



A global revolution ahead for higher education

Susan L. Robertson

technology parlance, *An Avalanche* went viral. Everyone was talking about it. Could the HE sector - which had faced down centuries - be wiped out so dramatically?

The third was a call from my colleague in the USA. Would I consider doing a MOOC with him - a Massive Open Online Course - to be launched in early 2014 on universities and the global knowledge economy! I remember a mixture of feelings: daunted, curious, aware of the different motivations of interested groups, including venture capitalists, in this emerging phenomena.

We did develop the MOOC, and it was both an exhausting, fascinating and rewarding experience. Will it revolutionise higher education? Having completed one, I'm not so sure. Yet this did not stop the prophets, pundits, and profiteers from arguing that we now face the end of the university as we know it. Now the question for us today is whether these kinds of development add up to being a revolution? What might be its dynamics, features and outcomes? How might we determine the difference between mythmaking and fact facing?

Nathan Harden, in an influential and lengthy essay in the US in 2012, argued that half of the roughly 4,500 colleges operating in the US will cease to exist; access to college level education will be free for everyone and ten years from now Harvard will

I remember March 2013 for three things connected with higher education. One is that I was in New Zealand on a 'knowledge-exchange' programme funded by the European Commission. This took me back to the University of Auckland where I had spent 4 years working in the 1990s - before taking up my current post in the UK. I was struck by how much had changed in a decade. The biggest changes were how large the university had grown, the number of universities that had moved into the city, and the changed student population and city landscape. These were outcomes of an explicit New Zealand government strategy around education trade and Brand New Zealand.

The second was the launch of the Institute Public Policy Research report written by Michael Barber and colleagues - *An Avalanche is Coming: Higher Education and the Revolution Ahead*. Barber, of course, was UK PM - Tony Blair's - advisor for public sector reforms - well known for what he called 'deliverology'. Barber was later to become a senior consultant for McKinsey & Co, and began making waves in the schooling world with his reports in 2007 and 2010 on top performing schools. Barber now heads up education developments in Pearson Education - one of the largest global education firms. In current

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From the Editor

This issue of HERDSA NEWS offers an eclectic mix of features, articles and columns

which really highlight the variety of interests in our HERDSA community. Our feature article is the third in our series of keynotes from the 2014 HERDSA conference. Susan L. Robertson discusses the global revolution in higher education and the myths surrounding talk of the demise of the university as we know it. Susan asks whose interests are advanced by 'catastrophe talk' and how this relates to the shaping of higher education as a public good.

In the last edition we launched two new columns. *Who's who in HERDSA?* reveals those who give their time and energy to HERDSA behind the scenes. This issue features the leader of our publications portfolio and puppy lover, the indefatigable Peter Kandlbinder. Our other recently added column *From the HERD editorial desk* supports those who are interested in maximising the publishing opportunities of our prestigious Higher Education Research and Development journal.

I am pleased to launch two more regular columns this time around. From New Zealand comes the *Ako Aotearoa* column by Peter Coolbear. Ako Aotearoa is the National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence in New Zealand. Peter discusses what makes a good funding proposal. Our other new column is from the Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT). OLT provides important opportunities and resources of interest to HERDSA members and this column will keep us up to date on

these with important dates for grant and award submissions.

Our regular features include Bob Cannon's *Meanderings* which really made me smile as he highlights some seriously amusing journal articles and Roger Atkinson's seriously researched *IT column*, this one a result of extensive trawling through the Australasian Journal of Educational Technology archives. Peter Kandlbinder reviews an article from the *HERDSA Review of Higher Education* and anyone interested in the first year experience as a transition period for university students should read this.

In his column *From the President* by Allan Goody also reflects on the first year experience, as well as the demise of teaching and learning centres. He brings us up to date with what has been happening behind the scenes in HERDSA. Our *HERDSA Fellows* column is by Susan Rowland and highlights the opportunities for associate fellows. Our other regular columnists appear with the *New Scholars* column from Deb Clarke; news from the branches now retitled as *HERDSA Local*; and Clinton Golding brings news and views from *HERDSA New Zealand*. In addition there are two articles on the transition theme that report successful strategies for student support.

I have included reminders about our forthcoming HERDSA 2015 conference in Melbourne. I hope you enjoy this issue and I look forward to seeing you at the HERDSA conference in Melbourne which promises to be both stimulating and fun. I always love hopping on a Melbourne tram. I will be looking around for new material for HERDSA NEWS so come and say hello.

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Contributions are welcome and may be submitted to office@herdsa.org.au for consideration by the Editor.

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enrol ten million students. Why? "Because the college classroom is about to go virtual". He further adds: "The higher-ed business is in for a lot of pain as a new era of creative destruction produces a merciless shakeout of those institutions that adapt and prosper from those that stall and die" (Harden, 2012).

Similarly, in *An Avalanche*, Barber and colleagues confidently pronounced that: "The models of higher education that marched triumphantly around the globe in the second half of the twentieth century are broken ... The traditional multi-purpose university with a range of degrees and a modestly effective research programme has had its day" (Barber et al, 2013). We can see apocalyptic thinking is the genre, one that has played well for mythmakers and the industry that has sprung up in the wake of such pronouncements.

Such ideas have circulated widely and been highly influential in political circles - and clearly shaped some of the language of writers like Barber and colleagues. It is our job as researchers in, and practitioners of, higher education to recognise the difference between diagnosis and vested interests, and to ask where the lines are between mythmaking and fact-facing.

So, what are the facts? At one level they are almost a bit boring.

First: Universities have endured over the centuries because they are complex institutions engaged in teaching and learning, research, as well as outreach and service work. So they are MORE than teaching - which is what the MOOC phenomenon is referring to. They are currently major producers of ideas and innovation, and social glue, if OECD figures can be believed. That is, university educated graduates are more likely to be politically engaged and civic minded. Second: University credentials are also positional goods. So they play a very complex role in society's political economy and not just as a producer of human capital. Third: Universities have also shown a remarkable capacity to endure over time.

Now I am not suggesting universities have changed very little over the course

of time. Of course they have - and particularly so as a result of recent global processes at work. Since the 1990s, universities are now more global as they stretch out into space. There are now around 217 branch campuses and growing all of the time, though they are concentrated in particular regions of the world - South /East Asia, London, Gulf Region - all with quite innovative approaches to building universities around a new set of metaphors - HUBS, Educities and so on. These transformations in the spatial organization of the university, however, have not been unproblematic. For example, who governs US academics, such as the Yale faculty, when they work in Singapore?

MOOCs, of course, take the university into the homes of students from all over the world, but for the most part, they do not extend a university education to those who have not had the opportunity to experience one before. Rather the profile of MOOC students is that they have a degree, some are even serial MOOCers, but more importantly MOOCs are currently not global in reach. Regionalisation represents perhaps the more radical edge of the changes under way in that national education systems - such as those in Europe, have been transformed in their degree architectures, quality assurance mechanisms and so on.

Arguably it is student mobility across national boundaries that we notice most in our daily work - whether as academic, administrator or policymaker. Set to increase beyond the current 4.3 million, according to the OECD's *Education at a Glance 2014*, international students have changed the face of university departments, universities, cities, and nations. These developments have also given rise to a whole new area of trade accounting - especially calculations as to the value of education to the economy. Yet perhaps some of the biggest, and at one level least visible, set of changes at work is the rapid privatizing, financialising, and commodifying, of knowledge production which represents a step change in processes currently at work. Consider the following facts: two of them were reported in the *New York Times* in the past month. The first is a

report by investment advisors working for Merrill Lynch Bank of America; on the estimated value of education - \$4.3 trillion. The companies viewed as beneficiaries of this are Pearson Education, Elsevier and Informa. Of course the publishing world has always had a strong foot in education but these firms are not imagining themselves as operating on the margins. They are increasingly moving into core business or - if we take world class rankings, impact factors, and hot scientists as cases in point - engaged in shaping the education sector as well as institutional fortunes and academic careers in significant ways.

Now at this point we could wring our hands, give up, and go home. Or we could have a grown up conversation about the future and the future of the next generation. I prefer the latter and I think we need to shape that conversation with a series of strong questions that push for strong answers.

We might ask whose interests are advanced by 'catastrophe talk', reveal those interests and ask what part they play in shaping higher education as a public good? If they do, fine. If they don't then let's reduce their power to shape the debate. And what of 'one size fits all' solutions to higher education development? What does this model do for producing the diverse conversations and debates about our future and how to respond to major challenges? If not much, then let's open up the policy and public spaces for a bigger and wider conversation. And what of the narrow economic path for universities and their role in knowledge creation? Who gets to control data on universities, academics and students? Could we not ask for our data back, or open up and democratise this form of knowledge. I could go on, but you get my drift. Surely the risk in not doing so is the risk that we lose what has been won and most importantly, that we risk the future itself.

Professor Susan L. Robertson is Director of Research and Director, Centre for Globalisation, Education and Societies at Bristol University and Editor-in-Chief, *Globalisation, Societies and Education*.



From the President

This time last year I was writing about beginning a new academic year and all those new students finding their way as a university student. And here we are again. I had a reminder about just how daunting starting university can be through meeting a family from Singapore who came to Perth to help their child settle into first year university in Australia.

The first day on campus – orientation – proved to be a confronting culture shock for the new student. So much so that talk immediately turned to returning to Singapore and taking up the offer to attend a university there in familiar surroundings. I witnessed more of the anguish and uncertainty for the parents rather than the student but none-the-less, from our conversations, it has been a very trying week – and classes have not even started.

This family's experience started me thinking. I reflected on my initial arrival at the University of Illinois. Admittedly I was a mature age graduate student and I was part of the majority, that is, caucasian, but as an 'outsider' it was still quite daunting to face the many unknowns. The most important thing that made my transition easier was the individuals, both university staff and locals from the town community, who made me feel that I belonged at the university and as a member of their community.

I have not had much contact with this particular student, but I hope that by reaching out to the parents and trying to reassure them that given time their child will feel a part of the university community has in some way lessened their burden and sense of helplessness as they leave behind their child to begin this new journey. I think this student will try to hang in there; I hope so.

I know our universities put in a lot of effort to make all students welcome to campus but despite all these good intentions, it can still be very confronting for our new students, especially those from a different culture. What more can we do? If you see a new student on campus, looking a little lost, I hope you reach out and give a few kind words of reassurance.

Some of you might subscribe to the POD Network listserv. POD is the HERDSA equivalent in the USA. Their listserv is very robust with subscribers seeking advice on a range of issues, posing questions and freely sharing resources. There are many regular contributors who often engage in very spirited debates.

In the past couple of days the POD list conversation has turned to the demise of teaching and learning centres in universities. Of course this is not a phenomenon unique to North America. I am reminded of the most recent dismantling of the Teaching and Educational Development Institute (TEDI) at The University of Queensland and the Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (CATL) at The University of Western Australia. They are not the first to go of course (and guaranteed not the last) but TEDI was always looked to for stability and leadership in the development of teaching and learning; it had been around for more than 40 years! I was there when CATL was born and last week I had the chance to have one last drink at the trough as it too became just a memory (albeit a very good memory).

Why do these centres meet a premature end when often they are reincarnated with essentially the same mission of supporting the academic community to provide students with the best learning experience? The only difference is usually a new and (in some people's

minds) hipper name. Why all the waste of money involved in this reincarnation process in times of scarcity? Why cause distress to those people who work in the centres? Why risk the alienation of those academic and professional staff with whom teaching centre staff have developed strong relationships through times of change, with the common goal of improving student learning and productive academic practice?

And all these hip names and phrases is another matter altogether. Learning Futures? Onboarding? (I believe it means induction.) Maybe I do have too much time on my hands and trying to understand the logic of these happenings will probably lead nowhere. Maybe you have been contemplating these or similar issues too. At least you know you are not alone in asking these questions.

Now to bring you up to date with what has been happening with HERDSA over the past months. I have had discussions with the Council of Australian Directors of Academic Development (CADAD) about how we can collaborate more. There are quite a number of professional societies in Australia and New Zealand with goals that are generally varied on the theme of supporting those working in higher education and improving the student experience. We can, and should be, collaborating and sharing resources. If you are a member of another of these organisations and can see opportunities for collaboration, please contact me.

Maureen has been working hard to produce a more contemporary look for HERDSA News. You can judge for yourself as you read this issue. I am sure Maureen will welcome your feedback. We are also working hard with a number of authors to get one or two new HERDSA Guides ready for launch at the conference.

In January I attended the Teaching and Learning Forum in Perth which this year attracted more than 300 delegates. Pretty amazing for a state-based teaching and learning event. HERDSA always has a presence holding the branch AGM and promoting publications. It was encouraging to meet at least one new member who introduced himself. This new member comes from the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector and he and his colleagues are looking to HERDSA as a resource as their institutions move into the higher education provider realm and forge more pathways with traditional higher education providers. This is an opportunity for HERDSA to engage and broaden our base and assist where we can. I again extend a welcome to this new member and his colleagues and invite VET members to engage with HERDSA and let us know how the society can assist you.

The next big event is the HERDSA conference in Melbourne in July. I understand there were a large number of submissions which means we will have a robust and interesting program. The conference will also see a new executive starting a two-year term. There is a good chance that some of the current executive will be continuing for another term which is always good for maintaining momentum on various projects while allowing new executive members to contribute new ideas and energy. I will also start a second term as President. I find this role fulfilling not least because every day there is some question to answer, an issue to resolve or someone to thank; as well as to keep up to date, liaise and network, monitor and progress our various projects. Working on a casual basis, I am lucky to have more time to devote to all these demands and hopefully attend to them in a timely manner.

I look forward to seeing you all in Melbourne. Until then, I hope you have a successful and rewarding semester.

By the way, you can subscribe to the POD list at <http://listserv.nd.edu/archives/pod.html>. And like the HERDSA list, you do not need to be a member of POD. POD membership is perhaps not as broad as HERDSA, with a focus on professional and organisational development in higher education, but it is another great (and free) resource, even if you just remain a lurker!

Allan Goody
Email: agoody56@gmail.com

Who's who in HERDSA?



Peter Kandlbinder is a Senior Lecturer in the Institute for Interactive Media & Learning at UTS. Peter has been a member of the HERDSA executive since 2008. Peter is Chair of the HERDSA *Publications portfolio* which includes the *HERD journal*, *HERDSA Guides* and *HERDSA NEWS* and is a regular contributor to HERDSA NEWS and has co-edited conference editions. In addition he is working on the HERDSA web site redesign while assisting

in its maintenance. He compiles the weekly *HERDSA Notices* listserv. Peter is co-editor of the *Higher Education Research and Development Anthology* and oral histories for *Make a Place: An Oral History of Academic Development in Australia*.

What does HERDSA mean to you?

The networking and working with other HERDSA members are really the most important. Having been a member for almost 20 years it is like a reunion at the conference every year.

What have you achieved in HERDSA?

We have a whole series of publications with different purposes for the membership. I have put most of my efforts into trying to put the publications portfolio on a more systematic footing and clarify the different opportunities for members to contribute to the various publications.

What next?

When I started as a HERDSA member in 1996 the NSW HERDSA branch formally closed down. When I leave the executive I would like to have a go at resurrecting the New South Wales branch.

What do you like to tweet about?

Graham Gibbs said "academic developers give it away for free". That's why I like using Twitter and blogging, sharing resources. You hear someone has an interest and you think "I know something that might answer your question".

What are you reading?

Sapiens - A history of humankind by Yuval Harari and it's fantastic. I am really interested in this idea of 'deep history' where you try to work out what are the significant movements in our existence. That will be one of my projects now. A deep history of higher education.

What are you passionate about?

Libraries and learning. As an undergraduate I was a member of 5 different libraries - I had a library card collection. You should have seen my library fines.

What bugs you?

Competition, people trying to get on top of other people. People who hide a textbook in the library, saying "I don't want anyone else to get this textbook". Healthy competition is to achieve and strive, competition against my own goals.

What do you love doing?

Charles Schultz says: "Happiness is a warm puppy". We have a young puppy. I am devoting all my extra time and effort to puppy life.



Miss Ollie, the wonder dog

Breaking News - HERDSA 2015 Conference



www.herdsa2015.org/registration

The HERDSA 2015 conference is shaping up to be bigger and better than ever. The organising committee received nearly 300 abstracts and full papers. There are many exciting and innovative papers, posters and workshop/roundtables so the program is certainly going to be full. Over 90 people have already registered to attend the conference to explore the conference theme: "Learning for Life and Work in a Complex World".

The conference program starts with pre-conference workshops as well as a full day TATAL (Talking about Teaching and Learning) session. During the conference delegates will have lots of opportunities to hear from leading academics, pose challenging questions, interact and network professionally and socially. A vibrant social program is under development and includes a welcome function and conference dinner.

The HERDSA 2015 conference will be held at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. The MCEC is located on the banks of the Yarra River, only a short walk from Melbourne's central business district, and a 20-minute drive to Melbourne Airport.

Confirmed keynote speakers:

Dr Helen Chen

Senior researcher in the Designing Education Lab in the Center for Design Research within the Department of Mechanical Engineering at Stanford University

Ms Belinda Robinson

Chief Executive with Universities Australia

Dr Gardner Campbell

Vice Provost for Learning Innovation and Student Success, and Associate Professor of English, at Virginia Commonwealth University

Dr George Siemens

Professor and Executive Director of the Learning Innovation and Networked Knowledge Research Lab at the University of Texas Arlington

For information about keynote speakers go to: www.herdsa2015.org/speakers-3/

You can start engaging with the conference activity by joining the 3000 people who have already visited the HERDSA 2015 conference website or follow us on your preferred social media platform.



@herdsa2015 hastag: #herdsa;
facebook or LinkedIn

HERDSA 2014 conference papers are available at the HERDSA website: www.herdsa.org.au

Click on the link: 2014 HERDSA Annual Conference papers now available



From the HERD editorial Desk

Titles, abstracts and keywords: The buzzword is discoverability!

Barbara Grant

These days there is a big push from all sorts of directions to think about the discoverability of our published work. It's not enough to get it out there: we need to think about how we can assist others find our journal articles, chapters, and books. Blogging and tweeting are two increasingly common practices that academics are using adroitly – and sometimes stylishly – to this end.

But there are also low-tech *writerly* steps you can take at the final stage of preparing a manuscript that will help too. In particular, attend to the **title** you craft, the **keywords** you choose, and the **abstract** you compose because many of the search engines used by hungry academic readers draw on that information. Paying attention to these features of your manuscript can take you a little more deeply into the pleasures of writing *artfully* to attract your readers. In what follows, you'll find pointers for producing better versions of these elements critical to your manuscript.

First, the title: think about your title in two ways. Is it informative? Does it tell the reader what the focus of your paper is? And, just as importantly, is your title interesting, intriguing, inviting? Has it got a bit of snap and sizzle? Many authors now (me included) quite like a 'colonised' title, which gives you two parts to play with, one in each direction. The title of this column is an example of what I mean: I've used the first part to give the reader fairly accurate information about the substance of the column and the second, on the other side of the colon, to be a little provocative. (Am I sneering or cheering you on? I'm not really sure, maybe I'm doing both – 'discoverability' is a term I have an ambivalent relationship with because of its capture by 'neolib-speak'!) Notice,

too, that I could have put the two parts in reverse order, with the 'interesting' bit first: *The buzzword is discoverability: Titles, abstracts and keywords*. But then I had to lose my exclamation mark, which was part of trying to create that ambivalent tone, so I didn't (although I tried out reversing the two halves to be sure). A final thing about titles: avoid long droning ones that put your readers to sleep.

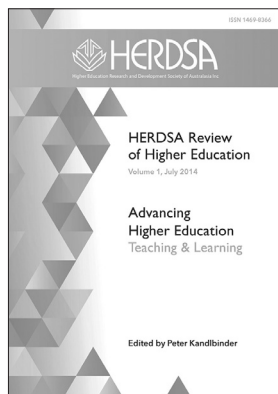
Second, the abstract: *HERD* abstracts can be up to a capacious 300 words long. (Some other journals ask for shorter abstracts – for example, both *Studies in Higher Education* and *Teaching in Higher Education* allow only up to 150 words.) Within the broad goals of writing an inviting, readable, accurate and *self-contained* abstract, embed key words and phrases that name the broad topic area of your work as well as the specific focus of the paper, the theory you have used, as well as the methodologies and methods. Read your abstract aloud to yourself to make sure it reads well: is your language active and vivid? Does it convey something of the significance of your work to the reader? (On that last point: do your best, without lecturing the reader, to tell her why she should read your article.) And then there are the keywords: *HERD* asks prospective authors to choose a generous 5-10 keywords. When we look at the manuscripts coming in, the keywords sometimes look a bit random – as if they were the last tired authorial gasp! But keywords should be much more purposive because of their importance in helping your work to be found via on-line searches. A question to take seriously: Have you carefully chosen the most important words to attract readers who will be looking for work like yours? Again, think about the substantive focus of your manuscript (its topic, the argument), think about the theory

and methodology you have used: are these well represented in your choice of words? And have you considered alternates that might be used in other parts of the world? For example in my research area, graduate research 'supervision' is referred to as 'advising' in the US and 'academic staff' are called 'faculty'. By including alternates, you gently signal the relevance of your work to wider audiences. Lastly, you could browse the online ERIC Thesaurus for at least one standard term to include, given that some searchers might lean on this word-pool heavily. For example, I would probably choose 'graduate study', which is listed in the ERIC Thesaurus under 'higher education', which in turn is listed under H on the *Browse Alphabetically* page. (Neither 'supervision' or 'academic advising' would work for me because as they are used in ERIC Thesaurus they mean other things.)

Finally, think about these three aspects of your manuscript as a group, because that is likely to be how a search engine treats them: you might not be able to (or want to) use an ERIC descriptor in your title, but you can include it in your keywords. Likewise for alternates: don't clutter up your title, but instead find a way to include them inside your abstract. This can often be done quite deftly eg "Supervision (or advising, as it is called in the US) is.... blah blah".

In sum: take some time at the final stage of writing your manuscript to attend to these features. The crafting involved in preparing these small segments of text can be pleasurable and, as a bonus, it can make your work (and you) more discoverable!

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Review Article

The first year experience: Looking back to inform the future

Karen Nelson and John Clarke

Peter Kandlbinder

Executive Editor HERDSA Review of Higher Education

In Volume 1 of *HERDSA Review of Higher Education* Nelson and Clarke (2014) remind us that the student's first year at university is a critical period because it establishes the patterns of behaviour that students follow throughout their studies. The idea that students 'transition' to university may conjure up images of high school students being ushered into the welcoming arms of their academic community as just reward for doing well in their final examinations. Yet the reality for many students is that the change from school to university is often filled with doubt, insecurity and anxiety to the point where some find they are unable to make a transition at all.

This is not a recent observation. Early higher education researchers identified the issue that some students do not make a successful transition to university as a problem of student failure and wastage (Gray & Short, 1961). Wastage was taken to be any student who came to university but failed to complete his or her degree. Universities responded to the issue of wastage by selecting students with the greatest chance of success and established higher education research centres to assist in identifying the most able students (Anderson & Eaton, 1982).

Once universities were required to enrol a diversity of students they had to look for reasons, other than the failings students brought with them when they entered university study, for the cause of academic failure. It is performance in the first year that remains one of the most reliable indicators of student success (Birch & Miller, 2007). Over time the focus shifted from students who dropped out to students who remained at university but may be having a poor experience due to under-preparation, unrealistic expectations or bad teaching.

What Nelson and Clarke highlight by focusing on research published in the 21st century is the growing sophistication of research into the First Year Experience (FYE) of higher education students and a shift away from thinking about the first year as a student orientation to what has become known as a transition pedagogy (Kift & Nelson, 2005).

Nelson and Clarke divide the FYE research into three generations that expanded over the first decade of the 21st century. The first generation was characterised by orientation activities that focused on what the university could do to help students feel part of their institution. The second generation shifted the focus onto students and transformed orientation activities to reflect the needs of the students. The third generation abandoned the idea that the first year experience was improved by isolated events and went for a whole-of-university approach.

Nelson and Clarke suggest that though each generation dominated a decade none was exclusively used to address first year experience issues during that period. Even as universities transitioned their orientation to more student-focused approaches, the activities of the first generation evolved to become increasingly sophisticated. What appeared over time was a gradual change of emphasis without necessarily replacing earlier initiatives. Instead initiatives became more evidence-based, focused on disciplines and concentrated on students at risk of failing. Increasingly institutional factors came to the fore and universities reviewed their student support infrastructure. Holistic, institution-wide initiatives started to emerge in the final period along with the growing interest in student engagement.

Having identified the past trends, Nelson and Clarke (2014) ask the reasonable question: where to next for the first year experience? From their review of the past it might be expected that there would be a steady progression from second to third generation first year experience initiatives.

While some whole-of-university initiatives had emerged, the first year experience movement largely stalled at second generation program-focused levels of good practice. To analyse why this may be the case Nelson and Clarke apply the concept of maturity modelling to tertiary student engagement behaviour (Nelson & Clarke, 2011). They subsequently developed their own variant of this analytical tool they called *Student Engagement, Success and Retention Maturity Model* (SESR-MM) (Nelson, Clarke, & Stoodley, 2013). This version of maturity modelling was designed to assess the capacity of higher education institutions to implement institutional student engagement and retention strategies. It included a set of five indicators of maturity — Providing, Planning, Institutional framing, Monitoring and Optimising — that provides a framework of 315 specific practices that can be used to compare actual institutional practices. Their goal was to build on the generational approach by highlighting practices currently not being undertaken and providing university leaders objective evidence on which to make decisions about future institutional directions and priorities designed to enhance the FYE.

To this end Nelson and Clarke (2014) designed a procedure to guide the search for evidence of FYE practices that could be used to assess the quality or maturity of the practices identified. As useful as the generational classification has been to describe past efforts to achieve good practice for the

FYE, Nelson and Clarke (2014) argue that a richer and more future-focused alternative is required. They propose the use of maturity modelling as a way of demonstrating that the majority of current practices still remain focused on first and second-generation approaches. Achieving a whole-of university approach to the FYE formulated on a transition pedagogy will be challenging to implement. They show that while some elements of the transition pedagogy are well addressed in the literature there is potential for a greater focus on student engagement based on activities applying diversity and evaluation principles.

Nelson and Clarke remind us that the first year of study remains an important period of transition for all university students. I would encourage all members interested in developing a future focus to student engagement to download the *HERDSA Review of Higher Education* article, which is available free on the HERDSA web site.

The First Year Experience: Looking back to inform the future.

Nelson, K. & Clarke, J. (2014) HERDSA Review of Higher Education, 1 pp. 23-45. Retrieved from <http://www.herdsa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/HERDSARHE2014v01p05.pdf>

About the Authors

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of three co-editors of the International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education.

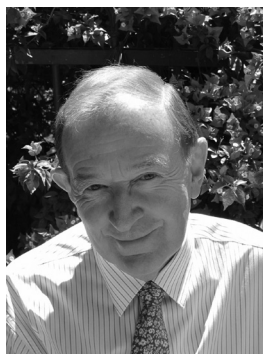
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HERDSA 2014 conference organisers hand over to the Melbourne conference organisers at the closing ceremony in Hong Kong.



Hong Kong conference committee hand over the the 'Kete' (the basket of knowledge in Maori legend) received from HERDSA 2013 in Auckland, with a 'Pan Chang' knot (盤長結, symbolising prosperity, long-lasting network and collaboration) as a blessing gift to HERDSA 2015
Photo: Eric Lee



Meanderings

Robert Cannon

Each year at Christmas, the *British Medical Journal (BMJ)* publishes a humorous scientific paper as a Christmas gift for readers. Over many years, these humorous papers show us how the tools of science can be used and misused in various situations where we wouldn't normally consider their application at all. The results are usually hilarious, sometimes ridiculous and even controversial.

When leading workshops on lecturing, I frequently used a *BMJ* paper as a teaching aid to draw attention to the soporific impact of lecturing. The paper I used was Richard Harvey, and others, 'Dreaming during scientific papers: effects of added extrinsic material', *British Medical Journal*, 287, 1983. The most striking finding of this study was that sleep frequency and dream frequency were unrelated – dreaming often took place without evidence of sleep! The authors proposed the term 'day dream' to cover this phenomenon. Sleep frequency was relatively constant, whatever kind of extraneous material – that is, graded slides of boring to interesting material – was introduced into a presentation. This finding was partly explained by the rather alarming observation of the rapid onset of sleep in many subjects, even before the presentation of the extraneous material. Subjects were therefore unable actually to see the material and were therefore not influenced by it because they were asleep.

My workshop participants loved this study. This was partly because it dealt with a very personal issue for them as both the givers of lectures and the receivers of my lecture at the workshop. They also enjoyed the analyses, particularly of dream content expressed as percentage of all dreams recalled by the occupation of dreamers. For instance, the analysis shows that the topics scoring the highest were money and medical politics, followed by food and drink. When broken down by

grades of staff, younger staff were found to have a higher incidence of sexual fantasies whereas older male Emeritus Professors were dreaming about their bladders. Other popular dream topics were the weather, bran and cricket... bran?

Another *BMJ* paper subtly and very effectively uses ridicule to draw attention to the current popularity of randomized control trials of medical interventions – the so-called 'gold standard' of evaluation. This paper, by Gordon Smith and Jill Pell in the *British Medical Journal*, 327, 2003, is titled 'Parachute use to prevent death and major trauma related to gravitational challenge: systematic review of randomised controlled trials'. After an exhaustive literature search and an elaborate statistical approach, Smith and Pell find that no randomised controlled trials of parachute use have ever been undertaken. They find that the basis for the efficacy of parachute use is purely observational, and that this efficacy can be explained by a 'healthy cohort' effect. This effect is explained as follows: "One of the major weaknesses of observational data is the possibility of bias, including selection bias and reporting bias, which may be obviated largely by using randomised controlled trials. The relevance to parachute use is that individuals jumping from aircraft without the help of a parachute are likely to have a high prevalence of pre-existing psychiatric morbidity. Individuals who use parachutes are likely to have less psychiatric morbidity and may also differ in key demographic factors, such as income and cigarette use. It follows, therefore, that the apparent protective effect of parachutes may be merely an example of the 'healthy cohort' effect".

The authors recommend that: "individuals who insist that all interventions need to be validated by a randomised controlled trial need to come down to earth with a bump".

Next we come to a controversial article by Ben Lendrum, et al, The Darwin Awards: sex differences in idiotic behaviour, *British Medical Journal*, 349, 2014 (this paper is available at: <http://www.bmj.com/content/bmj/349/bmj.g7094.full.pdf>).

The paper notes that little is known about sex differences in idiotic risk taking behaviour and so analyses the data on winners of the Darwin Award over a 20 year period from 1995 to 2014. By demonstrating an astounding misapplication of common sense, winners of a Darwin Award must eliminate themselves from the gene pool (code for die) in such an idiotic manner that their action ensures one less idiot will survive. This paper reports a marked sex difference in Darwin Award winners: males are significantly more likely to receive a Darwin Award than females, as males make up 88.7% of award winners. The authors conclude that this finding is entirely consistent with male idiot theory (MIT) that supports the hypothesis that men are idiots and idiots do stupid things.

Now, the controversy...

Livening up readers to his critique of the Darwin Awards article with the wisecrack: 'What do you call a train full of professors?' Answer: 'A tube of Smarties', Glen Poole writing in *InsideMan*, December 15, 2014 (<http://tinyurl.com/p3maduf>) argues passionately that when academics think it's funny to label men as idiots, the joke has gone too far, pointing out that Darwin Award winners are real people, with real friends and families, people whose tragic deaths are presented for our collective entertainment and amusement. Warming to his case, Poole argues that the joke's on us – us men – "because we're all too stupid to have feelings". He asks whether it would be acceptable if the humour were applied to other groups in society – women, gays and people with a disability, for

example. Of course not, he says, so why is labelling half the population ‘idiots’ for a joke OK? Poole suggests that the Newcastle University team who did the study are perpetuating “a culture of misandry that at best tolerates and at worst contributes to hatred of men and boys as a group”. Poole, incidentally, is author of the book *Equality 4 Men* (Available: <http://equality4men.com/book/>).

These are challenging points to ponder when we consider what is appropriate humour for use in our teaching or in our publications. Why is it apparently OK to make jokes of men but not other sub-groups of society? Coincidentally, and almost immediately after I read Poole’s article, I was listening to an ABC broadcast where Arab-Australians discussed humour. One comedian argued that it was more acceptable in our society to ridicule more secure and powerful groups than those who were seen to be weaker or in a minority, so it seems that men are fair game in this view. Implicit in the broadcast is the view that it is also more acceptable for minorities to make fun of themselves than for a member from the majority or some other group to do this.

Moving on from this tricky territory, and from whatever view we take about ridiculing men’s idiotic behaviour in this way, the article about the Darwin Awards would seem to fit, in principle, with the goal of the organisation that goes by the name of ‘Improbable Research’. Their goal is to make people laugh, and then make them think. Each year Improbable Research conducts a major ceremony at Harvard University called the Ig Nobel Prizes that celebrates achievements in making people laugh, then think, and that spur people’s interest in science, medicine and technology. Each Ig Nobel Prize is for legitimate, published research.

Here are half a dozen examples from the most recent 2014 Ig Nobel Awards (the rest can be found here: <http://www.improbable.com/ig/winners/#ig2014>):

Economics: The Italian National Institute of Statistics, for taking the lead in fulfilling the European Union mandate for each country to increase the official size of its national economy by including revenues from prostitution, illegal drug sales,

smuggling, and all other unlawful financial transactions between willing participants.

Nutrition: The characterization of lactic acid bacteria isolated from infant faeces as potential probiotic starter cultures for fermented sausages.

Arctic science: Testing how reindeer react to seeing humans who are disguised as polar bears.

Biology: A study documenting that when dogs defecate and urinate, they prefer to align their body axis with Earth’s north-south geomagnetic field lines.

Neuroscience: Research in understanding what happens in the brains of people who see the face of Jesus in a piece of toast.

Psychology: Providing evidence that people who habitually stay up late are, on average, more self-admiring, more manipulative, and more psychopathic than people who habitually arise early in the morning.

The winners’ list is guaranteed to bring a smile to even the most jaded reader of this column. Obviously, for one who is interested in educational humour, I searched through the list for a winner in the education category. The closest I came to a result was a 2008 Ig Nobel Prize in cognitive science awarded to a Japanese and Hungarian team for discovering that slime moulds can solve puzzles. Sadly there does not seem to be an education category. No education article this century has been awarded a prize and so we might conclude from the evidence gathered by Improbable Research that the fields of medicine, physics, ornithology, biology – and even economics – are funnier than education.

Rather depressing, isn’t it?

Robert Cannon is the senior evaluation adviser to the large USAID PRIORITAS education project in Indonesia. He has also been an external evaluator, and former Acting Chief of Party, of the USAID-funded Palestinian Faculty Development Program. Robert was Director of the Advisory Centre for University Education at the University of Adelaide from 1977 to 2001.

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A point for debate

Tai’s Pick

Points for Debate Editor (Tai Peseta) provides her pick of an article she thinks is of special interest in each issue. Here is Tai’s latest pick reprinted from the journal.

Volume 34, Number 2, pp. 270-283

The third page of this article invites the sort of provocation every interesting article should: ‘what is colonial and what is indigenous?’ It’s the sort of question that really is very difficult to ignore. For Michelle Carey and Michael Prince, authors of *Designing an Australian Indigenous Studies curriculum for the twentieth century: Nakata’s ‘cultural interface’, standpoints and working beyond binaries*, the matter of how to work with the complexities of Indigenous-Western knowledge intersections has led them to the scholarship of Martin Nakata – in particular – his notion of a cultural interface.

Recognising that the term itself has been taken up by scholars in ways that continue to reify knowledge boundaries, subjectivities and aspirations (perhaps unwittingly they suggest), Carey & Prince’s portrayal of how one university’s Indigenous studies major has navigated this sticky terrain makes for enlightening reading.

For those interested in the minutiae of particular units/ subjects (and their progression), assessment tasks, and activities, the article is thick with that sort of description too.

Download the article at:
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2014.956691>



HERDSA New Zealand

Clinton Golding, Chair

TERNZ Conference – a different model

Prior to the conference I was in an end-year slump and not going anywhere but TERNZ veterans - colleagues and friends - assured me it would be a conference like no other; a worthwhile experience. Trusting them, I shook off the slump and turned up. I am glad I did. I found the conference reinvigorating and inspiring (TERNZ first-time participant).

In November 2014, the Centre for Learning and Research (CLear) at the University of Auckland hosted the Tertiary Education Research in New Zealand (TERNZ) conference for academics from all disciplines. The theme for TERNZ is learning in higher education: our learning, our students' learning, our colleagues' learning. TERNZ is unusual for an academic conference in that it enables academics to talk about education. It encourages attendees to learn from each other's experience, reflecting the view that academics, just like our students, learn most effectively in an interactive setting where our own experience is valued. In particular, TERNZ provides a medium for early-career academics to present their work and receive feedback in a collegial environment.

I recommend TERNZ highly to anyone engaged in tertiary education research or practice, but especially those for whom conferences might feel daunting, laborious or (as Tony also said) who have had experiences of the 'rich and

the famous' being applauded, but at the expense of spaces for others. At TERNZ, spaces abound for everyone to be applauded and recognised on their own merits, at whatever career stage (TERNZ delegate).

There are no paper presentations at TERNZ and the thinking is not led by 'experts'. Instead, ideas are developed through conversations in which all participants have the opportunity to play an equal part. Some participants present posters and there is time allocated for interactive conversations about the posters with interested viewers. At the 2014 conference, participants were given 45 minutes in which to present their research into learning and teaching which draws directly upon their work as teachers and learners; and to present an activity that would encourage collegial feedback on their work.

'Host groups' are a major part of the conference. Participants were placed in groups with a leader. The groups met regularly throughout the conference to extend the conversations begun in presentations. As a result teachers build networks with others who see their teaching as a valuable field for research, form collaborations, gather new ideas for research and make some new friends.

Collegiality permeated the conference. TERNZ was certainly not a Hell's Kitchen, or Masterchef or even a My Kitchen Rules environment. Competition did not drive us. TERNZ was more of a River Cottage celebration of wholesome ingredients and people who are passionate about creating with them; akin to the slow food movement (TERNZ first-time participant).

The conference is usually capped at around 60-70 participants but this year it attracted approximately 140, demonstrating the interest New Zealand academics have in sharing their ideas and innovations in a research environment and wanting to learn what others are doing in their teaching. This presented a challenge to CLear to organise more host groups within limited space, but fortunately this was able to be done. The end result was an overwhelmingly positive response, particularly from early-career academics, many of whom were at their first conference.

We were also fortunate to have the backing of Ako Aotearoa who generously donated towards the conference and were able to attend as well.

TERNZ is held in New Zealand every year in November. Proposed date for 2015 is **25th -27th November in Auckland** so make a note in your diary. Participants from New Zealand and beyond are welcome to come along and be stimulated and refreshed.



Left: Tramping the North West Circuit Stewart Island. Right: Green Lake Track Fiordland. Photos: Maureen Bell

HERDSA local



HERDSA branches and regional networks form a key link in the HERDSA community's chain of networking and developmental events.

HERDSA Branch Chairs are shown in the photos above. From left to right: Catherine McLoughlin (ACT), Anna Siu Fong Kwan (HK), Rebecca Sealey (QLD), Sharron King (SA), Tracy Douglas (TAS), Elizabeth Levin (VIC), Melissa Davis (WA).

ACT

Chair: Catherine McLoughlin

The branch is looking forward to a full day November workshop *Benchmarking with the Sessional Staff Standards Framework* with Australian National Teaching Fellow Dr Marina Harvey.

Contact: catherine.mcloughlin@acu.edu.au

Hong Kong

Chair: Anna Siu Fong Kwan

Follow-up from the HERDSA Hong Kong conference has been the focus for the Hong Kong branch for several months, reporting on progress of post-conference tasks and generating ideas for 2015 activities. 2014 Conference Proceedings have now been published with the assistance and support of the HERDSA Executive Committee and HERDSA Office.

Website: herdsahk.edublogs.org/
Contact: anna.kwan@outlook.com

Visiting Hong Kong?

Are you a HERDSA member working and/or visiting Hong Kong? If so, you are most welcome to join HERDSA Hong Kong activities. Dinner dialogues in particular give you the opportunity to try out some local cuisine with the friendly HERDSA Hong Kong team. Please visit the website or contact Anna for the most up to date information.

Queensland

Chair: Rebecca Sealey

Queensland branch has been active with a variety of events in conjunction with other entities including the OLT and ACEN for example: integration of curriculum and learning outcomes; work integrated learning webinars and conference; and core concepts of innovative and practical capstones. The inclusive design of technology enabled learning workshop offered an important take-home message - that while learning analytics has an emerging role in monitoring the success of student engagement with learning technologies, we must always be mindful that the chosen pedagogy is transformative, purposeful, adaptable and accessible. The 2015 conference is fast approaching and we are hoping for a strong Queensland contingent in Melbourne.

Website: www.jcu.edu.au/learnandteach/professionallearning/herdsa/index.htm
Contact: rebecca.sealey@jcu.edu.au

South Australia

Chair: Sharron King

HERDSA SA has got off to a great start this year with two seminars by Deanne Gannaway (QUT). *What's up with the Australian BA?* Deanne examined the place of BA programs in the increasingly neoliberal context of contemporary Australian higher education. Drawing on a national study that deconstructed Arts curricula of BA programs offered at all 39 Australian universities between 2007 and 2011 participants explored commonly held truths and perceptions of what constitutes an Australian Arts program and examined current trends and practices in Australian Arts programs. A curriculum design workshop followed. Questions explored include: how can a design thinking approach be utilised for higher education curriculum design? A good question. A workshop on the OLT project *Course handover tools* is planned. Contact: Sharron.King@unisa.edu.au

Tasmania

Chair: Tracy Douglas

Members of the Tasmanian branch met informally at the University of Tasmania Teaching Matters conference in December. A number of members presented at the conference in a range of areas including the role of social media in learning and teaching, developing enquiry-oriented learning approaches, student utilisation of online lectures, educating students about the avoidance of plagiarism, and peer mentoring. This year the branch hopes to hold at least two workshops to enhance Scholarship of Teaching and Learning skills of members.

Contact: T.Douglas@utas.edu.au

Victoria

Chair: Elizabeth Levin

The Victorian branch is working with the 2015 conference committee. The conference takes place from 6th till 9th July at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Contact: elevin@swin.edu.au

Western Australia

Chair: Melissa Davis

At the AGM members farewelled and thanked Catherine Moore for her work on the HERDSA WA committee over many years. Welcome to Audrey Geste from Edith Cowan University as a new representative. WA branch are well occupied with planning for the 2016 Conference to be held in Fremantle. The 2016 conference provides the opportunity for HERDSA members to plan a visit to some of the beautiful tourist destinations on the West coast.

Contact: m.davis@curtin.edu.au

SA Key Date

25th May HERDSA SA Seminar on NCSEHE funded project Exploring First in Family Students Experiences of Higher Education.



Can we learn anything from edtech journal archives? Creative innovations and AJET 1985 - 2007

Roger Atkinson

Of course the answer to this question is 'yes', though with the qualifier, 'from my perspective and the evidence perused recently'. To explain this 'qualifier', for over a year I have been meandering along with a project for the current editors of the *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* (AJET, n.d.), creating PDF versions for archival issues 1985-2007, which were published only in HTML (post-2007, PDF was already online for AJET). It was important to create PDF formatting that resembled the original printed issues, especially the pagination, thus ruling out an automated conversion. So 451 articles and editorials had to be read and reformatted. That constitutes 'the evidence perused recently'. As to 'my perspective', the reformatting was time-consuming and perhaps a trivial, even pointless exercise (if HTML is already online, why replace with PDF?). So I kept notes along the way, hoping that the positive 'can we learn anything?' question would turn up something of interest to counter the negative, 'why bother?' question.

Working backwards in the AJET sequence, 2007 to 1985, it was not until reaching the mid-nineties that I found a worthy key theme: exploring Australian and New Zealand university contributions in *creating* educational technology innovations, in contrast to their *adopting* of innovations. Very broadly, this period showed much *adopting*, but little *creating*. To illustrate that contrast, considered below are three notable cases of *creating* that I perceive as emerging from that period or soon after: Moodle, Lectoria and Mahara.

Upon reaching the late-eighties, a second worthy theme emerged: how the focus of edtech attention has changed over several decades. In the mid to late eighties it centred on *how to make*

a new technology work, progressing in the nineties into *which technology to adopt*, followed by how to *use technology to change the culture* of teaching and learning, then in our current decade characterised by how to advance the culture of teaching and learning using *an integrated suite of influences* (of which, technology is only one). Very broadly, a progression from *technocentric* to *design for learning-centric*. This topic is one for investigation in the future, along with numerous other themes and trends for AJET 1985-2007 that can be identified and are worth citing, very briefly, as potential topics for further research. These include:

- advances in pedagogy, especially transitions from 'instructivist' to 'constructivist' pedagogies;
- rapid advances in technologies for creating, storing and communicating learning resources, and for conducting learning activities, coupled with new ways to combine and integrate individual technologies into larger, more effective assemblages;
- the incredible expansion of free to the Internet learning materials and services that can be adapted for learning and teaching purposes (Google, *YouTube*, *Second Life*, *Wikipedia*, etc);
- from an educational research perspective, the maturing of investigative techniques; a proliferation and maturation of theoretical perspectives; and increased differentiation between AJET's reporting of academic research, and news or industry magazine or blog reporting of technological developments;
- the influences of central government policies on the promotion of research, and upon IT adoption and integration in higher education

(sometimes productive, sometimes unproductive);

- the contrast between 'enduring' and 'ephemeral' topics for IT in higher education;
- from the perspective of scholarly publishing, the transitions from print to online; from subscriptions for printed copies to open access, online only; the expanding of the author base from local and regional to international and globalised; the broadening of the author base from mostly men to equally men and women; and first language background of authors widening from almost entirely English to mostly a language other than English.

You could quite reasonably tick 'all of the above' as important trends evident from the archives, but to return to the first of my columnist's picks, the significance of Moodle, Lectoria and Mahara. The three are fine examples of innovative educational technologies developed in Australian and New Zealand universities, and are also instructive examples of diverging paths taken as they matured. Moodle (n.d.), a learning management system (LMS), and Mahara (n.d., a), an e-portfolio system, being primarily software innovations, went non-commercial along the path of open source software. By contrast, Lectoria, a web-based system for video recording and network distribution of lectures went commercial, being sold into the US corporate world, becoming *Echo360* (The University of Western Australia, 2007). Quite interestingly, Moodle (Dougiamas, 2000) and Lectoria (initially named *iLectures*, in Fardon & Ludewig, 2000) originated in Western Australia, whilst Mahara originated in New Zealand. All three from the regional periphery!

Moodle, Lectoria and Mahara have another important feature in common. All three can be pictured as assemblies and integrations of components that were existing technologies already familiar to many through emerging new practices. To take an illustration from Moodle, online discussion forums, also known as web-based conferencing, computer-mediated conferencing and bulletin boards, became a familiar topic in AJET from the late 1990s. To Moodle's founder, the discussion forum was a component that can "easily be added to the system in a modular way" (Dougiamas, 2000), along with others such as multiple choice questions, structured display of pages, user authentication, etc, although some software details underlying "easily be added" may be rather daunting. As Dougiamas described the software details:

The building of the first prototype of Moodle took me approximately one month of full-time work to complete, using free open-source software tools. These included: Linux (www.linux.com), for the operating system; Zope (www.zope.org), as the application server; Python (www.python.org), as a lower-level programming environment; Apache (www.apache.org), as the web server gateway; and a number of Unix shell scripts to control the system (Dougiamas, 2000).

Although Moodle originated in about 2000, it did not receive any specific mention in AJET until about 2008, though use of the generic term 'learning management system' became common from 2003, and very common from about 2006. AJET and other journals did not provide a useful tracking of Moodle's rapid growth, which had half a million users in 2008 by the time it was first mentioned in AJET:

... Moodle had established itself by 2007 as a leading and award-winning open source LMS. From 1000 registered sites in 2004, it had gone to half a million users in 2008 and over a million users in 2010, with over 50 Moodle partners. Its translation repository AMOS held over 100 languages (Moodle, 2015).

Moodle's sustained growth over a long period ('long' in an IT context) and its large number of users mark it as a *creative* innovation, very distinct from an *adoptive* innovation, though as outlined above, the flair was in creating a new system that assembled, integrated and refined existing components rather than in creating something completely new. There are quite a number of AJET articles based on adoption and utilisation of Moodle and other LMS, almost becoming commonplace after about 2010. Whilst these articles certainly are creative, innovative, and have well-earned places in the journal, their attainments are *adoptive*.

From the perspective of identifying IT industries that are spin-offs from our universities, Moodle has made only a tiny contribution to Australia's economy. Moodle's Perth headquarters and local staffing are very modest indeed (Moodle, n.d., b). However, in a broader perspective, Moodle can be seen as a substantial contributor to critically important IT services for higher education, which "... is one of the most successful new export industries in Australia" (Australian Government, 2014).

Lectoria originated at about the same time as Moodle (Fardon & Ludwig, 2000), and similarly AJET has no specific mentions of it, or its predecessor *iLectures*, its successor *Echo360*, or the generic term *web based lecture technologies*, until about 2009. However, earlier references occur in conference proceedings from about 2004, and the closely related topics of audio recording and TV broadcasting of lectures occur in AJET and other journals at earlier dates, even as early as the late 1980s. Similarly to Moodle, *iLectures*/ Lectoria/ *Echo360* could be characterised as an assembling, integrating and refining of existing components: video cameras, microphones, controlling software, servers, and communications networks.

There are few publicly available insights into the reasons why Lectoria was commercialised, in contrast to Moodle's open source, non-commercial strategy. This extract from the press release at the time (UWA, 2007) suggests that 'commercialization' was preferred over a non-commercial, open source strategy:

Lectoria exemplifies the model of an institution-backed project maturing into a technology primed for broad adoption by the education community. After considering several strategies for international commercialization, we saw one choice to give Lectoria well-deserved global exposure. ... (UWA, 2007)

Mahara is an open source e-portfolio (or eportfolio or ePortfolio) system initiated in mid-2006 with New Zealand Government funding for its development (Mahara, n.d., a). A later development than Moodle and Lectoria, Mahara has been reported in conference proceedings since about 2007 (Brown, Anderson, Simpson & Suddaby, 2007), though not cited specifically in AJET until about 2013. However, there are earlier references to e-portfolios or electronic portfolios in the literature, some developed with in-house software, indicating that Mahara is also an example of assembling, integrating and refining software components and practices that existed already.

Mahara's continued growth seems to be linked to acquiring partners (Mahara, n.d., b) who participate in Mahara's software development, or provide hosting, training and technical support services, or both. This extract from a press release (NetSpot, 2011) illustrates partnering:

NetSpot Pty Ltd ... is an eLearning technology services partner to the education sector in Australasia. NetSpot provides AARNet-based managed hosting for various eLearning Systems including Moodle for over 600,000 users. NetSpot is an official Moodle Partner in Australia, Singapore and Hong Kong, an official Echo360 hosting partner in Australia and a Mahara (ePortfolio) Partner.

.... NetSpot provides a range of eLearning services, including enterprise Moodle services, to education institutions in the region, many of whom are already using the Echo360 platform. Increasingly educational organisations are choosing to outsource the hosting of their enterprise eLearning platforms to

Interested in publishing your research?

Higher Education Research and Development Journal FREE pre-conference workshop

The HERD journal editorial team (Barbara, Mark & Tai) will be leading a pre-conference workshop at this year's conference in Melbourne titled *Critical discourse analysis and close reading of texts: Powerful methodologies for analysing HE data*. The workshop is free to conference attendees.

The workshop will explore critical discourse analysis and close reading of texts as ways to analyse and interpret qualitative data in higher education research beyond a simply descriptive mode. The workshop will include input about these approaches to data, along with some practice exercises and discussion.

The data analysis processes explored in the workshop will be useful for dealing with the challenges of making sense of qualitative data in higher education research. They will also be helpful for producing analyses/interpretations of data that are sensitive to the uncertainty and complexity characteristic of knowledge about education.

Select to attend the workshop as an add-on during the registration process. If you have already registered for the conference log back on to your registration profile as a returning delegate and select the conference.

This workshop is supported by HERDSA and is FREE for full HERDSA delegates. Details at: <http://herdsa2015.org/workshops/>

third party vendors with specialist expertise in this area. This is particularly so for some smaller organisations that don't have the necessary IT expertise to internally manage the diverse range of systems required (NetSpot, 2011).

Not surprisingly, NetSpot (n.d.) has partnerships with all three of the notable cases of *creating* discussed in this column. Not surprising that an Australian-based edtech entrepreneur aligns with the most notable Australian and New Zealand edtech innovations! Perhaps during the remainder of this decade we will see the leading edge of *creative edtech innovations*, in contrast to *adoptions*, moving away from universities and into businesses such as NetSpot and its competitors such as Pukunui (n.d.; initiated in Perth in 2000!).

Returning to the title question, 'can we learn anything from an edtech journal archive?', whilst the concluding answer is still 'yes', there is an additional and darker qualifier, 'What do we *not* learn, or learn *too slowly*, from an edtech archive?' As illustrated above, AJET's archives show quite long delays before the first specific appearance of the three innovations discussed in this column. Conference proceedings, press releases and informal Internet channels such as blogs and newsletters moved more rapidly on dissemination of creative innovations in edtech. That may become more pronounced as NetSpot and its partners and competitors continue to gain a greater share of the work in delivering IT services in higher education.

It is a breathtaking and perhaps saddening irony, that my reporting of the cases probed in this column depended quite heavily on going beyond AJET, the academic research journal, into the kind of literature that is severely discounted in the Australian Government's attempts to pursue 'research excellence', namely conference papers, press releases, newsletters and the like. So, after beginning with a question, we end with one, "How can we reform the Australian Government's attempts to pursue research excellence?"

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Promoting excellence - the power of networks

Coralie McCormack

November 2014 saw forty members of Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) state-based Promoting Excellence Networks (PENs), representing all PENs across Australia, gather at the University of New England Parramatta FutureCampus to celebrate the success of the OLT's networks initiative. PENs are charged with consolidating existing connections in the higher education sector and helping to foster new collegial and cross-institutional links to generate high-level collaborative approaches to teaching and learning issues.

Professor Alison Sheridan, University of New England (UNE) Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic), welcomed us to the Symposium by highlighting the value of membership of the NSW/ACT PEN. For example, at UNE PEN membership led to the reintroduction of teaching awards. We were then challenged by Professor Sally Kift, ALTC Senior Fellow, OLT Discipline Scholar and DVC (Academic) James Cook University in her keynote address to imagine our networks as the 'New Normal', that is, sustainable networks of practice powered by leveraging the social capital of our networks through knowledge brokering. Sally's keynote address set the scene for the lively discussion that continued across the following sessions and offered a role model for networking approaches:

Sally Kift's presentation showed how 'one person' can be the embodiment of a network approach to forging relationships... a professional model is great to see in living action (Symposium participant).

The morning concluded with an update of the key directions for the OLT in 2015 presented by Di Weddell, and Natalie Laifer from the Office for Teaching and Learning.

Our afternoon discussion took up the challenge to unpack the meaning of 'powered'. Participants suggested that the power of the PEN is derived from:

- connection that is more than knowing each other
- collective advocacy for learning and teaching
- collaboration that is more than sharing content
- capacity building within and beyond PENs
- common purpose, different processes, similar benefits
- process is as valuable as any outcomes
- practice as knowledge in action
- PENs as a dissemination strategy.

It was a very good idea to get people working together...I think some key learnings came out of the work. Particularly, strategising our future connections and sustainability was excellent and has provided the foundation for future conversations. (End of Symposium participant feedback survey, November, 2014)

At the end of the symposium participants agreed that:

1. There is high quality, scholarly and interesting work being undertaken by the PENs.
2. PENs are efficient; they use limited funding to reach many.
3. The strength of PENs is their diversity. There is no 'one size fits all' model of an effectively functioning PEN.

It was suggested that a national network of PENs and an annual PEN symposium would increase cross-PEN connections and collaborations and build communication channels between PENs and the OLT.

If you would like to find out more about PENs go to: www.olt.gov.au/state-based-networks and click on the link for your state.

To find out more about the symposium *Building success through network connections*, contact Dr Coralie McCormack (Coralie.McCormack@canberra.edu.au).

Call for Proposals - IJAD Special Issue

Beyond learning and teaching: extending the frontiers of academic development

This is a call for papers for a Special Issue on *Beyond learning and teaching: Extending the frontiers of academic development* due for publication in 2016. Specifically, we are looking for empirical studies of academic development work beyond learning and teaching. As with regular IJAD articles, we have no prescribed methodologies and invite you to find creative ways to evaluate your work and its impact.

All submitted manuscripts will go through IJAD's double-blind review process as normal once they are submitted.

Manuscripts due 31 July 2015
Anticipated publication in early 2016

Submitted papers should not have been previously published nor be under consideration for publication elsewhere. A guide for authors, Word template, and other relevant information can be found on IJAD's website: www.tandfonline.com/ijad

Information at:
<http://icedonline.net/2015/02/ijad-call-for-proposals-special-issue-2016/>

Contact:
Kathryn.Sutherland@vuw.ac.nz



New Scholars column

Do you need a mentor?

Deb Clarke

So here you are in your probationary meeting with your Head of Department or Faculty. S/he informs you that you need a mentor whose role it will be to assist you to learn the ropes and plan your career.

You are now a Mintie! Oops! Mentee. You wonder what this relationship might look like, how it might operate and what the benefits might be for you, your mentor and the university.

So what is academic mentoring?

The original Mentor comes from Greek mythology. Mentor was the name of King Odysseus' wise and trusted companion who was entrusted with the role of advising and guiding Odysseus' son, Telemachus, when Odysseus went to war (Shea, 1997).

While numerous definitions of mentoring exist in the literature, mentoring has historically involved a relationship within which a mentor (usually an experienced senior faculty member) fosters the academic growth and development of a mentee (a junior or less experienced colleague), primarily through dialogue and reflection. This mentoring process may include sharing perspectives and expertise on: teaching, tutoring, supporting students, preparation of materials, administrative roles and processes, research strategies and skills, attracting and managing contracts and consultancies, networking and introductions.

Mentoring essentially assists academic staff to navigate their career path as a result of understanding institutional policy and practice, and engaging in the institutional tasks required of an academic. Mentoring literature suggests that mentoring is important for recruitment and retention of academics, as well as their ongoing professional and

leadership development (Beech, et al., 2013; Metzger et al., 2013; Nick et al., 2012).

For academics new to their institutional role, the question of 'what makes a good mentor?' may be foremost in their mind. Best practice in academic mentoring is well researched in the literature (see for example Beech et al., 2013; Bell & Treleavan, 2011; Larose, 2013; Nick et al., 2012; Smith & Zsohar, 2007) and suggests that successful mentoring relationships are built on mutual respect, trust and professionalism. Mentors are seen as role models to their mentees (Collardey, 2012). According to Sambunjak and colleagues (2010) mentors should be established faculty members who demonstrate sincerity in their interactions with the mentee, can listen well, and offer constructive advice.

While researching the literature for this article I found what I think is a very useful set of criteria for a mentor. Mentors:

- create opportunities and open doors
- know your strengths and abilities and that they don't set you up to fail
- set an example
- want you to succeed and help you learn from your mistakes
- want you to become independent (Kappel, 2008).

So as you gaze around the corridor at potential mentors, consider these questions:

What do you want your mentor relationship to look like?

How will you negotiate this type of relationship with your mentor?

Dr Deb Clarke
Chair, New Scholars Portfolio

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HERDSA Fellows column

Reflections of a HERDSA Associate Fellow

Susan Rowland

Why do I teach the way I do?

How do I teach, and what is my most important practice?

When my students leave me, what do they take away?

What are my plans for improvement in the future?

These questions are all key to good teaching and learning practice, and the answers can help us write a HERDSA Fellowship application.

I have been thinking of applying for a HERDSA fellowship for a couple of years, but the process seemed daunting and time consuming. There are, however, plenty of reasons to be a Fellow: the opportunities for professional recognition; personal fulfilment; and the mentored, structured planning for my future were high on my list. I had been weighing up the risks and the rewards, until HERDSA 2014. The turning point? A raucous dinner in a highrise restaurant building in Hong Kong, when I got to meet the Fellows themselves.

I was caught up in dinner with the Fellows by accident, but it was meant to be. The Fellows are welcoming, warm, and witty, and I met the joyous Cristina Poyatos Matas, who kindly appointed herself as my mentor. We looked over Hong Kong Harbour and ate course after delicious course. We also tackled some things that were more on the challenging end of the culinary spectrum. I even managed half a sea cucumber! After spending the evening with this lovely group of people I was hooked, and I signed up as an Associate Fellow using the form on the HERDSA website.

The Associate Fellow application is short. There are only three questions:

1: Why are you interested in becoming an Associate Fellow and starting the process of working towards a HERDSA Fellowship?

2: What makes you think you are suitable to be an Associate Fellow?

3: What strategies will help you to be successful in submitting your Fellowship application inside the two-year period?

I wasn't really sure what to write, apart from the obvious answer to question one. Cristina encouraged me to include my teaching awards and published scholarship of teaching and learning in my response to question two. Since I was working on a promotion application and a national-level teaching award application, I referred to these in my response to question three. As per the guidelines, my entire application fitted on one page.

My application to be a HERDSA Associate Fellow was approved by the committee, and I am currently writing my Fellowship application. It's about the length of a serious grant application, with 5000 words of reflective discussion, two pages of references, ten pages of supporting evidence, and an eight page curriculum vitae.

HERDSA Fellowship applicants are required to address a set of criteria for the award.

- The applicant's educational practice demonstrates a concern for learning.
- The applicant's assessment encourages and supports learning.
- The needs of different participants are recognised and supported by the applicant's practice.
- The applicant improves educational practice by recognising and building on their wider departmental, institutional and/or community context for learning.
- The applicant's curricula and innovations are planned and introduced to enhance learning.
- The applicant's critical reflection to improve educational practice takes place in the light of evidence

obtained from different types of evaluation.

- The applicant uses research and scholarship to enhance participants' learning.

For some of these items I will be able to build an evidenced and scholarly argument using my previous grant applications, annual review documents, and papers that are either published or in draft form. This will simplify my writing process, but I am not under the illusion that the Fellowship application will be quick or easy to complete.

For each criterion applicants need to describe a specific instance of their teaching practice and the resultant outcomes; reflect on their work and describe their own learning process; and use the benefit of hindsight to indicate how their practice can improve. All of these aspects of the application must be linked back to the teaching and learning literature. This is no small task.

I know that engaging in this level of reflection will force me to take 'time-out' to work on approaches and strategies I can use to improve as a teacher *and* as a learner. I know my mentor Cristina will be a valuable critical friend, both because she already holds a HERDSA Fellowship and because she works in a different field to mine. This will bring fresh disciplinary eyes to the 'science' bent of my work. I have faith in the process and I'm looking forward to the future when I (hope to) join the HERDSA Fellows as a legitimate member of the group.

But first, I have to finish writing!

Susan Rowland is a Teaching Focused Associate Professor in the School of Chemistry and Molecular Biosciences at the University of Queensland. In 2014 she was awarded the Australian Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Beckman Coulter Award and an OLT Australian Award for University Teaching Excellence.

Real students, real strategies, real success: The Connections for Learning Program story

Rena Frohman, Robyn Nash, Joanne Ramsbotham, and Pam Lemcke

The workshops empowered me to be able to speak up to fight for results, to understand the assessment criteria. It feels so good to try so hard and get results. It makes me think outside the box...it's not just about language skills BUT developing cultural knowledge of learning and teaching relationships (Undergraduate student, 2012).

Cultural, academic and social challenges can present significant obstacles to international and domestic students from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds enrolled in health courses, especially those requiring work integrated learning placements. Similar to other universities, Queensland University of Technology (QUT) offers a variety of services to help students transition into life at university, but, through anecdotal evidence from students, staff and industry partners, and a 2009 needs analysis survey, the Connections for Learning Program (CLP) team realised that more was needed. At the same time the size and diversity of our student body was increasing significantly. Over the period 2005-2010, for example, there was a 106% increase in the proportion of Health students speaking a language other than English at home and a 177% increase in international enrolments.

Since 2010, the CLP has provided a faculty-wide, co-curricular program to more than 10,000 students and 100 staff. Although over time the strategies have evolved to meet ever-changing needs, the program design has always focused on four goals: (1) encouraging student aspirations and building their capacity for university study; (2) increasing students' confidence and preparedness for workplace learning; (3) building staff confidence and capabilities in designing learning for CALD students, and (4) promoting student engagement with university and health communities. Underpinned by an action research framework and principles of intercultural education, the CLP provides a cohesive suite of programs that are operationalised through four key strategies.

Academic Literacy

For undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students we run Academic Writing and Assessment Strategy workshops, Postgraduate Writing Communities, and an 'At Risk' individual consultation support program. These health-contextualised workshops assist CALD students with skills such as interpreting assessment questions, synthesising evidenced-based literature and reflecting critically on learning. Over five years, evaluations of these strategies indicate that students who participate in the Assessment Strategies co-curricular workshops perform better on their written assessments than students who do not attend. For example, over the period 2011-2012, international students attending the CLP workshops received 61% (on average) for a written assessment task in a 3rd year Bachelor of Nursing unit. This result exceeded that of the *non*-CLP attenders (54.3%) and the unit cohort as whole (56.8%). Student feedback supports the results and indicates that we are hitting the mark in the areas of developing academic writing skills and building confidence in undertaking assessment tasks.

Workplace Integration

This workshop program assists students to better understand communication and cultural expectations within healthcare contexts and develop learning strategies for the workplace. These workshops provide authentic, scenario-based activities that are designed to facilitate the sharing of real world experiences among participants and key skills practice in a 'fun' and safe environment. A key element is the Peer/Peer role-play activities that participants undertake with student volunteers who have been 'out on prac' and are willing to share their experiences. Over five years, approximately 87% of surveyed participants strongly agree that the workshops help them develop useful skills for developing relationships with patients.

Staff Development

From the early needs analysis and staff forums we recognised that our focus needed to include staff development. Initially, workshops were provided for staff. However, our experience shows that consultations with individual staff and/or teaching teams regarding curriculum design and implementation is more effective for building staff capability and confidence for working with CALD students. We now complement these consultations with reflective forums focusing on pedagogies to better meet CALD students' needs.

I cannot overstate the importance of the CLP workshops. The program works very closely with teaching staff to develop excellent resources for students. It has also been extremely useful for reflecting on and developing unit assessment items (Unit coordinator, 2012).

Community Outreach

The healthcare volunteer program provides students with a unique opportunity to engage with the local community and enhance their socio-cultural transitions into the health workplace. We now have eight industry partners located across Brisbane and, since 2011, more than 180 students have participated in this initiative. For students, the benefits of this initiative include easing social isolation, learning about local culture and developing communication with people from diverse socio-cultural and demographic backgrounds:

It was my first time in a hospital and it taught me so much. The first few weeks I had no idea what the staff were saying to patients but a few months later I know how to talk to patients. The experience has really increased my confidence' (CLP student volunteer, 2013).

At the end of 2014, we initiated a five-year review to evaluate the effectiveness of the CLP program drawing data from: student surveys, unit assessment results, key stakeholder interviews (academic and industry-based staff), interviews and focus groups with students engaged in CLP activities and an external review by an expert in academic language and learning.

At this point results indicate that participating students report: increased confidence in academic language and learning, better communication skills which are applied to workplace integrated learning, a deeper sense of belonging to QUT and/or local communities, and a positive perception of their learning experiences. Participating staff report feeling that as a result of their engagement with the CLP team they are more aware of students' needs, more competent in designing curricula and have changed their pedagogical practices. They have also observed CALD students' increased engagement in the learning process.

From working with the CLP team and taking that support back to my facilitators we've changed the way we teach...this program must continue. It's crucial to students' ability to succeed. I think that this is a benchmark for the university (Unit Coordinator, 2014).

In conclusion, we believe that the targeted support provided by the CLP is having a positive and sustained impact on academic learning outcomes, improving students' confidence and preparedness for workplace learning, and promoting their broader engagement with health communities. We acknowledge that the strong collaborations between all members of the CLP team and staff (academic and industry-based) are a significant factor in the evolution of the program and its continued success. Perhaps more importantly, through its unique four-pronged strategy and deliberative focus on creating safe, active learning environments, the CLP provides students with a means to experience the joy of learning and is a strong catalyst for facilitating successful learning experiences.

For more information contact:
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OLT column

About the Office for Learning and Teaching



The Australian Government's Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) was established in 2011 to promote and support change in higher education institutions for the enhancement of learning and teaching. OLT responsibilities include:

- providing grants to academics and professional staff to explore, develop and implement innovations in learning and teaching and to develop leadership capabilities
- commissioning work on issues of strategic significance to the higher education sector to inform policy development and practice in relation to learning and teaching
- managing a suite of awards to celebrate, recognise and value teaching excellence and programs that enhance student learning
- funding fellowships and secondments for leading educators to address significant national educational issues
- disseminating resources on innovations in learning and teaching
- supporting the development of effective mechanisms for the embedding of good practice in learning and teaching in Australian higher education
- encouraging collaboration and sharing of good practice for improved student learning outcomes and
- facilitating networking and professional development opportunities for academics and professional staff.

Important Dates

Applications for a number of OLT grants programmes and award nominations will close soon:

- **Seed Grants, closing date 22 June 2015.**
Seed Grants of up to \$40,000 provide an opportunity to test and evaluate an original idea.
- **Extension Grants, closing date 31 August 2015.**
Extension Grants support the continued dissemination and embedding of completed learning and teaching projects funded by the OLT or its predecessor bodies. Funding amounts determined on a case-by-case basis.
- **OLT Award nominations, opening on 29 May 2015 and closing on 2 July 2015.**
- Awards for *Programmes that Enhance Learning* and Awards for *Teaching Excellence*.

Intending applicants and nominees should, in the first instance, discuss their intention with the relevant OLT Institutional Contact Officer (ICO) – a list of ICOs can be found on the OLT website.

For further information on the OLT and its programmes please refer to the OLT website at: www.olt.gov.au



News from Ako Aotearoa

What makes a good funding proposal?

Peter Coolbear, National Director of Ako Aotearoa, talks about the 2015 national projects chosen by the Ako Aotearoa National Project Fund selection panel and explains why they were chosen.

Ako Aotearoa is pleased to announce three new projects from our contestable National Project Funding Round, each of which will commence this year.

| Project leader and collaborators | Project title and brief outline |
|---|--|
| Associate Professor Leonie Pihama Director, Te Kotahi Research Institute University of Waikato. <i>Collaborating organisations:</i> UoW, Waikato-Tainui College for Research and Development, UoA and Ngā Pae o Te Māramatanga. | He Tātua o Kahukura This collaborative project is designed to develop ways of better supporting Māori PhD students through success in their studies to effective commencement of their careers. |
| Associate Professor Cathy Gunn Deputy Director of CLeaR, The University of Auckland. <i>Collaborating organisations:</i> UoA, University of Otago, Massey University and Open Polytechnic. | Building an evidence-base for teaching and learning design using learning analytics data This multi-institutional project is designed to develop ways to translate learning analytics data into useful information for tertiary teachers, learning designers and students. |
| Dr Barbara Kensington-Miller Head of Research, CLeaR, The University of Auckland. <i>Collaborating organisations:</i> UoA and Victoria University of Wellington. Industry collaborators are also included in the project's design. | Making the invisible visible: illuminating undergraduate learning outcomes beyond content and skills This multi-disciplinary project plans to identify educational outcomes that enhance student attributes and capabilities beyond those normally identified on academic transcripts and develop tools to observe, analyse and report them. |

This was a highly competitive process. There were originally 11 expressions of interest in this round with a total value of \$3.9m. Why were these three successful?

The basic criteria are the usual ones: that proposals are well thought through (projects are well designed, risks are anticipated and mitigation strategies in

place); that the teams clearly have the expertise to carry out the work and that the project is clearly beyond business as usual quality enhancement. But that only gets a proposal off the starting blocks. What made these three projects stand out over and above some other very strong contenders? First and foremost, Ako Aotearoa's funding is change funding. This means

projects must be designed to improve the way things are done in our tertiary education system for the benefit of learners. We are excited about these three projects because they all have the potential to do just that. Ultimately they are all solutions focussed. Each has a significant research component, but each clearly focusses on evidence-based change. The fact that each is co-

funded by the host institutions further signals a commitment to effecting and maintaining changes resulting from the work.

Secondly, we are looking for projects that are clearly value for money in terms of potential impact versus \$ spent. This is a nuanced judgement call. At one level it is about looking in some detail at project budgets and evaluating the proposed inputs versus the dollars to be spent – and we have good experience of what components of similar work might cost if commissioned through a commercial tender process! This however, is very much a threshold of acceptability – the key criteria are based on judgements about potential outcomes: firstly the likelihood of teams achieving the proposed outputs and then the impact those outputs are likely to have on practice and, most importantly, on learners themselves. Our assessment of impact has at least two dimensions: the likely breadth of impact and the extent of change proposed. Two project teams, led by Leonie Pihama and Cathy Gunn are, in the Aotearoa, New Zealand context, very much breaking new ground.

We have reached a stage in New Zealand where there is a general consensus that we have a now critical mass of Māori gaining PhDs. Clearly there are aspirations for many more, but at the same time it is no longer unusual. The pressure points are about continuing to support Māori PhD students to complete successfully within reasonable time-frames and (the ground-breaking bit) then support them to make effective use of their achievements as they build their careers both in and outside of academia. Leonie's project will support ways of doing this.

Similarly, there has been considerable discussion over the past few years in New Zealand about the potential of learning analytics, but Cathy's project is, as far as we are aware, the first major use-focused project in this space. What appealed to the panel really strongly was that the project is focussing on teaching and learning, not on the technology.

The third project, led by Barbara Kensington-Miller explicitly builds on existing work being undertaken in New Zealand on graduate attributes

and outcomes. It will resonate too with a significant body of work being undertaken in Australia and the UK. What appealed to us in particular about this project was the pragmatic aim to provide tools to measure how students are developing those capabilities during their programme of study. The fact that the project was ambitiously multi-disciplinary also appealed very strongly. This project, in particular, has the potential to drive significant curriculum and pedagogical change within our undergraduate education system.

Each of these projects has a current topicality within our tertiary education system here, but that's not necessarily why the panel chose them. We are, at the moment, very open about topic areas. What excited the panel about each of these three projects was the potential leverage the work might offer in terms of improving our tertiary education system. Each project is framed both around identified need and opportunity. We, and their co-funders, are absolutely convinced they are investments worth making.



Workshop participants at the 2014 Tertiary Education Research in New Zealand (TERNZ) Conference.

'From little things, big things grow'

Opening access to university and future work for regional students through a transformative preparatory program

Jenny McGuire, Suzi Hellmundt, Meredith Kayess and Janet Taylor



Meredith Kayess, Jenny McGuire, Bronwen Graydon and Suzi Hellmundt representing the PSP team at the OLT Citation presentation in Brisbane on 29th September 2014.

I was working part-time as a cleaner and didn't have much hope of a career because of my low HSC grade. A friend told me about the Preparing for Success Program (PSP) at Southern Cross University. In one and a half years I completed the PSP, an Associate Degree of Paralegal Studies and am now enrolled in Bachelor of Laws (Jackson, PSP graduate).

Southern Cross University (SCU), through its Preparing for Success at SCU Program (PSP), reaches out to those in its regional community who have previously been unable to access a university education. The program equips students with key skills, understandings and knowledge to start university with the confidence and resilience to successfully meet the challenges of university study. The PSP at SCU started in 2006 with 136 students on the Lismore campus. Over the eight years since, over 2000 students have availed themselves of this pathway to university. Like Jackson above, many have had their lives transformed.

Slowly over its eight years of operation, the program has reached out to students on all campuses (Lismore, Gold Coast, Coffs Harbour) as well as those studying by distance education and it is offered in every study session. The

distance education offering has proven a boon to our regional students, many of whom are from low socio economic backgrounds and would have long distances to travel if they had to attend on-campus. In fact, the program has exceeded its initial vision with students from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences and from different equity groups now successfully accessing SCU.

One particular equity group, Indigenous students, is engaging more with the PSP and, benefitting from the transformational outcomes that the program can provide. Jerrad explains:

I started the PSP in Session 1 of 2014. It has been one of the best experiences I have had so far with education. I finished my Year 12 and had a bit of a break for a couple of years and I've been out bush working for the last two years and this gave me the opportunity to further my education and to enter university. ... I am glad that I have finished it and I have now started my Bachelor of Indigenous Trauma and Healing (Jerrad, 2014 PSP graduate).

In 2014 Indigenous students joined together to create an enticing video clip extolling the benefits of the PSP to their potential Indigenous peers.

The screenshot from the video shows two Indigenous students working on an assignment at SCU's Indigenous Australian Student Services centre. As the PSP program grew, it was clear that the initial curriculum did not meet all students' needs for tertiary study. An external curriculum review engaged students and staff from across the University and resulted in major change. The program is now composed of three core units: *Managing Your Study*; *Communicating at University*; and *Applying Quantitative Concepts*. Students also choose one Science, Business or Arts-based elective unit. Assessment was also reviewed and modified. In 2011, assessment tasks across the program were mapped, and further assistance with assessment was provided by including short video clips on the learning sites to give students a better idea about the requirements and expectations of the tasks. The combination of skills learnt in each unit means that students are well prepared for their future studies, independent of their prior educational background.

In the initial days of the program, some members of academic staff were sceptical about the capacity of the program to prepare students as effectively as six years of high school study. Concerns were raised about the lowering of entry standards. Contrary to these early beliefs, the program has exceeded all expectations. Our data shows students who complete the program have the same or a better chance of success in university study than students from traditional pathways. Academic staff now highly praise the program and its graduates. Dr Chris Brook, Lecturer in Midwifery, a course that has high entry requirements but popular among PSP students, writes:

I'm very impressed with the skills of the midwifery students who have completed the PSP program – they have had a tremendous academic, functional and emotional advantage in starting their midwifery degree – the combination of

their organisational and academic skills and their self-confidence has enabled them to approach their studies this year with confidence and skill.

In 2012, the PSP was transferred from the Academic Skills Development Unit to the newly formed SCU College along with two other access programs. As part of the SCU College, six new learning spaces across the Northern Rivers region of NSW were opened to support distance education students. PSP students, who cannot attend orientation sessions at any of SCU's three main campuses, attend orientation sessions at these learning centres. The orientation gives students the opportunity to meet other students to share experiences and goals and to find 'study buddies'. The centres also provide a space for students to study throughout the study period either in small groups or individually where they have access to computers and a free hotline to the College and University. The success of these centres is evident in the success of the students who use them. A further five regional Learning Spaces are planned and will provide distance PSP students with spaces to connect and study close to home.

The PSP has made an outstanding contribution to students' learning by opening access to university and thence employment for regional and other diverse groups of students. Feedback from students who successfully complete the PSP indicates that they transition easily and successfully to

university studies, with many securing fulfilling work, making substantial contributions to their communities. One of the first students to complete the PSP and move to undergraduate studies at SCU, Dean, describes his experience as follows:

With the initial help of the Preparing for Success course I finished the Clinical Sciences – Osteopathy course in 5 years and graduated as part of the first cohort of osteopaths. I now have a growing osteopathic practice and also work as a clinical supervisor at the university clinic. This gives me a chance to give back. And it all started with enrolling in the Preparing for Success course (Dean, PSP graduate).

We are proud of the success of the program which has grown from very small beginnings to a strong pathway for regional students into higher education. At a time when higher education form, function and standards are being questioned across Australia, enabling programs such as the PSP provide a pathway to success for those people who might otherwise not have the opportunity to engage in university study.

In 2014 the Office for Learning and Teaching awarded the *Preparing for Success* team a national citation for their outstanding contribution to student learning. Truly 'from little things big things grow'.

Call for papers

Higher Education Research & Development

Call for papers for the 2016 Special Issue

New frontiers: Exploring the space/s of Higher Education

Guest Editor: Dr Robyn Barnacle, RMIT (Australia)

Space and spatiality are increasingly on the agenda for higher education. A belief in the capacity of higher education to drive and transform economic and social development is widely held and has led to flows of students, academics, and knowledge around the globe.

This special issue of HERD welcomes research articles, scholarly essays and other more innovative kinds of academic writing that address considerations of space to offer insights into contemporary higher education. Themes and topics of interest could include explorations of the:

- spaces and places of research and scholarship, teaching and learning, and/or academic citizenship
- global, regional, local and/or virtual spaces of higher education
- lived, material and technologized spaces of working in higher education
- physical, social and/or imaginative spaces in higher education.

Manuscript submission due: 31 May 2015

For further information or queries regarding this Special Issue, please contact:

Dr Robyn Barnacle
robyn.barnacle@rmit.edu.au



PSP students, Glenda Rose and Sharleen Anderson, studying at SCU's Indigenous Australian Student Services centre.

Join the conversation

Take some time at HERDSA 2015 to talk about learning and teaching (TATAL)

TATAL workshops at HERDSA

2015 offer an opportunity to reflect on the values and beliefs that underlie your approach to learning and teaching and to develop them into a teaching philosophy. Participants can continue the TATAL experience after the conference face-to-face and/or through Skype as they develop a teaching portfolio.

TATAL makes us think about how we teach and also about how we align our teaching with the scholarship of teaching...it makes me aware of how research can underpin and strengthen my teaching. And it's fun. (2008 TATAL participant).

HERDSA TATAL Melbourne will start with a full day pre-conference workshop and finish with a breakfast session on the first day of the conference.

Pre-conference workshop
(9.30am – 4:00pm)

- Facilitators and participants will establish a safe collaborative environment in which to investigate the challenges and successes of teaching and learning.
- Participants will develop a teaching philosophy statement with the support of the facilitators.

Breakfast session, conference day 1
(7:45am – 8:45am)

- Facilitators and participants will provide collaborative feedback on draft philosophy statements.

- Participants will arrange dates for future meetings.

Following the conference

participants may choose to collaborate in preparing teaching portfolios. Melbourne participants may choose to meet face to face while delegates from geographically diverse regions may meet virtually.

TATALs formed in 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 continue to meet.

So, why would you get involved in a TATAL group? I would recommend it to academics who are at the early, mid or later stages of their careers. There are plenty of opportunities to mentor and be mentored, to facilitate and be facilitated, to learn and to teach. The mixture of informality and formality keeps our group on an even keel and ensures we mix our interest in each other with our interest in a variety of issues related to good learning and teaching in the higher education sector (2011 HERDSA TATAL participant).

Facilitators are members of existing TATALs: Stuart Schonell, University of Tasmania; Geoff Treloar, Australian College of Theology, Maria Northcote, Avondale College; Coralie McCormack, University of Canberra; John Gilchrist, Australian Catholic University.

TATALS are a NO COST experience.

For more information contact:
stuart.schonell@utas.edu.au or
go to www.herdsa2015.org/tatal-workshop

Want to read something really useful?

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

Academic Writing Retreats: A Facilitators Guide - Barbara Grant

Advising PhD Candidates - Peggy Nightingale

Conducting Tutorials, 2nd Edition - Jacqueline Lublin and Kathryn Sutherland

Designing and using e-assessments 2nd Edition - Geoffrey Crisp

Developing Students' Critical Thinking in the Higher Education Class - Iris Vardi

Effective Feedback for Student Learning in Higher Education - Iris Vardi

Improving Teaching and Learning in Laboratories - Elizabeth Hazel and Caroline Baillie

Introducing Students to the Culture of Enquiry in an Arts Degree - Kate Chanock

Leading Academic Networks - Shelda Debowski

Lecturing for Better Learning - Robert Cannon and Christopher Knapper

Managing Student Teams - Donella Caspersz, Judy Skene and Madeline Wu

Organising Academic Conferences - A. C. Lynn Zelmer

Peer Observation Partnerships in Higher Education - Maureen Bell

Reciprocal Peer Coaching - Richard K. Ladyshevsky

Student Centered Teaching: the development and use of conceptual frameworks - Kym Fraser

Teaching students who have English as an additional language: A handbook for academic staff in higher education - Katie Dunworth and Carmela Briguglio

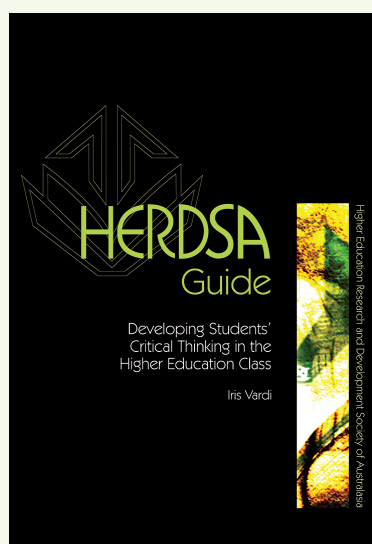
The Research Matrix: An Approach to Supervision of Higher Degree Research - Robyn Smyth and T. W. Maxwell

Transnational Teaching and Learning - Anne Melano, Maureen Bell and Ruth Walker

Up the Publication Road - D. Royce Sadler

Using Stories in Teaching - Frances Miley, Amy Griffin, Barbara Cram, Robert Kennelly, Coralie McCormack and Andrew Read

Work Integrated Learning in the Curriculum - Edited by Sonia Ferns



NEW HERDSA GUIDE

Developing Students' Critical Thinking in the Higher Education Class

Iris Vardi

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.



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- Exploiting emerging technologies to enable employability
- Assessing, evidencing and evaluating graduate capabilities
- Navigating uncertainty and complexity

Submission deadline November 5th 2014

www.hersa2015.org visit our website to register and be kept informed



ICED Continental Symposium on
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Presidents and Educational leaders from 24 countries around the world will participate in an outstanding collaboration of workshops, panels and open conversations. This continental symposium will dive into a range of evidence-based practices across disciplines and professional practice and push the boundaries of development by sharing very diverse perspectives. Engage with these leaders as they unpack and reveal national approaches that generate evidence worth sharing in a variety of contexts.

<http://icedonline.net> Visit the website for more details.