Views from a Writing Retreat

By Paula Myatt, Deanne Gannaway and Wendy Green

Imagine this … Sitting on a wicker chair, on the veranda of a cottage, facing south, overlooking a valley scattered with trees and pastures and little else. The soft light of early morning sending shafts of sunlight angled across the laptop on your knee. There is absolute silence in the morning air, broken only by the distant bellow of a cow and the occasional magpie warble. No cars, no noise, no pollution – and, importantly, no demands on your time or attention. There is only you, your laptop, your thoughts and your writing.

Sound idyllic? Sound impossible? Sound like something indulgent? None of the above - simply a typical working morning at the Spicers Hidden Vale Writing Retreat, Queensland.

For those fortunate enough to participate, this experience was more than just an opportunity to get out of the office, get some space away from email, students, colleagues and paperwork, to make space to engage with writing. The retreat was transformational, fundamentally changing their outlook of self and their abilities, resulting in outcomes far beyond “a block of time to concentrate on writing”.

Running a Successful Retreat

We had heard about the benefits of attending the writing retreats led by Professor Barbara Grant in New Zealand, and we had read of the benefits a writing retreat can bring (Grant 2006; Grant and Knowles 2000). It seemed problematic to organise a group trip to New Zealand and so, in 2011, we decided to organise a retreat in Queensland, and invite Barbara to be our guest facilitator. Barbara was enthusiastic from the start. She was supportive of our planning, generous with her time and resources, and at the same time modest about her role.

It was apparent that there were four key features which would contribute significantly to the success of our retreat: the location and its spaces; the structure of the activities; the facilitation; and the participants themselves.

The Venue …

Finding a suitable venue was certainly a challenge. The venue needed to: satisfactorily accommodate 16 adults, in equivalent standard rooms, with individual spaces for writing plus group spaces for writing activities; with air conditioning (it was Queensland after all); fully catered (to maximise our time for writing); and there was no expectation for any demands on participants’ time or attention.

continued page 3 and 4
From the Editor

The closure by the Australian Federal Government of the highly productive ALTC a few years back seemed a dark day for Learning and Teaching in universities.

However as is often the case some good things emerged not least the Office of Learning and Teaching OLT, which is very active and supportive of teaching and learning. Prior to its closure the ALTC had money for which it encouraged professional organisations like HERDSA and Ascilite to submit project proposals. HERDSA was successful in its bid and was able to conduct a project into the nature of Higher Education Research in Australia, see HERDSA News, Dec 2012. It was also possible to fund a number of small scale projects and Iris Vardi writes about these in this issue.

A sign of the growing links between HERDSA and the OLT is the launching of a regular column for the OLT in each issue of HERDSA News. I am also delighted that the OLT will be joined by AkoAotearoa, which is the National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence in New Zealand.

The contributions of the regular columnists to the News is much appreciated as it provides a framework for the publication. One of our writers, Bob Cannon, has wandered off from his usual Meanderings to spend time working on academic development projects in Palestinian universities. It is encouraging to read of progress made even in such a difficult environment.

Another HERDSA member, Anne Herbert, writes about work with staff from many different parts of the world teaching an international curriculum in Vietnam. Anne would like to develop a HERDSA branch in Vietnam so those interested who are working in Vietnam please contact Anne.

iPads are increasing in numbers in universities some of whom are loaning them to whole year groups. Stanley Frielick with his band of students investigated the use of iPads at the Auckland University of Technology. They provided basic training for staff in the use of the device and also began to research how the functions of the iPad could be used in new, innovative ways of learning and teaching.

Two different articles show how opportunities are being provided for academics to develop some basic skills eg. Scholarly writing. Paula Myatt, Deanne Gannaway and Wendy Green paint an idyllic picture of a writers retreat, which should have a long queue lining up for the next one! Then Deb Clarke and HERDSA colleagues have developed several sessions online to teach the basic concepts of the Scholarship of Learning and Teaching. These are aimed at new scholars in the field and also includes a session on writing.

This issue feature more news of TATAL (Talking about Teaching and Learning) with groups springing up in Western Australia. My congratulations to Robert Kennelly and his team for their vision in developing this valuable way of reflecting about teaching.

The issue closes with a poem written by Kathryn Sutherland based on comments made by young academics during interviews. It is a sober reminder of the experiences of academic life today.

I wish all readers and contributors a peaceful holiday break.

Roger Landbeck

Submitting items to the HERDSA Weekly Email List

We have just introduced a new online system for submitting items to the list. Please go to http://www.herdsa.org.au/?page_id=2679 where you will see how to do it.

Thank you for your co-operation in using the new system as it saves a lot of work.

Roger Landbeck
List Moderator
Views from a Writing Retreat

from page 1

within an environment that was conducive to quiet contemplation or to individual activity (depending on the individual); and all within a car trip from Brisbane. After an extensive search, and visits to several beautiful (and not so beautiful) possible venues, we discovered Spicers Hidden Vale Retreat in the Lockyer Valley, a 60 minute drive southwest of Brisbane. Designed for corporate retreats and country weekend escapes, this resort met all of our requirements – albeit at a standard (and price) above our initial expectations.

The Structure …
The Spicer’s Hidden Vale Writing Retreat commences on a Sunday and concludes by lunchtime on Thursday – providing three and half days of writing time, three day-time optional workshops and four evening writing events.

The retreat commences on a Sunday afternoon, with a welcome drink, dinner and meeting. Writing commences first thing Monday morning. Each day then maintains a consistent rhythm of meals, writing and optional workshops enabling participants to design their own individual program and writing space. Work-in-progress group activities are compulsory and provide each participant the opportunity to gain valuable feedback as well as gain insights from reading and commenting on the work of others.

The Facilitator …
We have run this writing retreat twice now (February 2012 and February 2013) and will run it again in February 2014. While Barbara Grant facilitated the first retreat, she was not available in 2013, and so we now use different guest facilitators within the original retreat structure.

The expertise of our facilitator played a significant role in making this retreat a success from the very beginning. While the structure of the writing retreat itself was not unique - the design and its underpinnings are all contained in the HERDSA Guide “Academics writing retreats: A facilitator’s guide” by Barbara Grant (2008) - having Barbara facilitate the first retreat modelled optimal facilitation for us. She does not agree about the importance of her role at the retreat (she told us this more than once!) but, as participants, we were all aware that the facilitator shapes the environment and the tone. She encouraged the creation of a community of writers, facilitated effective sessions and influenced the experiences of those who attended.

The Participants …
Our first hope was that the majority of the participants would come from within our own higher education community of practice. Instead, the 15 participants were a diverse mix of university academics and PhD students from different backgrounds: different universities, states, disciplines, genders, academic levels, and writing experiences. There was no selection of participants; the first 15 people who applied (and subsequently paid) were the people who attended. We followed the same model for the second retreat which attracted a different group, ensuring a different experience.

The Surprising and Unexpected …
The retreat created something far greater than the sum of its parts. What was surprising and unexpected was not what we did but what we built. More than words on paper (although they were built too), we built individuals, identities, confidence and a community.

We were initially concerned that the eclectic mix of participants might “make or break” the retreat. We found, however, the diversity brought strength. Differing experience levels and different disciplines contributed to the success. Now we think it is not so simple, and not so fragile. The place, the structure, and the facilitation combine with the people to create a unique writing space – a space which creates success and develops a community of writers. A space where writing is celebrated, skills acquired and confidence in one’s abilities nurtured in a safe, non-judgemental, and – dare we say it – fun way.

The transient community developed in the retreat built new identities for people as writers; it enabled a growth in confidence, it encouraged their exploration of new writing genres and it illuminated new possibilities. Many participants described their experience as transformational. Writing is central to our roles as academics, and sharing our fears and our actual written words, and making them public and open for critique at the retreat brought us closer together. Sharing our challenges (engaging titles!) and our successes (a 23 word opening sentence!) seemed integral to that community.

The writing retreat importantly also built tangible outcomes, in the form of on-going writing groups – a PhD finishing school (a multi-university writing group for RHD students), First Friday SoTL Coffee (a UQ monthly writing group that models a mini-writing retreat) - and other direct impacts on personal practice. After the retreat, participants reported changes to their approach to writing, making more time for writing and one participant even changed the furniture in their house to enable improved writing efficiency!

Why did people attend the retreat? We sent an online survey to the 22 individuals who had attended one or both retreats which elicited 18 responses. Respondents indicated that their reasons for attending the retreat varied widely, including: looking for “space to write”, skill development, networking, immersion in a writing culture, developing confidence and even “Finding out whether I could actually write”. Whilst most participants aimed to focus on writing a journal article, other outcomes mentioned included abstracts, conference proceedings or work towards a higher degree.

Did participants achieve their aims? All respondents reported that they had either achieved or partly achieved their writing goals – with many explaining how the retreat had led to various publications. Most respondents indicated that the development of a sustaining, supportive community of writers was an unanticipated and highly beneficial bonus outcome of the retreat.
A further feature of the writing retreat is that it gave credibility to the work of writing. By taking time out to write, rather than squeezing it around all the other work and activity associated with higher education, writing became an important academic pursuit, worth investing in.

Final Views …

Writing retreats are going to vary. The key contributors to success will always include the place, the design, and the people, but we didn’t realise the powerful impact that each factor would contribute in building the success. The value of the diversity of participants and of expert facilitation cannot be underestimated. Perhaps the transformative nature can only be understood by those who were there, so here are three final views from a writing retreat:

From Paula: I was truly concerned that when the writing obstacles and writing excuses were removed from my world, then it would be revealed that I couldn’t actually write at all. The writing retreat would not be a point of development for me but career implosion. What would happen on that first Monday morning at the retreat? With astonishment I survived. More than survived; I learnt so much from hearing others speak about their writing, sharing challenges and successes and meals. I left the writing retreat determined to help others, write more and return next year!

From Deanne: I went to the first retreat under duress … a rite of passage, something I had to do, resistant because that meant exposing myself as someone who couldn’t possibly write! Besides, who has the time to be that indulgent and take that amount of time off from my very important work? Three days later … after talking about my writing in safety; after realising seasoned writers battled as much and in the same way I did; after immersing myself in the joy of words … I re-established an old passion and found my voice. Eighteen months after that first retreat … 3 journal publications accepted; 6 chapters of my PhD thesis completed; 2 ongoing nurturing communities of writers established … I’m looking forward to the next one.

From Wendy: I too faced my first writing retreat with some trepidation. I worried about how much I would write - would I churn out enough words to justify the cost, and the time out from work and family? What I came to realise over the course of those four wonderful days is that in my struggle to survive in an academic culture - obsessed as it is with publication counts - I had lost the joy, the fun, the passion I had once found in writing. At Spicers, I rediscovered all of this, and more – the value of belonging to a community of writers. That first retreat started me back on a journey towards better, livelier writing. I can’t wait for the next one.

Everyone is welcome to register their interest in the Spicer’s Hidden Vale Writing Retreat in 2014 or in the future.

References


Paula Myatt, Deanne Gannaway and Wendy Green are from the Teaching and Educational Development Institute (TEDI), The University of Queensland. Originally from diverse disciplines, they currently work as higher education researchers and teach in academic professional development. They are colleagues and friends.

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Seeding Future Research into Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

By Iris Vardi

One of the wonderful things about HERDSA receiving an Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT) Grant is that it allows us as a professional organisation to do things that we often don’t have the financial means to do. One of these is seeding new ventures of research into teaching and learning.

Back in July 2013, we called for expressions of interest for small grants of $2500 to seed exploration of under-researched areas, and to develop collaboration between experienced and early career investigators of teaching and learning in higher education. In this way we were looking to go beyond what the money could deliver in the short term to what it could seed for the longer term.

Between them, the successful grant recipients have covered a wide range of
under-researched areas as identified by the Report Australian Tertiary Learning and Teaching Scholarship and Research 2007–2012 commissioned as part of the OLT grant in 2012. All these successful proposals demonstrated collaboration with, and mentoring of, new scholars.

Dr Angela Dobele and Dr Stuart Thomas’s project Surfing or Diving? An exploration of students’ practices and attitudes towards technology for learning seeds a small pilot to investigate students’ use of social and e-learning technologies in their studies to see whether it helps them in deep learning (“diving”) or leads only to shallow, surface learning (“surfing”). If successful, the lead researchers plan to extend the study to a broader program that will examine students’ perceptions and outcomes over a teaching period. The judging panel commended this project for being a sound proposal that tested key assumptions.

Ms Judith Smith, Professor Ryan Daniel, and Ms Mandy Shircore have brought together industry and community partners with new and established researchers across two universities in their project Researching the pedagogies and practices of interdisciplinary curriculum in authentic learning contexts to develop a collaborative research plan. This project was commended by the judging panel for providing a framework for authentic learning in interdisciplinary curricula that could form the basis for other projects. The project was also commended for its impressive research team and strong collaborative and mentoring elements.

Dr Diana Rajendran’s project Internationalisation of the Curriculum in Management Programs to Develop Global Citizens explores how discipline colleagues across the world address internationalisation and examine how these various approaches align with the attributes of a “global citizen”. The judging panel commended this project for being a tightly argued and focused project that addresses an interesting problem of scale in this area (institutional claims vs embedding in programs/curricula), and further that the focus the single discipline of Management makes this project do-able.

Dr Jacqueline Widin’s project Academic literacy practices in diverse tertiary settings examines the relational dimensions of the practices of three different centres in providing English language and academic literacy support, and the students perceptions of these. The study focuses on how pedagogical relationships and connectedness are established between the staff, the students, the academic tasks and the institution. The judging panel commended the project for being highly focused on building research capacity that could be very useful to learning centre literature, and for identifying a common area of confusion in many institutions: the provision of academic language support by multiple centres with different cohorts of focus, often working without overt connections to each other.

In addition to seeding the research projects above, two projects were awarded special funding for seeding ongoing mentorship of new scholars in teaching and learning in tune with the goals of the scheme. Dr Stephen Maloney’s project Formation of “International Society for Cost and Value in Medical Education” proposes the formation of a new research group, the “International Society for Cost and Value in Medical Education” to bring together interested parties from across the globe to examine the cost-effectiveness of educational approaches and processes in medical education. The seed funding will be used to set-up and establish the society including a governance structure and website development. Dr Deborah Clarke’s project Supporting New Scholars in the Scholarship of Learning & Teaching aims to create an online learning community of experienced researchers in higher education and new scholars. The seed funding will be used to analyse the efficacy of online activities to ensure their sustainability and future ongoing success.

You will be able to find out more about these projects, their progress and findings through HERDSA News in 2014. To find out more about HERDSA’s OLT grant and all the initiatives it has funded, go to http://www.herdsa.org.au/?page_id=3254

Dr Iris Vardi currently works as a Higher Education Consultant co-ordinating the OLT Advancing Higher Education Teaching and Learning Project.

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Six Good Reasons to Join HERDSA 2014 in Hong Kong

If you have attended a previous HERDSA conference or plan to attend one, you will not want to miss the Conference in Hong Kong during 7-10 July 2014.

First, this conference in Hong Kong will provide an international platform for colleagues in higher education and related industries around the world to come together to explore and debate the many facets of this truly significant global phenomenon – Higher Education in a Globalized World. Professor Susan Robertson, University of Bristol, Professor Jan Currie, Murdoch University, Professor Rui Yang, the University of Hong Kong, will speak in the conference to share with you their latest research and experiences. Also, this conference will bring Chinese scholars and students from nearby regions, making it an excellent opportunity to discuss research on Chinese learners and its implications. A selection of pre-conference workshops, a variety of presentations and sessions, a range of programmes and activities designed for you, your partners and family members should make this conference a highly memorable event.

Second, you will experience the unique culture in Hong Kong by exploring around.
You might like to visit a range of museums to understand the territory’s history and development. You can travel to almost everywhere in Hong Kong by the MTR (Mass Transit Railway). For convenience and saving money, you should buy a tourist octopus for your stay in Hong Kong. Take MTR to Central Station, and then find your way to the “Travelator”. This may be the World’s longest covered escalator that goes from Central up the hill to the Mid-levels.

To make Dr. Sun Yat-sen Museum your first stop may be a wise decision. You can understand an important part of Chinese history through the life of this world-renowned revolutionary who devoted his entire life to overthrowing the Qing Dynasty and setting up the Republic of China. Following the Dr Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail can deepen your understanding of this top Chinese hero rated by Chinese students.

The areas near the “Travelator” are spectacular but changing rapidly. Take your time to taste some Chinese and fusion snacks and visit the old market before they disappear. When you are there, please look around. If you happen to see me and other Hong Kong colleagues, please say hi. We may be able to show you around.

For a leisure experience, travelling Hong Kong Island on a double-decker tram is a smart choice. The tram has been running over a century (locally known as “ding-dong”, the sound of the ringing bell to warn people on the road the tram is coming or to alert people on the tram it is about to move forward), you can experience Hong Kong’s living culture and everyday life. You will appreciate how Hong Kong’s rich Chinese culture, traditions and values live in harmony with the Western influences.

Third, you can explore the nature in Hong Kong. To discover the countryside, hiking in the outlying islands and visiting the Wetland Park to discover the Hong Kong ecosystem are some of the pleasant things to do. Taking a Star Ferry ride is essential. The Ferry has been crossing Victoria Harbour since 1888. This cross-harbour journey ranked first in the “Top 10 Most Exciting Ferry Rides in the World” poll which was conducted by the Society of American Travel Writers in 2009. You should not miss the historic Peak Tram up the 45-degree mountainside to the Peak to enjoy the panoramic views over Hong Kong Island, Victoria Harbour, Kowloon and beyond, experiencing the Chinese (and perhaps universal) metaphor of “登高望遠” (climbing high seeing far, widening perspective). It may also be a good moment to relate what you see and feel to your culture and your own life experiences.

Fourth, you will love shopping and dining in Hong Kong. No matter you are looking for the latest electronic items or classic antiques, you can find it in a vast array of malls, theme streets and quaint back lands. For bargains and gifts, you might like to go to Stanley Market or Temple Street Night Market as a starting point. Hong Kong is a diner’s paradise. You might like to sample a full range of Chinese cuisine, including “Dim Sum” and cuisine from all over the world to construct your own Michelin Guide.

Fifth, you can make trips to Macau and China to enrich your experience of HERDSA 2014. I recommend you to visit the Catholic churches in Macau since they are noted architectural legacies. Many of them, including the one in which I was baptized, are on the UNESCO World Heritage Inscription List. Both short and long trips to China are equally great for natural scenery, rich culture and meeting with a wide range of Chinese learners.

Finally, this HERDSA conference takes place in the Northern Hemisphere. According to history, a warm HERDSA conference happened once in a decade (the last one was in Malaysia in 2004). A warm conference means that you can pack more clothing and other items in your suitcase both in and out, making your 2014 Conference significantly colourful and rewarding.

What you need to do is to submit a proposal and join us for this great conference in Hong Kong. Submissions close on 7 February 2014. Information about the conference, guidelines for submissions and a link to the online submission portal are all available at the conference website http://conference.herdsa.org.au/2014 HERDSA (Hong Kong Branch) are having fun in preparing the Conference. We look forward to welcoming old and new HERDSA members to Hong Kong in July 2014.

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Connecting Staff to iPads: The LATTE Initiative at AUT

By Stanley Frielick, Judit Klein, Christine Probert, Charlotte Alexander, Theresa Kendrick, Emily Whitehead, Conal Lewes, Thomas Hall, & Kate Wanless

Not long after the release of the first iPad, it was already being hailed as the “game changer” for education (Brown-Martin 2010). However as is common with the “rollout” of new technologies, the default in most institutions is to use the iPad as a simple replacement for existing tools, substituting it for previous methods and processes without leveraging the pedagogical benefits (Laurillard, 2008). Like all institutions, AUT University faces a major challenge of changing this default, and developing the digital capability of staff to use these new devices for transforming practice to engage a new generation of digitally-aware students.

Such challenges require a range of strategic initiatives, grounded in a “pessimistic approach” (Selwyn 2011). At the Centre for Learning and Teaching (CfLAT) we found that as iPad use increased—with many staff either purchasing their own iPads or being supplied with one through departments or funded projects—it was necessary to find effective ways of supporting staff as
they came to grips with the new paradigm and affordances of the “post-PC” device (Murphy 2011).

Remembering that an NZ school had met a similar challenge in 2002 by employing senior students to teach their teachers about computers (Bolstad & Gilbert 2006), Stanley Friedlick (Director of CfLAT) hired a team of undergraduate students to act as “learning and teaching technology enablers” (LATTEs) who provided support and coaching to staff with their new iPads. The first group of 3 students in 2011 have now grown into the team of 8 LATTEs pictured below.

Drop in For a LATTE
Since mobile devices are deeply entwined with all aspects of students’ personal and social lives (Traxler, 2010) it seems logical that students are ideally placed to teach staff about the effective use of the iPad. The LATTE team are a diverse group ranging from second year through to postgraduate level, sharing a common interest in technology and its place in the changing world of higher education. In most cases the LATTE work informs the students’ learning, in terms of assignments, studio papers and electives in the Bachelor of Creative Technologies and other programmes. The students are paid on the hourly pay scale for teaching and research assistants, and also gain valuable experience in research and academic development. Working closely with CfLAT staff, the LATTE team provides a range of different services, approaches and resources for all staff at AUT.

The primary focus over the past two years has been “first-line” support, where staff can become familiar with basic operational use of the device in a relatively informal and user-friendly “drop-in” setting. Drop-in sessions are scheduled weekly and other specific sessions - e.g. to support a departmental “roll-out” - are arranged on request.

The LATTE team keeps a detailed record of all sessions and calls for assistance. In 2012 the team recorded 344 jobs that were resolved with an 88% success rate, and to date in 2013 the team has logged 246 jobs with an 89% success rate. Thus far about 950 iPads have been purchased by AUT for staff across 5 Faculties (approx. 40% of the FTE staff total).

The LATTE job logs are a mine of useful information about the “frequently asked questions” in relation to first-line support of the iPad.

Examples From LATTE Job Logs
“Staff member X was keen for a one-on-one tutorial to help her hone her text-editing skills on the iPad. Our primary focus was gesture recognition, in particular, copying, pasting and deleting chunks of text. This led into a discussion of the best practices for note-taking on the iPad.”

“Staff member Y recently received her iPad and had gotten as far as connecting the Unisurf network and Exchange mail account and needed help setting the rest up. We signed into the Cache and created a home screen button for it, created an Apple ID, signed into the Store, verified the account, signed into iCloud, ran through everything in Settings including creating a Passcode and explaining about Wifi and 3G.”

“Staff member Z is going to be teaching in the new WG lecture hall which has two screens with the potential to display two different things from different inputs so she wanted to know the best way to prepare material for her lecture. She was preparing a Powerpoint and wanted to have her slides on one screen and images on the other. We set it up so she will be using the computer in the lecture hall to show the powerpoint and her iPad as a separate input for her image.”

To use the job log information more effectively the LATTE team collated answers to over 90 FAQs and created 19 iBooks on the themes emerging from the database - e.g. Apple ID, setting up email, document management, iCloud, using the iPad overseas, etc. These resources are freely available at http://cfat.aust.ac.nz (click on LATTEs). The iBook on the use of Zotero won the award in the student section of the recent Cyclone iBooks competition in NZ.

LATTEs Going Forward
There are two key aspects of the LATTE initiative. The first level or phase is aimed at the provision of enabling tools and enhancing digital capability. This aspect addresses the critical need to provide learning opportunities and resources for staff to use new technologies. Although research is needed on staff perceptions of the effectiveness of being assisted by students, the data in the job logs and anecdotal feedback suggests that staff feel able to discuss naive questions without feeling anxious or intimidated, and develop confidence in the basic functions of the device.

The second phase of the LATTE initiative focuses on the critical aspects of transforming practice. Support in the basic functions and choosing which apps to use is necessary, but not sufficient for understanding why the iPad can provide valuable learning opportunities for students. The LATTE model is designed with the recognition that dominant practices in the university do not align with a 21st century view of education. As Bolstad and Gilbert (2006) note: “Teachers must have the opportunity to compare their existing ideas and practices with ‘21st century’ ideas, to debate these
Reflections on a State-Based Network: Q-PEN

By Karen van Haeringen, Georgina Tkacz, Georgia Smeal, Rae-Anne Diehm and Tania Stevenson

Leading a network of all Queensland’s higher education institutions1 to engage collaboratively with the programs of the Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT), has been both rewarding and a learning experience for the Queensland Promoting Excellence Network (Q-PEN) leadership team.

Q-PEN historically has not been state based. Originally it formed part of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council’s (ALTC) Promoting Excellence Network (PEN), of which 42 higher education institutions were members who received institution-focused funding as part of the ALTC Promoting Excellence Initiative (PEI). The Promoting Excellence Network was “a national network from which to gain ideas and models for developing sustainable processes for engagement and dissemination” with the programs of the ALTC.

During the ALTC’s PEI (2008-2010) Queensland PEI Coordinators formed the Queensland PEI, which met twice a year and was pivotal in establishing collaborative platforms for engagement with ALTC.

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References


The Network was further consolidated and formalised in 2011 with the support of two years of ALTC Legacy Funding under the leadership of Griffith University, Queensland University of Technology and the University of the Sunshine Coast. The intent was to sustain the momentum and spirit of collaboration established under the Queensland PEI in sharing resources, ideas and processes to improve systems and outcomes in member institutions as well as contributing to the national quality agenda.

Q-PEN’s value statement encapsulates the Network’s main objectives: To provide a collegial network for grants and awards professionals in Queensland to share practice, develop skills, and take collective action to support the enhancement of learning and teaching in higher education. At its establishment, Q-PEN agreed to develop this statement to guide its work over the two years of an ALTC-funded grant (2011-2013). The consultative process of involving all Q-PEN members in articulating Q-PEN’s purpose has proven highly effective in focusing the scope and orientation of Network activities.

In developing the value statement, members considered whether Q-PEN is a network or a community of practice. Wenger et. al (2011), for example, distinguishes networks and communities as follows:

- “The network aspect refers to the set of relationships, personal interactions, and connections among participants who have personal reasons to connect. It is viewed as a set of nodes and links with affordances for learning, such as information flows, helpful linkages, joint problem solving, and knowledge creation.

- The community aspect refers to the development of a shared identity around a topic or a set of challenges. It represents a collective intention – however tacit and distributed – to steward a domain of knowledge and to sustain learning about it.” (p. 9).

The value statement reflects a core need for awards and grants professionals to engage with others in similar roles and have opportunities to learn from each other. Awards and grants support work can be a lonely experience for many. It is specialised work and often the responsibility of a small cohort of professional staff – in some instances a single person per institution. Moreover, the staff in these critical roles (at least in Q-PEN’s experience) often do not remain in the role for a prolonged period, as institutional circumstances and priorities (particularly in the area of Learning and Teaching) are constantly shifting. From 2011 to 2013, for example, more than 45% of the 11 participating Q-PEN institutions changed their institutional representative. A key focus of the Queensland PEI and more recently Q-PEN has therefore been to reduce his isolation. Q-PEN facilitates communication between awards and grants staff in institutions across Queensland and northern New South Wales and builds capacity in their roles, and, more broadly, in learning and teaching scholarship and best practice. Q-PEN therefore subscribes more closely to Wenger’s definition of a network. The ever-changing nature of the membership would also appear consistent with the literature related to networks, which describes the relationships as “always shifting and changing as people have the need to connect. The primary purpose of these informal networks is to collect and pass along information” (Allee, 2000).

The latterpart of the value statement, to “take collective action to support the enhancement of learning and teaching in higher education”, also features prominently in Q-PEN’s priorities through the Network’s commitment to the quality and improvement of OLT programs and processes. To date, Q-PEN has provided feedback to the OLT on many of its Promoting Excellence in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PELTHE) programs, including a network response to the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Review, which represented the views of 21 Q-PEN members across 10 institutions.

The Network’s leverage through a collective voice and potential for influence complements other Network benefits including:

• Building and consolidating relationships with colleagues from other member institutions, other similar state-based PENs and other learning and teaching networks e.g. discipline networks are facilitated through Network forums and collaborative technology.

• Professional development opportunities for awards and grants professionals through workshops, guest speakers and dissemination events.

• Regular face-to-face forums that facilitate the exchange of ideas, experiences and practices between awards and grants professionals.

• The Q-PEN public website (www.qpen.com.au), which provides resources and serves as a central point for information about relevant Learning and Teaching events being hosted at member institutions. Q-PEN members are automatically invited to these events.

• The Q-PEN Team Place (collaborative) site (members only access via www.qpen.com.au), which contains a repository of current information and resources to support institutional improvement processes.

• The guidance of a leadership team that includes members with more than a decade’s experience in the PELTHE and its predecessor schemes and who are active practitioners as teaching grant participants and recipients of Australian Awards for University Teaching Citations for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning.

• Access to information for new awards and grants professionals. This includes information that awards and grants professionals may not normally be privy to, such as the implications of sector-wide higher education policy and regulatory changes.

The strength of relationships and their enduring nature is Q-PEN’s most distinctive characteristic. Q-PEN members consistently report that forming and fostering collegial relationships is the Network’s single greatest benefit. As one member reflected, “What has been particularly beneficial … are the relationships that develop from staff from various universities attending Q-PEN activities. These events have initiated and sustained cross-institution partnerships. In other words, it is that personal face-to-face contact that is particularly beneficial.” A conscious effort is made to cultivate these relationships both internally (i.e. within the state membership) and externally (i.e. across other state-based PEI networks and discipline networks). Q-PEN enjoys positive relationships and communication channels with the NSW/ACT PEI Network, VTAS Promoting Excellence Network, SANTPEN, Western Australian
support received from members to maintain the Network suggest Q-PEN will continue to thrive well into the future.

References


Karen van Haeringen is the Deputy Academic Registrar at Griffith University. Other project members include: Georgina Tkacz (Griffith University); Georgia Smeal and Rae-Anne Diehm (Queensland University of Technology); and Tania Stevenson (University of the Sunshine Coast).

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Endnote
1. Q-PEN’s membership comprises 9 Queensland, 1 Northern NSW and 1 National Table A higher education providers.

Working at RMT Vietnam with a Multicultural Teaching Cohort in Transnational Teams

When lecturing vacancies are advertised at RMIT Vietnam the field of applicants is usually large and competitive. There are many qualified Vietnamese nationals who want a job at home and in an international university, as well as foreigners wanting to live in Vietnam and work in an international setting. One challenge is to help teachers who do not know RMIT Vietnam to understand what it is like to work in a well-equipped campus of a global university operating in a rapidly changing developing country.

At RMIT’s Vietnam campus, most of the students are Vietnamese, with a growing minority of other student nationalities on campus. The teaching staff comes from all over the world. All the degrees offered are recognised by the Vietnam Ministry of Higher Education and Training, approved by the Academic Board of RMIT, and the qualifications are awarded by RMIT. Business, engineering, information technology, design, and media degrees are delivered by RMIT Vietnam.

RMIT Vietnam operates as an English language environment for teachers and students and all administration and support services. Academic standards conform to those same quality standards as all Australian universities.

The demand for high quality and globally-oriented higher education is increasing in Vietnam as the economy expands. This puts increasing demands on RMIT teaching staff to provide an engaging learning experience for students that results in recognised and portable academic qualifications. The qualifications are expected by the students to help them achieve their personal and their families’ goals, or sometimes also their organisational sponsor’s goals.

I came to RMIT VN six months ago to lead the Learning and Teaching Unit at RMIT in Vietnam. The Unit’s primary responsibility is to foster ongoing development of learning and teaching quality in all the RMIT Vietnam’s programs. The Unit also aims to connect with other universities in Vietnam to exchange knowledge about effective teaching and learning and related issues.

At RMIT Vietnam there are exciting dynamics affecting the learning and teaching environment. The Vietnamese government expects the best for its citizens and wants RMIT to show leadership in learning and teaching. The students are privately funded and expect the best possible value for money. Many students are very ambitious and hope that studying at RMIT in Vietnam will expand both their horizons and opportunity. While some students aspire for employment with multinational organisations, others aim to lead their family businesses into multinational operations.

RMIT is historically based in Australia but nowadays, outside Australia Vietnam is the largest site in the global network of campuses and partners. Perhaps this global network organisation of the university is the factor that affects the teaching environment the most.

All teachers at RMIT Vietnam are part of transnational teaching teams. On a day to day basis they are modelling work in a multinational organisation. Very few, if any, of the courses delivered at RMIT VN are only delivered in Vietnam. Courses are delivered in multiple locations, and teachers of the same course in any location are considered part of the transnational teaching team for that course. All courses, wherever delivered, are guided by the same RMIT policies and procedures. RMIT promises students an equivalent level of teaching quality and equivalence and comparability of academic standards wherever in the world they are enrolled. Transnational teaching teams are expected to deliver on that promise.

By Anne Herbert
Higher Education Development in the Holy Land: with the Palestinian Faculty Development Program

**By Robert Cannon**

Hardly a week goes by without troubling news from Palestine or Israel: rockets from Gaza, Israeli settlements in the West Bank, protracted peace negotiations, deaths, the separation wall, violence – the bad news seems endless. Yet there is good news and I witnessed some of this in the impact of the Palestinian Faculty Development Program.

To discuss a faculty development program against Palestine’s troubled background may seem trivial. Yet the Palestinian Faculty Development Program (PFDP) and its achievements are far from trivial. It has a demonstrably successful place in strengthening educational institutions and systems of government.

Working with the Program was the most meaningful professional assignment I have undertaken in a long career in education. The opportunity arose when I was invited by Amideast, the contractor to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), to be a partner in a small team led by Professor Chris Knapper of Queen’s University, Ontario, to undertake an external evaluation of part of the Program. Our work began in 2011 and now, through a project extension, continues until December 2014. In addition, I was asked to spend two months this year to work in Ramallah as acting Chief of Party of the Program. Why it was such a meaningful assignment warrants explanation and I will...
return to this, but first, something about the
Program.
USAID has been supporting this Program since 2005. It is part of United
States government’s commitment to strengthen the higher education
sector in the West Bank and Gaza, to improve teaching and learning, and to
develop leadership in support of Palestinian
government.

The task assigned to Chris Knapper and myself was to evaluate two new educational
development centres known as “Centers for Teaching Excellence”. One centre is located
at the University of Bethlehem and the other at An Najah University in Nablus. We
also had the privilege of being invited to contribute to seminars and to a National
Conference arranged by these two Centres – a conference incidentally, that would rival
any, anywhere, in quality.

Why was this assignment so meaningful? There are two main reasons for this. The first
reason relates to the Palestinian context, the second to the substantial achievements of
the new educational development centres working in that context.

It is almost impossible to comprehend, let alone to find the words to describe here, the
maelstrom of Palestine and Israel today: words like bewildering, beautiful, ugly,
inspiring, despair, depressing, hope, cruelty, complex, frustrating and disgust are a few
that come to mind. Without doubt, the most meaningful aspect of the assignment was
having my attitudes and my limited appreciation of the local context in which universities
must operate, so rapidly and comprehensively challenged and changed.

Looking back at my views prior to departure, I now appreciate how distorted they had
become through years of generally negative reporting about Palestine in the Australian
media.

But not once did the people I met gratuitously complain about their situation.
Their approach to my questioning was essentially descriptive: “that settlement has
taken the water my family’s farm relied on and now our land is useless”; “this is the first
year the university has been able to complete a full year’s teaching without being closed for
security reasons”.

Evidence of the challenges faced by the Palestinian people and the context in
which the universities struggle to achieve their academic objectives is there to be seen
with depressing frequency: the massive separation wall, the checkpoints and the
soldiers, and the Israeli settlements perched on West Bank hilltops.

Then there is the targeting of people at checkpoints. Delays and disruption of
academic programs, especially between different universities, is common when
academics are held at checkpoints or refused permission to pass. I experienced just a small
measure of this frustration when an Israeli soldier, after inspecting my passport at one
checkpoint near Bethlehem, wrongly refused my entry with the aggressive determination
that “no Australians can enter here”.

In spite of this, the outward good humour, tolerance, generosity, lack of complaint, and
friendliness of the Palestinian people – despite their situation – is really humbling.

Palestinian Universities and the
Higher Education “System”

The second meaningful aspect of the assignment was to observe the achievements of
the universities in these challenging conditions. The serious attention and value
placed on higher education as a means of coping, understanding and managing in the
conditions created by the Israeli occupation of Palestine is very evident.

As I discovered, there is really no Palestinian university “system” of higher education,
as we know it, with coordination, quality oversight, regulation and the other trappings
we accept as part of a functioning “system”. Rather, there are 13 West Bank and eight
Gaza universities and higher education institutions, largely independent and often
competitive. Various religious orders and foundations have created most of these
universities, the government only a few. In an attempt to help build a system of
higher education, the Program is currently supporting a national seminar series to
address a range of policy issues including quality assurance, governance, education
laws, and research policy.

At the two universities we were working with, An Najah and Bethlehem, there is
a strong commitment to improving the quality of learning and teaching. Strong
leadership at the most senior levels is evident. At An Najah, for example, it was
reported that the University President (who is now Prime Minister of Palestine)
regularly attended the Center’s activities and
remained as a participant after completing the
usual opening formalities.

Evaluating the work of the two centres presented a challenge. The idea of centres
contributing to the evaluation themselves by undertaking a self-study was warmly
accepted during our first visit to Palestine. By self-study, we meant that each centre
would collect its own data, summarize the results, and provide an analysis of what they
had found. We provided a sample of the self-study approach that was used successfully
at Queen’s University together with some suggested headings that the centres might
use as they worked with their own data.

The final external evaluation was a process in which we carefully validated material
supplied by the centres in their self-studies. We spent several days at each university
and met with a cross-section of people, including centre and academic staff, senior
administrators and students. In addition, we analysed documents, had meetings with
donor and project management staff, and met Ministry representatives. To deepen
our understanding of Palestinian higher education, we participated in events attended
by academics from across Palestine, including a Roundtable on leadership led by the Vice
Chancellor of Bethlehem University (a New Zealand) and led another Roundtable on
evaluation, presented three workshops for faculty, and took part in the excellent national
conference arranged by the centres. During our second visit we were also able to have
discussions with academic staff from the two American partner universities, Northwestern
and Portland State, that had been providing academic and technical support to the new
centres.

On the basis of the self-studies, our observations during two visits, and our
validation processes, we concluded that USAID financial support and Amideast
management had helped produce centres that had proved to be remarkably successful
in a very short time. Our analysis suggested that a strong case could be made that the
Centers of Teaching Excellence program had a demonstrable impact on the two
universities.

Both centres had benefitted from strong leadership from their directors and each had
well-equipped, refurbished and dedicated space. Each centre had mounted an ambitious
set of programs, and had attracted a large number of participants, many of whom went
on to apply their new knowledge and skills. Both centres had established a respected profile across their respective universities. It was evident from what had been achieved that each centre had made a strong beginning. Everyone we met communicated enthusiasm that each centre had made a strong beginning. It was evident from what had been achieved to apply their new knowledge and skills.

These strong beginnings offer a model for the future success of educational development at other Palestinian universities. The positive findings of this external evaluation of the centres supported USAID’s decision to extend the Program. The extension is intended to achieve three things: consolidate the work of the An Najah and Bethlehem centres, create new centres, support the development of partnerships between the Bethlehem and An Najah centres and faculty development activities in other Palestinian universities, and assist the Ministry with policy development work. In 2013 all this work is under way and we are looking forward to further evaluation visits to Palestine in 2014.

Reference

Robert Cannon is an external evaluation adviser to the USAID-funded Palestinian Faculty Development Program and served as Chief of Party from July to September this year. He is also working with a USAID basic education project in Indonesia. He was formerly Director of the Advisory Centre for University Education at the University of Adelaide. He was awarded life membership of HERDSA in July 2013.

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Presidents Report

By Allan Goody

I am writing this report from Fudan University in Shanghai, China where I have just completed a workshop on researching higher education. There is a lot of enthusiasm for teaching and learning here as Chinese higher Education begins grappling with the issues we have been dealing with for some time. Academic development activities are increasing to support the enhancement of student learning. It was a surprise for me to come to this campus which is quite central in Shanghai and find open green space, (mostly) car-less streets and lots of trees. All students live in university housing on or close by the campus. And the rather crisp autumn air makes for a very pleasant stroll around the campus which is a bit of a sanctuary from the noisy traffic outside the gates. I did see tiered lecture theatres with the professor at the lecture, slides up on the screen and writing on the blackboards. In the workshop we discussed the universal similarity of higher education. You can go onto most university campuses around the world and feel quite at home. Of course while here I have taken the opportunity to promote HERDSA and our journal HERD.

While I am talking about this part of the world, I remind you that the call for proposals for the 2014 conference Higher “Education in a Globalised World” being held in Hong Kong is now open. I encourage you to submit a paper for what I am sure will be an exciting conference in an exciting location. It is an opportunity for us to broaden our perspectives and work with and learn from our colleagues in this region of Asia. Anna and her team are working hard to ensure we have a great time.

The last couple of months have been rather busy with HERDSA activity. The HERDSA Executive recently met in Sydney. This was the first full meeting of the current executive which is a blend of members returning from the previous executive and a number of new members. What I noticed about this meeting was the efficiency in which we were able to complete our business. I believe this is due to the ongoing work of the portfolio teams in the period between meetings. The teams have blended seamlessly and have kept HERDSA business moving along smoothly. The meeting then served as a point of reporting and decision making about future directions. I thank all the members of the executive for their contribution. Face-to-face executive meetings are an expensive but necessary activity. With this greater efficiency we will be able to reduce some of that cost and still afford to bring all the executive members together for two meetings a year in addition to the conference meeting.

Among the many things that have occurred over the past few months is the revitalisation of our Queensland and South Australia branches. Our thanks go to those members who have worked hard to keep these branches going and thanks to the members who have now taken up the leadership of these branches to move them forward. It is not an easy task to coordinate activities for branch members at a time of competing demands on our time. A contributing factor to this revitalisation and of greatly increased activity in all the branches has been the funds made available as part of the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) project that HERDSA has been undertaking for the past 20 months. The Australian branches have been resourced to offer events related to the project outcomes; these events have attracted many participants. We were also able to extend some of the resources to...
ensure that the New Zealand branch did not miss out. One of the priorities of this executive is to enhance the benefits members get from their membership. The challenge will be to maintain this momentum after this OLT project funding ceases.

Collaboration with other networks is one way of doing this and I cite the Western Australian example where WAND (Western Australian Network for Dissemination) works across all five Perth-based universities together with HERDSA to jointly offer activities. Another example is the recent forum in Adelaide which was a collaboration between the OLT, HERDSA, ACEN (Australian Cooperative Education Network) and SANTPEN (South Australia Northern Territory Promoting Excellence Network). This collaboration resulted in an excellent day of sharing and learning together around the theme of research in higher education.

The value of this branch and network activity and the generosity of spirit and time of local branch members are illustrated by these words in an email that crossed my desk recently:

I value my HERDSA membership, its philosophy of continuing personal development and the Australasian tertiary research connections. I would not be the educator and educational learner that I am today, without the HERDSA & TATAL networks and the enormous voluntary contributions in particular by Coralie, Robert and John here at UC.

While branches provide a focal point for members based on their location, Special Interest Groups (SIGs) are a way for members to network around a particular topic. HERDSA has always supported SIGs although none have been active for a long time. The Networks portfolio is in the process of drawing up a framework for supporting SIGs. So if you would like to form a SIG, please do not hesitate to contact us.

I also recently met with Suzi Hewlett from the OLT to discuss ways that we can continue and enhance our association and collaboration with the OLT. A first step is a regular OLT column in HERDSA News. This will be complemented with a column from Ako Aotearoa.

We are now close to the end of another year. For me personally it has been a year of challenges but also one of professional achievement, not the least of which is the opportunity to lead HERDSA and the opportunities this has presented. I have been able to renew and make new connections with colleagues in Australasia and internationally. These types of connections are important for personal professional growth and certainly for me, they are a source of inspiration as well as reminding me of what is important. We know that change is a constant in our lives but recently it seems that the pace of change has ramped up a notch or two. I hope that you find some time during the next few weeks to sit back and enjoy those important parts of your life that might have been a bit neglected during the year. Best wishes to you all for 2014 and I look forward to meeting you along the way.

Alan Goody is a higher education consultant and President of HERDSA.
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New Scholars Portfolio Article

The New Scholars Portfolio members have been facilitating a very exciting venture: Scholarship of Teaching & Learning (SoTL) “How To” Seminar Series.

The series is in a sequence of five seminars that introduce new scholars to publishing in learning and teaching. A “new scholar” is defined as not having previously published in a peer reviewed journal relating to learning and teaching.

The seminars are being facilitated by Dr Deb Clarke, A/Prof Lee Partridge and Dr Lesley Petersen who are members of the HERDSA Executive New Scholars Portfolio and have extensive experience working in academic development, together with Cassily Charles who facilitates writing sessions using the “Shut Up & Write” approach.

The five sessions of the seminar series require participants to complete brief learning activities and reading prior to each of five x 2 hour online facilitated discussion and activity sessions. The desired outcome of participants’ involvement in the program is for them to prepare a draft of a manuscript for submission to a learning and teaching conference or journal by late January.

At the time of writing this article we have conducted Session 1 with 15 academic participants from tertiary institutions throughout Australia and New Zealand. The sessions have been conducted online using Adobe Connect and after a few initial technical hitches, participants are planning their SoTL projects and refining their research questions. Initial feedback from Session 1 signals that we are off to a flying start!

“Awesome seminar. Got so much out of this.”

“Thank you. This is 1st time I have participated in an online synchronous class”.

by Debbie Clarke
### Seminar Session Outcomes
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>How</strong></th>
<th><strong>Resources &amp; Learning Activities</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create an online facilitated scholarly community of practice that shares interests in SoTL</td>
<td>• Welcome to HERDSA NEW Scholars SoTL program&lt;br&gt;• Online meeting etiquette &amp; expectations&lt;br&gt;• Introductions: Deb, Lee, Lesley &amp; Cassily (Facilitators). Discussion of our roles as facilitators of the program, &amp; our own SoTL interests/pursuits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe the nature of SoTL &amp; provide examples of the types of issues that could be investigated as SoTL projects</td>
<td><strong>Participant Activity</strong>&lt;br&gt;• Introductions &amp; homework presentation by participants&lt;br&gt;• Are there similarities between the responses of our participants?&lt;br&gt;• How might we use these similarities to our advantage as a scholarly community?</td>
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### “Thanks Deb and Lee and Lesley and everyone for a great session!”

Following is an overview of each session’s content:

**Session 1 Introduction to SoTL**

This session introduced participants to the nature of SoTL, and explained why participants might undertake SoTL. Learning how to link teaching and research and how to be strategic with time were addressed. The types of data used in SoTL were modelled and the need for ethics approval for SoTL work was discussed.

As an example, I have showcased a taster of the learning activities in which participants have been engaging in Session 1.

**Session 2 Role of Literature in SoTL**

This second session will outline the literature review process as a key element of an academic paper in SoTL, in particular explore the role of empirical and contextual literature. Session content will also cover how to construct a research proposal, write data collection questions and discuss the process for gaining ethics approval.

**Session 3 Data Analysis, Abstract Writing, Selection of Dissemination Mode**

This session will build on aspects introduced in the preceding sessions and prepare participants for the following two writing sessions. Content covered will include a recap of the analysis of data (quantitative and qualitative), examining a sample structure for an academic paper in SoTL, choosing the right avenue to disseminate your work, and writing an abstract.

**Session 4 & 5 Shut Up & Write**

Shut Up & Write (SU&W / SUAW) is a type of writing group which began in San Francisco and has been spreading worldwide, with growing popularity among academic writers in recent years. Shut Up & Write can be useful in these ways:

- To increase focus & productivity;
- To build a sense of community around the research writing process;
- To boost motivation and overcome procrastination or writer’s block; and
- To quarantine time which is dedicated to research writing, free from other demands or distractions.

For the New Scholars program, the Shut Up & Write sessions are intended to kick-start your scholarship of higher education teaching and learning.

**What Happens?**

Each person brings their own writing goals for the meeting, relating to your current higher education learning and teaching.
scholarship. At the beginning of the session, after a quick hello to the group, everyone notes their writing goals for the first “block” of writing. We then begin the first block of 25 minutes of focussed writing, without any interruptions. At the end of the block, a bell rings and we have 5 minutes to review our progress against the writing goal, and report back to the group, get a cup of tea, stretch and set the goal for the next block of 25 minutes. This cycle is repeated, to give us 3 blocks of focussed writing, with a short wrap-up discussion afterwards.

What kinds of writing are suitable?
Article planning, data summary or commentary, ethics application, abstract for a conference, literature review draft or any other writing, reading or analysis task for your scholarship of learning and teaching.

As a result of the overwhelming interest in participating in this series, the New Scholars Portfolio members will be offering a modified version of the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning (SoTL)“ How To” Seminar Series as a pre-conference workshop at the HERDSA Conference in Hong Kong in July 2014.

Dr Deb Clarke
Chair, New Scholars Portfolio
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THE HERDSA FELLOWS COLUMN

Collaborative Mentoring - Reflection on the Role of TATAL in The Aftershock of a HERDSA Fellowship Application

By John Gilchrist, Eleanor Hancock, Jesmin Islam, Coralie McCormack and Maria Northcote

The HERDSA Fellows Column usually highlights the reflections of one of our Fellows. In this edition HERDSA Fellow John Gilchrist and members of his TATAL group reflect on the support that TATALs can offer to fellowship applicants in the development of reflective practice and the preparation of their portfolios. (Ed.)

Over time, reflective conversations seem to have disappeared from our everyday practice as university teachers, yet intuitively we know that “developing excellent teaching and maintaining that excellence usually involve[s] a great deal of talking about teaching” (Gibbs, Knapper & Piccinin, 2007, p. 2). Becoming a HERDSA Fellow is one way to initiate and sustain such conversations. The HERDSA Fellowship application process helps an applicant to develop a reflective approach to their educational practice and builds a community of educational scholars. As they work towards these outcomes, applicants are encouraged to seek the support of a mentor.

Mentoring could occur with a colleague or colleagues in their own educational context and with whom they have face-to-face meetings. Someone who holds a HERDSA Fellowship and so is personally familiar with the portfolio process can be a mentor. Members of a conversation group, face-to-face and/or online, such as TATAL (Talking about Teaching and Learning) also carry out the mentoring role.

TATALs facilitate cohorts of reflective practitioners to meet regularly to enhance their teaching and the learning of their students (McCormack & Kennelly, 2011). They provide a safe collaborative environment which connects teachers across disciplines, institutions and geographic regions through the stories they tell of their teaching and the collaborative reflection on these stories. TATALs:

• Facilitate the scholarly investigation of learning and teaching. Involvement in a TATAL group is an ideal way to extend your approach to teaching and learning in a scholarly way that is steeped in reflection and research. (2011 TATAL participant)

• Promote teaching excellence through development of a teaching philosophy statement and a teaching portfolio. TATAL has enabled me to identify the components of a teaching philosophy and positioned me to develop my understanding of them. (2012 TATAL participant)

• Provide a forum to discuss issues relevant to tertiary education. I have found the experience of being a TATAL member a wonderful opportunity to regularly reflect on my teaching and to make constructive and evidence-informed plans for the future. (2011 TATAL participant)

• Provide support for colleagues preparing applications for HERDSA fellowships.
My involvement in this group has scaffolded my preparation for a HERDSA fellowship in a way that was measured and systematic. The group provides a clear direction and purpose for the application and helped me to clarify my own thinking behind the application. (2011 TATAL participant)

- Encourage and disseminate research on teaching, and learning among tertiary educators. (2008 TATAL members published a HERDSA Guide, Miley et al., 2012)

In this article five TATAL members (including two successful fellowship applicants and one currently writing her application) share their experiences of writing an application and/or supporting others as they write.

The Role of TATAL in Supporting HERDSA Fellowship Applicants

Unlike traditional HERDSA one-on-one mentoring, the regular gathering of members of a TATAL group provides the benefit of putting several minds and several sets of experiences to work. Members of the group jointly analyse and probe individual member’s teaching philosophy statements or HERDSA criteria teaching stories with points of clarification and final comments from each member to prompt deeper thinking about the individual member’s teaching philosophy and their teaching. Members of TATAL groups by agreement eschew critical comments. Rather they point to further questions each member should reflect upon and seek to resolve in the development of their philosophy statement or their stories. This is a hallmark of the TATAL experience. Through this analytical process, members implicitly and expressly pass on their own experiences and these are normally enhanced and cross-fertilized by group members with other-disciplinary and other-institutional experience.

A TATAL group establishes a discipline of regular intellectual and social commitment by members to reflect on and improve their teaching and learning. Members’ confidence is assured by confidential meetings, by mutual support and encouragement, and by reference to educational literature as well as members’ experiences. For example, the development of teaching philosophy statements usually commences with questions like “what do I think about learning” and “what do I think about teaching”, using teaching metaphors, within frameworks guided by the views of Schonwetter, Sokal, Friesen & Taylor (2002) and Chism (1998). TATAL promotes within each individual member, a culture of improvement and reflection and a greater self-knowledge and understanding of good educational practice.

This supportive culture is particularly appreciated by members of the TATAL group who describe the experience as non-judgemental, encouraging, and helping within a confidential and encouraging atmosphere. One group member expressed this experience of being supported by the group as follows: “Their encouragement keeps me going. Although after every meeting I ask myself – Will I be able to reach that goal of finalising the application? My fellow TATAL colleagues seem to believe that I can.” Because of the non-competitive nature of the group’s role and intentions, members feel they can be ‘open about their apparent failures and weaknesses as teachers’ and, consequently, engage in deep exploration of their teaching philosophies and practices. Group members often suggest scholarly research articles to each other, in support of their fellow group members in these “just-in-time” teachable moments (Fusco, Haavind, Remold, & Schank, 2011; Wichert, 2002). From these points of self-analysis, members of the TATAL group engage in multiple opportunities to reflect in a scholarly way on their past and future teaching practices (Boud, Cressey & Docherty, 2006). These reflections are frequently integrated into components of their HERDSA Fellowship portfolio.

While the role that TATAL plays in supporting HERDSA Fellowship applicants is evident in many ways up to and including the time when TATAL members submit their Fellowship application and portfolio, the benefits of being involved in the group continue past this stage. The “master-enablers” who facilitate the TATAL sessions provide guidance on how to relate these moments of reflection to the criteria of the HERDSA Fellowship. As the sessions progress and the members become increasingly familiar with each other and their teaching contexts, other members of the group are mentored into facilitation roles: “There are plenty of opportunities to mentor and be mentored, to facilitate and be facilitated, to learn and to teach”. TATAL groups in essence provide a collective mentoring experience for HERDSA Fellowship applicants.

Conclusion

TATAL groups create an ongoing environment of reflection on teaching practice for their members. The groups motivate and sustain HERDSA Fellowship applicants by providing continuing support throughout the process of preparing and submitting an application and portfolio. The TATAL format enables more varied mentoring for applicants and the TATAL culture creates a safe space for deep reflection on teaching and learning. TATALs enable this reflection to continue beyond the award of the HERDSA Fellowship.

References


Talking About Teaching & Learning in Western Australia

by Robert Kennelly

This report describes the commencement of two HERDSA TATALs in The HERDSA Branch in Western Australia. It provides the background to TATALs and the context within which these TATALs are situated.

Background

TATALs facilitate cohorts of reflective practitioners to meet regularly to enhance their teaching and the learning of their students (McCormack & Kennelly, 2011). The first TATAL group began in 2008 followed by new groups in 2009, 2011 and 2012. Three groups (2008, 2009 and 2011) continue in 2013 as self-facilitating groups each with six regular attendees. The fourth group (established in July 2012) continues as a co-facilitated group of seven participants. TATAL communities are increasing each year with three new communities beginning in 2013. Participants teach a variety of disciplines, including academic development, accounting, building and construction management, history, business, law, librarianship, geography, theology and education. Their geographic location is spread across Australia and New Zealand (Kennelly and McCormack 2013).

TATAL connects teachers across disciplines and institutions through the stories they tell of their teaching and the collaborative reflection on these stories. This process has a powerful engaging energy which stirs the listeners to reflect on the story they have heard and its ramifications for their own teaching. These connections are made possible and sustained in a physical place that fosters a sense of safety through trust, respect and honesty. Within this collaborative reflective community participants make personal discoveries about their sense of self as a teacher and professional discoveries about their teaching practice (Kennelly and McCormack, 2013).

In a vision laid out by Kennelly and McCormack (2013) the future of TATALs were to be sustained by maintaining the current TATALs and increasing their number and the range of disciplines and universities involved and to provide a resistance to the inevitable march of university corporatism which encroaches more and more on genuine support for Teaching and Learning and by definition to Collaborative reflective practice (CRP).

Types of TATALs

TATALs as described above are pretty much the same every time they are run. However there are two different delivery methods:

1. A Face to Face TATAL at all sessions with TATALers sharing a single city location. For example, 2008 and 2009 in Canberra and the two new ones started in Perth in 2013.

2. HERDSA conference TATALS which commence using face to face for an intensive four sessions (one every day) at the conference, and then continued via skype for TATALers who are geographically dispersed. For example, 2011 Gold Coast, 2012 Hobart and 2013 Auckland.

(Please note: At the conference in Auckland two TATALers from 2011 Gold Coast will grapple with puzzles in ones teaching and learning. However the plan generally is that (in between sessions 6 and 20) participants will share sufficient stories to allow them to complete a Teaching portfolio and submit it for assessing to become a HERDSA Fellow. An interesting characteristic of every TATAL is the presence of TATAL cake (see photo 1). That is a walnut iced carrot cake with the letters “TATAL; emblazed in the icing. The TATAL cake signifies the hospitality and sustenance of a TATAL; important ingredients for establishing a space and place conducive to honestly and reflection.
become Fellows as will one from the 2009 TATAL.)

HERDSA TATALs in WA

At the start of 2013 Robert Kennelly moved, in a semi-retired state, to Western Australia where he worked with Lee Partridge (a 2011 TATALer and a new Fellow) at UWA. They both agreed to support the development of TATALs with assistance of the WA HERDSA Branch. Robert was made very welcome at the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CATL) at Love House at UWA where he was “stabled” for the first 5 months of 2013. The Western Australian Network for Dissemination (WAND) and HERDSA WA were instrumental in advertising the benefits of TATALs. Lee Partridge arranged for a Showcase workshop to be presented at the WA universities Teaching and Learning Forum at Murdoch University in early February and from this a TATAL, across UWA, ECU and Curtin began at CATL, UWA and one at Murdoch supported by Denyse MacNish.

HERDSA TATAL WA (HTWA)

On 21 March at Love House the first HERDSA TATAL WA (HTWA) began with seven participants from three universities. The format, similar to all TATALs, is described on the previous page and started with a three-hour session followed with two-hour sessions weekly, becoming fortnightly after the fourth session. The heart of the early TATAL sessions are the “free writing” of answers to questions where TATALers are introduced to reflective practice through the pen (McCormack and Kennelly, 2011). By mid-year this group of 5 (from disciplines of radiography, speech pathology, pharmacology and education) had met 8 times with the facilitation of Robert Kennelly and Lee Partridge. Four participants have completed their Teaching philosophy statement (TPS) and are sharing their second story. Lee Partridge will continue as an “on demand” facilitator as the group moves into a self facilitating mode. The richness and variety of this reflective process is borne out with the following insights from the teaching philosophy statements of some of these TATALers:

“... and by teaching I’m exploring my learning in more depth.”

“I believe the student-teacher relationships one where the student develops the ability to be self-guiding under the stewardship of the teacher.”

“Learning like buildings, must be scaffolded to accommodate the cognitive and emotional level of the learner.”

HERDSA TATAL Murdoch (HTM)

On 26 March a TATAL, supported by Murdoch University and Denyse MacNish in particular, commenced with seven TATALers from Murdoch and Notre Dame. The sessions were fortnightly and the style of session was identical to that of HTWA. In that time all five regular TATALers (from the disciplines of medicine, indigenous studies, teaching and learning, statistics and psychology/information technology) have completed their Teaching philosophy statement (TPS) and are sharing second story. Robert Kennelly has been the facilitator and now the group has moved into a self facilitating mode with their first informal meeting in a cafe in Fremantle. The richness and variety of this reflective process is borne out with the following insights from the teaching philosophy statements of these TATALers:

“Teaching and learning are the art underpinning education. The teacher is the artist, the Knowledge is the paint and the student is the canvas.”

“Being a teacher means being a conduit for knowledge, old and new, past and present, with the key notion being one of circularity, of mutuality, synergy and symbiosis between teacher and student.”
“The expression, gratitude and feedback from a young student in the mid west (of WA) formed the basis for my desire to teach tertiary students”.

“Students do have a natural curiosity about the world and ideas, and I believe that is always better to work with a student’s natural proclivities than to try and fight them”.

“Learning is an event in which I gain experience, knowledge and skills. It is encouraged by an attitude of openness to novelty and it feeds on curiosity”.

**Evaluation and Future of WA TATALs**

Interestingly these TATALs began with the smallest number, seven each, of any TATAL, yet each group has had a core of five who have continued. In part this is brought about by the welcoming approach of the hosts of both TATALs; Lee Partridge and the staff at Love House, UWA and Denyse MacNish’s efficient approach to room bookings, timetabling and refreshments at Murdoch. Both TATALs of course had the symbolic TATAL (carrot) cake at each session. The Murdoch TATAL was the best attended and most effective with use of time. Four out of five TATALers attended every session; all TATALers have completed their TPS and are up to second stories. These outcomes have not occurred in previous TATALs.

**The Future**

Resources have been put in place to encourage and support the continuation of these TATALs. In particular HTM has taken its first step towards self-facilitating by determining the regularity and venue of further TATAL meetings

Coralie McCormack and Robert Kennelly started TATALs with the support of the University of Canberra and the ACT Branch of HERDSA in 2008 to provide academics with greater opportunity to think and reflect collaboratively about their teaching and Learning (McCormack and Kennelly 2011). We hope the TATALing continues!

**References**

HERDSA Registrant handbook 2013
Kennelly, R., & McCormack, C. (2013). Creating more “elbow room” for collaborative reflective practice in the competitive, performative culture of today’s university. HERD (with editor)

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Overview of program

Pre-conference Workshop 1

Stage 2

Stage 3

Stage 4

Stage 5

Stage 6 - 20

Content

Introduction to program. Share personal information, program information, ground rules. Free writing

Defining the Philosophy Statement

Free Writing

Check expectations, ground rules. Collaborative feedback on philosophy statement

Construct a teaching portfolio for a particular audience eg. HERDSA fellowships and teaching awards, performance development review or promotion.

Compile a professional development portfolio for continuous learning improvement.

PROCESS

Build rapport and trust. Reflect on philosophy statement.

Reflective conversations

Reflective conversations

Reflective conversations Building the conversation communities

Reflective inquiry: Write, tell, listen and rewrite critical incident narratives of personal learning and teaching experiences.

Reflect, review and rewrite teaching philosophy statement in the light of learning from critical incident narrative analysis.

Sustaining reflective conversation community.
The Office of Learning and Teaching in Australia Ako Aotearoa in New Zealand are government agencies broadly mandated to encourage quality Learning and Teaching in the higher education sector.

Following informal discussions between the HERDSA President, the OLT and Ako Aotearoa to compile a regular column of news from the two bodies in each issue of HERDSA News. I warmly welcome the first contributions to the columns which appear below.(Editor).

The website addresses are:
OLT
http://www.olt.gov.au
Ako Aotearoa
http://akoaotearoa.ac.nz

The Australian Awards for University Teaching, supported by the Office for Learning and Teaching, were celebrated at the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra on Tuesday 19 November 2013.

Each year the Office for Learning and Teaching recognises excellence in university teaching with its awards program comprising Citations for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning, Awards for Teaching Excellence, Awards for Programs that Enhance Student Learning and the Prime Minister's Award for Australian University Teacher of the Year.

The Citations for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning recognise and reward the diverse contributions made by individuals and teams to the quality of student learning.

They are awarded to academic and professional staff who have made a significant and sustained contribution to the quality of student learning in a specific area of expertise.

The Citations were awarded to 148 recipients in September 2013 at ceremonies in five states.

The Awards for Teaching Excellence celebrate a group of the nation's most outstanding university teachers in their fields.

The Awards give recognition to individuals and teams who have made a broad and deep contribution to enhancing the quality of learning and teaching in higher education.

The Awards for Programs that Enhance Learning recognise learning and teaching support programs and services that make a valuable contribution to the quality of student learning and the quality of the student experience of higher education.

The Prime Minister's Award for Australian University Teacher of the Year is the premier university teaching award and is presented to one of the recipients of the Awards for Teaching Excellence.

The award is made to an academic with an exceptional record of advancing student learning, educational leadership and scholarly contribution to teaching and learning.

The national teaching and program awards were presented by Senator the Hon Scott Ryan, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education at the ceremony in Canberra.

Senator Ryan congratulated 13 university teachers recognised this year for their outstanding work, along with nine university programs that enhance student learning.

The teachers and teams honoured at the awards come from universities all around Australia and from disciplines as diverse as dental studies, business, construction, languages, medical science and architecture. The programs range from specialised medical treatment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to enhancing students' learning in laboratories.

Professor John Croucher, from Macquarie University, was this year's recipient of the prestigious Prime Minister's Award for Australian University Teacher of the Year. Professor Croucher has been a leading statistician and educator for more than 35 years. He has made a sustained commitment to making statistics relevant and transformative for his students: improving their learning at all levels and inspiring students to make a difference in their business and life.

In his long career, Professor Croucher has brought scientific methods not only to thousands of students but to more one million readers of his weekly newspaper column, Number Crunch.

He is also responsible for a community outreach program for indigenous students in Papua New Guinea where he designed and lectured in a creative pioneer MBA degree.

For his exceptional achievements, Professor Croucher was made a Visiting Professor at the University of London, and awarded an honorary PhD by the Divine Word University in Papua New Guinea for his "outstanding contribution to the development of humanity".

Further details on all 2013 award winners and on the Australian Awards for University Teaching are available at: www.olt.gov.au
Supporting the Enhancement of Tertiary Teaching and Learning Through Project Funding

by Ako Aotearoa

Ako Aotearoa, New Zealand’s National Centre for Tertiary Teaching and Excellence has been supporting projects designed to improve teaching and learning since 2007. Peter Coolbear, Ako Aotearoa’s National Director, reflects on some of the learnings gained over that time.

Ako Aotearoa was formally established in the middle of 2007 after an extensive consultation process and considerable preparatory work. From the beginning, the mandate of the centre has been clear: the best possible educational outcomes for all learners in New Zealand’s tertiary education sector.

Part of our brief was to set up a funding scheme (or schemes) to support research in tertiary education in New Zealand. It was felt that there was insufficient understanding of the issues in tertiary education in a New Zealand context and that our national research capability in this area (with some remarkable exceptions!) was relatively weak.

One of the earliest decisions we made was to set up a small open fund (grants of $10,000 NZ) to support small projects. This was with a view to providing interested practitioners with an opportunity to begin research in this field and also to provide a ready source of funding to support more experienced researchers in seeding work to develop larger projects. We then opened our National Project Fund as a contestable fund to support larger projects (to the value of up to $150,000 NZ).

Investing for Learners

From the start we have viewed our project funding – whether for large projects or small - as an investment of public money on behalf of future learners. Early on we recognised that there were tensions between a theoretical view of research that was simply around unpacking the problems and inequities of tertiary education and our mandate to support the enhancement of quality in tertiary education.

We were also very aware of the critiques from the mid-1990’s of the overall quality educational research in general. Accordingly, from the outset we set our funding criteria to favour use-inspired research following the model proposed by Donald Stokes. His analysis of science research suggested that, for our purposes as a funder of applied research and/or experimental development, we should look to support research that not only has the highest theoretical and methodological integrity, but also has, from the outset, a clear line of sight to use and benefit to learners.

Aside from initial criticism from those who expected our fund to support tertiary education research: full stop, this approach brings its own difficulties. Not least is that, in many circumstances, any outcomes for learners may not result from the work until well beyond the life-time of the project. At best, due to inevitable funding constraints, our projects have been two years in duration. Nevertheless, the approach enabled us to require from prospective project teams a clear demonstration of what learner needs were being addressed from proposers and what measures of success might be appropriate during the duration of the project. We encouraged potential fundees to think about theories of change and/or outcomes hierarchies, the latter being a key feature of our own strategic plan.

What Makes a Proposal Difficult to Fund?

From the start our national project fund was highly competitive (over eight times over-subscribed). This meant that we have always had some exciting proposals to choose from and as our website and publications catalogue show have been able to support a wide range of excellent work with which we have been proud to be associated.

But why do many proposals not make the short-list? What makes it easy for our independent panels to say “no”?

There are three key reasons: firstly poor writing skills, coupled with the unconvinving use of academic jargon are a serious impediment to the progress of many expressions of interest. Secondly, many proposals failed to demonstrate that the work was anything more than what should be business as usual for a high quality education provider looking to provide the best possible support for its learners. As soon as a panel member asks aloud “shouldn’t they already be doing that?”, a proposal has an uphill battle to make a short-list. In the early days there were far too many of these: one of the reasons why we began to encourage cross-sector collaboration to take people’s thinking beyond the immediacies of their own academic unit.

The third consideration is weaknesses in methodology: a poor match of method to the identified problem causes concern. Sample size and sampling strategies appropriate to the chosen methodologies are also areas we look at closely in all projects. For larger projects we look to encourage mixed methods approaches. All too often we suspect a proposal is actually a methodological approach looking for a problem. Sometimes, in smaller projects, this might be OK: in most projects it’s not.
Developing a Partnership Approach

Part of our philosophy has always been that, once a commitment to fund has been made, we look to work as far as possible in partnership with project teams. While we spend a lot of time with teams negotiating milestones at the outset of the project, we are well aware that circumstances can change or serendipitous findings can spark new directions.

We also take on a significant role where necessary in supporting the development of project summaries targeted at fellow practitioners or institutional managers as appropriate. Many academics are adept at translating research findings into resource guides and tool kits, but many are not. Most do not have the design facilities at their disposal: we do.

In particular, many of the people we fund are emerging researchers or experienced researchers in their own discipline working in education for the first time. Feedback tells us that the partnership model has proved exceptionally positive for these teams, especially when experience has shown us that track record is not always the best predictor of project success! The key to a successful project is maintaining that initial line of sight to improving educational opportunity for the learner. My goodness, this can be truly exciting work. It’s such a privilege to be part of it!

Over 2013, Ako Aotearoa has progressed its impact evaluation work, changed its funding approach to a co-funding model and dropped the word ‘research’ from its funding guidelines. Why we’ve done this and the issues it raises will be covered in a subsequent article.

Endnotes


IT IN HIGHER EDUCATION COLUMN

Academic Journals: Are Open Access Article Publishing Charges Enabling a Dark Side?

By Roger Atkinson

For some years the major commercial publishers of academic journals have offered authors the option to purchase open access status for their academic research articles [1]. This is now an established and respected option, but in recent times a “dark side” has emerged. The term “dark side” was used by Declan Butler [2], in a Nature article with the subheading, “The explosion in open-access publishing has fuelled the rise of questionable operators”, and comments on the concept of “predatory publishers”:

... the goal of predatory open-access publishers is to exploit this model by charging the fee without providing all the expected publishing services. [2]

The term “predatory publishers” was drawn from Jeffrey Beall, who in another Nature article drew a contrast between the early pioneers in open access publishing, who established many benefits, and the more recent appearance of “predatory publishers” [3]:

Then came predatory publishers, which publish counterfeit journals to exploit the open-access model in which the author pays.

These predatory publishers are dishonest and lack transparency. They aim to dupe researchers, especially those inexperienced in scholarly communication. They set up websites that closely resemble those of legitimate online publishers, and publish journals of questionable and downright low quality. [3]

Predatory? Aim to dupe? Other recent commentary about potentially shady practices has also used somewhat emotive phrases, such as “an emerging Wild West in academic publishing” (Bohannon, 2013) [4]; “It seems like the Wild West now”
Perhaps the most remarkable commentary is due to Science correspondent John Bohannon [8], who during 2013 conducted a large scale “sting” operation in which he submitted fake scientific papers to 304 journals each published by a different fee-charging, open access publisher. Published in Science in 2013 [4], and also receiving its own Wikipedia article [9], Bohannon’s investigation showed that “60% of them are not doing peer review” [8], because each “paper was designed with such grave and obvious scientific flaws that it should have been rapidly rejected by editors and peer reviewers, but 60% of the journals accepted it” [9].

Bohannon’s article [4] ignited a brief but passionate debate during October 2013, illustrated (for example) by Peter Suber’s “New ‘sting’ of weak open-access journals” [10] and Ernesto Priego’s “Predatory journals and defective peer review are general academic problems ...” [11]. According to my reading, the debate centred mainly upon whether Bohannon’s article was unfairly tarnishing open access journals that did maintain high standards, and upon perceptions of methodological deficiencies and ethical flaws in the research. Few correspondents gave any prominence to the circumstances of the authors who had their articles accepted by the journals in Bohannon’s investigation, though he stated that it was prompted by an email detailing “the publication woes of Aline Noutcha, a biologist at the University of Port Harcourt in Nigeria” [4]. What prompts or misleads authors into submitting their research articles to a journal that may be characterised by Butler’s [2] definition of predatory open-access publishers? Is it desperation about obtaining an acceptance from a better-established journal; or pressures to score a publication in an English language, international journal; or if seeking open access, a lack of funds to purchase OA from a better-established journal; or sophisticated deception by a predatory publisher?

There is quite a number of lines of investigation that could be very relevant. For example, in relation to the “desperate to publish in English” line of investigation, one matter that I have investigated is the under-representation of Asian authors in educational research journals [12]. Concerning “sophisticated deception by a predatory publisher”, for example “They set up websites that closely resemble those of legitimate online publishers ...” [3], there could be scope for systematic research that has an educative impact upon publisher behaviours, to move these away from outright deception and towards modern best practice. However, resisting a temptation to explore every line of investigation, this column will concentrate upon open access article publishing charges (omitting, of course, the large population of open access journals with no publishing charges).

Table 1 presents a small but illustrative listing of open access article publishing charges. The main point to illustrate is that the world’s long established major commercial publishers of academic journals (first 6 rows; note that CSIRO, though very minor, is included simply to give an Australian example) have charges that are about an order of magnitude larger than charges made by some “newcomers” (last 6 rows; all of these except ARPN appear in Beall’s List [13]). The “newcomers” rows are not a systematic sample, but are intended to illustrate one important distinction: mostly they make a special appeal to authors from developing countries. However, there are features in common: all 12 are commercial businesses, undoubtedly very successful and mostly very high income earners in the case of the first 6, and also undoubtedly, mostly unsuccessful and with very low incomes in the case of the second 6.

To illustrate the matter of low incomes, Science Publishing Group (row 8) conducts 6 journals in the field of education, all inaugurated in 2012, which together have published a total of 63 articles up until mid-November 2013. Based on a limited count, I estimated that SPG’s average fee per article is US$150, so its gross income to date from its educational journals is about US$10,000. Although SPG lists about 117 journals in disciplines other than education, and many of these may have higher earnings than its education journals, as a business venture it is exceedingly unlikely to challenge those in the top 6 rows of Table 1. So, although Jeffrey Beall’s initial assessment identified SPG as possibly a predatory publisher [14], it is very probably only a rather lowly predator. SPG was not listed as a publisher in Bohannon’s investigation [4].

Although gross income may be low, profitability may be “reasonable” (from the perspectives of the owners of the publishers, if not from author and reader perspectives) if costs are contained at very low levels. The business model for “predatory open-access publishers” could be as described by Butler, namely “charging the fee without providing all the expected publishing services” [2]. Concerning fees, perhaps one could add the qualifying phrase, “very modest” or “readily affordable even for developing country authors”, and concerning services, “almost no services other than receiving articles and hosting them on a website”, and “no meaningful peer review or feedback, and no copy editing”. Of course this business model is made possible only by a number of underlying factors, such as spectacular advances in ICTs, especially in enabling any journal to become “international” at no extra cost, and in relation to automated processes for supporting journal publication; established and major publishers not keeping up with the demand from potential authors, notwithstanding their “growth spurs” in recent years [15]; emergence of English as the dominant language for publication of academic research; large increases in the numbers of universities worldwide, and hence in the numbers of academics seeking outlets for their research; the widespread replacement of “print on paper” reading by “screen only” reading; etc.

Also, any business model requires continuous refinement, and that certainly seems to be the case with the business model for “predatory open-access publishers”. For example, concealing ownership and location is probably counter-productive. Recognising that the great majority of one’s authors and reviewers are from developing and intermediate economies, be honest about one’s location! Fake addresses in New York repel potential supporters [13]. Another
deficiency is the lack of identification with professional societies or university research centres, other than through editorial board memberships.

However, does the identification of “predatory open-access publishers” and their business model give us a sufficiently deep probing into the “dark side”? To borrow and adapt some standard research questions from the educational research literature, we must ask questions of the form: Are the authors satisfied with the publication process? Did authors achieve their goals and did they get their “money’s worth”? There are “dark side” corollary questions, such as: How many rejections did you receive from established, prestigious journals prior to acceptance of your article by (“journal of [allegedly] questionable and downright low quality”)? Of course, surveying authors’ views would not be enough, it would be equally important to research questions of the form: Are the authors’ peers satisfied with the validity of the research? With the significance of the research? Here I prefer to avoid the word “quality”, as in my experience a good proportion of edtech research article submissions from authors in intermediate and developing countries scored well on “validity” (attuned to the contemporary literature, methodologically sound, well-executed, evidence-based conclusions, etc.).
but poorly on “significance” (contribution of new knowledge, originality, etc.).

If we are to probe more deeply into the “dark side” of open access publishing, as I believe we should, we need to go much further than simple tests for distinguishing between “predatory” and “non-predatory”. In particular, we should probe whether there is a “dark side” to the operations of our highly reputable and prestigious journals. Should our prosperous, Western-based journals, well-attuned to native speakers of English, be more accommodating towards the flow of articles from non-Western, NESB authors? [12] Otherwise, in some kind of desperation, they may buy their articles a space in a “predatory publisher’s” journal.

References

7. The publishers’ names that I recorded were Science Publishing Group, OpenScience, ARPN Journals and “SJP” (Science Journal Publication). Others I discarded without taking notes!

Roger Atkinson retired from Murdoch University in 2001. His current activities include honorary work in the TL Forum conference series, Issues in Educational Research, and other academic conference support and publishing activities. In mid-2012 he retired from a 17 year association with the publishing of AJET. Website (including this article in html format): http://www.roger-atkinson.id.au/

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HERDSA Branches

By Maureen Bell

A recent initiative of the HERDSA executive under the auspices of the HERDSA Advancing Teaching and Learning in Higher Education project has supported and funded a series of branch activities. This project has seen a remarkable upsurge in branch activities and participation in workshopping and networking opportunities focused on key research areas in higher education teaching and learning.

HERDSA branches and regional networks form a key link in the HERDSA community’s chain of networking and developmental events. Branch chairs and committees work hard behind the scenes to organise branch activities for HERDSA members. Local networking activities include colloquia, fora, pre- and post-conference presentations, network meetings, and speakers. If you have not yet made it to one of your branch activities we encourage you to get involved.

News of past and future branch activities can be forwarded to mbell@uow.edu.au for inclusion in the next HERDSA News.

ACT

Chair: Catherine McLoughlin

Thanks to Jean Rath who has stepped down as chair and who is heading back to New Zealand to take up a new position
at the University of Waikato. Jean is looking forward to continuing her active involvement with HERDSA from her new base. Catherine McLoughlin has taken on the mantle of ACT Chair.

A session entitled Highlighting heutagogy in self-directional online resources for professional learning was held in December to highlight the findings of professional learning research projects that have influenced the design, structure and content of a set of three online professional learning resources. These resources have been designed to enable academic staff and research students to access online support and resources using a self-directional informal approach. The resources include:

The MOOBRIC: A rubric that enables academic staff to identify and reflect on their online course design and teaching skills.

• Moodle’s Little Helper: An online repository of examples, instructions and suggestions about how to design online courses and teach online.

• The Researcher’s Little Helper: An online repository of examples, instructions and suggestions about how to conduct postgraduate research.

An end of year event was held at ANU with presentations by OLT citation award winners in the ACT and was enjoyed by all who attended.

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NEW SOUTH WALES

NEW ZEALAND

Chair: Clinton Golding

As always HERDSA NZ has been very active. In addition to hosting the wonderfully successful 2013 HERDSA conference the highlights of 2013 are noted as: the popular Shane Dawson Learning Analytics workshop and a Research Mentoring workshop conducted by Jim Thornhill.

A variety of activities are in the pipeline for 2014 including the TERNZ (Tertiary Education Research in New Zealand) conference on November 27th and 28th in Auckland. HERDSA NZ organises this conference every year except when hosting the HERDSA conference. The conference is designed to be an inclusive, cooperative space for dialogue. All members from Australia and New Zealand are warmly invited so put this in your diary.

Other activities in the planning pipeline include:

• Graduate Attributes Symposium, Wellington in April

• HERDSA Revisited, all major centres in July/August

• Higher Education Researcher Symposium, September in Auckland.

Members will find the article by Clinton Golding in this issue of HERDSA NEWS - HERDSA NZ to host a (metaphorical) street party for the tertiary education neighbourhood - interesting reading in which Clinton suggests HERDSA should take a hand in fostering a stronger community built on our common interests in tertiary or higher education.

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HERDSA NZ: http://www.hersda.org.nz/

NEW SOUTH WALES

Watch this space!

HONG KONG

Chair: Anna Siu Fong KWAN

The Branch is working hard as the HERDSA 2014 Conference approaches. Make sure you pencil in the dates in Hong Kong from 7 to 10 July. The conference theme is Higher Education in a Globalized World. Conference details can be accessed http://conference.hersda.org.au/2014/

Hong Kong branch is famous for its Dinner Dialogues. The most recent dinner dialogue highlighted A/Prof Romy Lawson from University of Wollongong discussing the principles behind curriculum renewal for quality assurance and cultural change in the higher education context.

All HERDSA members who are working and visiting Hong Kong are most welcome to HERDSA HK activities. Please visit the website or contact Anna for the most up to date information.

HERDSA HK Website: http://hersdahk.edublogs.org/

Contact Anna Kwan: anna.kwan@outlook.com

QUEENSLAND

Watch this space!

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Chair: Sharron King, University of South Australia

The SA Branch has recently set up a new committee with representatives from the three main universities in SA: Sharron King, Ann Luzeckyj, Amanda Richardson, Ben McCann, Dale Wache, David Birbeck, Helen Benzie, Melissa Nursey-Bray. Thanks go to Dale Wache who has stepped down as Branch Chair after overseeing some exciting branch events and activities. Thanks to Sharron for taking on the role of Branch Chair.

The branch has been very busy with recent events relating to the HERDSA/OLT grant. The Learning Analytics Road show with Shane Dawson (UniSA) and George Siemens (Athabasca University) was very well received by the 54 participants. Shane and George provided a great overview of the power of Learning Analytics for improving teaching. The resultant discussion on the practical applications as well as ethical implications of implementing these tools provided a useful forum for participants to explore the ramifications of using learning analytics in their teaching, learning and research contexts.

The next branch event was a seminar by Helen McGillivray (QUT) on Balancing teaching and research demands for early career academics. Helen followed this seminar with an interactive workshop on Developing statistical thinking capabilities for postgraduates across disciplines. Again there was a great turn out with 55 academics as well as postgraduate students from all three SA universities. Participants responded very positively to the practical aspects of the workshop with many commenting that they found the workshop highly informative with useful resources that could be applied
directly to their own teaching and research environments.

In November a seminar with David Boud on Exploring effective feedback strategies and a collaborative event with the SA branch of the Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN) and the SA and NT Promoting Excellence Network (SANTPEN) was held as a whole day event at Flinders University focussing on Researching in higher education: identifying the gaps and future directions. An expert panel presented the national priorities in teaching and learning research. Panel members include our own HERDSA president, Allan Goody, Judy Kay (ACEN), Suzi Hewlett (OLT) Deb West (SANTPEN/Charles Darwin university) and Malcolm Tight (Lancaster University, UK). Two interactive workshops on measuring teaching impact and research / fellowship grant development were hosted by Keith Trigwell (University of Sydney) and Judy Nagy (UniSA) respectively. The closing keynote by Malcolm Tight addressed the current status and future directions of higher education research to round out a very exciting forum. The branch committee looks forward to working with the SA branch members in planning for future events in 2014.

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TASMANIA
Chair: Tracy Douglas

HERDSA TAS conducted two OLT funded workshops at UTAS in Launceston recently, both facilitated by Dr Iris Vardi: Providing Effective Feedback and Assessing Critical Writing. The workshops enabled participants to further enhance their understanding and skills in providing effective feedback to students and effectively assessing critical writing in their units. The 27 participants who attended the first workshop reported that they were able to critically evaluate their own perceptions of feedback and enhance their skills in improving their students’ satisfaction with feedback and overall student learning outcomes. The 16 participants who attended the second workshop examined the nature of critical thinking and writing and enhanced their skills in designing assessment tasks that clearly demonstrate a need for critical thinking and writing as well as examining effective ways to reliably grade and support student success.

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VICTORIA
Chair: Joan Richardson

HERDSA VIC Branch held their AGM and two Branch Executive meetings and five successful events over the year, the most recent being: OLT projects - ‘Inside Story’ of the Good, the Bad and the Ugly. The session offered an update on two OLT funded projects which provided the opportunity to learn from the experiences of colleagues who have received OLT grants. This was followed by an update on HERDSA VIC and an end of year celebration. Planning by the branch has already commenced for the 2015 HERDSA conference in Melbourne.

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WESTERN AUSTRALIA
Chair: Melissa Davis
The WA Branch has been delighted to present two outstanding professional learning events thanks to the funding support of HERDSA and the OLT. Dr Shane Dawson presented a stimulating half day workshop on Learning Analytics: Building Evidence Based Practice as part of a National “roadshow”. The second event was a workshop and discussion forum presented by Professor David Boud. The workshop, entitled Feedback – why have we got it so wrong? Ensuring feedback leads to learning, challenged participants to question the usefulness of some traditional modes of feedback and stimulated thinking about how we can better use our time and resources in providing feedback to students that is in line with “sustainable assessment”. The forum was designed around the question of “How can we prevent assessment destroying the very learning that we are trying to create?” and participants had the opportunity to discuss contemporary challenges related to assessment in the higher education environment.

The annual HERDSA Rekindled event was a resounding success according to all who participated. The session included presentations on a range of topics and provided opportunities for refreshing and stimulating collegial discussions. Special thanks go to colleagues who generously gave their time to present, on their own or on behalf of their research teams: Amanda Draper (ECU), Torsten Reiners (Curtin), Patrick Halloran (Curtin), Shelda Debowski, Dawn Bennett (Curtin), and Rachel Wicking (UWA).

Thanks also go to all Committee members for their support in attending and hosting events. Melissa wishes all members all the very best for the festive season and the Branch looks forward to another great year in 2014.

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HERDSA NZ to Host a (metaphorical) Street Party for the Tertiary Education Neighbourhood

By Clinton Golding, Chair of the NZ branch

I was surprised to discover there were so many tertiary education organisations, associations and societies in New Zealand. I knew three or four of HERDSA’s neighbours, but had missed more than 10 others. It was as if I had never looked at the other homes on the street I lived.

There is a broad and diverse tertiary education neighbourhood in NZ (with a mind-numbing array of acronyms). As well as HERDSA there are also organisations for particular groups of tertiary educators – Learning advisors have the Association of Tertiary Learning Advisors of Aotearoa New Zealand (ATLAANZ), academic developers have the Academic Staff Developers of the Universities of NZ (ASDUNZ) or the Tertiary Academic Staff Development Educational Network (TASDEN), and foundation and bridging educators have the Foundation and Bridging Educators New Zealand (FABENZ). The Tertiary Education Union (TEU) and Ako Aotearoa (The NZ equivalent of OLT) are prominent, but it is easy to miss the NZ Association of Research in Education (NZARE) and the NZ Council for Educational Research (NZCER) who also have a stake in tertiary education. There are also subject associations with a strong interest in the tertiary sector, such as the Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (ASCILITE), the Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia (PESA) and the Australian and New Zealand Association for Health Professional Education (ANZAHPE). Two other local groups worth mentioning, both of which focus on quality assurance, are the Academic Quality Agency (AQA) and the NZ Vice Chancellors Committee. And there are even more that I don’t yet know.

In such a diverse neighbourhood, what should HERDSA do to be a good neighbour?

I don’t suggest amalgamating different organisations – Each group has its own particular interests, and they each serve an important, independent function. Instead, I suggest HERDSA should take a hand in fostering a stronger community built on our common interests in tertiary or higher education.

So my recommendation for those in HERDSA, especially the executive, is first of all, be aware of the wider community. Second, say hello to the neighbours, whether at a conference or via email. An email exchange might be enough, but to really say hello and get to know the neighbours, you can’t beat a street party where everyone gets together.

With this in mind, HERDSA NZ will invite its neighbour organisations, societies and associations to join us in our annual conference. HERDSA NZ organises a conference every year we don’t host the HERDSA conference. We call it TERNZ (Tertiary Education Research in New Zealand), and it is designed to be an inclusive, cooperative space for dialogue. In 2014 the conference is in Auckland on the 27th and 28th of November. We would be delighted to have representatives from all the different organisations in New Zealand and Australia – the more the merrier. We even have a space for special interest groups on the preceding Wednesday 26th, when members of different organisations or societies can meet together. It might not be an actual street party, but our aim is to capture the same spirit of community building.

For more information about TERNZ, contact Dr Barbara Kensington-Miller, Centre for Learning and Research in Higher Education, The University of Auckland: b.kensington-miller@auckland.ac.nz
University teachers studying teaching and learning are usually expected to read the literature to help them understand the key concepts in the field. The HERD Anthology provides an excellent introduction to the conceptual development of the higher education teaching and learning.

A chapter is devoted to each of the 5 main concepts discussed in Graduate Certificates in Higher Education Teaching and Learning in Australasia and the UK. 1. Reflective practice 2. Constructive alignment 3. Approaches to learning.
4. Assessment for learning 5. Scholarship of teaching Each chapter has a brief introduction to the main tenets of the concept and how it has evolved over time. This is followed by a re-print of the three high impact Higher Education Research & Development articles focused on the concept. The selected articles are followed by suggestions for further reading designed to provide a guide to university teachers wishing to pursue their own research in these areas.

Critical Thinking is close to the heart of many academics, and reflects the fundamental work of the universities.

Developing theories and concepts that explain different aspects of the world and how it functions, interpreting events in both recent and past history, finding solutions to pressing complex problems, and making sense of new discoveries, all require the attitudes to knowledge development and reasoning that characterise critical thinking.

Using the latest findings from the literature, this Guide provides practical ways to improve your students’ depth of learning by incorporating critical thinking development into the design of the disciplinary units, assessments and class interactions.

To see a complete list of publications accompanied by a brief description of each go to:
http://www.herdsa.org.au/?page_id=139

Publications may be ordered on line from:
http://www.herdsa.org.au/?page_id=35
Academia is losing its appeal

By Kathryn Sutherland

I am continually being told
It’s all about the outputs

Publish
Develop research capacity
Publish
Secure external grant funding
Publish
Focus on research and international publications;
do as little teaching and service as is possible
Publish
It is the key determinant of progression

But, I have just had a new baby
I have two children under five
I have too many kids
doing too many activities
with too many friends
My elderly mother lives with us
and I have a full teaching load
Academia is losing its appeal

My course has increased from
50 to 170 students in four years and
I have received no additional resource
or support to offset the workload
I work from around 9-8 during term time
I have to work seven days a week
I feel exhausted at the start of most working weeks
I am currently having counselling to deal with
anxiety and stress
I need to take sleeping pills on Sunday night
Whatever I do is never enough

Academia is losing its appeal
The University increases the teaching load
but it still expects the same amount of research and service
so it goes from being a 40-40-20 position
to a 70-40-20 position

In academia it seems to be the norm
that to succeed
you need to work many more hours than you are paid for.
What work-life balance?
Academia is losing its appeal.

I love my job, though
I do field work, which I enjoy
My research and teaching offer much joy and inspiration
Students bring me joy
I feel privileged to do what I love every day
I have the best job in the world

Just offer me some support
Say hello to me in the corridor
Ask me about my work
Teach me how to write and access external grants
Give me the opportunity to gain a teaching qualification and
support me with some teaching relief
Be proactive in expressing encouragement when I do well
Focus on the things that matter

Because academia is losing its appeal.

A poem composed from the words of participants in a research project on the experiences of early career academics in New Zealand universities: http://akoaotearoa.ac.nz/early-career-academics

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