



## HERDSA Conference 2010 “Reshaping Higher Education” Melbourne July 6–9

The 2010 conference was held in the Hilton on the Park hotel, Melbourne. There were 376 registrations with delegates attending from many parts of the world as well as Australia and New Zealand. An interesting fact about the registrants was that 69% were female. This compares with 53% at the Thresholds Concepts conference which was held just prior to the HERDSA conference in Sydney. An interesting statistic to ponder.

All the events of the conference except the dinner were held on the first floor of the hotel using the excellent facilities. The keynote addresses were held in the Grand Ballroom which could be quickly transformed into three large rooms for paper presentations while there were many spaces for small group sessions.

All meals were served in the same area which made it possible for delegates to eat and drink and examine the poster display and the trade stalls in the vicinity.

The conference commenced on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> July with well attended pre-conference workshops in the morning and afternoon. These were followed by the welcome reception.

Next morning at 8.00 the new member's breakfast was held, continuing a successful event first begun at the Adelaide conference in 2007. The conference was officially opened at 9.00 with a welcome to country address by Doreen Gavey-Wandin from the



Doreen Gavey-Wandin welcomes delegates to her country.

Wurundjeri Council and an address by Professor Sally Walker, the Vice-Chancellor of Deakin University.

The conference dinner was held at the Etihad Stadium. During the dinner two HERDSA Fellowships were awarded and Mary Melrose and John Jones received Life Membership of HERDSA. There was an excellent band which encouraged many to dance.

The conference closed on Friday afternoon with the presentation of the award for the most creative presentation at the conference and gifts for the hard working organising committee. Finally delegates were given a preview of the 2011 Conference, which is being organised by Griffith University on the Gold Coast from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> July. The theme of the conference is “Higher Education on the Edge”. Hope to see you there.

### contents

From the Editor 2

**Impressions of the Conference**  
By Linda Bowden 7

**Academic Practice and the Purpose of Higher Education. What is the Role of Professional Societies such as HERDSA?**  
By Geoffrey Crisp 8

**HERDSA FELLOWS COLUMN**  
**Reflections of a HERDSA Fellow**  
By Damien Ruth 11

**HERDSA Fellowship: Critical Reflection on Teaching Practice**  
By Magdalena Wajrak 12

**Supporting Higher Education Research and Development at Deakin University**  
By Dr Anna Lichtenberg 14

**Benchmarking Academic Development**  
By Don Maconachie 16

**Modelling Graduate Attributes at the Royal University of Bhutan**  
By Maureen Bell 19

**Involving People in Learning**  
By Hamish Coates and Alex Radloff 20

**THE INTERNATIONAL COLUMN**  
**Crossing Borders/Bridging Minds: Implications for Education**  
By Joy Mighty 22

**Meanderings**  
By Robert Cannon 23

**THE PHILOSOPHER'S COLUMN**  
**Practice Being Wrong Until You Get It Right...**  
By Ann Kerwin 26

**THE HOW TO ... TEACHING SERIES**  
**How to...**  
**Teach Gen-Y undergraduates**  
By Peter Kandlbinder 28

**Higher Education in the Headlines. August 2010**  
By Peter Kandlbinder 29

**HERDSA Branch News: July 2010** 30

## HERDSA Executive

### President

Geoffrey Crisp SA

### Vice President

Mark Barrow NZ

### Treasurer

Mark Barrow and Barbara Grant NZ

### Occasional Publications Editor

Allan Goody WA

### Journal Co-Editors

Izabel Soliman NSW

Ian McDonald VIC

### HERDSA News Editor

Roger Landbeck QLD

### Executive Members

Deanne Gannaway QLD

Peter Kandlbinder NSW

Robert Kennelly ACT

Kogi Naidoo SA

Tai Peseta VIC

Janet Taylor NSW

Iris Vardi WA

Gail Wilson QLD

## HERDSA Office

Jennifer Ungaro (Office Manager)

PO Box 27, Milperra NSW 2214

**Phone:** +61 2 9771 3911

**Fax:** +61 2 9771 4299

**Email:** office@herdsa.org.au

**Website:** www.herdsa.org.au

## HERDSA News

### Editor Roger Landbeck

28/242 Parklands Blvd, Currimundi, QLD 4551

Phone: +61 7 5438 2789

Email: landbeck@ozemail.com.au

### Editorial Committee

Maureen Bell and Peter Kandlbinder

### Issue Dates: April, September, December

Contributions for the next issue must reach the editor by **Monday 8 November 2010**. They should be sent to Roger Landbeck at the above address.

Advertising rates. Please contact the HERDSA Office.

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

Desk top publishing by Donna Bennett, Office Logistics, Brisbane

Printed by Instant Colour Press, Canberra

# From the Editor

The annual HERDSA conference is a high point in the year for many members. It provides a forum for them to present their research in teaching and learning. High quality speakers reflect on the latest issues in higher education through keynote addresses. Contacts are made with colleagues in other institutions which, in many cases, continue to be fostered in the months following the conference. This outcome is perhaps one of the most important benefits of the conference.

Thanks to technology those unable to attend the conference need not miss out on some of the benefits. The papers are available on the HERDSA website and the slides from the keynote addresses are also there. Go to <http://conference.herdsa.org.au/2010/>

However the good feelings generated by a few days at the conference seem to quickly evaporate when back home facing the ever changing issues of the institution to say nothing about the pile of student work awaiting assessment or maybe a report to be written for a committee. So how can membership of HERDSA be beneficial to academic life throughout the year and not just at the conference?

Throughout the year members receive issues of *HERDSA News* and *HERD*. The latter, which has an A rating, contains quality papers in the scholarship of teaching and learning and so keeps members abreast of current developments in the field. The weekly email news provides information about events organised by the Society, forthcoming conferences and vacant positions. *HERDSA Guides* provide valuable guidance in teaching and research topics faced by academics in their daily work.

Then there are branch activities in a number of places in Australia and New Zealand which provide the valuable contacts with colleagues mentioned earlier as one of the benefits of the conference. Activities are now getting started in Queensland while NSW members met at the conference to discuss ways of getting things going in their

state. Members in more remote areas of the country who cannot travel to branch activities can organise local activities under the HERDSA banner and receive financial assistance from HERDSA. Enquire at the HERDSA office, [office@herdsa.org.au](mailto:office@herdsa.org.au) for details.

In addition to these very practical ways in which HERDSA membership can benefit academics people may also wonder if professional societies have a role in the debate about the purposes of higher education. This topic was addressed by Geoffrey Crisp in his Presidential address to the conference which is published in this issue.

One very successful example of how colleagues can get support in their work is described in the article about the very successful Higher Education Research Group (HERG) at Deakin University. This provides a useful model for other institutions to follow.

A recent HERDSA publication, "Making a Place", chronicled the early history of academic development in Australia as seen through the eyes of those who pioneered the first centres in universities. One of the topics discussed in the book was the question of whether academic development had become a field of academic study. The article by Don Maconachie on benchmarking academic development shows how far things have progressed since the early days. The research provides credibility to the field of academic development which will allow it to make a contribution to an institution's strategic planning.

Finally I would like to encourage readers who are in the early stages of a project to consider writing a brief article for *HERDSA News* as a way of seeking feedback on the project and clarifying their ideas about the project in writing. Incidentally this is an example of how HERDSA can benefit members throughout the year. Enjoy your membership and make the most of it!

**Roger Landbeck**



# HERDSA Conference 2010 "Reshaping Higher Education" Melbourne July 6-9

Acknowledgement

Photography by Simon Fox Knowledge Media Division Deakin University



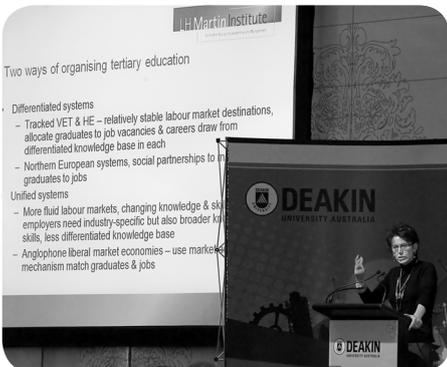
A Pre-conference Workshop



Marcia Devlin, Conference Convenor welcomes delegates to the conference



A plenary Session in the Grand Ballroom



Associate Professor Leesa Wheelahan giving a keynote address



The Poster Display and Trade Stalls

*Photo by Maureen Bell*



The HERDSA Stand

*Photo by Maureen Bell*



The Conference Dinner



The Dancing Queen



A typical paper session



Conversations at meal times



Gary Poole from Canada giving the closing plenary address



Thank you to the Organising Team

## Prizes

The following prizes were awarded during the conference:

### Taylor and Francis Prize for the Best Paper by a New Researcher

The 2010 Taylor and Francis Prize for the Best Paper by a New Researcher was awarded to **Catherine (Jill) Bamforth** from Swinburne University of Technology, for her paper titled "Improving undergraduates performance via an embedded generic skills program"

Summary from the abstract for the paper:

The program invites students to identify perceived areas of concern in their generic skill sets, which are then used to customise a workshop delivered early in the term as part of their unit. Preliminary analysis shows most students entered the management unit with both high, unrealistic result expectations and significant confidence in their generic skill sets. During the term, both changed, with over 50% finding the embedded program useful. The overall impact of the program on academic results compared to previous years was marginal but insights into specific areas of concern were identified. These may assist those considering implementing generic skill support programs.

The paper was topical, well written and scholarly. It was an excellent example of gathering primary evidence on the effectiveness of a program, analysing that evidence and reflecting on the program outcomes for designing future activities.



Jill Bamforth receiving her prize from a representative of Taylor and Francis.

### HERDSA Travel Award for a Postgraduate Student

The 2010 HERDSA Travel Award for a Postgraduate Student was awarded to **Julie Willems**, School of Humanities, Communications and Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts, Monash University, Australia for her paper titled "Understanding social determinants in educational disadvantage and under-representation: The Equity Raw-Score Matrix".

Summary from the abstract for the paper:

Understanding educational disadvantage has been a focus in Australian higher education policy since the 1980s. As part of this focus, the Bradley Report has identified of concern the participation of under-represented groups of students in higher education. Further, Gillard has linked federal government funding to institutions on the basis of the inclusion and participation of these under-represented (equity) groups in higher education. Yet educational disadvantage is a complex issue. Many argue that the identification of broad equity group categories do not capture the true nature of disadvantage in education. Some have further argued for the creation of measures that will more accurately capture the nature of social determinants of disadvantage, and the role that these play in participation in, and completion of, higher education. This is a difficult task: the linking of quantitative data collection and the capturing of qualitative social issues for the purposes of analysis, evaluation and funding. The Equity Raw-Score Matrix has been proposed as one means not only to address the complex and multidimensional nature of educational disadvantage from an individual student's perspective, but also to supply institutions, governments, policy creators, and funding bodies with detailed (cross-sectoral) data on student transition, participation,

retention and successful completion in higher education. This paper further develops the matrix for the purposes of an intended pilot study.

The paper discussed a contemporary issue facing many higher education institutions; it used an elegant approach to analyse quantitative data on disadvantage and provide institutions with a succinct representation of multiple data sets that are interrelated.

### The University of Sydney Institute of Teaching and Learning Creative Presentation Award.

The award was won jointly by **Helen Larkin and Ben Richardson** from Deakin University for their paper "Creating high challenge/high support academic environments through constructive alignment" and **Linda Bowen and Kathryn Sutherland** of Victoria University Wellington for their paper "Students' perceptions of the effects of coursework on their development of graduate attributes".

### HERDSA Fellowships

Two HERDSA Fellowships were awarded at the conference dinner.

**Dr Magdalena Wajrak**, School of Natural Sciences at Edith Cowan University, was awarded a HERDSA Fellowship.

Magda's main area of interest is in chemical education where she has developed multimedia resources for teaching chemical concepts. Magda's use of simulations assists students in learning chemistry at a molecular level. Her Fellowship portfolio showed a reflective approach to engaging students in service level teaching as well



Julie Willems receiving her prize from Geoff Crisp



Helen Larkin, Linda Bowen, Geoff Crisp and Kathryn Sutherland

as students majoring in chemistry; Magda showed concern for the whole student experience and worked to enhance curiosity, logical and critical thinking, enthusiasm, determination, social responsibility, moral and ethical values in her students.

*(Magda was not able to be present to receive the award)*

**Associate Professor Nicholas Tonti-Filippini** from the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family, Melbourne was awarded a HERDSA Fellowship. Nicholas is the Institute Associate Dean (Teaching, Learning and Research) and Head of Bioethics.

Nicholas' Fellowship portfolio described a focus on developing the skill of constructive critical evaluation in students. Nicholas engaged students who would be instrumental in forming policy in Bioethics; his students would require skills appropriate for roles in government and ethics committees. Nicholas encouraged students to reflect deeply on their own values and the values of others so that they could encourage others to express their views; the ability to listen respectfully to different points of view, to recognise the assumptions underlying the opinions of others and to build consensus from division are all important components of the educational environment created by Nicholas.

### A Papal Knight joins the HERDSA Fellowship

Nicholas Tonti-Filippini was awarded his HERDSA Fellowship at the HERDSA Conference in July 2010. Nick is Associate Dean (Teaching, Learning and Research) and Head of Bioethics at the John Paul II institute for Marriage and Family. The Institute is associated with the Lateran

University in Rome and is accredited in Australia to conduct graduate programs in Theology and Bioethics.

Nick prepares graduates to contribute to bioethics policy in health care, especially in professional practice and on ethics committees. He has developed constructive critical evaluation as an approach to learning in which students role play committee involvement to develop a consensus. Assessment requires them to report and explain the joint decisions of the "committee" to a "researcher" who has applied to do the project under discussion.

Nick prepared his portfolio for submission to the HERDSA fellowship committee after being appointed Associate Dean. He felt that he needed the external review and the learning experience in order to be confident to assist members of faculty to develop their approach to teaching and learning. As part of the work for the Fellowship he also developed a peer review process to complement the student evaluations in use by subject coordinators.

Nick has served on numerous government committees. He was deputy chair of the Australian Health Ethics Committee and chaired committees on the unresponsive state and on the commercial use of human tissue. In 1982 he was Australia's first hospital ethicist at St Vincent's Hospital where he was Director of Bioethics. He has taught medical students, nurses and others for thirty years and after leaving St Vincents has been a consultant serving the Office of the Australian Prime Minister, the Australian Minister for Health, the US Congress, the Victorian Minister for Health, the German Federal Department of Health and Welfare, UNESCO and the Australian Catholic Bishops. In 2009 he was appointed a papal knight by Pope

Benedict XVI for his work in Bioethics and for the Catholic Church.

Nick is chronically ill with renal disease and has been on dialysis for the past nineteen years. The underlying disease has also caused vision disability and neuropathy which means that he now uses dictation software for much of his output. Despite that he has maintained his research active status and currently has five articles forthcoming in peer reviewed journals and is completing the co-authorship of a guide to current ethical issues. He is married to a GP, Dr Mary Walsh, and they have four children.

### New Life Members of HERDSA

**Mary Melrose** gained her PhD in Education from the University of Auckland; her early career involved Science teaching in a number of Auckland secondary schools, before being seconded to the Department of Education as an Advisor.

Mary was Associate Head of the Centre for Professional Development at the Auckland Institute of Technology, working as a senior lecturer in Tertiary Teaching and as a Staff Developer. She continued in that Centre until 1998 when her strengths in educational research led to her being appointed as Academic Manager in the Office of the Vice President (Research) in 1999, and Director of Postgraduate Studies in 2002.

Mary was a key player in fostering the research capabilities of staff during Auckland Institute of Technology's quest for University status; modelling how to research, and running workshops and programmes for staff wishing to become active researchers and to build research into the curriculum.



Kogi Naidoo, Nicholas Tonti-Filippini and Geoff Crisp



New HERDSA Fellow  
Nick Tonti-Filippini



Life Member  
Mary Melrose

Mary encouraged staff in the wider polytechnic sector of New Zealand, especially at Auckland University of Technology, Manukau Institute of Technology and Unitec, to become active members of HERDSA. In her roles as staff developer and research developer she assisted many staff with setting up and carrying out successful educational research projects about teaching and learning. She also assisted them with writing about their research and many later presented their results at conferences or seminars arranged through HERDSA or through their own teaching and learning centres.

Mary was Co-convenor of the 1998 conference, "Transformation in Higher Education", held at the University of Auckland.

Mary served on the Auckland-based committee of the New Zealand Branch of HERDSA for approximately a decade, from 1993–2003, and in 1994, became Chairperson. She was the regional coordinator or invited speaker/panel member/chairperson at seminar programmes, and host of many HERDSA Visiting Scholar events organised by HERDSA's NZ Branch.

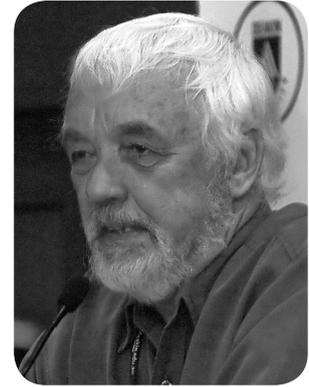
In 1996 she was elected on to the Australasian Executive of HERDSA and

stayed as long as was possible under the HERDSA constitution. On the Executive she served as a member of the Visiting Scholar Committee and those committees dealing with awards for members attending conferences; judging papers and travel award applications for postgraduate student.

*(Mary was unable to be present to receive her Life Membership)*

**John Jones** holds a PhD in Physics from the University of Wales and a Master of Education from the University of Malawi. Following appointments at the Universities of Wales, Malawi and Papua New Guinea, he was appointed as the foundation Director of the Higher Education Research Office (HERO) at the University of Auckland in 1974. By 1976 there were four "academic development units" established in New Zealand and John hosted the first meeting of university higher education research officers at the University of Auckland in April 1976.

In his 20 years at the University of Auckland John established himself as a major influence in higher education in Auckland and the rest of New Zealand, until he temporarily left New Zealand to become Director of Educational Development, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, a post he held for seven years.



Life Member  
John Jones

John was a principal driver behind the formation of the New Zealand branch of HERDSA. Having attended the conferences of the fledgling society in Australia John (along with others) organised a two day meeting of interested people in the (then) Auckland Technical Institute and the NZ branch was born. In 1985 John co-convened the first HERDSA conference to be held outside Australia. He took up the convenorship of the Auckland chapter at that time and in 1987 became the New Zealand "President". John served on the HERDSA Executive from 1989–1994, becoming the HERDSA President in 1992 – a post he held for two years.

---

## HERDSA Life Members

Kol Star elected 1978 (deceased)

Barbara Falk elected 1981 (deceased)

Ilma Brewer elected 1982 (deceased)

Peter Karmel elected 1984 (deceased)

Ernest Roe elected 1985

Norman Henry elected 1986 (deceased)

John Powell elected 1987 (deceased)

Don Anderson elected 1993

Alan Lonsdale elected 1993

Alan Prosser elected 1993 (deceased)

Ian Dunn elected 1996

Jackie Lublin elected 1999

Ingrid Moses elected 1999

Peggy Nightingale elected 1999

Rod Mackay elected 1998

Roger Landbeck elected 2005

David Boud elected 2005

Michael Prosser elected 2005

Angela Brew elected 2009

John Dearn elected 2009

# Impressions of the Conference

By Linda Bowden

Heading to the airport prior to departure to Melbourne, I confess I was wondering why on earth I had allowed myself to be talked into attending the HERDSA conference. Several months beforehand, the idea of presenting some findings around graduate attributes as a showcase presentation to HERDSA had sounded like a fun thing to do. I enjoyed doing the research and the findings were interesting – at least I thought so! – but now that it was time to actually go it didn't seem like such a good idea anymore. I had thousands of student evaluations to process, I hated flying, the cat hated being put in the cattery and really, what was I doing going to a conference aimed at higher education research and development anyway? I was convinced I would be out of my league as most people would be academics; in fact everyone would be an academic except me! Someone – who I hasten to add is not a HERDSA member and has never been to a HERDSA conference – told me they were the “socks and cardigans brigade”, which didn't sound terribly auspicious. And as for doing a presentation – I hate public speaking but it was my intention that, having done the research, my colleague Kathryn Sutherland would stand up and do the speaking part while I lurked in the background.

So it would be fair to say that I didn't approach my first HERDSA conference with a great deal of confidence or

enthusiasm. On Tuesday evening I had visions of lying in the bath in the hotel room with my copy of Agatha Christie stories instead of attending the welcome reception but thankfully I went anyway and met a number of lovely people, all of whom seemed genuinely interested in me, my role at the university and the upcoming showcase presentation. Nobody minded that I was not an academic and, although I'm sure there were a lot of socks being worn, I didn't see a single cardigan. I did spy several pairs of funky boots though, which I silently coveted.

The next two days were spent attending key note addresses and various sessions and meeting many more interesting and engaging people. I was particularly thrilled to attend a session on student evaluation and to discover that there are people who see this is an interesting and important field and not just as a necessary evil forced upon them. I felt inspired to do more in this area myself – once I had managed to shift the huge pile of evaluations that still awaited my return.

Our showcase presentation wasn't until 12 o'clock Friday, which initially I had thought would drive me batty with nerves, having to wait until almost the end of the conference. But by then I had met so many wonderful people and been given so much support that I was surprisingly not too worried about it. I was pretty sure that by 12 o'clock on Friday most people would be

either out shopping or back in their hotel rooms packing anyway so I was convinced we would be presenting to just three people and a stray cockroach. Oh, and Kathryn decided we would role play it! Without a script. Great; I don't do public speaking, I don't like attention, and acting is not my thing either but I took a deep breath, adopted a persona and just decided to enjoy the experience. Which I did – even though the room was packed and there were even people standing! We were given very positive feedback so I was pleased that my first ever conference presentation went down so well.

All in all, I had a great time and my overall impression was one of friendly, interested, supportive people who were passionate about making improvements in higher education. It was great to get away for a week and to immerse myself amongst people who inspired me and who have given me valuable insights into how I can develop my career from here.

*Linda Bowden is the Evaluations and Reviews Administrator at Victoria University of Wellington*

**Contact:** Linda.Bowden@vuw.ac.nz

*Editors Note. Despite all Linda's misgivings about presenting she and Kathryn Sutherland shared the University of Sydney Creative Presentation Prize at the conference. Not bad for a first timer!!*

University World News

The global window on higher education

For details go to

[http://www.universityworldnews.com/index.php?page=About\\_Us](http://www.universityworldnews.com/index.php?page=About_Us)

# Academic Practice and the Purpose of Higher Education. What is the Role of Professional Societies such as HERDSA?

By Geoffrey Crisp

*This paper was given as the Presidential Address at the HERDSA Conference 2010*

## Introduction

Castells (2001) described four functions of universities; they are ideological apparatuses, they are places for the selection and formation of the dominant elites, they represent centres for the production and application of knowledge, and they are places for training a skilled labour force. These descriptors seem devoid of the additional characteristics that Marginson (2006) has proposed for the role of universities, namely places in which learning, scholarship, identity formation and self-alteration can take place. Universities are complex entities that exist in dynamic social, political and economic realities; the activities and priorities for universities are influenced by the current beliefs and values that are present in the wider community that exists outside of the sandstone facades that often house our academic communities.

This short paper will look at some of the recent articles on the purpose of higher education and the role that universities are expected to take in the current political, social and economic climate. I will then reflect on the impact that these insights may have on academic practice and the role of professional organisations such as HERDSA.

## Purpose of Higher Education Institutions

Williams and Filippakou (2010) have posited that mass higher education has moved away from the historical role of fostering the “symbolic capital associated with elite membership” towards a more pluralistic view where institutional missions are varied. Although newer universities embraced the diversity agenda from their inception and rarely subscribed to the view that the purpose of higher education was

for the accumulation of symbolic capital (relating to a person’s reputation and value as perceived by others), many long established universities have embarked on an evolutionary journey towards diversity necessitated by the changing dynamics within their student and staff populations. Academics have played both active and passive parts in this evolutionary journey, depending on their discipline and particular institutional history.

The study by Williams and Filippakou (2010) looked at the educational background of people appearing in the UK compilation of Who’s Who (2008) for a set period of time. These authors were investigating the relationship between educational background and “elite status” and whether there had been any changes over time. Although their analysis was confined to the UK and the definition of “elite status” was narrow, the trends are interesting in relation to the role of universities and the purpose of higher education. The study found, not surprisingly, that Oxford and Cambridge headed the “elite status” list with 25–33% of people in Who’s Who having graduated from these institutions over the period under investigation. Recently, the trend has been for more diversification with the wider Russell Group of institutions dominating the Who’s Who list. The one occupation group that significantly broadened its educational base was politicians; this will likely have a significant impact on university priorities and student recruitment practices over time as political representatives from diverse backgrounds begin to influence government policy and funding for higher education. Williams and Filippakou concluded that the accumulation of symbolic capital was the most likely rationale for students wanting to graduate from Russell Group institutions and that new patterns of student engagement with higher education institutions were emerging as governments required universities to widen participation

and increase the number of students from diverse economic and social backgrounds.

Governments are particularly sensitive to community perceptions of elitism and systems that appear to perpetuate particular models of social stratification. As a result of community interest in the part that universities will play in a modern knowledge economy, many countries have recently reviewed their higher education systems; Australia (2008), the United Kingdom (2003), the United States (2006), Canada (2009), New Zealand (OECD, 2006) and South Africa (2007). There is little doubt that the wider community is taking a more active interest in the role that universities play beyond generating “symbolic capital associated with elite membership”. All these recent reviews have emphasised the need for wider participation in higher education, with the explicit assumption that universities are not simply charged with generating graduates for the Who’s Who list. The consequences of changes in the higher education landscape have already had an impact on academic practice (Marginson, 2009) and on the ways that universities conduct their business; this in turn impacts on the role of professional societies such as HERDSA.

The role of HERDSA is to be a scholarly society for people committed to the advancement of higher and tertiary education. It promotes the development of higher education policy and practice, and the study of teaching and learning. HERDSA encourages and disseminates research on teaching and learning and higher education development; it also works to build strong academic communities. These statements are taken from the HERDSA website ([http://www.herdsa.org.au/?page\\_id=2](http://www.herdsa.org.au/?page_id=2)). HERDSA would not have seen itself as fostering elite groups or adding to symbolic capital; HERDSA endeavours to foster a community of practice for those interested in enhancing educational practices,

independent of the status of the practitioner. Nevertheless, HERDSA itself could be drawn into a situation where it privileges particular “elites” and institutionalises “symbolic capital” in learning and teaching. We must look to the current values inherent in the agenda for broadening participation in higher education, and ensure that these values underpin HERDSA activities.

Public universities are being encouraged (forced?) to become more entrepreneurial, to seek funding from a diversity of sources to make up for consistent reductions in public funding. Different universities will respond to these demands in different ways, some will concentrate on entrepreneurial activities simply for economic gain while others will engage in simultaneous social engagement and economic gain. The public service component of universities might be considered the third pillar upon which the purpose and reputation of a university might rest, alongside research and teaching (Nelles and Vorley, 2010). Nelles and Vorley have reflected on the potential changes in academic practice as universities are required to become more entrepreneurial and whether academic practice might look different if entrepreneurial activity were for the public good as opposed to just transactional activity designed to generate income. If the role of universities is to enhance the public good, what are the benefits of obtaining a higher education? There have been recent arguments, especially from Governments keen to defray the costs of public higher education that education is predominantly an economic advantage to the individual and so the individual must make a financial contribution for this privilege. Yet this argument tends to reinforce a traditional view that the purpose of higher education is to accumulate symbolic capital that could be turned into economic capital. Is this the goal of diversifying participation in higher education, simply to generate economic capital? Or should it be directed more towards the generation of public good and social cohesion through meaningful participation in a broader community?

A nation’s higher education system is an integral part of its social, cultural, economic and political fabric. When public funds are used to support universities, politicians will wish to demonstrate to their constituents that they are carefully monitoring the use of those funds. Examples of individuals gaining unfair access to resources that

enhance their economic capital or out of touch academics engaging in self-indulgent “research” that has no conceivable practical or social use, will clearly not be tolerated. In this environment, what is the responsibility of the discipline academic to align his or her academic practices with national priorities and the public good? What would an individual academic’s practice look like if it were directed towards the public good?

Spanier (2010) has discussed to what extent public land grant universities in the USA might prioritise their activities in order to return to their historical origins of serving the community through activities that matter to the nation; with the priorities identified as homeland security, defence, law enforcement and intelligence. Spanier proposes that universities should offer students opportunities to engage in research and active learning through participation in real communities, not just academic institutions. There is renewed interest in providing students with opportunities to volunteer for community service, highlighting the public good role of universities. This provides an alternative view of the entrepreneurial university, one based on service to the community and not solely economic gain. What would academic practice look like in this environment? What role would professional societies such as HERDSA play in supporting academics in this public good role?

### **Do we all have the Same Expectations of Higher Education Institutions?**

What then of academic practice and this tension between public and individual good? Universities often attract staff and students from many different cultures and countries. This has been one of the strengths of modern universities; they often reflect cultural values that promote the rights and importance of the individual, that privilege ambiguity and uncertainty and promote equality (although some academics may question whether recent trends towards managerialism really do support these values!). Academic practice is therefore undertaken in a particular environment that may not necessarily reflect that prevalent in the wider community. Nations do have particular cultural priorities and preferences; academic practice will inevitably be influenced by these priorities if for no other reason than the fact that higher

education funding tends to follow the priorities of those outside of the university system. Funding for public universities will often be determined by national priorities that will reflect more closely the current political and economic values of the nation.

HERDSA’s membership is drawn from a subset of the academic community and so will reflect the values dominant in this subset. Values that promote the rights of the individual, that privilege ambiguity and uncertainty and promote equality would sit comfortably with HERDSA members. At least in this respect, there is likely to be a close alignment between the values of HERDSA as an organisation and the values of its members. As HERDSA strives to influence or comment on national priorities in higher education, how much should it critique the agenda of the government and how much should it comment on the alignment of academic practice with national priorities? HERDSA has members from many different nations, although the two largest member groups are from Australia and New Zealand. In terms of the underlying values dominant in HERDSA, these two population groups inevitably have the most influence on the public persona of HERDSA and the direction of HERDSA comments or critiques of education policy.

### **Academic Practice**

HERDSA works towards improving academic practice through the development of communities of practice and providing opportunities for tertiary teachers to engage in scholarly activities and sharing effective approaches to student learning. In Australia, the recent Bradley review of higher education indicated that universities should be engaging in activities that promote a “civil and just society” (Australia, 2008). This review, in common with most national reviews discussed earlier in this paper, proposed that increasing the overall participation rate in higher education would be in the public good, as well as assisting in economic development. For individual academics reflecting on their role and the national agenda it is difficult to see how they would have control over who is allowed to come to their university or how pathways are offered to people who would like to participate in higher education. Yet, individual academics can have a profound effect on the success rate of students once they are enrolled in

programs. Individual academics will engage in those areas where they have some direct influence over the outcomes, in this case the learning environment and the engagement of students with the program. Decisions about access paths for higher education are complex and involve economic, social and political influences; individual academics rarely have a direct influence on access paths. The issue for HERDSA is how will it assist academics and universities to achieve productive outcomes for students when participation is on a wider scale?

Academic practice is heavily influenced by discipline cultures, probably more so than institutional priorities. Should academic practice, as reified in the discipline context, be aligned with national agendas and priorities? Do the scholarly activities we undertake as HERDSA members reflect the role of universities being for the public good or do they reflect a privileging of that role being for the enhancement of the individual? HERDSA can support governments and universities with the agenda for wider participation in higher education, both directly and indirectly. HERDSA scaffolds the development of communities of practice, and since much of the practice of academics takes place within their disciplinary context, HERDSA can assist academics by promoting disciplinary perspectives of academic practice that reflect the priorities of wider participation and the role of universities being for the public good.

Other professional organisations such as POD (Professional and Organizational Development) in the USA, STLHE (Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education) in Canada, SEDA (Staff and Educational Development Association) in the UK and the international organisation ICED (International Consortium for Educational Development), all share common aspirations with HERDSA of improving academic practice and the student experience, as well as research into higher education. All these organisations would like to think that they are supporting the development of a “civil and just society”;

the complex part is to show a causal relationship between professional body activities and specific outcomes related to the national agendas.

## Conclusion

This short paper attempts to encourage reflection and debate about the role of professional organisations such as HERDSA in supporting academic practice that is aligned with national priorities. HERDSA, and indeed all the professional organisations listed above, could find themselves privileging particular “elites” and institutionalising “symbolic capital” in learning and teaching if they neglect a key purpose of higher education being for the public good. We must look to the current values inherent in the agenda for broadening participation in higher education, and ensure that these values underpin the activities of groups dedicated to enhancing practice.

## References

- Australian Government (2008). *Review of Australian Higher Education Final Report*. Retrieved 16 July 2010 from [http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Review/Documents/PDF/Higher%20Education%20Review\\_one%20document\\_02.pdf](http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Review/Documents/PDF/Higher%20Education%20Review_one%20document_02.pdf)
- Canadian Council on Learning (2009). *2008–2009 Post-Secondary Education in Canada Meeting our Needs?* Retrieved 16 July 2010 from: [http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/pse/2009/pse2008\\_english.pdf](http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/pse/2009/pse2008_english.pdf)
- Castells, M. (2001). Universities as dynamic systems of contradictory functions. In J. Muller, N. Cloete, & S. Badat (Eds.), *Challenges of globalisation* (pp. 206–223). Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman.
- Marginson, S. (2006). Putting “Public” Back into the Public University. *Thesis Eleven*, 84, 44–59.
- Marginson, S. (2009) The academic professions in the global era. In J. Enders & E. de Weert (Eds.), *The Academic Profession and the*

*Modernization of Higher Education: Analytical and comparative perspectives* (pp. 96–113). Dordrecht: Springer.

- Nelles, J., & Vorley, T. (2010). Constructing an Entrepreneurial Architecture: An Emergent Framework for Studying the Contemporary University Beyond the Entrepreneurial Turn. *Innovative Higher Education*, 35(3), 161–176.
- New Zealand Ministry of Education (2006). *OECD Thematic Review of Tertiary Education. New Zealand Country Background Report*. Retrieved 16 July 2010 from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/20/46/36441052.pdf>
- Council on Higher Education (2007). *Review of Higher Education in South Africa*. Retrieved 16 July 2010 from [http://www.che.ac.za/documents/d000146/Review\\_HE\\_SA\\_2007\\_Complete.pdf](http://www.che.ac.za/documents/d000146/Review_HE_SA_2007_Complete.pdf)
- Spanier, G. B. (2010). Creating Adaptable Universities. *Innovative Higher Education*, 35, 91–99.
- UK (2003) Retrieved 16 July 2010 from <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/hegateway/uploads/White%20Paper.pdf>
- US (2006) A Test of Leadership. Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education, A Report of the Commission Appointed by, Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings. Retrieved 16 July 2010 from <http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/hiedfuture/reports/final-report.pdf>
- Williams, G., & Filippakou, O. (2010). Higher education and UK elite formation in the twentieth century. *Higher Education*, 59, 1–20.
- Who’s Who. (2008). London: A C Black. Online edition at Retrieved 16 July 2010 from <http://www.ukwhoswho.co.uk>
- Geoffrey Crisp is the President of HERDSA. He is the Director of the Centre of Learning and Professional Development and Director, Online Education at the University of Adelaide.**
- Contact: [geoffrey.crisp@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:geoffrey.crisp@adelaide.edu.au)**

### For more information about other Higher Education Societies

Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) Canada

<http://www.stlhe.ca/en/stlhe/>

Professional and Organisational Development Network in Higher Education (POD) U.S.A.

<http://podnetwork.org>

Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA). U.K.

[www.seda.ac.uk](http://www.seda.ac.uk)

# HERDSA FELLOWS COLUMN

## Reflections of a HERDSA Fellow

By Damien Ruth

*In this edition of the HERDSA Fellows Column two fellows reflect on their experiences of working toward the award of the Fellowship and provide interesting contrasts in their experiences.*

The process of becoming a HERDSA Fellow is essentially a process of review, reflection and profession. There are other similar processes; applying for a job, research grant, award and others. I have long pondered on how apparently similar processes can feel completely different. Considering these differences leads me to what I think are the rewarding features of the HERDSA Fellowship process.

One obvious feature is that the Fellowship is not competitive. This is worth something in an environment like higher education that is increasingly dominated by competition for resources, competition for recognition and rankings. We have become so used to the idea of examinations, assessments and the creep of instrumentalism into education, that it is easy to forget that the idea of linking an individual's potential to observable utilitarian outcomes is recent and even a few generations ago would have seemed quite ludicrous. To suggest that there is some kind of standardisation that makes comparisons sensible is even more so. I presume that most people seeking a HERDSA Fellowship are educational developers or subject specialists with particular sensitivity to the education of practitioners in their field. We are thus educators and I like the idea of being part of a community that guards an ideal of education as a limitless exploration of humanity. I know as well as everybody else that money matters, but I find it hard to draw inspiration for a meaningful life from stock exchange data or the latest national budget. I am an educator.

The Fellowship process is voluntary and a demanding process. It is the combination that matters. Applying for a Fellowship is an expression of a wish, and the wish can

only be granted by going to some effort. The Fellowship may embody a wish that is somewhat intrinsic, such as recognition of one's peers. Since the Fellowship has cache, a certain currency, it can be used like other indicators of achievement and recognition and in that sense embody a wish for status and worth. In this way, it is not like a PhD which is now virtually a requirement for an academic career, or the requirement to access research funds. But neither is it granted, like an honorary degree. So it occupies a sort of liminal space; the mere presentation of evidence does not secure recognition but the granting of recognition is contingent on evidence.

The process of developing and submitting a portfolio is self-directed within given parameters and subject to peer review. Again, an obvious point but worth a pause. In negotiating one's way through any career one is presented with a spectrum of demands expressed on a continuum from filling in a form to the creative expression of one's self. There is a rough correlation between absolute requirement and form-filling, and between optionality and creativity. Why is this so? I suggest that it is because applying for a Fellowship is a particular way of entering a community. We are not being elected to a royal society; we can argue our case. But we have to make that case. It is an optional *rite de passage*. Whilst I can explore parameters that have been set, even push them, there is room for self-expression and – this is now crucial – that process is peer-reviewed. The distinction is difficult to draw out without far more analysis than is warranted in a short essay, but perhaps the following observation may carry over what I mean; I have greater confidence in the value of my Fellowship than I have in a teaching award that I have received, for the Fellowship is recognition by my peers of what I have attempted, the way I have attempted it, and entails a certain respect for my sense of what is worth aspiring for; the teaching award,

by contrast, is the recognition that, in one particular year, I was the candidate that best fulfilled a certain set of conditions.

Earning a fellowship and maintaining it entails an ongoing process of peer review, which in my experience is conducted with mutual respect. Nevertheless, it remains rigorous. Again I sense and feel a difference with many other rituals of academia, especially those relating to assessment, accreditation and auditing.

I did not find the HERDSA Fellowship process either simple or easy. The aspects that were merely procedural were, well, merely procedural, so what would be the point of writing about them. For me, the deep value of the HERDSA Fellowship was rising to the challenge or self-directed reflection. This was an arduous process of exploration rather than an exercise in conformity.

In our role as educators we are often pressured into standardising and streamlining our vocation to meet the demands of a bureaucracy. An early loss in this process is fine-grained analysis. Under pressure and against our better judgment we eventually acquiesce in questioning the value of extending analysis as far as possible and after a time even modestly extended analysis comes to seem unnecessarily tedious, and in due course analysis has to be justified as useful. Our tools become blunt and ultimately our vocation impoverished to the point of being a functional service, which is to say it ceases to be a vocation at all. In reflecting on becoming a HERDSA Fellow, I ply the craft aspect of my vocation; I will honour the demand for clarity but I will not concede to the demands for simplification.

*Damian Ruth is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Management at Massey University*

Contact: [d.w.ruth@massey.ac.nz](mailto:d.w.ruth@massey.ac.nz)

# HERDSA Fellowship: Critical Reflection on Teaching Practice

By Magdalena Wajrak

I recently received very exciting and rewarding news about my HERDSA Fellowship application being accepted. In my case it certainly has been a very long journey to get to this stage, one which was interrupted few times due to family and work commitments. There were times when I was ready to give up this process and felt discouraged by the feedback I received on my earlier versions of the portfolio. However, having the “never give up” type character and receiving encouraging words from Prof Geoffrey Crisp along the way, I decided to take on board assessor’s comments and reflect more on my teaching rather than just write about my teaching and learning strategies. As I was addressing assessor’s comments I realised that one of the main aims of this portfolio is to encourage me take time out of teaching and document and justify how the strategies that I have been using in my teaching have been successful or not, in improving students’ learning. Over the past 10 years of my teaching career, I have implemented various teaching strategies, but never had much time to reflect back on them and explain how those strategies have worked and what still needed to be done to improve my teaching. I think, like so many other lecturers, I am always busy teaching, but never get a chance to deeply reflect on the strategies that I have implemented and what improvements I could make. Having now written the portfolio, my approach to teaching has changed and I now tend to be more critical about my approaches to teaching and ask myself questions such as: “what outcomes am I expecting from this approach”, “how will students benefit from this approach?”, “how will I know that my approach has worked?” and “what evidence will I need to show that this approach has or hasn’t worked?”

When I was invited to write an article about my HERDSA Fellowship experience, I immediately decided to go back through the *HERDSA News* and read some of the previous articles. One in particular that stuck in my mind was column by Peter

Jones (Jones, 2008). As I was reading Peter’s column I was smiling and nodding to myself, because our backgrounds are very similar and the experiences Peter described were also my experiences. The only difference is that my professional background is chemistry and his is social work. Like Peter, I came to University teaching almost by accident, having started my teaching as a demonstrator during my PhD at UWA. After completing my PhD, I held various positions; as a scientific advisor to the Minister for the Environment, and a chemist for Monitoring Technologies International company, however, I realised that I have a great passion for teaching and therefore I decided to complete Diploma of Education and build a career in education. I have been a University lecturer for ten years, and I still love my job. My current position is chemistry lecturer at Edith Cowan University.

During the process of creating Fellowship portfolio I realised that my interest in teaching stems from my own learning experiences, both good and not so good, at the University level. I also realised that students’ understanding of any subject matter, can be greatly enhanced through the

enthusiasm, interest and educational skills of the lecturer. The importance of lecturer cannot be underestimated and as a lecturer my job is not just to teach the subject matter, but more importantly to set the students up on a life-long journey of learning. My job is to also to help them to develop critical and logical thinking and ultimately create a change in their thinking, perception and attitudes to learning. As a chemistry lecturer, I recognise that chemists require the ability to identify, synthesise, discover and safely store chemical compounds, they also require sound knowledge of chemical concepts, curiosity, logical and critical thinking, enthusiasm, determination, social responsibility, moral and ethical values. Therefore, I have embedded these attributes within all the units that I teach to help students understand the link between the knowledge and skills they need to learn in a particular unit and how it is relevant to their chemistry career. In addition to implementation of the graduate attributes within each chemistry unit that I teach, the pedagogical framework of the chemistry course varies from a more instructivist approach in the first year units that I teach to a more constructivist approach in third year units as suggested by Siragusa, 2007.



A Group of HERDSA Fellows at the Conference

When designing a unit, I first think what skills and concepts do I want the student to learn from this unit, then how will I know that the student has learned those skills and concept, ie. what type of questions should form part of the assessment, and finally what activities should I design to help students learn those skills and concepts (Wiggins, 1998).

Within a systematic and coherent frame of practice, one's educational philosophy, teaching goals and professional development provide a thread that links teaching and learning processes, with the use of appropriate teaching techniques to enhance students' learning. In my HERDSA portfolio I have outlined those techniques, strategies and approaches which I have

implemented in my chemistry units and reflected on them. It was a difficult process, however, I now feel that having to critically reflect on my own teaching practice has helped me to recognise what I do well, but also what I still need to improve on in my teaching.

For me personally, it was a very rewarding, although at times frustrating experience which has provided me with valuable information about my teaching.

### References

- Jones, S. (2008). Reflections of a new Fellow. *HERDSA News*, 29(3), 19–20.
- Siragusa, L., Dixon, K. C., Dixon, L., (2007). *Designing quality e-learning environments in higher education*.

Conference presentation, Ascilite 2007 Singapore.

Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (1998). *Understanding by Design*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

*Magdalena Wajrak is a Chemistry Lecturer in the School of Natural Sciences at Edith Cowan University. In 2007 she was awarded the Pearson's Education RACI Chemical Educator of the Year Award and has also received ECU's Vice Chancellor's Excellence in Teaching Award in 2005.*

Contact: [m.wajrak@ecu.edu.au](mailto:m.wajrak@ecu.edu.au)

## HERDSA Guides

HERDSA Guides provide useful ideas and information on many aspects of teaching and learning. Written by experts in specific fields, they are short, inexpensive and easy to read.

### Designing and using e-assessments

#### Professor Geoffrey Crisp

This HERDSA Guide highlights some of the key issues surrounding the use of e-assessment and provides examples and practical advice on how teachers might engage students in more interactive online tasks. It presents a realistic view of what is now possible through the use of computers and the Internet in higher education assessment. It specifically discusses the important relationship between learning, teaching and assessment, and presents a number of frameworks for aligning e-learning activities and e-assessment tasks.

The Guide covers e-assessment possibilities ranging from simple computer marked multiple-choice questions, through to elaborate role-plays, interactive simulations and online scenarios. There is no suggestion in the Guide that e-assessment will replace all traditional assessment tasks; it highlights the necessity for teachers to be aware of the new opportunities for enhancing the quality of assessment tasks through the use of computers and the Internet. The Guide also emphasises that if students are using the Internet or computers as part of the learning environment, they should also use these tools to complete their assessment tasks. Numerous examples of how teachers can prepare engaging questions that will test higher order capabilities in students are provided in the Guide.

Professor Geoff Crisp is the Director of the Centre for Learning and Professional Development and Director of Online Education at the University of Adelaide. He is currently President of HERDSA.

Order online through [www.herdsa.org.au](http://www.herdsa.org.au)

# Supporting Higher Education Research and Development at Deakin University

Research concerning the higher education sector and the contribution it makes to Australian society has never been more necessary or important.

Professor Philip Clarke  
Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)  
Deakin University, 2009.

University academic staff members are facing greater challenges, to ensure excellence in teaching and learning as well as to contribute to research activity and output through winning external funding and achieving refereed and other publications. One response has been to “stream” individual academics into predominantly teaching or predominantly research roles.

At Deakin University, the preferred approach is to keep the majority of academic staff involved and contributing to both teaching and research. For many academics, the immediacy of teaching can leave limited time and focus for scholarship and/or discipline research. The demands of teaching can be high and challenging but with encouragement and appropriate structures, academics can develop and enhance their research involvement and contribution, including through research into teaching and learning and other aspects of higher education.

An institutional structure that has begun to develop a community of research practice was initiated at Deakin University in 2008. The Higher Education Research Group (HERG) was set up to lead, encourage and support colleagues in their higher education related research endeavours. HERG, through its activities, initiatives and programs, provides a catalyst for informed change and innovation in higher education across disciplines and faculties at Deakin University, as well as through partnerships between institutions.

## HERG History and Development

The Higher Education Research Group is little more than two years old but it has achieved a great deal and it has already reached some exciting milestones. Professor Marcia Devlin was appointed as the inaugural Chair in Higher Education Research in April 2008. Marcia launched her appointment and communicated her aims to establish a centre of excellence at Deakin University with a discussion paper on the scholarship of teaching. As a result of the overwhelmingly positive response to this paper and the dialogue with colleagues that it initiated, another two discussion papers on the quality of higher education research and on Deakin University becoming a national leader in higher education were then disseminated and widely discussed.

The Higher Education Research Group was formally launched in June 2008 with the first issue of *HERG News*. This was a modest but information rich, fortnightly e-newsletter sent to the original 60 people who had shown interest in joining a collective team focused on high-quality research and scholarship in higher education. The newsletter served to raise awareness about higher education research going on across the university and across the sector, and to put HERG members in touch with each other.

There are now more than 200 members of HERG. *HERG News* has become a monthly communication that has helped to develop and maintain a strong, supportive community of research- focused members from all faculties, schools and divisions across Deakin. The newsletter provides information on events, seminars, workshop, updates and alerts on higher education research and conferences as well as an important mechanism to share HERG

By Dr Anna Lichtenberg

member successes. *HERG News* is read by interested parties in Canada, Hong Kong and Malaysia as well as at a number of other Australian universities.

## HERG Initiatives and Programs

A dedicated HERG website was soon established (<http://www.deakin.edu.au/herg>) to house higher education research focused biographies of members, advice on sources of funding, guidance for members on applying for funding, guidance on publishing, exemplars of successful ethics applications, papers of interest and annotated bibliographies as well as other practical resources.

Marcia, as Director, has been joined in the demanding work at HERG by Deputy Director, Associate Professor Judy Nagy (from July 2009), a colleague seconded from the Faculty of Business and Law and Personal and Administrative Assistant, Terry McCormick (January 2009) as well as by a small team of research staff to assist them with funded projects. As well as facilitating the programs of HERG, they also work on their own Australian Research Council (ARC) and Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) funded projects and other research initiatives such as media briefings and invited conference presentations.

The many activities of HERG that work toward the creation of a viable community of research practice include: an annual Colloquia Series on a range of higher education research topics; Grant Writing Workshops; Individual Mentoring Programs and a 12 week Writing for Refereed Publication Program delivered across three campuses. The output from HERG in a short timeframe has been remarkable, with a number of externally funded research

projects including two ARC and five ALTC projects; publications including books, books chapters and refereed journal articles, as well as print, online and radio media interviews and commissioned and opinion articles in newspapers.

HERG now also offers a professional development program for beginning higher education researchers, the Intensive New Researcher Workshop. In response to the challenges of new staff with discipline backgrounds, who are keen, but not sure how to start to participate in higher education research, this workshop covers topics such as hot topics, relevant methodologies for higher education research, funding and publishing sources and how to find like-minded colleagues with whom to collaborate.

Led by ALTC National Award winning teacher, Associate Professor Judy Nagy, the course runs in intensive mode at the Deakin Management Centre over two days. The central aim of the two-day intensive program is to provide a structured, step-by-step program for beginning higher education researchers that introduces the basic principles and practices of research in this field. The first program offered by HERG was oversubscribed and received extremely positive feedback and a second had to be offered soon after the first to accommodate demand. If you are interested in discussing the possibility of offering the course to staff at another institution, please contact Professor Marcia Devlin ([mdevlin@deakin.edu.au](mailto:mdevlin@deakin.edu.au)).

### Peer Support

The Peer Writing Workshops provide academics with the opportunity to work with colleagues in small groups to review and provide feedback in a supportive and collegial environment. These monthly workshops are for members of HERG who are conducting scholarship or research

into curriculum or pedagogy in higher education, the student experience of higher education, higher education policy, and/or related higher education issues. Prospective participants are required to submit a draft paper for review and commit to reviewing and preparing comments on the work of peers prior to the workshop. Several HERG members have achieved refereed publications following participation in this program.

### External Links

HERG also has initiated links internationally through the International Visiting Scholars Program. A “small grants scheme” to support travel and associated costs for HERG members’ research activities is another dimension of HERG’s strategy to encourage and support research involvement. If you are an international reader of *HERDSA News* and would like to discuss the possibility of a Visiting Scholar position, please contact Professor Marcia Devlin ([mdevlin@deakin.edu.au](mailto:mdevlin@deakin.edu.au)).

### HERDSA 2010

In 2010, Marcia was convenor of the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) 2010 Conference, *Reshaping Higher Education* (6 – 9 July) in Melbourne. HERG members were involved in every aspect of the conference including reviewing submissions, submitting and presenting papers, participating in the organising committee, chairing sessions and generally assisting with the conference hosting. More than 390 delegates from 9 countries participated in this year’s conference and feedback indicates a perception of a very high quality and worthwhile event.

### HERG Members’ Thoughts

How do the members feel and talk about HERG? In 2008 a formal survey was sent

out to HERG members to ascertain their views on the effectiveness of the initiative. The following quotes capture the essence of the general reaction and responses received.

*Overall I think that HERG is a fantastic initiative and one that we should all be very proud of ...* (Anonymous respondent, HERG Evaluation, 2009)

*The strong sense of leadership of a community of researchers, in conjunction with the support, information and professional development opportunities provided by Professor Devlin through HERG have greatly enhanced my confidence to target my efforts towards higher education research and my ability to do so with a much greater degree of knowledge, skill and passion.* (Anonymous respondent, HERG Evaluation, 2009)

*HERG has provided a network for linking people with common interests, for helping to remove silos (or at least gently nudge them to one side). I am now actively engaged with three cross-disciplinary projects arising from a HERG two-day professional development. Both Marcia and Judy have also provided strong support to me in the process of developing ALTC applications – helping enthusiastically with both fine detail and strategic directions.* (Karen Le Rossignol, Lecturer, School of Communication and Creative Arts, Faculty of Arts and Education)

### The Future

HERG continues to grow in memberships and is maturing. The community of practice that has evolved and member “ownership” has generated keen interest in exploring the future of the group.

To find out more about the work of HERG, please see the HERG website (<http://www.deakedu.au/herg>) or contact Professor Marcia Devlin at [mdevlin@deakin.edu.au](mailto:mdevlin@deakin.edu.au)

*Anna Lichtenberg is a Research Fellow of HERG at Deakin University.*

Contact: [anna.lichtenberg@deakin.edu.au](mailto:anna.lichtenberg@deakin.edu.au)

## The HERDSA Weekly E-News

Posted every Wednesday

To subscribe go to

<http://mailman.anu.edu.au/mailman/listinfo/herdsa>

# Benchmarking Academic Development

By Don Maconachie

## Introduction

The Council of Australian Directors of Academic Development (CADAD) is the peak body in Australia for directors of academic development. It strives to promote and support academic development for the advancement of learning and teaching in higher education. It also provides professional services for its members, who are nominated by their respective institutions. CADAD has members from 38 of Australia's universities, and affiliate members from universities in New Zealand and South Africa ([www.cadad.edu.au](http://www.cadad.edu.au)).

In a more deregulated, competitive and performance-driven sector, Australian universities are increasingly conscious of the quality of learning and teaching. The twin impacts of this on academic development units (ADUs) are a greater profile in the academic strategy of universities and increasing pressures to demonstrate their value to their institutions in enhancing the quality of learning and teaching.

In this context CADAD wanted to find the most effective ways in which ADUs could make their work more explicit, and show how it aligns with institutional strategy and contributes to the quality of learning and teaching. Moreover, CADAD wished to provide a means by which ADUs could calibrate their performance against that of other ADUs, thus establishing some sector-wide norms for academic development. It was recognised from the outset that any such norms would need to be progressive in nature, taking account of the major changes affecting both the higher education sector and the practice of academic development.

This article describes the collaborative process through which the members of CADAD first developed a range of key performance indicators (KPIs) for academic development, and then translated this work into benchmarks and benchmarking processes for ADUs. It provides details about the benchmarks and how they are applied and measured, and concludes with some

comments about use of the benchmarks at institutional level.

## Key Performance Indicators for Academic Development

Phase one of the CADAD benchmarking project involved the development of KPIs for academic development. These were intended to be measures of the performance of ADUs that could be assessed within institutions and then compared across institutions. In order to identify these KPIs it was first necessary to describe the work of ADUs. To do this the project team came up with a list of the domains and sub-domains of academic development as they have evolved in Australian universities. These have been worked and reworked over two years and are now in a form that the members of CADAD believe are an accurate reflection of the core work of ADUs, recognising that some ADUs may not perform some of these functions and some relatively common functions are not (yet) included. These domains and sub-domains are described at Figure 1.

During phase one of the benchmarking project, KPIs were identified for each sub-domain. The domains, sub-domains and KPIs were embedded in a matrix that also prefigured the processes of self assessment and benchmarking that were intended to drive the process. This matrix is shown, using as an example, one KPI for the domain of *Professional Development* and sub-domain of *Planning*, at Figure 2.

KPI: Advice and support for development of annual professional development plans

The features of this matrix were as follows:

- Both the actual provision of ADU functions and services (level) and their effectiveness (quality) were measured (rows 1 and 2)
- Benchmarks were identified (norms of practice)
- ADUs set their own targets against the benchmarks and recorded whether they

met the target or the benchmark (if the target was different from the benchmark)

- Columns were provided to set the date of assessment and identify the nature of the evidence used.

To complete phase one of the project, many members trialled the KPIs and the assessment processes, and provided extensive feedback to the project team. Others provided feedback on their experience of benchmarking with another ADU. The feedback was discussed at length at a CADAD meeting in 2009, and it was determined that sufficient progress had been made to warrant moving on to the development of more descriptive benchmarks for academic development.

## Benchmarks for Academic Development

Phase two of the project is now well advanced, with members of the project team, the wider reference group, and various other members of CADAD drafting benchmarks to populate the new framework that has been developed by the project team. This framework involves the same domains and sub-domains, but has been designed around differentiation of the work of ADUs at three levels within institutions, and assessment of performance based on a five point scale. Using the example of the domain of *Strategy, Policy and Governance*, the current draft of typical benchmarks at each of the three levels for the sub-domain of *Strategic Advice* are described at Figure 3.

The current draft of the 5 point assessment scale, which is to be used for both self-assessment and benchmarking purposes, is detailed at Figure 4.

This approach to benchmarking for academic development is an advance on the first phase of the project. This is because it overcomes the somewhat cryptic nature of the KPI approach and better accommodates the many different styles of academic development in universities in Australia and beyond.

<p>Strategy, Policy and Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic Advice</li> <li>• Strategic Planning</li> <li>• Governance</li> <li>• Policy Development and Implementation</li> <li>• Strategic Initiatives</li> </ul>	<p>Quality of Learning and Teaching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards</li> <li>• Evaluation and Improvement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student Feedback</li> <li>Peer Review</li> <li>Curriculum Review</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Scholarship of Teaching and Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grants and Awards</li> <li>• Significant Projects</li> <li>• Research into Learning and Teaching</li> <li>• Research into Academic Development</li> </ul>	<p>Professional Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Management</li> <li>• Delivery</li> </ul>
<p>Accredited Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Management</li> <li>• Delivery</li> </ul>	<p>Curriculum Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum Planning and Design</li> <li>• Education Resource Development</li> </ul>
<p>University Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal Communication</li> <li>• Internal Collaboration</li> <li>• External Collaboration</li> <li>• Communities of Practice</li> </ul>	<p>ADU Effectiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ADU Mission and Strategy Alignment</li> <li>• ADU Leadership and Management</li> <li>• ADU Impact</li> <li>• ADU Quality Assurance and Improvement</li> </ul>

Figure 1: Domains and Sub-domains of Academic Development

Measure	Target	Target Met	Benchmark	Benchmark Met	Date Reported	Evidence
Level of provision			<p>Coordination of</p> <p>(a) broad consultation and decision-making regarding professional development needs</p> <p>(b) development and dissemination of annual professional development plan</p>			(Documentation)
Quality of provision			60% of staff satisfied or very satisfied			

Figure 2: Key Performance Indicator Matrix

## Conclusion

CADAD expects to have completed this project and to make the academic development benchmarks available for use by early next year. The benchmarks should help ADUs to demonstrate their value in enhancing the quality of learning and teaching at their respective institutions. This has always been CADAD's main motivation for undertaking this work and is one of the reasons that most of the benchmarks are *leading* indicators. The benchmarks

should help ADUs and their institutions to plan the work of the ADU, be clear about expectations of the ADU and its specific functions and services, identify in advance how the ADU and the institution will know how well the ADU has implemented its planned activities, and enable appropriate performance evaluations to take place.

The question of *outcome* indicators is vexed for academic development, and not only because there is little consensus about learning and teaching performance

indicators. It is also very difficult to demonstrate causal relationships between academic development activities, such as a project to enhance assessment and feedback in a first year course, and the quality of student learning outcomes. There are many links in any such chain over which ADUs can have little or no influence. CADAD is actively interested in this problem, however, and intends to follow-up the benchmarking project with work on measuring the impact of ADUs.

<p>Domain: Strategy, Policy and Governance</p> <p>Sub-domain: Strategic Advice</p> <p>Level: <b>Institution</b></p> <p>Nature of ADU Engagement:</p> <p><i>The ADU provides current and timely information, supports interpretation, and provides strategic advice in relation to government policy and proposals. The ADU assists the institution to develop (a) an understanding of the implications of these policies and proposals for the institution, and (b) a strategic response consistent with the institutions vision and mission. The unit advises on emerging learning and teaching trends and issues in the higher education context both nationally and internationally.</i></p>
<p>Domain: Strategy, Policy and Governance</p> <p>Sub-domain: Strategic Advice</p> <p>Level: <b>Faculty/School</b></p> <p>Nature of ADU Engagement:</p> <p><i>The ADU provides current and timely information, supports interpretation, and provides strategic advice in relation to government policy and proposals to the faculty/school. The ADU assists the faculty/school to develop (a) an understanding of the implications of these policies and proposals for the institution, faculty/school, and (b) a strategic response consistent with the institution's vision and mission and response to these policies and proposals. The unit advises on the implications of emerging learning and teaching trends and issues in the higher education context both nationally and internationally for the faculty/school.</i></p>
<p>Domain: Strategy, Policy and Governance</p> <p>Sub-domain: Strategic Advice</p> <p>Level: <b>Program/Course</b></p> <p>Nature of ADU Engagement:</p> <p><i>The ADU assists staff at program/course level to develop their understanding of the implication of government policies, and institutional and faculty/school responses to same, for the program/course. The unit advises on the implications for the program/course of emerging learning and teaching trends and issues in the higher education context both nationally and internationally.</i></p>

Figure 3: Examples of Benchmarks for the Sub-domain of Strategy, Policy and Governance

1	2	3	4	5
Beginning-Developing		Functional-Proficient		Accomplished-Exemplary
The unit is beginning to engage in this activity at this level for the first time. Strategies, systems, and capabilities to enable and facilitate this type of engagement at this level are in development and/or only partially implemented.		The unit has well developed strategies, systems and capabilities to enable and facilitate this type of engagement at this level and utilises same to effectively fulfil such responsibilities.		The unit engages in this activity at this level in a highly accomplished way. Systems, strategies and capabilities to enable and facilitate this type of activity are exemplary and reflect an advanced state of development and implementation.

Figure 4: Benchmark Assessment Scale

In the meantime, CADAD would be very satisfied if its academic development benchmarks were used by institutional leaders, deans and heads of school, and course coordinators, in concert with directors of academic development units and their staff, to harmonise support

for institutional efforts to enhance the quality of learning and teaching – and make informed judgements about the contributions of the ADU to developing the quality of learning and teaching.

**Don Maconachie is Director of Teaching and Research Services at the University of the Sunshine Coast. He is both the Secretary and Treasurer of CADAD.**  
**Contact: [dmaconac@usc.edu.au](mailto:dmaconac@usc.edu.au)**



# Modelling Graduate Attributes at the Royal University of Bhutan

By Maureen Bell

Bhutan is a tiny and until recently isolated country straddling the Himalayas, surrounded by China and India. The University was only recently brought into being by the amalgamation of 10 existing colleges. My research project into teaching and learning at the university has so far taken me and my Bhutanese co-researchers to 6 of the 10 colleges – primary education, secondary education, natural resources, science and technology, language and cultural studies and the National Institute for Traditional Medicine. Other colleges still to be visited offer courses in general studies, business, health sciences and engineering.

Our data gathering involves interviews with students and staff and classroom observations. One of the many interesting aspects of such work lies in the differences between Australian and Bhutanese higher education approaches and practices. It can be a little unnerving to have students courteously stand as you walk into a lecture theatre, some of the young men even bow as you walk past their social groups in the courtyard. Such celebrity status could go to one's head. I find that wearing the national costume, which for females is the full-length kira, restricts one's walking and seems to slow things down to a more sedate pace.

In our interviews we found students were keen to tell us what kind of teaching was

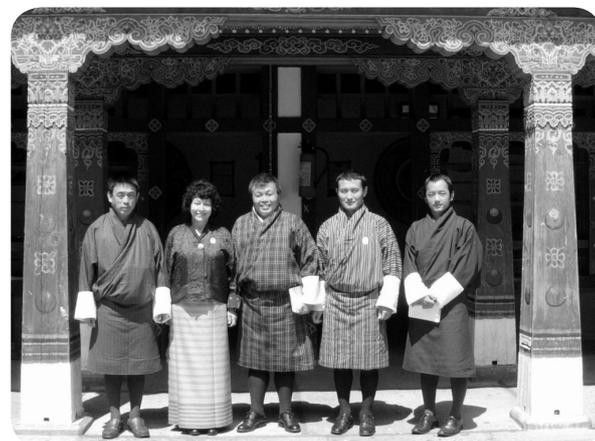
effective and ineffective, and to offer suggestions for improvements that would benefit future students. Without exception students stated the importance of the teacher as a role model and mentor in the development of desired Bhutanese attributes. They also spoke of their own purpose and desire to contribute to the building of Gross National Happiness (GNH) after graduating. The academics, too, spoke of their role in mentoring and supporting students in character development and the development of GNH. In Australian universities we look to the curriculum for the development of graduate attributes. At the Royal University of Bhutan graduate attributes are modeled and discussed by the academics. Students and academics seem, at this time, united in their purpose and in their vision for the country.

The university is at a pivotal educational moment in which RUB academics seek to develop a "student-centred learning" approach while maintaining what they believe to be the positive aspects of a traditional, sometimes ritualistic approach to teaching. Will the resulting learning

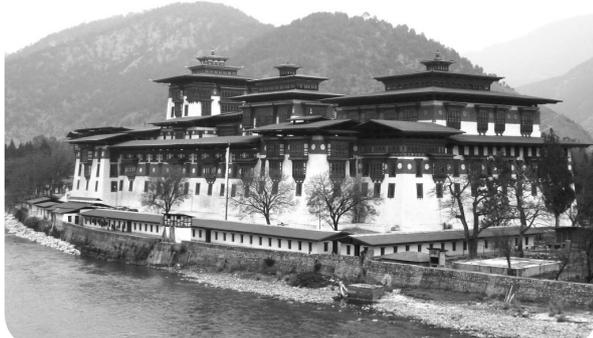
environment be a unique blend of traditional and modern? And will students and their teachers diverge in their thinking about the role of the teacher and the Bhutanese citizen in their own country and globally? RUB is keen to build international teaching and research links and I would be happy to talk with Australasian academics interested in educational research that would benefit RUB.

*Maureen Bell was a Senior Lecturer in the Centre for Educational Development and Interactive Resources (CEDIR) at the University of Wollongong.*

**Contact: mbell@uow.edu.au.**



Director Paro College of Education Dr Thubten Gyatso, Vice Chancellor Dasha Pema Thinley with Maureen Bell and members of academic staff



Punaka Dzong



Students at the Centre for Language and Cultural Studies

# Involving People in Learning

By Hamish Coates and Alex Radloff

## An Engaging State of Play

In August around 300,000 students and over 10,000 teaching staff were invited to report on their engagement with learning and also on many of the broader, more enriching aspects of higher education by taking part in the 2010 Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) (see: <http://ausse.acer.edu.au>).

The survey involved students and staff from 54 higher education institutions – 32 Australian universities, seven New Zealand universities, and 15 other higher education providers.

The 2010 administration of AUSSE is the largest, most comprehensive and well validated survey yet conducted of the extent to which students and institutions are engaging in effective educational practices.

Participating in the survey is beneficial for learners, teachers and institutions, as it exposes people to lists of effective educational practices. The survey presents an opportunity for students and teachers to provide honest feedback that has the potential to improve the higher education experience.

Students answer questions about their studies on campus and at home, their commute to their institution and their future plans as well as questions about how they like to spend their free time.

Teachers provide further information on how much time they spend teaching, whether they teach on or off-campus and their delivery methods, such as lectures, tutorials or online formats.

Institutions use the information gathered to identify areas where improvement in student engagement can be achieved, to plan improvements to the quality of education they provide, and to monitor their progress.

## About the AUSSE

The 2010 administration is the fourth administration of the AUSSE, an annual

study funded by participating institutions, which began in 2007.

As the above remarks suggest, the main purpose of the AUSSE is to develop evidence-based conversations that enhance students' engagement with higher education. The parallel Staff Student Engagement Survey (SSES) captures information from teaching staff, and the Postgraduate Survey of Student Engagement (POSSE) yields much needed information on coursework postgraduate study.

The AUSSE instrument, the Student Engagement Questionnaire (SEQ), is designed for online or paper completion in under 15 minutes. The SEQ measures six important areas of Australasian university education: Active Learning, Academic Challenge, Student and Staff Interactions, Enriching Educational Experiences, Supportive Learning Environment, and Work Integrated Learning.

In addition to the engagement scales, the SEQ measures seven key outcomes: Higher Order Thinking, General Learning Outcomes, General Development Outcomes, Career Readiness, Average Overall Grade, Departure Intention, and Overall Satisfaction.

Data gathered through administration of the AUSSE provides new insights into areas of higher education that are central to good practice. Before 2007 these core facets of university education were not the focus of wide-scale measurement in Australasia.

The AUSSE provides evidence about what students are actually doing, highlights the most critical aspects of learning and development, provides a "learner-centred, whole-of-institution" perspective, and gives an index of students' involvement in study.

A technically advanced and efficient survey methodology has been developed to ensure the validity and reliability of results. Survey administration is centrally managed by ACER and key activities are conducted by institutions. ACER verifies each institution's population, samples students

using a scientifically designed strategy, and dispatches standardised materials to institutions. These materials are sent from institutions to students and completed responses are returned directly to ACER for verification and processing. The phased management approach includes numerous quality checkpoints and provides a basis for continuous improvement.

ACER produces Institution Reports for participating universities, providing details about the responses from students in their institution and selected benchmark groups. These reports provide a basis for publication and presentation of analyses within higher education communities, at conferences, and in magazines and journals. ACER also produces the Australasian Student Engagement Report (ASER), a series of AUSSE Research Briefings, and a series of AUSSE Enhancement Guides. These public documents are intended to convey general results to wider audiences.

As a large-scale international survey of the engagement of currently enrolled students, the AUSSE facilitates cross-institutional benchmarking and cross-national comparison. It provides data on growth in students' engagement in learning, and information for attracting, engaging and retaining students.

## A Sample of Insights

Moving beyond data on students' happiness with teaching and the administrative services provided by their institution produces a range of telling insights on what students and institutions are doing.

For instance, analysis of the 30,000-plus responses to the 2009 AUSSE reveals very clearly that the broader forms of support that institutions provide to students plays a vital role in retention. The average score, on a 0 to 100 scale, on the Supportive Learning Environment scale for students who reported seriously considering departing their institution before graduation was 49, compared with 56 for those who had not considered dropping out. If students are

separated into two groups – those with above average support scores and those who reported below average levels of support – those in the above average group scores higher on every other measured facet of engagement and outcome.

Such insights are hardly surprising, although having evidence to affirm the value of support services is in itself an important contribution. What is surprising, particularly given the salutary effects of support, is that students report very low levels of support. Over a third of all first- and later-year students report that they have not used support services in the current academic year, a statistic that rises above 40 per cent for postgraduate coursework students. Clearly such evidence of the value of support services for students' involvement and outcomes provides an important prompt to better recognise the value of such services and to ensure that they are managed in the most appropriate and effective ways.

Similar insights are evident regarding students' participation in paid work during study, and their active or indirect use of careers advice. In 2009, 63 and 70 per cent of first- and later-year students respectively participated in paid work off campus, while only five and 13 per cent of students in these year levels participated in on-campus paid work. Although once considered an unhelpful detraction from study, evidence from the AUSSE affirms the developmental value of participation in paid work and employment experiences overall. Paid work appears to be particularly beneficial if it averages between 5 to 15 hours per week. Participation in an industry placement, for instance, is linked with higher levels of engagement with learning and with better outcomes.

But while most students are working and gaining value from such work, higher education institutions do not appear to be supporting this effort in the most effective

ways. In their last year of study, only 13 per cent of Australasian later-year learners had visited a careers service for advice, a modest rise from five per cent in the first year. When asked about the relation of their paid work to their study, 55 per cent of working students reported that there was "none at all", a figure that drops to only 40 per cent by final year. The extent to which the academic experience has contributed to securing relevant work after graduation is low, particularly in the creative arts, sciences and humanities.

### Counting Things to Improve

These insights on support and career development point to areas in which the value proposition is clear – supporting students boosts retention, and work experience promotes student involvement and outcomes – but in which institutions are failing to convert. Of course it is important not to particularise these large-scale Australasian findings – many teachers, support staff and institutions make an excellent contribution to many thousands of learners. At the same time, the findings provide a stimulus and indication of areas in need of improvement. Demonstrating the value of support and career development – and the 100 SEQ items tap into a vast number of other areas – shines a light on the importance of these areas and in particular their value for quality higher education.

What is measured counts. Things that are not measured are invisible. It is difficult to improve something if it is not measured. Measuring students' engagement and the support provided by higher education institutions highlights the significance of these phenomena and provides robust evidence-based foundations for improvement.

Much is being done by institutions in Australia and New Zealand to use AUSSE data for improvement and developing

strategies to use engagement data for continuous quality improvement is a vital part of the AUSSE. Collecting information on student engagement can play a valuable role in enhancing the quality of higher education, if only by stimulating conversations about how students engage in high-quality learning, or by exposing students and teaching staff to lists of good learning practices. But the most productive change comes through using findings to steer improvements in practice.

Institutions need to make informed, professional decisions about what particular student engagement data they will act on and about how to take necessary action. To assist with this process, ACER has produced a series of AUSSE Enhancement Guides in collaboration with colleagues at higher education institutions. These guides have been developed to help institutions make the most use of their AUSSE data and results and to make the link from data to positive change.

As outlined in these guides, information on student engagement can be used in many different ways. The data can be used to provide information to potential students, for internal and external quality assurance activities, to help academic staff target their teaching, to understand how students are interacting with institutional resources, to inform employers about student characteristics and growth, and to manage particular student cohorts. Most importantly, understanding student involvement can be used to engage and help students succeed in higher education.

*Hamish Coates is Associate Professor and Principal Research Fellow, at the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), in Melbourne.*

*Alex Radloff, is a Senior Research Officer at the ACER.*

Contact: [coatesh@acer.edu.au](mailto:coatesh@acer.edu.au)

The website for the Student Engagement Project is:

<http://ausse.acer.edu.au>

## THE INTERNATIONAL COLUMN

# Crossing Borders/Bridging Minds: Implications for Education

By Joy Mighty

In my introductory remarks at a recent symposium on the topic of “crossing borders”, I asked the audience of about 150 graduate students and faculty to stand if they had studied or worked in a city, province or country other than the one in which they were born or in which the symposium was being held. All but one member of the audience stood. In the ensuing discussion, we acknowledged that not only is it quite commonplace today to cross borders in a literal sense at some point during one’s education or career, but also that many people unfortunately experience other types of “borders”, for example psychological, social, political or cultural barriers, without necessarily crossing a geographical boundary. This realisation led to a fascinating discussion about the implications for education of the now commonplace phenomenon of crossing borders, and especially the role of education in bridging minds in the context of changing domestic demographics and increasing internationalisation that result from crossing borders.

The human population has grown, and continues to grow, at such a rapid rate that the United Nations estimates that we will reach 9.1 billion by mid-century. In addition, advances in telecommunications and transportation, the collapse and/or reshaping of geographic borders, the expansion of capitalism, and numerous free trade and other agreements have resulted in unprecedented global mobility and economic and cultural integration. These global changes are reflected in increasing diversity.

For example, results from the 2006 Census indicate that foreign-born people in Canada accounted for approximately 20% of the total population, the highest proportion in 75 years. Approximately 70% of the foreign-born population reported having a mother tongue other than English

or French, Canada’s official languages. Moreover, it is projected that the diversity of Canada’s population will continue to increase significantly during the next two decades and, by 2031, the proportion of foreign-born in the total population would increase from 20% in 2006 to 46%, almost one-half of the Canadian population.<sup>2</sup> Of course, such diversity is not unique to Canada. It is a global phenomenon that is influenced by other factors apart from immigration. Similarly, there is increasing diversity in other dimensions of social identity, including race, gender, religion, language, sexual orientation, ethnicity, ability, age, and class.

What are the implications of such diversity for education? In my view, those of us who are in education, at whatever level of the system, have an important role to play, indeed, a responsibility, to prepare students for living and working amidst such diversity at home and abroad. For example, we need to be intentional about seeking to develop intercultural competence which is the acquisition of culture-specific and culture-general knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for effective communication and interaction with individuals from other cultures. Individuals with intercultural competence have the capacity to work effectively in culturally diverse domestic and international settings. They are able to understand the impact of culture on human behavior and identity, and to examine and apply disciplinary knowledge from a cross-cultural perspective.<sup>3</sup>

A host of environmental, institutional, and personal constraints may prevent the implementation of relevant programs and activities for developing intercultural competence, especially in the face of diminishing resources, but we can help overcome such challenges by reframing them as opportunities to be seized. For example, we can turn the changing demographics

mentioned earlier into opportunities to learn from each other through intercultural contact and connections.

I see a special role for educational developers in helping administrators, departments and individual faculty members across the disciplines to address questions about appropriate curricula, learning experiences and pedagogical approaches to use in developing graduates with intercultural competence. But I also believe that achieving this objective requires a systemic approach. It cannot be accomplished by any single group or unit, working alone. We all have a part to play and we must find ways of institutionalising our efforts so that they become an integral part of our institutional culture rather than occasional reactions to hot incidents when they arise. Such institutionalisation requires an explicit articulation of intercultural competence as part of the institution’s vision and mission, as well as leadership at all levels and appropriate infrastructure, such as educational development and professional international and diversity education units and staff, to support whatever initiatives are implemented. In addition, institutionalisation requires that we ensure that the diversity in the population is appropriately reflected at every level of our institution, including the highest levels of administration and across the academic ranks of faculty. In the final analysis, only the involvement and commitment of the entire institution, working together, will ensure that our students develop the intercultural competence that is necessary for making connections and bridging minds in the context of crossed borders.

*Joy Mighty is Director of the Centre for Teaching and Learning at Queens University, Canada. She is also a Professor in the School of Business. She has just completed her term as President of the Society for Learning and Teaching*

*in Higher Education (STLHE) which is the Canadian equivalent of HERDSA.*

Contact [director.ctl@queensu.ca](mailto:director.ctl@queensu.ca)

## Endnotes

1 Adapted from a keynote address

presented at the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Graduate Students in Education Symposium held at Queen's University in Kingston Ontario, Canada, on April 9, 2010.

2 Statistics Canada: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/100309/dq100309a-eng.htm>. Retrieved, April

10, 2010.

3 Paige, R. M. (2009). *Intercultural Perspectives on Internationalizing the Curriculum*. Presented at the Cross-Faculty Teaching Forum, Queen's University, April 27, 2009.

# Meanderings

In *The Uncommon Reader*, (Faber and Faber, 2007) Alan Bennett describes a scene where the Queen, having turned 80, threw a party for her numerous advisers over the years. She addresses those present and scares the living daylights out of them by announcing that she is going to write a book about her life, "...for one has a long perspective and it was ever thus. At eighty things do not occur; they recur".

I am certainly not 80 yet, but it is true that things do recur, especially in education! An experience with an announcement in the electronic *HERDSA News* on Wed 6 March 2010 illustrates this. The announcement reads:

Resources about "Clickers"

The Science Education Initiative has created a set of resources about effective use of personal response systems ("clickers") for student engagement and formative assessment – most notably a set of high-quality videos giving an inside look at clickers being used in the classroom and teacher and student opinions about them.

"Clickers" are not clearly explained here, reflecting a characteristic of much of today's communication where important activities are reduced to names or acronyms that have no clear meaning for the reader. When I first read of a "clicker", I thought of those little metal beetle-like toys we used to get at the Sydney Royal Easter Show in show-bags when we were kids. Investigation revealed that clickers are not toys at all but an electronic student response system for use in large group teaching.

The announcement implies that this is an innovation. I pointed out in correspondence with colleagues that this idea was around in the very early 1970's and was presented in one of the very few good-quality training films available at that time, *Programmed Learning*, a film produced for the Royal Navy. In fact, a non-electronic and vastly cheaper version known as the "Cosford Cube" – a cube with different coloured sides – was also presented.

So, I claimed, the idea of "clickers" had been a round for at least 40 years. Further correspondence on student response systems revealed that they had been introduced at the University of Melbourne during the 1960's under Barbara Falk's leadership there. That system had not survived long as students demolished the electrics in the lecture theatres where they were being used! We had an additional and very helpful contribution to the discussion from Bill McKeachie in the US, surely the grandfather of educational development, who said: "I think the first use of clickers was here at the University of Michigan in the 1940's. Dick Brandt, Professor of Physics, used them in his classes".

These early student response systems did not last long, partly I suspect, because of their reliance on multiple choice test formats and the educational issues these introduced into teaching. It will be interesting to see what happens to the latest incarnation!

Now, to "meander" over to something quite different ... if you were offered a product or strategy that research shows provides the following 14 benefits, would you buy it?

Would you get it, if it were *free*? Consider your answer as you review these benefits:

- Reduces stress, anxiety, and tension
- Promotes psychological well-being
- Raises self-esteem
- Improves interpersonal interactions and relationships
- Builds group identity and cohesiveness
- Enhances memory
- Increases pain tolerance
- Elevates mood
- Increases hope, energy, and vigour
- Counteracts depression and anxiety
- Enhances creative thinking and problem-solving
- Increases friendliness and helpfulness
- Increases interpersonal attraction
- Exercises respiratory muscles.

Now, before giving your answer, also take into consideration that this product or strategy *might* also have these further 13 additional benefits:

- Reduces respiratory infections
- Treats asthma
- Enhances positive lifestyle choices
- Improves diabetes
- Increases longevity
- Improves immune function
- Treats cancer
- Fights off infections
- Lowers blood pressure
- Reduces heart disease
- Exercise benefits equal to jogging

- Leads to significant weight loss

The 27 benefits on offer look pretty good to me! Human nature being what it is, my guess is that if the product or strategy providing these benefits was offered for free it would be largely ignored. But, if it had a price tag – say \$99.99 – thousands would buy it, reflecting the way we tend to place greater value on things we pay for! By now you have probably figured out that the product we have here is humour. The two lists above have been endorsed by the *Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor* and they are available as a download from their website at: <http://aath.org/index.html>, the source for these lists.

The *Association* says that the first list is a summary of what we know about the effects of humour, mirth, and laughter based on the research to date. The second list expresses common beliefs in need of a firm scientific foundation in order to be promoted to the first, “what we know”, list.

According to the *Association*, these lists will be updated as new research findings are published. Their formal definition of “Therapeutic Humour” is: “Any intervention that promotes health and wellness by stimulating a playful discovery, expression or appreciation of the absurdity or incongruity of life’s situations. This intervention may enhance health or be used

In *The Uncommon Reader*, (Faber and Faber, 2007) Alan Bennett describes a scene where the Queen, having turned 80, threw a party for her numerous advisers over the years. She addresses those present and scares the living daylights out of them by announcing that she is going to write a book about her life, “...for one has a long perspective and it was ever thus. At eighty things do not occur; they recur”.

I am certainly not 80 yet, but it is true that things do recur, especially in education! An experience with an announcement in the electronic *HERDSA News* on Wed 6 March 2010 illustrates this. The announcement reads:

Resources about “Clickers”

The Science Education Initiative has created a set of resources about effective use of personal response systems (“clickers”) for student engagement and formative assessment – most notably a set of high-quality videos giving an inside look at clickers being used in

the classroom and teacher and student opinions about them.

“Clickers” are not clearly explained here, reflecting a characteristic of much of today’s communication where important activities are reduced to names or acronyms that have no clear meaning for the reader. When I first read of a “clicker”, I thought of those little metal beetle-like toys we used to get at the Sydney Royal Easter Show in show-bags when we were kids. Investigation revealed that clickers are not toys at all but an electronic student response system for use in large group teaching.

The announcement implies that this is an innovation. I pointed out in correspondence with colleagues that this idea was around in the very early 1970’s and was presented in one of the very few good-quality training films available at that time, *Programmed Learning*, a film produced for the Royal Navy. In fact, a non-electronic and vastly cheaper version known as the “Cosford Cube” – a cube with different coloured sides – was also presented.

So, I claimed, the idea of “clickers” had been a round for at least 40 years. Further correspondence on student response systems revealed that they had been introduced at the University of Melbourne during the 1960’s under Barbara Falk’s leadership there. That system had not survived long as students demolished the electrics in the lecture theatres where they were being used! We had an additional and very helpful contribution to the discussion from Bill McKeachie in the US, surely the grandfather of educational development, who said: “I think the first use of clickers was here at the University of Michigan in the 1940’s. Dick Brandt, Professor of Physics, used them in his classes”.

These early student response systems did not last long, partly I suspect, because of their reliance on multiple choice test formats and the educational issues these introduced into teaching. It will be interesting to see what happens to the latest incarnation!

Now, to “meander” over to something quite different ... if you were offered a product or strategy that research shows provides the following 14 benefits, would you buy it? Would you get it, if it were *free*? Consider your answer as you review these benefits:

- Reduces stress, anxiety, and tension
- Promotes psychological well-being

- Raises self-esteem
- Improves interpersonal interactions and relationships
- Builds group identity and cohesiveness
- Enhances memory
- Increases pain tolerance
- Elevates mood
- Increases hope, energy, and vigour
- Counteracts depression and anxiety
- Enhances creative thinking and problem-solving
- Increases friendliness and helpfulness
- Increases interpersonal attraction
- Exercises respiratory muscles.

Now, before giving your answer, also take into consideration that this product or strategy *might* also have these further 13 additional benefits:

- Reduces respiratory infections
- Treats asthma
- Enhances positive lifestyle choices
- Improves diabetes
- Increases longevity
- Improves immune function
- Treats cancer
- Fights off infections
- Lowers blood pressure
- Reduces heart disease
- Exercise benefits equal to jogging
- Leads to significant weight loss

The 27 benefits on offer look pretty good to me! Human nature being what it is, my guess is that if the product or strategy providing these benefits was offered for free it would be largely ignored. But, if it had a price tag – say \$99.99 – thousands would buy it, reflecting the way we tend to place greater value on things we pay for! By now you have probably figured out that the product we have here is humour. The two lists above have been endorsed by the *Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor* and they are available as a download from their website at: <http://aath.org/index.html>, the source for these lists.

The *Association* says that the first list is a summary of what we know about the effects of humour, mirth, and laughter based on the research to date. The second list expresses common beliefs in need of a firm scientific foundation in order to be promoted to the first, “what we know”, list.

According to the *Association*, these lists will be updated as new research findings are published. Their formal definition of “Therapeutic Humour” is: “Any intervention that promotes health and wellness by stimulating a playful discovery, expression or appreciation of the absurdity or incongruity of life’s situations. This intervention may enhance health or be used as a complementary treatment of illness to facilitate healing or coping, whether physical, emotional, cognitive, social or spiritual”.

With this focus on “discovery”, “expression” and appreciation of “absurdities”, I would have thought humour may have staked out a greater place in the research culture of universities but this does not generally seem to be the case. A few jokes thrown into a lecture seems to be about as far as it goes.

I think humour might be something we could all explore more fully in our research and teaching. Along the way, it would seem we might benefit greatly from its therapeutic benefits. There is a slight danger here, as Jim Walker, author of *Leave Them Laughing*, (sorry, I cannot locate the date or publisher of this small paperback) found when he was Deputy Director of a College of Advanced Education in Sydney some years back. Colleagues truly appreciated his humour, but at times he found it quite challenging to make serious points with them as they began to assume he was always joking and just laughed at him.

Accounts such as this of the experiences of academics and intellectuals can make fascinating reading for other academics and intellectuals. Reviewing a new biography of Arthur Koestler by Michael Scammel (Random House, 2009), *The Economist*, 27 February 2010, notes “A short man, and a serial fornicator, Koestler, it seems, used his conquests as a kind of self-validation. As his editor, Otto Katz once told him: “We all have our inferiority complexes of various sizes, Arthur. But yours isn’t a complex, it’s a cathedral!”

If Koestler had lived long enough – he would be turning 105 this year if he was still alive – he would no doubt have benefited from Alain de Botton’s excellent book: *The Consolations of Philosophy* (Penguin, 2001), in which human frailties are examined from the point of view of the writings of the great philosophers. The largest section in this book is devoted, interestingly enough, to philosophical “Consolations

for Inadequacy” – cathedral-like or just the standard academic kind. Here, de Botton’s main source of philosophical wisdom is the respected French philosopher, Michel de Montaigne who lived in southwestern France in the sixteenth century. Montaigne had a lot to say about writing and also about what “clever people” should know.

In a chapter titled “On Intellectual Inadequacy”, De Montaigne was scathing in his critique of education at that time. His critique seems as valid today as it was more than 500 years ago. De Montaigne challenges the outcomes of education, asking: “Has [the student] become better and wiser? We ought to find out not who understands *most* but who understands *best*. We work merely to fill the memory, leaving the understanding and the sense of right and wrong empty”. (De Botton, p. 153).

It is tempting to wring our hands about how such issues recur and make a passé remark such as “oh, how little has changed!” But, the situation has changed! We now have improved systems like “clickers” and better multiple choice testing techniques to “find out who understands *most*”. Where is the technology to help us know who understands *best*? Perhaps the research and development based on the idea of deep and surface learning is one answer to this question.

Montaigne believed clever people should develop a “wise intelligence” that enabled them to examine the challenges of life: love, sex, illness, death, children, money and ambition. He was impatient with the trivialities of learning reflected in examinations that required translation of slabs of Greek and Latin, solving mathematical problems with similar triangles and answering questions like: “What are the subject term, predicate term, copula and quantifiers (if any) in the following sentences: Dogs are man’s best friend. All bats are members of the class of rodents. Nothing green is in the room”. (p. 150).

By way of contrast, an examination based on the principles of Montaignean wisdom contains items such as the following:

“Question 1: There was a villager; his brain had long been battered by his wife’s jealousy. One day he came home from work to be welcomed by her usual nagging. It made him feel so mad that, taking the sickle, he suddenly lopped off the members which put his wife into

such a fever and chucked them in her face.

- (a) How should one settle domestic disputes?
- (b) Was the wife nagging or expressing affection?” (p.155).

In the December 2009 edition of *HERDSA News* I observed that writers of academic papers are disappointed by the usual responses to their work, which is often silence. Their desire to leave a lasting legacy is thwarted and unrecognised. In another of his outstanding books, *The Pleasures and Sorrows of Work* (Pantheon, 2009), Alain de Botton writes beautifully about the joys and sorrows of the workplace. One profession he discusses is accountancy. He asserts that accountants “...have no desire to leave a lasting legacy. They have the inner freedom to exercise their intelligence in the way that taxi drivers will practice their navigational skills: they will go wherever their clients direct them to go” (p.242).

One academic who has left a legacy is the sociologist Stanislaw Andreski. In his *Social Sciences as Sorcery* (Andre Deutsch, 1972), Andreski presents a searing analysis of the quality of research in the social sciences, much of which he asserts, is “... “re-search” for things that have been found long ago and many times since” (p.11). On the quantity and quality of publications, Andreski says: “... not only does the flood of publication reveal an abundance of pompous bluff and a paucity of new ideas, but even the old and valuable insights ... are being drowned in a torrent of meaningless verbiage and useless technicalities” (p.11). This situation is reflected in his challenging assertion that the declining quality of American education is related to the rapid increase in the numbers of psychologists and sociologists working in education.

Andreski’s blistering critique is not without humour, in fact, some of the book is actually quite funny. For example, among his criticisms of Everett Hagen’s *On the Theory of Social Change*, is Hagen’s low opinion of the “worldliness” of the inhabitants of third world, unindustrialised countries. This is because of Hagen’s astonishing judgement of the inability of these countries’ “illiterate peasants” to give satisfactory answers to questionnaires containing such items as: “If you were made editor of a newspaper, what kind of paper would you run?” and “Suppose that you were made head of

government, what are some of the things you would do?”

Andreski's response: “Surprising is it not? Why not test the level of “world cognition” of the President of the United States or the editor of *Foreign Affairs* by asking which is the best way of milking a camel?” (p.65).

“World cognition”? Andreski ridicules Hagen's pompous use of unnecessary jargon such as this, which simply means “general knowledge”.

All of us can surely benefit by reading this book and applying its challenging guidance to our own work. The Committee that prepared the recent report *Ahead of the Game: Blueprint for the Reform of Australian Government Administration* (2010) could have benefited from Andreski's book. As *The Drum* (<http://www.abc.net.au/thedrum/>) points out, this important report lags far behind the world's best from its clichéd title, to its bad language, such as “Opportunities for efficiencies and joined-up services, including with State and Territory agencies in particular locations to focus on improved

case coordination, particularly for those experiencing entrenched social disadvantage ...” (p. 36). Reporting his research into language in higher education research in the *International Journal for Academic Development*, 15,1, March 2010, David Green notes that 91% of respondents want simple language in teaching and learning literature. So, it seems, even academics do not like complex or bad language!

A recent British report, *Bad Language: The Use and Abuse of Official Language* (2010), takes a very strong and principled stance. The report, available at [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk), states that: “Politics and government are public activities, and so politicians and public servants should use language that people find clear, accurate and understandable. We undertook this inquiry because we were concerned that too often official language distorts or confuses meaning... We conclude that bad official language which results in tangible harm – such as preventing someone from receiving the benefits or services to which they are entitled – should be regarded as

“maladministration”. Bad official language deserves to be mocked, but it also needs to be taken seriously. We hope that our conclusions and suggestions will encourage government to mind its language in future” (From the Executive Summary.)

Concluding Test:

Question 1: Substitute the words “universities” and “academic” in the appropriate places in the above quotation instead of “politics, government, politicians, public servants and official”. How will you address the challenges revealed?

Question 2: What is the academic equivalent of “maladministration”?

Emailed answers to the undersigned will be greatly appreciated!

***Robert Cannon is the Lead Consultant in educational development with UNICEF in Indonesia.***

**Contact: [cannon@indo.net.id](mailto:cannon@indo.net.id)**

---

## THE PHILOSOPHER'S COLUMN

### Practice Being Wrong Until You Get It Right...

By Ann Kerwin

Let's play a game.

Imagine I tell you: “*I have made a surprising discovery: You are not perfect*”.

What would you reply?

Would you retort: “*I am perfect. All the time. I am pristinely perfect. I always have been, always will be, absolutely perfect*”?

I doubt it.

However robust your self-esteem, you will have made errors. You will have issued false predictions. In thought, word and deed,

you will have been mistaken. However fondly you regard yourself, you are aware of this: you are not perfect.

Nor am I.

Fallibility—being wrong, making mistakes—is woven into the human package. It comes with the hardware. It comes with the software. We can't avoid it. Plopped on to the planet, we begin and end as limited beings. Every day, we provide ample testament to human imperfection. No matter how we strive to be undeviatingly right, we cannot attain perfection. Whatever our educational achievements, peer esteem

or research rating, we cannot maintain inerrancy; we cannot sustain impeccable performance.

Our equipment can't deliver it. We are not made that way.

In fact, we see only a small fraction of what is. We hear an impoverished range of audible existence. We experience a minute portion of human history. We recall a tiny residue of what we've perceived. We conceive an infinitesimal percentage of what must be. We can't even estimate how much we miss, misperceive, misconceive, misinterpret, misconstrue or misreport.

We know this.

We understand this.

We accept this.

We simply cannot be perfect.

But oh how we hate “being wrong!” I will qualify this: Oh how we hate being wrong under certain conditions: in public, before an audience, in print, on an assessment.

We feel deeply foolish, ashamed. We feel humiliated. It hurts!

Perhaps, with minimal forethought, we could have avoided this or that error. But perhaps, diligence and erudition notwithstanding, we could *not* have anticipated being wrong. Perhaps we depended on gold standard economic data for our predictions, only to discover, five years later, the data were wrong. Perhaps you recited, as did I: the atom is the smallest particle known. So taught, I once held this thought inviolate. Then out popped quarks, charms, antiquarks, pentaquarks, bosons and their ever expanding kin. At one time, I *knew* brain cells never regenerated. Delightfully, I’ve learned: think again!

I realise I’ve made my point. It is obvious.

And yet, we hate being wrong.

If I were to start the game anew and say: “*I have made a discovery: you are wrong.*” you might be offended. You might wilt in shame. You might censure me for insensitivity, call me a bully. But I eased into the game because I realise the two claims are related. **You are wrong, and I am wrong, and we are all wrong because we are human; being human, we are not, never were, and never will be, perfect.**

Many of us care about being wrong. This confers advantages. To survey our persistent folly with lofty equanimity, is to endanger ourselves and each other; survival exacts a price. To remain stuck in our errors, with no desire to improve, undermines our human potential. However, given that we humans are not perfect, we are superbly equipped to do something of inestimable value: **we can learn.**

We do it all the time. In good measure, we enjoy it. We all like to learn about something. In general, as we learn, we prosper. Immensely curious and surprisingly adaptable, we actually delight in not knowing it all. I propose: once we acknowledge we are error-prone, we can

focus on **this game**: the game of human learning. We can get really good at it. In fact, on this much depends.

Here’s the rub.

If we accept we don’t have it in us to be perfect, we can face facts: we learn by trial and error. Every time we learn, we create portals to and from error. As discoveries hazard old truths, they induce uncertainty. We may feel at home in our error-strewn thought systems. Unlearning prompts inquiry: *can this new learning be trusted? What to do with it? If we abandon default, can we forsake habit, can we function off our beaten paths, derailed onto arduous detours thick with unknowing?*

I contend: we are good at this. Our systems are designed to accommodate learning.

Get a group of us together to learn and we are likely to egg each other on, lose track of time and get stuck in. Cognitive miserliness dissolves in the thrill of the chase. Provided we leave our shame behind, we love learning. Importantly, we learn much better when we have learned not to feel bad about learning. We learn better when we affirm: learning entails unlearning.

To get good at learning, we must get good at unlearning.

We know this.

To learn well we must unlearn this: excessive worry about “being wrong”. I would suggest that even educators—even educators kind and indulgent to their students’ inevitable stumbles and faiblesse—could practice this unlearning daily. Practice being wrong. Practice being wrong with aplomb, a grin, a triumphant laugh. Catch yourself being wrong and congratulate yourself for finding yet another way to learn.

This is not folly.

The first professional paper I ever heard taught me more than the speaker could ever know. I was a first semester postgraduate. The distinguished visitor had flown to sunny Southern California from Oxford, looking, in his tweed coat and school tie, gratifyingly eminent. There were no power points in those ancient days. The gentleman read a paper, written with grace, delivered with wit, followed by enthusiastic applause and questions. This was a new game for me. I noticed: to a few questions, he gave no ready retort. Rather, he thought, and his silence evoked my solicitude. I scanned

the crowd; no one else seemed uneasy. He rebutted several objections. To several points he replied: “I was quite wrong about that. Thank you for pointing it out”. To my profound surprise, the speaker was not deflated. He seemed quite happy. I remember him saying, with undeniable zest, to one interrogator: “You’ve quite demolished my thesis. I don’t know where to go now”. Unruffled, undefensive, utterly openly reflective, this great man engendered enormous respect. It was a fabulous lesson for me, a beginner.

An eminent scholar, his reputation was burnished, not diminished, by his exemplary willingness to learn and unlearn. Quite clearly, the gentleman was not stupid, neither careless nor lazy. He had just been wrong. That was all. Error detected, he was keen to re-think. I can’t remember the topic, I don’t recall the colloquy. I know this: I unlearned. It was as if a great weight rolled from me. The brilliant speaker, and all in the room, attached no shame to not-knowing, to not-knowing publicly; they found nothing wrong with being to being wrong. What this man, and my professors, taught me was permanently liberating: this is what professionals do. They think; they trial; they make common cause in inquiry.

In the great game of learning, rule number one is: we cannot not be wrong.

Rule number two: we can learn to hone and harness our prodigious powers of unlearning.

Care to learn, I suggest. Care enough to unlearn shame at unlearning. Shrug off the crushing shroud of false feeling: abandon all crippling belief that you are less than human, less than dignified, when you acknowledge you do not know. You are never more human, never more ripe for learning, than the moment your fallibility occasions new learning. Rejoice in it. Cultivate it. Follow its lead. If you love your students, gift them as I was so many years ago: Be wrong! Use it well...and enjoy.

*Ann Kerwin is the Philosopher-in-Residence at the Auckland University of Technology.*

Contact: [akerwin@aut.ac.nz](mailto:akerwin@aut.ac.nz)

An earlier version of this essay appeared in *New Zealand Education Review*, 21 November 2008

# THE HOW TO ... TEACHING SERIES

## How to...

### Teach Gen-Y undergraduates

By Peter Kandlbinder

Something is said to have changed in university classrooms over the past two decades. Long serving academics describe students they are teaching today as different from previous generations of students. Strategies they have been effective for years are no longer working with the generation of children born to the Baby Boomers. Known as Generation Y, these students were born in the 1980s and 1990s and grew up with the internet. This familiarity with digital technology is attributed with giving an entire generation of students shorter attention spans, a love of multitasking and an impatience with information that does not directly apply to them (McCrinkle and Wolfinger, 2009).

Gen-Ys tend to be positive, confident, self-focused but there are two schools of thought on how to approach teaching them as undergraduates. Some, like Mark Bauerlein(2008), argue that many of these traits lead to poor learning strategies and should be discouraged. Others accept Gen-Ys have distinctive characteristics and suggest ways of working with their preferences.

#### **Gen-Ys Want Their Courses to Make a Positive Impact on the World**

Students have a strong connection to social causes and want to make a difference to the world. They want to know why they should care about your course and need to be shown how it fits into the big picture. They expect the course to cater for them, not the other way around. However, they don't want you to pretend to know everything about their generation. Mark McCrinkle says they are generally sceptical and quick to spot a fake. Focus on their feelings and show that you understand and respect their perspectives.

#### **Gen-Y Students Have Short Attention Spans**

Marc Prensky (2005a) describes Gen-Y as "digital natives" whose minds have learned to adapt to speed and thrive on it. Living in a digital environment means being adept at processing information quickly. Information in the classroom also needs to be kept short and interesting to deal with Gen-Ys' shorter attention spans. Repeat key messages and provide learning activities that create excitement, enthusiasm and drama for students. Gen-Y doesn't want to sit and listen, they expect learning to be active rather than passive. Susan Eisner (2004) suggests a class game show is more likely to teach Gen-Y students more than traditional examinations.

#### **Gen-Y Insist That They Can Multitask**

Gen Ys are accustomed to randomly accessed information and instead of linear thinking they are skilled at parallel processing. Ron Alsop (2008) says that today's students have far greater access to information and they expect a more multimodal form of communication. Richard Sweeney (2007) says they are notoriously reluctant readers but happily sit down to podcasts, videos and computer games. Gen-Y students know how to use technology but not always to the best effect for their learning. They're easily distracted by SMS or Facebook and willing miss lectures and class discussions for their social networking. There is also concern that they are developing bad habits from SMS and rely too heavily on computer spelling checkers. Don't assume that they already have the appropriate writing skills just because they are at university.

#### **Gen-Y Embrace Recognition and Reward**

Gen-Y is competitive and obsessed with grades more than learning. They are self-centred and over-confident and will need to be challenged so that they can weigh up their talents and capabilities against others. It is only through an accurate, realistic appraisal of their present capabilities that they will develop mature judgement and find ways of dealing with negative criticism. You also need to be vigilant to prevent the use of technology for cheating. Their competitive streak and ability to cheat more easily means classroom behaviours need to be monitored more closely than before.

#### **Gen-Y are Distant and Disengaged From Universities**

Mark Bauerlein (2008) argues that very few Gen-Y students step up when given more responsibility for their learning. University teachers need to accept their responsibility in challenging students by providing them with regular work and perceptive guidance rather than indulging students to believing they always know best. Alsop (2008) says that Gen-Y are often challenged by ambiguity and how to figure out how to fit things together. They can struggle with courses that are not mapped out for them or don't have clear-cut, right answers. In these situations Gen-Y will tend to rely excessively on their lecturers for simple decisions and expect a high level of detailed step-by-step guidance and support.

#### **References**

- Alsop, R. (2008). *The trophy kids grow up: How the millennial generation is shaking up the workplace*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

*continued page 31*

# Higher Education in the Headlines. August 2010

By Peter Kandlbinder

A summary of the main stories on higher education from the last 4 months of the *Australian Higher Education (AHE)*, *Times Higher Education (THE)* and the *Chronicle of Higher Education (CHE)* found issues of research infrastructure and the student experience dominated the higher education press. Other themes included: International students, university quality, academic salaries & retirement, challenges to university funding, academic freedom and declining disciplines.

## Research Infrastructure

In April the *Australian Higher Education* portrayed the new Australian research regulator as unable to prosecute controversial cases. It then reported controversy over Australian climate change research that disputes a link to Australian droughts. In May the *Australian Higher Education* reported an Australian university will get extra funding for public policy research, then in June *AHE* discussed a report that warns of a shortfall in research funding. In July the *Australian Higher Education* explained the plan for long term research grants as well as a proposal for young researchers to get priority in all research grants. In April the *Times Higher Education* reported how the push for publications was distorting research results in the UK and following the election of a new government the REF was postponed to build a consensus on the impact of academic work. In July the *Times Higher Education* reported the slow progress of PhD research in some universities.

## Student Experience

In April the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported on a US university pledge for jobs for future graduates and Deans complained about delivering bad news about admissions. In May *CHE* reported admissions interviews were a mix of art and science with student's first assignment was to understand the financial aid process

and then reported calls for students to receive credit for internships. In June the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported student services was being outsourced in US universities. In July the *Times Higher Education* reported that a promise of 10000 fully funded places falls by the wayside. In July the *Australian Higher Education* reported a government plan to lift the cap on fees for local students.

## International Students

In April the *Times Higher Education* reported UUK warns its members not to sign up to the visa sponsor scheme. In June the *Australian Higher Education* reported a steep fall in international students in English courses that is worrying the sector and the downturn could signal the overseas student market is at risk with Britain and US being the preferred destination for students from China. In July *AHE* warned that sector faces a "perfect storm" in the overseas market sparked by a stronger Australian dollar.

## University Quality

In April the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported that the elite group of US universities had admitted a technology university to its group. The *Australian Higher Education* reported that university demands would confuse the power of the new quality agency and in May that standards are at risk after a budget cut. In June *AHE* reported that the sector had rejected the idea of rewarding strong performing universities. In May the *Times Higher Education* reported concerns on the impact on teaching as £315 million in quality funding dries up.

## Academic Salaries & Retirement

In April the *Times Higher Education* reported that all three government parties were united in limiting academics' pay not matter who wins the UK elections. The

*Chronicle of Higher Education* reported faculty salaries in the US only rose 1.2%, the lowest increase in 50 years. In June *CHE* reported professors were being paid to take early retirement while in July the *Times Higher Education* reported some UK universities were set to scrap final-salary pensions.

## Challenges to University Funding

In May the *Times Higher Education* reported fears for sector's future funding as UK universities lose their champions in the change of government. In May the *Australian Higher Education* reported calls for the budget to invest in universities as intellectual infrastructure. In July the *Times Higher Education* reported privatisation of UK universities was occurring through holding companies.

## Academic Freedom

In May the *Times Higher Education* reported on a lecturer showing a female colleague a paper about oral sex among fruit bats that sparked a debate on academic freedom. In June it reported on a national system of demerit points covering penalties for student plagiarism drawn up by UK academics.

## Declining Disciplines

In May the *Times Higher Education* reported the loss of philosophy at a UK university raised fears for the humanities. In July the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported a decline in community outreach in agriculture

Links to individual stories are available at [higherheadlines.wordpress.com](http://higherheadlines.wordpress.com)

# HERDSA Branch News: July 2010

## ACT BRANCH

*Chair: Robert Kennelly*

**Contact Robert Kennelly:**  
[Robert.Kennelly@canberra.edu.au](mailto:Robert.Kennelly@canberra.edu.au)

ACTU branch hosted a very successful seminar with 28 people from four institutions. Topics included *Exploring critical conceptions of student led evaluation in Australian higher education* [Stephen Darwin, ANU]; *Do Australian universities short-change teaching to subsidise research?* [Lawrence Cram, ANU]; *The impact of assessment on learning achievement* [Dennis Bryant, UC]. HERDSA Fellows, Robert Kennelly and Jackie Walkington offered an overview of a workshop on assessing and mentoring HERDSA Fellows that they presented at the HERDSA Conference in Melbourne.

## HONG KONG BRANCH

*Chair: Dr Anna Siu Fong KWAN*

**Contact Anna Kwan:**  
[akwan@ouhk.edu.hk](mailto:akwan@ouhk.edu.hk)

**Check the HERDSA HK website:**  
<http://herdsahk.edublogs.org/>

HERDSA Hong Kong focuses on connecting professional colleagues who work in different fields of university education and providing a platform to share and learn together. Another purpose is to introduce HERDSA and its work to Hong Kong colleagues and build the membership.

Recent activities include: *University academic staff orientation* by Dr Tak HA (HKUST), Professor Keith THOMAS (CUHK) & Dr Paul LAM (CUHK); *Capture- problems and solutions* by Thomas NG & Anthony HO, Edman CHAN & Dr Paul LAM (CUHK), Dr Crusher WONG (CityUHK); *Knowns and unknowns about student plagiarism* by Jude Carroll, Oxford Brookes University; *What do we know about students?* by Dr Anna KWAN (OUHK), Dr Ai Choo ONG (HKIED), Dr Tak Ha Lucia YEUNG (HKUST), Dr Theresa KWONG (CityUHK) and Dr Beatrice LOK (CUHK).

Colleagues from all Hong Kong universities are warmly welcomed to HERDSA activities.

## NEW ZEALAND BRANCH

*Convenor: Prof Tony Harland*

**Contact Tony Harland:**  
[tony.harland@stonebow.otago.ac.nz](mailto:tony.harland@stonebow.otago.ac.nz)

**Check the HERDSANZ website:**  
<http://www.herdsa.org.nz/>

A large committee of 21 members meets monthly using Access Grid for video conferencing across the country.

A very successful HERDSA Researcher Development Symposium was held at University of Auckland and Auckland University of Technology in September last year and the ever popular TERNZ annual conference took place at University of Otago in November.

*Nominations are requested for the HERDSA TERNZ Research Medal – please contact the head of the committee Dr Stanley Frielick at AUT.*

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA BRANCH

*Chair: Dale Wache*

**Contact Dale Wache:**  
[Dale.Wache@unisa.edu.au](mailto:Dale.Wache@unisa.edu.au)

A seminar titled *Talking about Teaching Awards* aimed at facilitating a conversation and the sharing of ideas and strategies around teaching awards was held. This was presented by Associate Professor Mahfuz Aziz, Winner of the Prime Minister's University Teacher of the Year, award 2009.

In August Professor Tania Aspland (from UA) will offer a presentation on her ALTC project on offshore teaching and internationalisation.

## VICTORIA BRANCH

*Chair: A/Prof Dianne (Di) Waddell*

**Contact Di Waddell:**  
[Dianne.waddell@deakin.edu.au](mailto:Dianne.waddell@deakin.edu.au)



*HERDSA ACT branch members participate in a seminar*

HERDSA Vic branch has hosted a number of interesting and well attended events in the first half of 2010. The branch was launched with an interactive workshop from Professor Larry Michaelsen, University of Central Missouri, based on his *Team Based Learning* (TBL) approach. This event at Swinburne University, Hawthorn campus, was very inspiring and well received by the 40 people who attended. 50 people attended a very detailed presentation at Monash University by Associate Professor Hamish Coates, ACER, who discussed the pedagogy informing the *AUSSE* (Australian Survey of Student Engagement) and generously shared some results, as well as highlighting the changes for 2010.

The recent HERDSA conference in Melbourne was enjoyed by all who attended and has resulted in many new members for HERDSA and for Vic branch. A traditional feature of the HERDSA conference is the branch lunch. The branch was privileged to have a guest speaker, Leone English, Associate Director, Holmesglen, who talked about imminent changes to post secondary education and the blurring of lines between TAFE and Higher Education.

The executive will be notifying members by email with information about future events and is looking forward to welcoming new HERDSA Vic members in the near future.

## WEST AUSTRALIAN BRANCH

*Chair: Rashmi Watson*

**Contact Rashmi Watson:**  
[rwatson1@nd.edu.au](mailto:rwatson1@nd.edu.au)

**Check the WA branch website at <http://www.tlc.murdoch.edu.au/asd/herdsa.html>**

WA branch welcomes new committee member Nicole Crawford from UWA.

The WA branch has continued the *HERDSA Scholarship Profiled* series which aims to engage academics in recent scholarly work by local Western Australians. In April, the first seminar *Surviving and sustaining teaching excellence: A narrative of entrapment* was very well received with over 30 participants. In June, the second seminar *The power of personal practical theories in teachers' use of technology in their teaching* was also well received.

Two more seminars are organised for 2010. In September, "HERDSA Rekindled" will run again as a half-day seminar at Curtin University. WA presenters from the national conference are invited to speak and present a summary of their work for those who could not attend the conference. This has been highly successful in the past few years. Members and non-members are welcomed to all events usually held in the late afternoon, four times per year. Attendees enjoy drinks and nibbles after each event encouraging networking across faculties and universities.

## QUEENSLAND AND NSW

In Queensland a few HERDSA colleagues are discussing the possibility of developing branch activities while in NSW a small group of conference delegates have been inspired by the success of the HERDSA conference into exploring the possibility of reconvening the NSW Branch of HERDSA. HERDSA executive is supporting these colleagues in their discussions so *watch this space*.

## How to...

### Teach Gen-Y undergraduates cont ...

*from page 28*

Bauerlein, M. (2008). *The dumbest generation*. New York: Jeremy. P. Tacherer/Penguin.

McCrinkle, M., & Wolfinger, E.(2009). *ABC of XYZ: Understanding the global generations*. Sydney: UNSW Press.

Prensky, M. (2005a). Engage me or enrage me. *EDUCASE Review*, 40(5), September/October, 61–64.

Sweeney, R. (2007). How the New Generation of Well-Wired Multitaskers

Is Changing Campus Culture. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 53(18), B10–B15.

Eisner, Susan P. (2004). Teaching generation Y college students—three Initiatives. *Journal of College Teaching and Learning*, 1(9), September 69–84.

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.

# **HERDSA Conference 2011**

***“Higher Education  
on the Edge”***

**Radisson Resort  
Gold Coast**

**4 – 7 July 2011**

**[http://conference.HERDSA.  
org.au/2011/](http://conference.HERDSA.org.au/2011/)**