurt publishers of other types of documents. Even when part of an ETD is similar to a conference paper or journal article, it seems unlikely that readers would prefer digging through large ETDs to find information when they can read a more carefully and tersely framed journal description. Accordingly, we believe that the NDLTD should be allowed to provide free access to ETDs. We request that publishers reflect carefully on this

situation, and assist universities to carry out their educational missions by supporting this policy. [11]

A later view from the ADT Program in 2004 was more upbeat, even suggesting in the last two sentences a counter attack [10]:

> Provision of access to theses via the ADT or similar systems does not constitute prior publication in a scholarly sense but could have a priority in relation to patents. However, there may be specific findings that would be better reported first in journal articles. A temporary restriction would enable such publication while preserving the principle of scholarly access.

> There is some evidence, e.g. surveys by Association of Learned and professional Society Publisher (UK) [17] and Project ROMEO [18], that more and more publishers have accepted self-archiving. ALPSP found that just under half permitted self-archiving of preprints (more common with large publishers), more than half (55%) permitted self-archiving of the published version. [10]

The task of *retrodigitisation of theses* is interesting (in part because my own 1969 PhD thesis, a "fourth carbon" copy, archived in my garage, needs retrodigitisation before it succumbs to the environment!). Here is how the British Library, a partner in EThOS, explains the project's approach [19]:

> *Why am I sometimes asked to pay for digitisation of a thesis?*

> Digitisation of a thesis is a costly process involving significant manual effort. The majority of institutions participating in EThOS have agreed to pay for digitisation of their theses in support of the Open Access initiative i.e. information should be free at the point of use. However, some institutions may not have the budget to fund the digitisation. You will be asked to fund digitisation of theses from these institutions. Once a thesis is digitised it is available for free download thereafter. [19]

After this long digression, let's return to the original question, "Will online change the thesis tradition?" The digression was long because the "online change" seems to be very largely confined to the advantages of supplementing print with electronic access and dissemination (i.e. nothing radically new). Sure, these are very major benefits, and 10-15 years of e-thesis promotion has *served* the thesis tradition very well, but it has not *changed* it in any major way. Even in the two likeliest areas of influence, theses which "may not have a paper equivalent" [14] and the "publication-based thesis", I

discern little influence of the technologies upon the dominant paradigm of supervised research within a university context. For example, the technologies rate little attention in *HERD*'s 2005 Special Issue on doctoral education research [20]. In relation to "innovative e-theses", DART-Europe [14] complained that:

> To date there has been a dearth of nominations for the NDLTD Innovative ETD award from European Higher Education Institutions. … High quality multimedia e-theses can be showcased in advocacy events to demonstrate the benefits of allowing the submission of theses in electronic format. [14]

However, "doctorate by publication" or "PhD by publication" are gaining some representation in the open access literature, as illustrated by these fine examples, firstly from Lisa Robins [21] and secondly from Bruno Starrs [22]:

> This article reflects upon the first author's experiences of undertaking a PhD by publication, as a series of nine journal articles and one peer-reviewed book chapter. Its purposes are to inform and, hopefully, inspire other doctoral scholars and their supervisors, and to contribute to contemporary discussions of doctoral publication practices… [21]

> There is, however, a slightly more palatable alternative to this nail-biting process of the traditional PhD, and that is the PhD by Published Papers (also known as PhD by Publications or PhD by Published Works). The form of my own soon-to-be-submitted thesis, it permits the submission for examination of a collection of papers that have been refereed and accepted (or are in the process of being refereed) for publication in academic journals or books. Apart from the obvious benefits in getting published early in one's (hopefully) burgeoning academic career, it also takes away a lot of the stress come final submission time. After all, I try to assure myself, the thesis examiners can't really discredit the process of double-blind, peer-review the bulk of the thesis has already undergone: their job is to examine how well I've unified the papers into a cohesive thesis … right? [22]

So, having accorded two Australian postgrads the concluding words, I will re-sharpen my pencils and get back to work, that thesis examination deadline is nigh!

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Some examples of these journals are:

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The link below will provide those interested in the journal and submitting papers with further details;

http://www.ojs.unisa.edu.au/index.php/JIEB/index

INTERNATIONAL COLUMN EXCHANGE

Educational Development in Early 2009: A U.S. Perspective

By Virginia S. Lee

This article is part of an ongoing international exchange among the Presidents of the societies for teaching and learning from Canada, Australia, and the United States.

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold…

Sitting in the study of my home on Ward Street in Durham, North Carolina in the United States on February 10, 2009, the morning after President Obama's first publicized press conference during prime time, I am very aware of the uncertainty of the present moment. The first three lines of Yeats's *The Second Coming* remind me of larger, mysterious forces at work even now; the broken relationship between falcon and falconer, of a camel dressage event I attended during a short trip to Qatar in December; and "[t]hings fall apart", of books by Chinua Achebe and Pema Chodron bearing the same title. Even sitting here the context seems larger, if not coherent.

Global uncertainty and instability are extreme, and there is a worldwide economic crisis. Arguably THE ROOT PROBLEM IS excesses inherent in capitalism as practiced in the United States and left unchecked in an era of deregulation with LITTLE accountability. Dazzling technical skill and virtuosity by Wall Street financiers exquisitely adapted to the expectations of the modern workplace brought extraordinary wealth to the already wealthy and extended hope of easy wealth to the unwealthy. And we exported the problem to the rest of the world in designer credit instruments of mass destruction. Somewhere along the line, we lost our moral compass.

In her keynote address, "Leadership in an Era of Urgency", at the annual meeting of the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) in Seattle, Washington January 2009, AAC&U President Carol Geary Schneider called on the 1,300 educational leaders gathered there "to take the lead in shaping educational priorities worthy of a great democracy". Indeed. In keeping with one of AAC&U's major initiatives, *Making Excellence Inclusive,* Schneider encouraged us to merge two ongoing dialogues in U.S. higher education—sustaining American capability and enhancing underserved student success—in a compelling vision of higher education. (In the United States underserved students—often students from communities of color, often low income, often unprepared for university-level work—are the fastest growing segment of the college and university student population.) For all students, Schneider urged us to seek evidence that they can apply essential learning outcomes to complex problems, and to hold ourselves accountable to what we find.

Following the June 2008 ICED Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah, I thought a lot about the development of human capacity and what we mean by it, its relationship to worldwide capacity building, and the role of higher education and educational development specifically in both processes. As I observed in a short article for the HERDSA Journal, frequently we cast worldwide capacity building in materialistic terms, harnessing it to a vision of universal prosperity inspired by the unsustainable standards of living of Western economies and their toxic patterns of consumption. Bound to that vision, the higher education agenda becomes little more than rarefied vocational training, focused on helping students acquire the skills and attitudes required to compete in an increasingly global economy and thereby secure national competitive advantage. Lost oftentimes is the classic vision of a liberal education and education as vehicle for social activism: the development of wide understanding, reflective discernment, and a sense of identity and purpose towards a broader conception of human and social betterment.

My hope for the POD Network is that we can find more and more ways to support our members as they revitalize their institutions through a broader and clearer collective vision of human capacity. They revitalize faculty through renewed engagement with students and other faculty. Lastly, they revitalize the organizational structures and processes required to further our enlarged vision of human capacity within an ever wider and more diverse community.

Visit our partners' websites:

The POD Network (Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education), United States
www.podnetwork.org

HERDSA (Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia), Australia
www.herdsa.org.au

STLHE (Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education), Canada.
http://www.mcmaster.ca/stlhe/

Virginia S. Lee, is the current President, POD Network in Higher Education. She is Senior Consultant, Virginia S. Lee & Associates, LLC (Durham, NC, USA)

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HERDSA Branch News

ACT Branch

The ACT branch has been very active having completed two very successful days working with Dr Dieter Schonwetter from the University of Manitoba.

An introductory workshop at ANU on teaching portfolios attracted 22 colleagues from 3 universities.

Ten colleagues attended the teaching philosophy workshop which was used to assess participants' statements and acted as a bridge for the ongoing work of reflecting on practice and building the teaching portfolios.

39 colleagues from three universities attended the forum: "How do you get universities to be serious about student learning?" This is the largest attendance at a recent HERDSA ACT Branch activity. The interactive forum had participants answering questions about authentic learning.

Contact:
Branch President: Robert Kenelly
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WA Branch

The WA branch will be profiling West Australian research into teaching and learning in higher education through the seminar series: "Scholarship Profiled: Cutting Edge Investigations into Teaching and Learning in Higher Education".

The ever-popular HERDSA Rekindled will also run again in August. HERDSA Rekindled showcases WA presentations made at the HERDSA national conference.

Contact:
Branch President: Iris Vardi
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South Australia Branch

A very successful seminar and workshop by Dr Dieter Schonwetter from Faculty of Dentistry, University of Manitoba, Canada was held on February 13, 2009 at the University of Adelaide. Dieter's sessions where on Providing Difficult Feedback: Dynamic and Integral Relationship between Teaching, Learning and Feedback. 104 HERDSA and non-HERDSA colleagues from the three South Australian universities registered for the presentation and 55 for the workshop.

An invitation is extended to South Australian HERDSA members to become office bearers in the Branch.

New Branch Contact:
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New Zealand Branch

Alison Holmes (Canterbury) has taken over from Stanley Frielick as Chair; Lorraine Parker (AUT University) has replaced Mark Barrow, and Julia Hallas (AUT University) remains as treasurer. The Branch has a spread of committee members throughout the country.

Branch members have been actively engaged with Ako Aotearoa including recent phone conference with the director to discuss cooperation.

The Branch recently co-hosted seminars by Professor Ray Land who is currently in NZ giving HERDSA supported seminars in Auckland, Waikato and Canterbury. HERDSA facilitated the seminars with funding from each of the host universities, Ako Aotearoa and HERDSA NZ.

HERDSA is supporting the NZ Tertiary Education Summit in April and the NZ Branch is contributing to two panel discussions. HERDSA NZ is represented by Associate Professor Neil Haigh and Dr Stanley Frielick. Two other HERDSA NZ members are being given free registration.

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News prepared by Maureen Bell
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Online Journals in Teaching and Learning

Another example is:

The Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education (JARHE)

The Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education is a NEW online peer-reviewed Journal, the central aim of which is to promote improved practice by encouraging informed debate into pedagogic and related matters in higher education.

For details see http://jarhe.research.glam.ac.uk/

BOOK REVIEWS

Making a Place – an oral history of academic development in Australia. Alison Lee, Catherine Manathunga and Peter Kandlbinder (editors). HERDSA, Milperra NSW, 2008, 183 pages, ISBN 0-908557-72-8, (paperback), AUD $25.00

Review By Margaret Hicks

There continue to be a number of questions posed around academic development in higher education. One is about the need to have some sense of the history of the work of academic developers – this is often keenly felt by those new to academic development. Others involve a number of ongoing questions that seem to be perennially asked about different aspects of the work of academic developers – who we are, what we do, how we define our work. Some of these questions are asked by people new to the work and others by practicing academic developers revisiting different elements of their work practice in changing times. Other questions focus on the futures of people who have been prominent in the field of academic development - where they are now. As someone who has both asked these questions and who works with staff who raise them from time to time, I was really pleased to see the publication of Alison Lee, Catherine Manathangu and Peter Kandlbinder's *Making a Place – an oral history of academic development in Australia.*

Through the use of oral histories, this book is a collection of interviews with fourteen people who focused on "making a place" teaching and learning in Australia during the 1960s and 70s and have shaped the work of academic development beyond these years in their respective universities and across the sector. Importantly, all of the interviewees had strong connections with the establishment and ongoing work of HERDSA, which supported the development of this book.

While each interviewee focuses on different recollections of his or her work in academic development, of the many common themes which are threaded through these narratives, three are prominent. The first concerns the pathways individuals took into academic development and their subsequent career histories. A person does not normally start out in life thinking they will be an academic developer in higher education, yet for many this becomes a rewarding experience and for others a life-long career. Barbara Falk recalls her journey from an undergraduate degree of history and political science to the "University Teaching Project" in the 1960s which then led to the establishment of the Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE) at the University of Melbourne, one of the first academic development units in Australia. Others such as John Powell, Peggy Nightingale, Terry Hore, Ian Thomas, Alan Lonsdale and Jackie Lublin, moved from primary or secondary school teaching to higher education and academic development work. Others still, already studying and working in a specific discipline area within higher education, took the opportunity to move into more focused teaching and learning roles within newly established academic development units.

There continues to be ongoing debate about the "positioning" of academic development work within an institutional setting – should it be centralised or devolved, the tensions between a service oriented role and the role of research in teaching and learning, the relationships with senior management and faculty, and the advantages and disadvantages of different committee representation. Different models and practices prevail in different places and some go out of fashion only to be reinstated a few years later. While many of us continue to grapple with these issues, it is interesting to read through these narratives that these issues were very much a concern for those working in academic development in Australia in the early years. Ingrid Moses comments on the changing role of senior executives in universities and is able to give the perspective of her relationship with senior management as an academic developer. She is also able to reflect later about her perceptions of academic development once she moved into a senior manager's role. Some people recall the importance and value of having a close relationship with senior managers while others distinctively emphasise the advantage of being at a greater distance. Rather than providing any concrete answers, the differences shown in these narratives represent what Jan Orrell in her final chapter of the book refers to as the "ever present business of academic business" (p172).

Although the recollections of academic work related in these interviews predominantly occurred through the 1970s I was struck by the number of similarities (and how much they resonated) with my current practice. People have recalled their work in teacher induction, curriculum development, teaching and learning policy development, Graduate Certificate teaching, and academic leadership, among a range of other teaching and learning activities. While today the emphasis may be different in a higher education world which is more constrained by accountabilities, interestingly there are many more similarities than differences with the work of an academic developer in the 21st century.

This last point emphasises why this book is a must read for every academic developer and those new to this work. Through the words of an esteemed group of people the work of academic development both past and present is brought to life. It is hard to write a traditional review of this book because it invokes such personal responses. Jan Orrell captures this reaction in her concluding chapter.

> I was unprepared for the profound personal impact and response to reading the preceding histories in which I discovered a richly distinctive history of academic development in higher education of which I had been part and in which I could find the echoes of my own endeavours. … Importantly, I was able to see how this tension had impacted on key individuals in the past and how it continues to shape contemporary debates in the field. (p 169)

> These narratives have provided a historical explanation as to what provokes these debates and has mellowed my pragmatism, sharpened my reflexivity and increased my understanding. (p170)

Given these reasons, everyone working in the area of academic development will find some resonance with these stories and will be rewarded from reading this book.

Professor Margaret Hicks, who has worked in higher education for over 20 years and more recently in academic development, is Director Learning and Teaching at the University of South Australia.

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"Informed Learning" by Christine Bruce (2008). Chicago, Association of College and Research Libraries, a division of the American Library Association. ISBN 978-0-8389-5 (Pbk) US$35 from amazon.com

Review By Bill Johnston

Educational developers, librarians and many academics around the world will welcome this book as a synthesis and development of Christine Bruce's longstanding engagement with information literacy, student learning, teaching practice and education generally. Those readers will find not only a thorough revision of earlier work, and a sound distillation of the most prominent research from around the world in the last decade, but many new slants on the application of ideas about the role of information in education. Christine has taken the bold but necessary step of moving research and practice around information from the domains of specialist interest, and placed it centre stage, as a key component of curriculum and pedagogy for all educators.

Those of us who have explored the information territory over time will find this publication an invaluable and stimulating sourcebook. I found myself spotting debates, theories and examples from my own experiences in every chapter. No mean achievement, as I read much of the book on long interstate flights, with competition from Nicole Kidman and Hugh Jackman chasing each other across Australia on the in-flight entertainment! However I think the largest part of my engagement came from the author's systematic development of the idea of *using information to learn*, organising each chapter around that idea, and making connections between the different sectors described in each chapter. This strikes me as a powerful challenge to the more common perception of information as a resource, which is somehow incorporated into discrete learning activities and experiences, perhaps by using some particular information skill or teaching strategy. By contrast Bruce has shifted the focus of attention onto the notion that in considering learning, irrespective of subject or context, we should start with the information needed to learn, create and change. This strikes me as a significant move, which should help revitalise debate amongst the information cognoscenti.

But what of readers who have not been closely engaged with questions of information literacy and learning? This audience will include lecturers, educational developers, adult educators, researchers and supervisors, managers and many others.

I believe this book can provide them with an essential resource to reconsider their roles and orientations. The term *informed learning* works for me as an umbrella term for all aspects of the educational realm as they might combine in relation to information. This is reflected in ten chapters, which explore the idea of informed learning from a multiplicity of perspectives – lecturers, students, disciplines, professions, workplaces, and organisations, including a chapter on future research around the construct.

For the lecturers in particular the ideas and practices are personified in the dilemmas and experiences of two newly appointed academics from very different disciplines and professional backgrounds – one an artist the other an engineer. Each chapter opens with a scene setting narrative, which situates informed learning in the real worlds of teachers and students. For example they begin their odyssey by discussing their ambition to help students to go on learning after graduation, and sharing ideas about the most appropriate teaching to achieve this. Out of that discussion comes a sense of the key information practices involved and the differences between the two disciplines. And so the story unfolds through the book as each chapter presents the pair with a new dimension of informed learning and outlines their developing engagement with the idea.

If you have ever struggled to try and show the relevance of information literacy to learning, for example, without recourse to complex diagrams and models, the book is worth it for these narratives alone!

In addition to these major points about the book, it is worth noting that it is very easy to read, which makes it ideal as a text for a variety of student groups for example. Bruce's style and structuring make her ideas clear and show how they may be linked to particular interests. So it is perfectly possible to dip into the text to extract material, which would help you devise ways of getting students more engaged with information practices in terms of essay writing say. Equally if you wanted to promote information literacy education amongst colleagues, you will find useful material organised to meet that need. This is a valuable feature when we are all under constant pressure and find ourselves putting off reading until "tomorrow", or the occasional long flight! However I would urge readers to set aside some time to think through the message of the book and its arguments, as well as cherry-picking its wealth of practical material. The world of education and the information society are becoming more closely intertwined, so it makes a great deal of sense to step back from the immediate rush of events, and review our appreciation of where information sits in our view of learning and teaching.

Bill Johnston is Senior Lecturer and Associate Director, Centre for Academic Practice and Learning Enhancement, University of Strathclyde, Scotland.

Bill is an educational developer and researcher whose interests include: curriculum renewal; the first year experience; information literacy; and quality enhancement.

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NEW DVDS available for

professional development of teachers, tutors, demonstrators:

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- Skills for Laboratory Demonstrators -

- Groups Work in Lectures -

I have produced two new DVDs in my quest for useful resource material for educational development of teaching staff. I have used the older ones extensively and "tested" the two new ones and find them useful.

The DVDs can be used as discussion starters with groups in foundations courses, workshops or for self-study by higher education teachers, tutors, demonstrators. The Skills for Laboratory Demonstrators has support materials for use as a training program.

The DVDs are divided into chapters making them easy to use in short sections if required.

You can preview them on the url below which also provides ordering information.

I hope you find them useful - they are modestly priced.

Details on opporsite page.

Best wishes

Maureen Bell, University of Wollongong

mbell@uow.edu.au

Website for previews and ordering: http://www.uow.edu.au/cedir/ult/UOW013239.html

NEW DVD

Skills for Laboratory Demonstrators (2008)

An introduction to effective questioning and explaining for demonstrators. Five scenarios set in the Physics laboratory at the University of Wollongong explore skills and attitudes for demonstrators. Tips from experienced academics and demonstrators are provided. A workbook and laboratory coordinators manual enable the DVD to be used as a self-study package or a training workshop for demonstrators.

$AUD 118.80

NEW DVD

Groups Work in Lectures (2008)

Dr Gary Butler and students from the Graduate School of Medicine, University of Wollongong, demonstrate a strategy for developing teamwork skills through group work in lectures. The lecturer introduces the group work using a stimulus, in this case a brief role play. Students work in groups of 7-8 within the lecture and contribute to the lecture content from those discussions.

$AUD 105.60

Teaching at the University of Wollongong

(compiled over 1998-2006)

This DVD provides stimulus materials for the professional development of teachers in higher education settings by demonstrating and discussing various aspects of educational practice in lectures and tutorials. Disciplines:

- Creative Arts   - Mathematics

- Geosciences   - Engineering

$AUD 79.20

Four conceptions of University Teaching (1999)

Simulated footage of four lecturers describing their conceptions of teaching with associated footage of students learning. A bit dated now but still useful as a trigger. We have used this over 10 years as pre-viewing in our foundations course. The four conceptions are:

- teaching as transmitting knowledge
- teaching as managing student activity
- teaching as facilitating learning
- teaching as facilitating student-directed learning.

$AUD 66.00

Associate Editors needed

for the journal

Higher Education Research & Development (HERD).

Due to a significant increase in papers submitted to HERD the Co-Editors would like to increase the number of Associate Editors currently on the editorial team. They invite expressions of interest from HERDSA members to join this prestigious academic team.

The responsibility of the Associate Editors primarily involves tracking an article from its initial electronic submission to HERD through the Manuscript Central paper management system; obtaining three appropriate reviewers from the Manuscript Central site; collating the reviewers reports and making a recommendation of either acceptance, revision or rejection, to one of the Co-Editors.

Expression of interest should be forwarded to:

Professor Shelda Debowski

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