



Academic Life Today

Special Issue No. 1

Research

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From the

Editor

Academic life today is undergoing significant changes and so it seemed useful to run a series of issues, which focused on different aspects of academic life, as a contribution to understanding and responding to these changes. Each issue will share experiences of academics and contribute commentary to the different topics. In no sense do we claim to present a comprehensive look at the topics, but rather a series of snapshots similar to those we present as a report on the annual HERDSA conference (this year run with ASET) and the First Year Experience course.

We begin with an overview looking at ways of managing academic life today by Royce Sadler, recently appointed to be Director of the Griffith University Institute of Higher Education. We chose to focus on three aspects of academic life, namely, research, administration, and professional service. Where then is teaching? Teaching always features strongly in every issue of HERDSA News and will not be forgotten but it

seemed appropriate to focus on other aspects of academic life for a major part of the issue.

The first issue is devoted to research, which is very topical as the funding details slowly emerge and universities make plans to adapt to the changing demands.

Angela Brew challenges us to reclaim the research agenda before it becomes totally economically driven, a theme that is echoed in the experiences of others. I am hoping this article will be widely read because the message is one that needs to be heard and heeded.

I would appreciate hearing stories of academics' experiences of administration and contributions to the community for the future issues so please contact me.

I hope the three issues on academic life today will be encouraging and useful as we come to terms with the radical changes that are occurring.

Roger Landbeck

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Managing Academic Life Today

D. Royce Sadler

In this article, I outline in broad terms some of the factors that have had an impact on Australasian higher education over the past two decades. These include continuity in the historical obligations of universities to teach students, increased demands for engagement in research, academic obligations to the community, and changes to the higher education sector generally. Retaining sanity and getting job satisfaction in higher education involves balancing the competing demands within the broader context, and managing them so far as possible for oneself. I conclude by reiterating some of the positive core aspects of academic life and the challenges that arise in trying to bring individual and group aspirations to fruition.

“Retaining sanity and getting job satisfaction in higher education involves balancing the competing demands within the broader context, and managing them so far as possible for oneself.”

Teaching

Teaching has always been a function of universities and colleges of higher education. Teaching has been their primary mission. The teacher acts as an important mediator between a body of content and skills on the one hand and students on the other. Teachers are not truly necessary for learning, of course, because significant forms of learning have always gone on, and still go on, in the absence of any teacher. Apart from personal discovery, this learning may draw on multiple sources of information

including other people, magazines and newspapers, books, television, recorded media, and now the internet. All of this learning is essentially informal. It is structured largely by the learner, and only to the extent that the learner needs it to be.

“Learning how to operate under the new regime is both demanding and exciting.”

In all systems of formalized education, however, the teacher is expected to be responsible, and to take up that responsibility, for the learning of others. This is common knowledge but is worth mentioning for two reasons. First, as universities fulfil their educative function, attention has been shifting steadily from a focus on good *teaching* in the sense of ‘good’ presentation and management of subject content towards good *learning*, that is learning that is significant, up-to-date, and enduring in both value and depth. This shift allows the quality of teaching to be judged by the quality of learning, at least in principle. Second, because university teachers are often key players in curriculum and instructional decision making, they are obliged to be expert in making those judgments and to be sensitive to the implications of making poor ones.

The opportunities that digital technologies are currently making affordable, effective and widely available are precipitating a revolution in how academics think about the curriculum, the instructional process and their role as teachers. Few of the old thought and behavior patterns remain valid. Learning how to operate under the new regime is both demanding and exciting. Furthermore the new ways are here to stay, notwithstanding the struggles that academics have in coming to terms with them.

Research

Without going into the history of how research came to form such an important part of life in higher education, it is now a key function that is soundly endorsed by governments and society. Advances in knowledge are seen as keys to national progress. A great deal of the knowledge available to and drawn upon in modern societies has been generated within universities.

Major changes have occurred in Australasia and other parts of the world through the transfer, incorporation or metamorphosis of higher education colleges into universities. This has thrust on to many academics an agenda that they initially felt unfamiliar with, and that still makes them feel uncomfortable. Many career opportunities were dashed in the change from the old to the new order, while others were opened up. Some people who were promoted just before the transition found themselves embarrassed in their new position because of the lack of a doctorate or masters degree. Senior managers also had quite high expectations about what these academics should be able to do and their ability to provide leadership in an activity that was relatively new to them and for which they had little orientation and were not adequately prepared. On the other hand, former colleagues who were not promoted before the changeover and who found their career aspirations abruptly curtailed often felt betrayed.

“Grant applications that fall into approved categories are important; success is even more important.”

Quite apart from the impact on individuals whose institutions were transformed, the focus on research has intensified. More resources have been directed to research inputs, with a greater expectation of significant research outputs. Grant applications that fall into approved categories are important;



success is even more important. Publications have become key indicators of research achievement, with the procedures for official verification of what is to count as a legitimate publication and for apportioning the rewards becoming almost a sub-industry of its own.

“The focus is on ensuring that the system is as resistant as possible to gross manipulation.”

Success in grantgetting and research publications has had both positive and negative effects. League tables that facilitate comparisons enhance or weaken institutional reputations. These reputations carry over into student recruitment, where concerted efforts are made to attract the brightest students to universities with the highest research profiles.

The most immediate benefit of getting a significant grant is, of course, that it enables the research to be carried out, but it produces other spin-offs as well. For example, it often attracts complementary funds for research infrastructure, and in some cases produces results that are patentable and commercially lucrative. In addition, external funding makes it easier to develop research teams that attract national and international recognition, and these in turn produce even more output of high quality.

The pressure to produce publications can, however, evolve into a pressure to overproduce. Turning out peer reviewed journal articles and monographs can be developed into an efficient production line if it is managed to that end. Productivity can then overtake scholarly importance as the primary aim, leading to greater numbers of shorter articles. The enterprise moves forward and accelerates as reputations are built and promotions and influence follow. Once the apparent validity of the procedures are accepted and incorporated into policies that have high material and status implications, it becomes difficult to recommit the basic principles to review or to reset the parameters. The focus is on ensuring that the system is as resistant as possible to gross manipulation.

Professional and community service

Universities are now more overtly aware of their responsibilities for professional and community service outside the institution. The idea of public scholarship (or scholarly commentary) has staged a comeback recently, partly for political and practical reasons and partly because of a felt obligation towards the community that, directly or through government, largely pays for higher education. The promotion of equity and social justice inside the academy results in changes not only to policies and practices but also to the ways people think about social and personal issues, and hence their ability to play a significant role outside the academy. Despite the debate as to whether academics should restrict their public utterances to their own scholarly field, there is a growing interest in what has been called the ‘public intellectual’, that is, the academic who is able to offer informed critical comment about important social, scientific, ethical and environmental issues.

“The impact on academic standards remains largely undocumented.”

Complementary to this is the university responsibility to contribute to the ongoing professional development of practising professionals. This applies particularly in fields where knowledge is changing rapidly or where high levels of professional accountability are expected for competence, quality of service and ethical integrity.

The broader context

Funding systems for higher education are undergoing rapid change. On the one hand, governments by and large are less inclined to increase funding levels in absolute terms. At the same time they push for increases in the participation rate and for greater throughputs and graduation rates. The impact on academic standards remains largely undocumented.

As public funding for universities falls, institutions naturally seek other sources, including fees. The user pays principle applies, with the proportion contributed by the beneficiary increasing steadily. Many of the institutions that

have emerged since the mid-60s possess little by way of endowments, large-scale investments or reserves. This limits their ability to make strategic moves that could position them strongly for the future. Such positioning will become even more important with increased globalization, rapid changes in technology and higher levels of interactivity.

“However major institutional change, whatever the rationale, is often detrimental to personal and scholarly connections between academics so that collegiality frequently suffers, at least initially.”

Only a few years ago, the talk was of a looming acute shortage of academics by the year 2000. That did not eventuate for a number of reasons. These include some slowing down in the rate of growth of the higher education sector, the transference of university teachers from elsewhere in the professional workforce (as also happened with the rapid growth in participation rates during 1965-1980) and changes in employment policies.

At the same time, access to promotion on merit is still widely accepted as the desirable norm, despite capping of the number of promotions available each year in many universities and what appear to many academics to be rising thresholds for moving from one rank to the next. The drive to make institutional dollars go further has led to calls for greater efficiency and effectiveness. In some cases, this has led to wholesale restructuring of institutions and campuses, resulting in turbulence and tensions at all levels. Curiously enough, a restructuring in one institution may proceed in exactly the opposite direction from that in another, although both are believed to promise solutions to the same basic problems. However major institutional change, whatever the rationale, is often detrimental to personal and scholarly connections between academics so that collegiality frequently suffers, at least initially.



Balancing the demands

It is patently obvious that within the context of academic life, massive changes have taken place in the last 10 years, and more massive changes are just around the corner. These will result not only in changed emphases and priorities among existing responsibilities but also entirely new demands that cause academics and institutions to constantly re-assess what they do, whether they can do it more effectively, and the nature of higher education itself.

In many ways, changes to the conceptualization of either a complete enterprise (such as a university) or of activities and elements within it (including something as fundamental as what it means to teach) are more complex and taxing to cope with than changes in material conditions. They mean discarding one set of beliefs and orientations and adopting new ones. Specifically, managing academic life today involves managing performance, productivity, priorities, time, career and transitions. Many academics are not skilled in orchestrating these aspects of

are few calls for intervention from other directions. However whenever a profession appears to be losing this capability, external agencies stand ready to help things along. This is the origin of many government regulations in all fields. The same principle applies among academics. To the extent that academics as individuals demonstrate the ability to

“To manage academic life effectively involves a small number of basic commitments.”

manage their own priorities and deliver on external expectations at the same time, management by others, including a Head of Department, only needs to be light.

Academics mostly do not take kindly to administrative procedures that are inefficient and get in their way as they attempt to achieve their primary goals. But academic life, despite all the changes, retains some enduring characteristics and has a lot going for it. Among the big pluses of academic life is the degree of self-determination and freedom that is possible, much more than in many other forms of employment. In terms of actual academic work, faculty members typically report receiving great satisfaction from:

- Helping students learn, watching them grow and develop intellectually and professionally;
- Being at the cutting edge of a knowledge field;
- Researching and publishing; and
- Participating in the development and operation of policies and procedures, and collegiate governance generally.

Maintaining a clear perspective on what higher education is essentially about is a key to managing intelligently and not being caught up in unprofitable activities. The focus for academics is surely to facilitate the core business of a university. Real academic work consists of two primary elements. The first is to teach in

such a way that students' knowledge and skill bases are extended, their sensitivity to historical and contemporary issues is heightened, and students move further towards becoming independent, intrinsically motivated and self-monitoring learners. The second is to extend the publicly accessible stock of knowledge through empirical, theoretical and conceptual research, scholarship and publication. Everything else, including administration, entrepreneurship, leadership in the profession, consultancies, and service (whether to the university, to departments or to our professions) must be subservient to these two.

To manage academic life effectively involves a small number of basic commitments. It involves increasing one's awareness of what is involved in being an academic — it is not a lifestyle for everyone. It involves developing insight into how the system works and how to make it work for oneself and colleagues. It involves knowing how to balance and capitalize on previous experience and current research and teaching activities. Finally, it involves learning how to position oneself to make the most of future opportunities as they arise while acting with a supportive and positive ethic towards colleagues and without diminishing their rights and legitimate expectations.

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“Maintaining a clear perspective on what higher education is essentially about is a key to managing intelligently and not being caught up in unprofitable activities.”

their lives to maximize job satisfaction and personal growth or advancement. That is probably the major challenge facing individual academics today.

Historically, whenever a trade or profession has shown itself capable of managing its own affairs to the good of the profession, its clients, the immediate community and the society at large, there



Reclaiming the Research Agenda

Angela Brew

In Greek mythology, Sisyphus was destined forever to roll a huge boulder up a mountain. When he reaches the top, the boulder rolls down to the bottom of the mountain and he has to begin all over again. The shortage of research funding, the highly competitive nature of research grants and research assessment demanding constant publication all add up to making research an uphill struggle. New researchers come to realise that those who are successful are those who, like Sisyphus, have been able to pick themselves up after being knocked back with a grant proposal or article submitted for publication or an attack on their ideas.

The recent Australian Government White Paper on research and research education places emphasis on 'research training'. When I see this I always imagine the pink gravel of a running track. Discussions of research in the corridors of our universities, in the popular press or in academic literature are permeated with sporting metaphors uncritically binding competition into the research process. We talk of the 'field of study', 'setting the boundaries' of the investigation, 'fishing' for ideas, being 'on target' in relation to a research project, 'getting up' or 'winning' or establishing a research 'track record' in relation to being successful with grant applications. If someone is the first to publish a particular idea, we talk of them 'getting over the line' first. We talk of the 'spin-offs' in terms of patents and inventions and of the ways in which governments publish research 'league tables'. The language we use sustains ideas about what is important, influencing policy formation and maintenance.

But are these just harmless images of sport or is there something more pernicious afoot? Although it is sometimes fiercely fought, sport is only sport. What is far more worrying is that some of the same language is the language of war. Otherwise mild-mannered academics, referring to how their ideas are treated, frequently talk of getting 'slaughtered' in seminars. Feyerabend¹ called it the 'civilized strangulation of the opponent'. Lakatos²

talked of a 'battleground' between rival research programs. 'Argument' is established research practice where you critically 'attack' to show up inadequacies in your opponent to 'map out your territory'. Research policy agendas have been able to build on such metaphors of war when they use words such as 'impact', the 'targeting' of research, research 'strategies'. The effect is to intensify the competition. Under the soft veneer of the university, cut-throat competition is afoot. The 'field of study' is no polite paddock. It is a field of battle where, increasingly, you amass behind your 'standards'.

"Under the soft veneer of the university, cut-throat competition is afoot. The 'field of study' is no polite paddock. It is a field of battle where, increasingly, you amass behind your 'standards'."

Governments are able to profit from this because economic rationalism thrives on intense competition. The push for what Lyotard³ calls performativity (performance directed at economic ends), has been used by many governments around the world in their various research performance exercises to change the nature of academic work. It is considered possible to measure the 'amount' of research done by an individual, a department, a university, or indeed the contribution of respective governments to world research, by reference to the amount of funding obtained and spent. The creation of a myth that every project needs funding means that research is defined in terms of clearly defined bite-size pieces which can be counted. For in an economic view of research, the value of research is equated with the amount of funding awarded to support it. Indeed, government pronouncements leave one in no doubt that they perceive a strong relationship between the amount invested in research and research outcomes in

terms of knowledge generated. Indeed, they have taken a number of steps to enhance the chances of a fruitful return on their 'investment', including requiring research grant applications to indicate their relevance to economic advancement, moving towards funding targeted larger research centres and prescribing priority areas for research development.

It is difficult to mount a counter argument to these competitive models of research. They are so prevalent in policy documents and a growing feature of discussions taking place in universities about research and how to develop it. But surprisingly, despite much disquiet, there is an absence of critical dialogue within the academic community and even more worrying, an absence of alternative models.

Recognising that governments have a hard task to decide how to fund research, we could say that they have made attempts, like farmers, to grow out imperfections in the seeds so that a larger number germinate and a higher yield can be expected, for example, by employing researchers' 'track records' as a significant influence on decisions about research funding. Becher⁴ says:

'A market garden is successful in so far as it cultivates a variety of produce to meet its clients' disparate needs. To drive a bulldozer through it in the interests of greater efficiency and higher productivity makes sense only if one wishes to transform it into a cornfield. Corn grows easily, but too assiduous a concentration of producing it will - as we now know to our cost - create a massive and useless surplus of one particular commodity, and a corresponding scarcity of those whose cultivation, though beneficial in its own right, happens to be more demanding, more labour-intensive and generally less easy to govern' (p 166).

Becher comments: 'Given the economic and military potential of contemporary scientific knowledge, such manipulation cannot be regarded with equanimity.'

Ron Barnett⁵ suggests that research needs, in contrast, to rise to the challenges of a super-complex world and teach us how to live in a society where everything is uncertain. So the crucial questions for us are whether current research agendas are helping us to live with the complexity of a multifaceted, complex and pluralistic world, and



whether they show us how to live. If the answers are no, what are the alternatives?

Academics have been enormously successful in rising to the challenge of competition and of successfully meeting economic imperatives. One of the reasons they have been able not simply to exist but also to thrive within the current

“ The creation of a myth that every project needs funding means that research is defined in terms of clearly defined bite-size pieces which can be counted. ”

research context is because the economic perspective feeds the way some academics inherently think about their research. My study of experienced researchers' conceptions of research identified as one variation what I called the *Trading Conception*.⁶ In the foreground of awareness are the products, endpoints, publications, grants and social networks. Research is interpreted as a kind of social marketplace where the exchange of products takes place resulting in recognition and reward. The trading idea gives expression to elements entirely consistent with economic rationalism. There is no conflict in pursuing government research agendas. Research is perceived to be clearly bounded in projects, with publication being its main force and *raison d'être*.

The *Domino Conception* also is to some extent consistent with these research agendas. Here, what is in the foreground are sets (lists) of atomistic things: techniques, problems etc. Research is interpreted as a process of synthesising these separate elements so that problems are solved, questions answered or opened up. Like the trading idea, the domino conception has an orientation outwards focusing on external products. For example, it is focused on solving problems or answering questions through a synthetic process of combining separate elements. This is consistent with the agendas mentioned earlier.

Yet the two other variations in conceptions of research I identified in my study suggest there can be conflict between what researchers believe research to be and the activities they are being encouraged by governments, their

university and their colleagues to engage in. These are the *Layer Conception* where what is foregrounded is data containing ideas linked to hidden meanings and where research is interpreted as a process of discovering, uncovering or creating underlying meanings, and the *Journey Conception* where what is in the foreground are the researcher's personal existential issues and dilemmas. In the Journey conception, research is interpreted as a personal journey of discovery possibly leading to transformation. These two categories of description are oriented inwards, focusing on internal processes of understanding.

There is a tension between an economic view of research focused in defined projects with known outcomes and a view of research as an ongoing process of developing an understanding such as in the layer or journey

“ ...research needs, in contrast, to rise to the challenges of a super-complex world and teach us how to live in a society where everything is uncertain. ”

Ron Barnett

conceptions. In the short term, control of research outcomes is by those who hold the purse strings, e.g. government and university funding bodies and promotions committees. In the longer term, the ultimate outcome of research is never quite what we think it is going to be. A focus on products may be potentially crippling and, in the end, stultifying. Taking tiny steps by increasing the quantity of publications within what Kuhn⁷ called 'normal science' for example, may prevent research from moving forward in giant revolutionary leaps. The need for research to demonstrate relevance to society and to demonstrate action through publications and income acquisition masks its potential to open up opportunities for individual and social transformation through sustained engagement with hard ideas and creative approaches to the solution of problems. This tension will be differently negotiated depending upon the researchers' views of research.

A view of research as an open process of discovery is more like a gardener sowing seeds some of which will germinate and others of which will stagnate in the ground. The gardener does not mind. They just sow more seeds to get the required yield. Many of the world's most significant scientific

“ there can be conflict between what researchers believe research to be and the activities they are being encouraged by governments, their university and their colleagues to engage in. ”

discoveries have been found by chance. Yet you cannot plan for chance or random discoveries. You can only sow the seeds and hope that some will flower profusely in ways that will benefit society and/or solve its problems, perhaps in unexpected ways. Answers to the world's problems will be found in unexpected places. They will be unexpected answers. It is the nature of academic research to have unpredictable findings and to discover problems and issues which we previously did not even know existed. It is the nature of research to redefine the universe in which we are situated. It is in the nature of research not to be tamed by investment strategies and strictly defined project objectives. The economic view inevitably neglects and fiercely competes with views of research as a transformative, creative process of discovery.

Another difference in the categories of description identified in my study is whether the researcher is in the focus of awareness or is absent from it. For example, in the trading conception the researcher is consistently present to awareness through the recognition or rewards which follow or the social networks in which the researcher is engaged. In the journey conception the career and personal issues of the researcher are in the centre of awareness. On the other hand, in the domino conception the person doing the research is conceptually separated from the research which is wholly oriented towards the ideas, techniques and/or activities. The researcher is also concep-

tually absent in the layer conception where the focus of awareness is on interpretation of meaning within the data. If, as Barnett suggests, research has to teach us how to live in a context where everything is uncertain, some crucially important lessons are contained in researchers' experiences of how they personally respond to that uncertainty. If we are to teach society how to live, there is going to be a need for a reflective critique. We are going to have to put ourselves back in the picture. Research priorities will have to be reordered if they are going to address the concerns of society in the future. Research which requires time to gestate to come to fruition or research which is personally transformative must be allowed to flourish. We also need to recognise the capacity indicated in journey conceptions of research to teach us about ourselves. The academy can and must reclaim the research agenda by developing forms of research which provide a new justification for its existence.

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Some of the ideas in this paper are developed more fully in Angela Brew's forthcoming book: *The nature of research: inquiry in academic contexts* to be published by Routledge Falmer.

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Research Today, some case studies

Introduction

To provide a picture of some aspects of research in universities today we present a number of case studies which illustrate how groups and individual academics are conducting research in today's changing environment.

The inclusion of disciplines such as Nursing and Fine Arts into University programmes in recent years has necessitated the development of a research culture in these areas. **Cathy Hawes** and **Judith Clare** describe the innovative way in which the Flinders School of Nursing has tackled the task of getting on the research track.

Anita Devos from the University of NSW describes WomenResearch21 a programme to encourage beginning women academics in research and two of the participants, **Tracy Wilcox** and **Carolyn Penfold** write about their experiences with the programme.

Shona Little and **Gina Hefferen** proved the value of collaborative research in their joint research project into problem based learning in Law. It is a good example of how research into teaching can enhance teaching and could provide a useful pointer to developing scholarship in teaching.

Finally a number of individual academics in different disciplines and at different stages of their careers reflect on their experiences of research particularly in the light of funding changes.



Getting on the research track: the four- year experience of a School

Cathy Hawes & Judith Clare

We describe strategies used to implement a research culture in the School of Nursing at Flinders University. Since nursing is relatively new to academia, staff in the School of Nursing required support to make the transition from the former College of Advanced Education environment in which teaching was valued to the University climate in which research is also expected.

In 1995 only two nurse academics in the School held PhDs, but this has increased to 13 (22%) in 1999, with a further 13 enrolled in 2000. The low percentage of the School's nurse academics (who are mainly women) holding PhDs contrasts starkly with national 1996 data showing that an average of 47.7% of all Australian academics held PhD qualifications (Probert, 1998). Few in the School of Nursing in 1995 had had the time necessary to acquire a sufficient publication record to compete for external research grant funding. The length of time needed is highlighted by Emden (1998), who suggests that 'as most early career nursing researchers are currently mature age women working full time', they will require longer than the accepted 2-3 years.

To facilitate change in the culture of the School, the position of Research Manager was created in 1996 to augment the post of Foundation Professor of Nursing. Leadership and guidance were provided to staff in applying for funding, planning and conducting their research, and improving the outcomes by publication. Staff workloads were negotiated within a system that used the four categories for promotion as a guide. In this way time for research was made available and both clinical and classroom teaching were counted.

In 1997, research infrastructure and internal funding enabled the establishment of a Research Education Unit comprising administrative and academic staff. The broad range of skills of these staff enables the Unit to provide a service to academics and senior students. An Academic Editor was appointed to work specifically with staff who had few or no publications in

refereed journals. In two years, this resulted in 16 papers being accepted for publication, with another 13 in preparation.

The Unit assists with: identifying funding opportunities; the preparation of grant applications to ensure that they are of high standard before submission; the preparation of ethics applications; planning research careers - particularly in obtaining an appropriate balance between postgraduate study and other research opportunities; choosing journals for publication; ensuring that manuscripts meet editorial requirements and dealing with the reviewers' comments; management of qualitative and quantitative data; literature searching; article retrieval and software basics.

However, while providing these services, the Unit maintains its emphasis on research education. Its aim is to enable academic staff to become empowered by acquiring the necessary research skills.

The extent of the understanding and knowledge of the role and services of the Unit by the academic staff was sought in its first year of establishment. A questionnaire survey revealed that 97% of the respondents knew of most of the services provided by the Unit. Over 70% of respondents considered that they had gained in skills and knowledge and felt more confident in conducting research. In the past two years the Unit has completed over 660 requests for assistance from 80% of the School's academic staff. Popular services are article retrieval, literature searching via electronic databases, reviewing of grant and ethics applications and editorial support in publishing.

A marked increase in research activity has been seen since 1995. The number of external grant applications submitted increased from 8 to 65 and the number of published refereed journal articles from 14 to 31. External research grant income increased by a factor of 3 over the period 1996-8 (for which figures are available). More importantly, an increasing percentage of staff participated in these research activities. Thus staff who were named as investigators on grant applications rose from 21% in 1995 to 57% in 1999. Those who authored journal articles increased from 16% to 45% over the same time period. This is in keeping

with the employed philosophy of creating change; that *all* staff should participate in and benefit from the new culture. The significance of the percentage (45% in 1999) of staff in the School authoring publications is even more apparent when compared to a 1993-1994 study which showed that only 7.5% of Australian nursing academics had published in refereed journals (Roberts, 1996).

Since participation in research is an essential element for career progression and promotion within the University, more staff are now able to achieve recognition in the university structure.

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Confessions of a Reluctant Researcher

Shona Little and Gina Hefferen

Introduction

This study was a collaborative venture between a staff developer with some research experience and a law discipline lecturer with no experience at all of educational research. The aim of the study was to identify the aspects of students' learning experiences that they perceived as contributing to their development of legal problem solving skills. The study involved 18 student volunteers from two streams of Integrated Module 3 of the Auckland University of Technology (AUT) Bachelor of Business Studies. Open questionnaires were used in order to derive student-generated concepts about contributing factors. Key themes and issues were then explored using focus groups.

The research experience - a novice perspective (Gina)

If you'd told me a year ago that I'd be contributing to a piece on research in Herdsa News, I wouldn't have believed it! In my academic group I was one of the most vocal in resisting the pressure to publish as I couldn't see how delving into esoteric points of law would in any way enhance my teaching. The trick (I've discovered) is to find something that you are really interested in and to work collaboratively. The process has

been enjoyable, sheer slog at times, rewarding and a revelation.

1st revelation. Research can be on *teaching* rather than abstruse aspects of law.

"If you'd told me a year ago that I'd be contributing to a piece on research in HERDSA News, I wouldn't have believed it!"

Gradually I overcame the initial emotional barriers such as "Whoa - what do I know about educational research?" (all the usual self-doubt hurdles).

2nd revelation. The sheer slog of combing through the literature. Working collaboratively helped maintain the momentum and the direction throughout the difficult aspects.

3rd revelation. The whole research design process was totally new to me. Working with Shona made it possible to access a large body of knowledge very efficiently. This was a huge learning curve!!

4th revelation. Having my co-researcher lead me through the 'admin'-type hurdles of applying for funding and gaining ethical approval.

5th revelation. I *did* have considerable expertise to contribute.

The benefits?

Most important are the new insights I have gained into what is and is not effective in the classroom, as well as the personal and professional 'lift' in terms of affirmation that what we do is effective. I have felt for some time that this particular part of the programme was something special and had had informal feedback from previous students about the paper's effectiveness. As a result of this study we have detailed and highly visible information about the value of what we do. Consequently I have been much more certain of my ground in advocating for the PBL (Problem Based Learning) approach to be expanded into other curriculum areas.

Postscript (Shona)

This collaborative research venture has been a rewarding and motivating experience for me as well. Especially satisfying has been the opportunity to work at the teaching/learning interface with a talented, dedicated and enthusiastic teacher.

Shona Little and Gina Hefferen both work at the Auckland University of Technology (AUT), Shona as a staff and educational developer, and Gina as a senior lecturer with the Law Academic Group.

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Conference Announcement

GLOBALISATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION: Views from the South

27-29 March 2001 Cape Town, South Africa

The conference is being hosted jointly with the Education Policy Unit, University of the Western Cape, and in association with five higher education institutions of the Western Cape, the Association of Commonwealth Universities and UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education.

One of the key focuses of the conference will be Australasia.

The Call for Proposals is currently available and the deadline for submission is 1 October 2000.

The conference website is <http://www.srhe.ac.uk/southafrica/globalHE.htm>

WomenResearch 21: responding to the issues for beginning women academics

Anita Devos

Anita Devos describes a programme to encourage beginning women academics in research and two of the participants, Tracy Wilcox and Carolyn Penfold write about their experiences.

A small group of beginning and early career women academics at UNSW recently collaborated to intervene in the drafting of the University's Research and Research Training Management Plan (RRTMP). All Universities were required to provide this plan to DETYA following the 1999 White Paper on Research Knowledge and Innovation. The preparation of this Plan provided an ideal opportunity to highlight some issues of concern for women arising from the current funding and policy contexts for university research.

This is not the first time women at UNSW have been active around women's research development concerns - the Women in Research Committee was first established in 1992. The difference this time was that the intervention was made by a group of beginning women academics participating in the WomenResearch 21 program.

Program outline

WomenResearch 21 is a program designed to provide beginning women academic researchers with support, appropriate training, advice and strategic direction in order that they may better tackle the challenges they face in building a research focus into their academic careers. The program was developed following extensive research into research development programs and mentoring schemes offered at many other universities. While the program was originally designed for 'beginning' women academics, or those women who are new to academic research and may not have completed their doctorate, we have in fact attracted a number of 'early career' researchers, or more experienced women who were seeking to further their research agendas.

The program has been funded through a CUTSD (Committee for University Teaching and Staff Development) grant over two years. It

had its first intake of 20 women in March 2000, and will have a second intake of 35 in March 2001. The program runs for 12 months with each

"WomenResearch 21 is a program designed to provide beginning women academic researchers with support, appropriate training, advice and strategic direction in order that they may better tackle the challenges they face in building a research focus into their academic careers."

cohort, and includes the following components:

- A series of half day seminars on topics which include: Institutional frameworks for research, Time management, Getting published, Writing grant applications, Balancing roles;
- The requirement for participants to complete a research-related project of their own choosing;
- The 'matching' of each participant with a research adviser, who will advise them on their project; and
- A nominal research grant of \$500 per participant.

Why a program for women?

The issues for women in academia and in research are well-documented in the published literature, and summarised in Deane et al's 1996 study. These issues include:

- Difficulty in balancing roles between teaching, research, administration and

family responsibilities;

- Male dominated research cultures, manifested in the linear models of a research career based on the male life cycle, and often an unwillingness to accept diverse research paradigms or ways of operating;
- A sense of isolation, of being outside the networks through which support, information and patronage are offered;
- A lack of confidence in their research ability compared to their male colleagues; and
- Lack of access to mentors, particularly in relation to their research development.

Bazeley et al's in their 1997 study of research productivity traced the high correlation between employment status (in terms of level of employment and tenure status) and research productivity. They observed the threshold challenge of getting ongoing academic employment before one can begin to establish a program of research and publication (1997:xxix).

The position at UNSW

At UNSW, women make up the smaller number of applicants for both small and large grants to the ARC, and have less likelihood of success when they do apply. In the 1998 round of Large ARC Grants, for example, women submitted approximately an eighth of the UNSW applications, while at the same time, women made up approximately a quarter of academic staff. Only 11% of the women were successful in securing funding, compared with 22% of the men.

This is due, in part, to the very high numbers of women on short term contracts within UNSW compared with men, and the high percentage of women at Levels A and B. In March 1997, 54% of all women academic staff at UNSW were in contract positions; 25% of all women academic staff were in contracts of less than one year's duration (UNSW Census of Staff, 1997). It may also be due to the fact that most women academics are located in the Arts and Social Sciences disciplines, which historically do not pursue grants as actively as the sciences. Clearly the pressure is on now for those academics to now also pursue external funding, if



only to buy themselves out of their teaching in order to do research.

“...participants express a very high level of satisfaction with the support and opportunities they are getting.”

Concluding comments

WomenResearch 21 is only 4 months old and so it is too early to offer any evidence of its success. We have, however, had no attrition from the program, and further, participants express a very high level of satisfaction with the support and opportunities they are getting. The two case studies attached to this article are written by two of the women in the program.

The program seeks to address the issues for beginning and early career women academics through sustained individual and group support, provided through the regular seminars and through the relationship with the participant's research adviser. Further the program offers participants the opportunity to work in a supported way on a specific research project. Participants will leave the program having completed or made substantial progress towards completing their projects. Thirdly, the program provides a vehicle through which women can voice their concerns and contribute to research policy making within the University.

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Case Study 1

Learning to Juggle (and other research necessities)

Tracy Wilcox

I am a fractional-time lecturer (level B) in Human Resource Management at UNSW. I have been working in academia for eight years—six years as a sessional (casual) tutor and lecturer, and two years in my current contract position. Prior to this, I worked in industry as a technical manager and consultant, while studying for my Master of Commerce part time. My current working arrangements allow me the flexibility I need as a parent of four small children.

Although I am an experienced adult educator, it is only since I commenced my current contract position that I have been able to afford the 'luxury' of conducting research. It is simply not possible without a relatively secure

academic position. I am now enrolled in a PhD part-time, and enjoying throwing myself into the research. It has taken me some time to 'crack the code' of the Academic research culture. Much of what needs to be learnt in research (like crafting a paper, selecting the right conferences, approaching journals) is tacit knowledge, and is not made available unless one is fortunate enough to be taken under the wing of a more senior researcher. That type of mentoring is hard to come by, particularly in my case where I am juggling substantial family, teaching and other responsibilities as well as my research.

For this reason, the Women Research 21 program currently underway here at UNSW has been invaluable. The program brings together researchers from across the university. Most of us are in the early stages of our

research career, but have broad experience in teaching or in our respective professions. The networking and mentoring available through the program has meant that I no longer feel isolated, and have gained a great deal of confidence in my researching ability.

Tracy Wilcox is a lecturer in Human Resource Management in the Faculty of Commerce and Economics, UNSW; working under a half-time "job share" arrangement. Prior to this she worked in the manufacturing industry as an industrial chemist, line manager and HR consultant, before commencing casual teaching at UNSW and the Australian Graduate School of Management. Tracy's research interests centre around organisational change and sustainability, ethics and human resource management.



Case Study 2

Getting on track with research

Carolyn Penfold

Academics often feel they're working so hard they can't get anything done. The hard work is teaching, admin, and community service, often the largest part of a junior academic's workload, but seemingly less and less valued. What's not getting done is the research, and research, we're told, is what really matters. We're told of course that teaching is important, but we also know that without a satisfactory research profile we won't get longer term employment.

I enjoy teaching and admin, and so have been willing to take it on, but it's been at the expense of time for research. I've undertaken a number of projects which help bring money into the faculty, but which are not research. However, as I'm contract staff, hoping for conversion to continuing, I need to minimise anything unnecessary and concentrate on building up a research profile. Two things are helping me to get my research on track.

The first is enrolling in a higher degree, which has a number of benefits. It puts me in formal contact with academic colleagues who I've known for some time but with whom I've never really discussed my research. It means I now have colleagues with a knowledge of what I'm doing, a responsibility for helping me along the research path, and who have an interest in my succeeding.

The flip side is that it requires me to talk to colleagues about my work, to engage in serious research and produce written work, to overcome embarrassment and uncertainty and show them my work, and to receive and use their advice.

The second thing I've become involved in is Women Research 21, a project set up under a CUTSD grant to help women at UNSW to get on the research track. This required me to prepare a research proposal, be coupled with a mentor, and undertake to complete a research project within a set time, with the mentor's advice and assistance. The project needed to be one which could be completed in a year, and mentors advised on the kinds of projects which would be suitable within the time frame, useful in terms of research profile, and possibly lead to further research. I am working on a journal article, which will also be the basis for a thesis chapter in my degree. Other participants are working on articles, grant proposals, book chapters etc.

This project has many of the benefits mentioned above in terms of a higher degree, except that by nominating a different mentor I now have access to another colleague with whom I've not previously discussed research. She has a part-time academic appointment as she also has family responsibilities, so we can discuss not only the substantive research, but also 'how' you can manage to do it with all these other responsibilities.

There are also other benefits from the WR21 program which are just as important as the research project itself.

Being involved in this program has introduced me to many other women in a similar situation, so I know I'm not the only one feeling the need for help with getting on the research track. The program has created a kind of 'research support network,' which gives us access to one another's' research ideas, allows us to discuss avenues for building up a research profile, increasing publications, accessing grants, and negotiating the mire of academic politics. Regular seminars also give us access to institutional information, for example how to apply for grants, and how to make the best use of SSP and other research entitlements. For many of us, the program allows us to feel part of an academic community which we may never have felt part of before.

I'd advise others trying to get their research on track to re-assess what they're currently doing, flick anything which is unnecessary or which conflicts with concentrating on research, get in contact with supportive colleagues who are good researchers, get in contact with other beginning researchers, even outside your discipline. Ask for help, overcome the embarrassment of showing others your work, take advice, and most importantly try to have confidence in your own ability.

Carolyn Penfold is a Lecturer in the School of Law, and has been actively involved with the Indigenous Legal Education program at UNSW. Her current research interests include regulation of content on the Internet.

Conference Announcement

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8-11 July University of Newcastle

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www.newcastle.edu.au/conferences/herdsa2001



Experiences of Research

The case studies were compiled from interviews conducted by the Editor. They illustrate the experiences of academics from various disciplines at different stages of their careers.

A View from Humanities.

Ed Conrad is an Associate Professor in the Department of Studies in Religion at the University of Queensland. He reflected that at the time of his first appointment 1977 he was able to really concentrate on teaching for the first two or three years without the pressure to get on with research - and now there is no time for coffee! A time when colleagues used to have useful informal discussions is sadly no more.

The changes in funding are causing dramatic changes for the humanities. Their primary source of funding is from the ARC, which is of course limited, especially in this field. It is increasingly difficult to maintain the familiar mode of work in which the individual writes a significant book, which requires little funding. Disciplines are being reorganised according to funding criteria rather than by academic principles. Morale in relation to resources is low among Humanities staff. Both research funds and library funds are shrinking. Colleagues are not receiving recognition by their institution in spite of having an international reputation among the academic community basically because their work does not attract external funding. However, the growing importance of postgraduate supervision may provide additional funding - and hence recognition - for the humanities - though, again, there are disciplinary differences in the nature of the PhD and the associated speed of completion that work against the humanities.

There has been an increase in concern about supervision and the development of group supervision. For example, Ed meets every month or six weeks with all of the honours, master's and PhD students he is supervising (about 15) at his home to address common issues, and each student reports progress and exchanges ideas with other students over drinks and snacks. The Faculty of Arts is providing a seminar program for postgraduate students to encourage peer support and to deal with concerns shared by students.

Another change that has occurred compared with when Ed started at Queensland University is that PhD students are more likely to have published in refereed journals before they

complete their degrees and will also have presented papers at conferences. Teaching matters now and academics are becoming more professional about their teaching. Academics just starting their careers will have to be prepared to work long hours, and do lots of teaching, research, and administration.

Research and Teaching

Nick Knight is a Professor in the School of Asian and International Studies at Griffith University. He recently became Head of the School. His research area is in Political Science with a special interest in Chinese Studies.

Teaching is very important to Nick and over the past 15 years he has been able to publish articles and chapters in educational journals and books, on subjects such as the education of the beginning researcher in the social sciences and humanities, and problems of supervision. This has been in addition to publishing in his research area.

The current situation is not encouraging for research. Work loads and administrative tasks are increasing, and resources are shrinking, along with a decline in external funding. The major factor for Nick is the lack of time available for research. He perceives increasing cynicism and pessimism in universities resulting in low morale which has a very negative effects on research and creative work. The cycle of change has been very rapid over recent years, which has further affected research.

Nick has not had great success obtaining external funding, but that has not greatly affected his ability to undertake research. However he is conscious that some areas in the Humanities and the Social Sciences do not readily attract outside funding and could be in danger of declining. Nick compensates for declining resources and lack of external funding by careful time management and disciplining himself to use any available time for research.

Nick has recently completed a textbook about East and Southeast Asia from an Australian perspective. The book required a considerable amount of disciplined work, but will get no recognition in the research quantum, a sad commentary on what is now being

valued in the system. Yet to write it required all of Nick's research skills. A textbook is an example of the nexus between teaching and research, which has traditionally been an essential part of the life of an academic. Nick undertook the project because he felt it important, and also from a refusal to have his research agenda dictated by the educational bureaucrats in Canberra.

His advice to new academics is to strive to be both an exemplary teacher and researcher. In order to do this in the current climate, it is important to learn to manage one's time very carefully and to be very disciplined in setting priorities and following these through.

Returning to Academic Life after a break.

Christine Smith is an Associate Professor in Economics at Griffith University, whose research interests are in regional and urban economic, qualitative modelling. Christine has an unusual career path in that when she took time off to have a family she had already risen to the rank of an Associate Professor. Thus when she returned to a 50% appointment she found that she was ineligible for any of the university grants designed to assist female lecturers returning to academic life after a break. These schemes assume you are at the bottom end of the academic ladder. Furthermore being on a fractional appointment she was ineligible for ARC grants. This has made it more difficult to re-establish research momentum, especially at the level normally expected by Associate Professors. However her previous contacts in government departments and the growth of industry funded research meant that she was able to continue her research through these external grants. Thus it seems the establishment of new funding sources, as well as their growing recognition as equivalent on a dollar-to-dollar basis to ARC funding, has been to Christine's advantage. However it is also clear that it was very helpful to have made previous contacts with industry and the public sector.

She noted a number of differences in the research culture over recent years.

1. In the past research activity was in



many respects opted into, but now there is much more pressure to be involved, particularly through performance reviews.

2. There was also no pressure in the past for humanities and social science academics to be part of a research group, this appears to be changing.
3. With the decline in federal government funding to universities, there is far more emphasis on research dollars brought into the university sector from non-traditional sources.

In commenting on the effects of the new funding arrangements she expressed concern for the individual researcher who concentrated activity on producing scholarly books, which though making significant contributions to knowledge, did not bring in the dollars. If research work like this cannot be sustained through lack of support then this is a sad commentary on what is now valued in academia.

A New Academic

Andrew White is a Lecturer (Level B) in the Department of Physics at the University of Queensland. This is his first appointment which he took up late last

year. During his PhD studies in Laser and quantum physics at the ANU he spent one year at a research institute in Germany. After graduating in 1997 he worked for two and a half years as a post doctoral scientist at the Los Alamos laboratory in the US. Thus he came to the position at Queensland University with a solid foundation in research. He is part of team of researchers from several universities (via a Special Research Centre).

The Department provided him with a start-up research grant but he has already received several ARC grants, and has applied for a large ARC grant for 2001. When asked about getting on track with research grant applications he replied that 'I was fortunate to learn a lot about grant applications while doing my PhD.'

Andrew's experiences in Physics provides a contrast with those of Ed Conrad in Humanities. In Physics there is a strong emphasis on team work which fits well with the growing pressure to establish multi-institutional and multi-disciplinary research collaborations. Postgraduate training also prepares students for the world of grant chasing. International networks are helpful when grant applications are considered by

groups like the ARC and NHMRC. It is possible that some disciplines may be better placed to prosper in the new climate.

He has been enjoying teaching, particularly contact with students, and has a senior member in the department appointed as his teaching mentor plus much informal professional mentoring from his senior colleagues, which is very helpful. He also found the teaching programme run by the Graduate School at the ANU during his PhD studies very useful.

Although his department has been very supportive both in his teaching and research he is conscious of the expectation that he will stand on his own feet as quickly as possible.

Andrew is well aware of the stresses and pressures of academic life today but seems to accept them as part of the job. He foresees a shakedown in the next few years in higher education as a result of the changes in funding and believes we could see a return to a two tier system.

His advice to newly appointed academics is 'listen to everyone-staff and students-work hard, and have fun.'

Postscript to the Case Studies

A few observations to round off the studies, not in any order of importance.

Making contacts with academics at high levels early in ones career appeared important in obtaining funding for research and the science disciplines seemed at an advantage here.

The current climate could provide a great opportunity for the development of the scholarship of teaching. This is may provide an opportunity for those in staff development to work closely with

academics on developing the scholarship of teaching in each discipline.

There is great value in working with a group and there are great opportunities and payoffs for new support mechanisms, like the WomanResearch21 programme, if they can be funded.

One thing that emerges from the case studies is the emphasis on and support for research which can attract external grants, and related to this, the consequent threat to research particularly in the social sciences, Humanities and Fine Arts. This

is serious and it would be good to hear statements from universities to say that they will continue to actively support this research. Australia may become smart technologically, but will it be wise? Where will the commentators of society be? Will Universities no longer be able to provide critiques of society and governments? For many the prospect is dark.

Editor



Changing our Practices

A Foucauldian analysis of research culture change in a New Zealand Polytechnic

Have you ever wished you could change the way your organisation operates? Have you ever felt powerless to resist sweeping changes in your organisation? Then read on! In this article I want to share how I have used Michel Foucault's concepts of power and how it operates, as a springboard for taking action in my own organisation. The article draws from work completed for my recent PhD thesis.

The impetus for action:

In 1990 New Zealand passed an Education Amendment Act that gave polytechnics the power to offer degrees. Prior to this, almost all polytechnic education had focussed around certificates and diplomas, with a strong emphasis on vocational and technical education. Many of the staff in the polytechnic sector were employed on the basis of trade or professional competence and were neither trained teachers when employed, nor holders of degrees. However, a requirement that our Qualifications Authority (NZQA) imposes on teachers in degree programmes is that they be engaged in 'significant and verifiable involvement in research.' While the NZQA definition of research is very broad, for many of our staff the word 'research' is incompatible with the teaching which they prize. Many tend to see research and teaching as different activities. This perception is not peculiar to New Zealand; work done in Australia by Moses and Ramsden with staff in the new universities in the early 1990s reveals similar thinking.

I work as a staff developer at The Waikato Polytechnic. I've worked here since 1985, and feel I understand the culture of the place fairly well. New Zealand polytechnics are interesting places, where students can learn to be cooks, hairdressers, mechanics, nurses, arborists, office and computer workers, business managers, farmers, artists and the like. The unifying theme in the polytechnic in the past has been a

commitment to high quality teaching using whatever approaches work best for the students in the group. It seemed to me, then, that given the external requirement for staff to be engaged in research if they teach degree programmes, the best way forward was to promote a research approach which helped novice researchers to improve their teaching. This way, they could work from a basis of competence and confidence in their own teaching practice, developing ways of improving this practice while simultaneously learning research skills and producing research outcomes.

"It seemed to me, then, that given the external requirement for staff to be engaged in research if they teach degree programmes, the best way forward was to promote a research approach which helped novice researchers to improve their teaching."

The philosophical foundation for my belief and action was the egalitarianism and commitment to social change promoted by action research, combined with the tools of organisational analysis suggested by the French philosopher Michel Foucault. His analysis of how power works in organisations as diverse as prisons, mental hospitals and schools stressed that power is not 'held' by people but circulates. According to Foucault, individuals can exercise power by intervening in various ways to bring about changes that they believe are important. He also described how various techniques of surveillance (e.g. examinations and self-monitoring) are

Pip Bruce Ferguson

used by organisations to control and monitor their staff.

The action:

I decided to act in a number of ways to assist the staff to meet the NZQA research requirements in ways that might work appropriately for them, rather than having them see these requirements as yet more demands to be resisted. Foucault believed that power is exercised through a 'net-like organisation'. One of the ways that that net is operational in our research context is via the Research Committee. Accordingly, I volunteered to act as Staff Representative on this committee, and was subsequently appointed. I was active in promoting research definitions within this committee that made space for teacher research to be 'counted' as appropriate research. This is compatible with Foucault's belief that power and knowledge are inextricably intertwined, and expressed through 'powers of writing'. The power of writing that we used in the committee through research definitions, described ways of researching that would be considered appropriate within the institution. It was important to me that space was made for teachers' voices in our emerging research discourse.

Another way I acted was through the insertion, into the compulsory teacher training programme that new staff undertake, of an optional Action Research course. Through this course, structured so that some generic research skills were also acquired, staff learned to improve their teaching practice by using action research cycles. My hope was that, given the collaborative nature of action research, there would be a 'catalytic' effect in which staff on the course were able to involve and enthuse their colleagues about the approach. In the event, this hope was confounded by the presence of only one representative per department on any given course, meaning that when they got back to their departments, overworked colleagues were reluctant to participate. I discuss a better way of achieving catalytic effects in my thesis (see Musgrave et al, in the thesis - website at end of article).



However, as I had hoped, staff did find the action research method a familiar and effective way of learning research skills, based as it is on the reflective practice that is common in the institution. Furthermore, several mentioned that it

“ I have been impressed by the ability of action research to reduce research fear, to improve teaching practice, and to encourage in our staff an appreciation of research endeavours in general. ”

had given them a better appreciation of the demands of research in general, and empathy for colleagues who had to continue doing research. Interestingly enough, of the 12 action researchers whom I interviewed for my doctoral

thesis, only 3 came from departments that taught degrees, and were therefore required to carry out research (there's another research question inherent in this statistic!) It is fair to say that there is still resistance in the degree departments among some staff to being required to carry out research.

Conclusions:

While my hopes of catalytic effects had to be amended, I have been impressed by the ability of action research to reduce research fear, to improve teaching practice, and to encourage in our staff an appreciation of research endeavours in general. For myself, I found the Foucauldian tools of analysis empowering. The recognition that individuals hold power - that it is not purely the 'property' of those in prestigious positions - gave me confidence to intervene, and has given me confidence since to state my beliefs and positions without fear. So far, the sky has not fallen on my head...I commend both action research and Foucauldian analysis to other educators wanting to improve their own organisational and teaching functions.

Dr Pip Bruce Ferguson has worked as a staff developer at The Waikato Polytechnic since 1985. Her appreciation for the energy and commitment of teaching staff across the institution led her to investigate how the developing research culture of the polytechnic, required under a new approval to grant degrees, could build on teachers' strengths. Accordingly, at the end of 1999 she was awarded her doctorate on the topic, "Developing a Research Culture in a Polytechnic: an Action Research Case Study." Pip has been a member of HERDSA since the mid 1980s, and is actively involved in the New Zealand Action Research Network.

Pip's thesis is now available electronically on the polytechnic's website (<http://www.twp.ac.nz/research/resource.htm>), or if you want to enter into discussion, email her on espmf@twp.ac.nz

Awards for University Teachers

Nominations are open for the 2000 Australian University Teaching awards sponsored by the Australian newspaper.

This year there will be awards in six categories and three institutional awards. An overall winner from one of the six categories will be named Prime Minister's Teacher of the Year.

Full details are on the awards website: www.autc.gov.au

The Herdsa Website <http://www.hersa.org.au>

To gain access to the member's section, key in your surname for 'username' and your membership number (found on your address label) for 'password'. You might have an item to add to the calendar of visits and activities listed in the members section.

Peer Observation and Feedback on Teaching at the University of Wollongong

Maureen Bell

"...there is one practice which Teaching Development Program taught me that transcends the specificity of the techniques which I was encouraged to adopt to improve my teaching. That practice is the habit of reflection, and the confidence to try different things ..."

The University of Wollongong has offered an Introduction to Tertiary Teaching (ITT) course for academic staff since 1992. A major part of the course is the Teaching Development Program (TDP) - a structured, collegial program of peer observation and feedback. Each ITT Participant works within an action learning process to design and direct their own TDP on chosen aspects of their teaching, entering into a teaching/learning dialogue with both a *Support Colleague* and the *Educational Developer*.

How does it work?

The Participant chooses a *Support Colleague* from their department or faculty and negotiates a plan for four cycles of observation and feedback. The Participant works within a structured process to plan, implement, receive feedback and reflect on discrete teaching experiences such as lectures or tutorials. Together they work through four TDP cycles.

In three of the cycles the Participant plans a teaching session and is observed by the *Support Colleague* who provides feedback. In one of the four cycles the roles are reversed such that the *observer* becomes the observed. After each of the four discussions the Participant reflects on the experience in writing and the

Educational Developer writes feedback on that reflection.

Finally the Participant completes a report on key issues that have emerged and includes a brief professional development plan. Assessment is by both Participant and Educational Developer according to specified assessment criteria.

Is it effective?

Almost all Participants who follow the process and complete the TDP report that it is an effective process. The level of change varies according to factors such as the Participant's openness to change, level of awareness, focus on teaching and their existing skills. Some Participants develop basic skills:

"I became more adept at writing keywords and phrases into the overheads rather than whole chunks of text ..."

Others develop interactive skills:

"I made some progress implementing mini-lecture and buzz groups into my lecture ..."

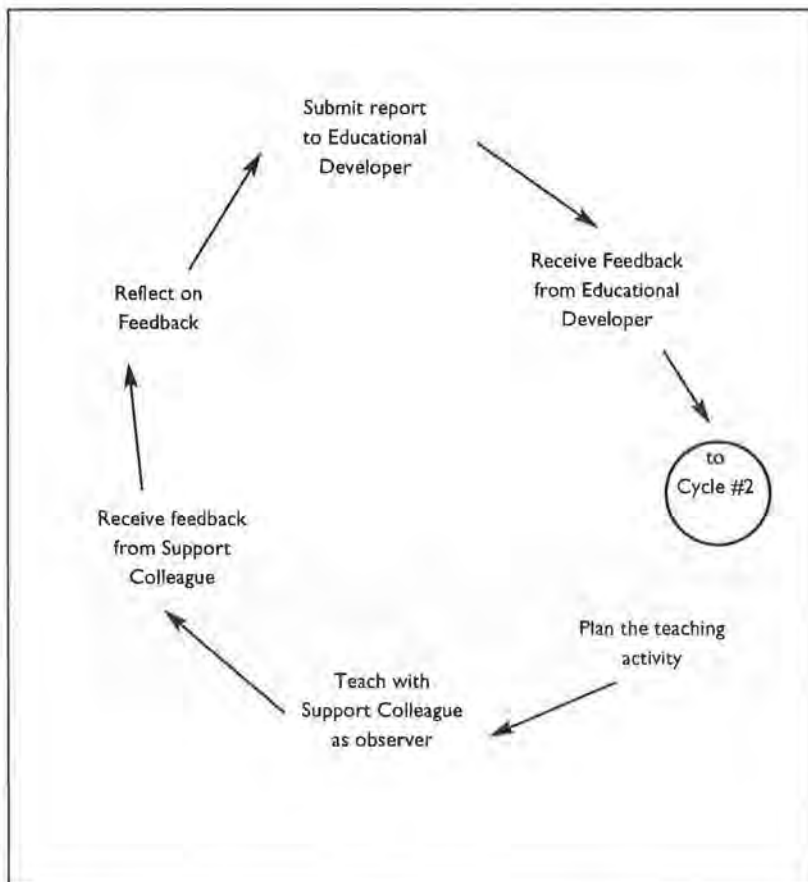
Some consider long-term change:

"To the extent that I have focused on refining or honing actual teaching skills in large part I achieved what I set out to do in the TDP cycles. To the extent that the TDP process brought to light "hidden tensions" in the conceptual and practical aspects of my teaching, it has provided me with an ongoing set of problems to work on for my own professional development as a university teacher."

Are there any problems?

Yes. Problems may arise where a Participant:

- does not follow the process,
- finds the process personally difficult,
- has unrealistic beliefs about their own teaching and development,
- has little interest in further developing their pedagogy; or
- ... where the *Support Colleague*:
 - provides overly negative criticism,
 - is insensitive in giving feedback,
 - over-emphasises personal convictions or pedagogical style.





What makes the TDP effective?

1. The TDP integrates Participant skills, reflection and the experience of teaching in a cooperative program.
2. The Educational Developer's role is essential in monitoring and providing feedback. The purpose of feedback is both to challenge and support the Participant's reflection, analysis and self-evaluation.

"The feedback was very useful - more so than I'd imagined it was going to be."

Monitoring the Support Colleague's feedback and the Participant's acceptance of it enables the Educational Developer to intervene where necessary for example, to suggest a more positive approach to feedback or reflection or to address any negative feelings,

"... the TDP has 'shaken me up' a little - not in the sense of reducing my confidence or harming my self-image, but

in the sense that I have recognised a hitherto hidden 'tension' between what I say (or think) about teaching and what I actually do."

The Educational Developer can intervene if a Support Colleague is highly critical or dictatorial, or where a Participant experiences emotional difficulty in dealing with the process.

"Your reflections in this cycle focus on improvements that you think might be made to your practice. Yet when I read the feedback you have received from your Support Colleague I find some 'positive criticism' that you have not explored in your feedback, for example (details). It is important that you reflect on these strengths as noted by your Support Colleague. You might also consider how you can further build on these obvious strengths."

3. Observing the observer helps to break down notions of being appraised, builds the observer's understanding of the sensitivity of the process and the other person's needs.

In summary

For most Participants, critical reflection on practice with the support of colleagues brings both immediate and long-term benefits. These benefits are manifested in changes to teaching practice and pedagogical understandings, and the building of professional teaching relationships. The TDP is carefully structured and monitored for optimum results and to circumvent foreseeable problems.

Maureen Bell is a Lecturer in Educational Development with the Centre for Educational Development and Interactive Resources at the University of Wollongong. She describes the peer observation and feedback program (TDP) she coordinates within the university's academic staff course.

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The 7th International Conference on Experiential Learning (ICEL 2000)

4-8 December 2000

University of Auckland, New Zealand

Theme: Bringing the outside inside: Experiential Learning as the mainstream for the third millennium

Detailed information on Conference available on Website: www.edesignz.co.nz/icel/pages

Or contact: Hori Pirini: Phone: +64 9 3737599 ext 5085

Fax: 3737458 - email: h.pirini@auckland.ac.nz

Marie-Thérèse Millet: Phone +64 9 3737599 ext 7619

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Luddites, Mavericks and Band-wagoners

In a pleasant happenstance, about to put my fingers to the keys for this piece, a morning newspaper article caught my eye. An archetypical maverick stepped out of the page, perfect exemplar of my topic. Today a 35 years-old man started a walk for charity, from the lowest point of the Sydney Harbour Tunnel to Kosciuszko's summit (Australia from bottom to top).

After a successful business life ("jet-setting IT consultant") stacks of work and "everything that society says a guy should want", he dumped it all. Nowadays (when not walking up Australia) he's a jobless nomad in a converted Kombi.

Essentially homeless, he's raising funds for Sydney's escalating homeless population. What he once had, he said, "wasn't making me happy. It was about technology for its own sake, about money, about toys". Technically broke now, he "feels much better for it" as he follows his "search for a bit of meaning".

It's not recorded that he threw his computer out the window, so let's not too-hastily call him a Luddite. Just a maverick ("unorthodox or undisciplined person" – OED) will do for now.

Luddites follow

But what about those pals of Ned Lud? Ah, what lies those primary school history books told. I was taught (badly, but that's another story) that the Luddites were simple, silly folk smashing their employers' hi-tech textile machinery out of raging resistance against everything new. Not quite so, I now discover.

Luddism may have been a nice exemplar of direct, rational political action. Well within the law of their day, they simply claimed their constitutional rights. It seems their bosses had ignored or abrogated every statute which might have afforded them job protection. And every attempt they made to enforce their "rights" by trade-union action was declared illegal by those in power (sounds like today, eh?)

But a Charter granted under Charles II gave deputies appointed by the Framework-Knitters Company the power to destroy "badly made goods". So they protested using the entirely reasonable premise that goods made through new

technology were obviously inferior to those previously made by hand (is there a parallel case for hi-tech teaching?)

That suggests a nice question of relative values rather than an exhibition of childish spite. A protest, not at machines as such, but at the emerging shape of an impending, unwelcome future in which valuable cultural assets are in danger of being lost forever.

Twenty years later farm-labourers smashed up their masters' hi-tech threshing machines. Again, not because machines were evil, but because hand-threshing was one of the few kinds of work left to escape starvation in a time of rising unemployment and widespread poverty.¹

A Maverick to reckon with

I've a favourite "unorthodox, undisciplined" historical character – Giambattista Vico (b. 1668) of Naples. Living during the Inquisition time, he gets my admiration for being so undisciplined as to try to resist one almighty wave of new-age conformism that he saw sweeping over the Continent.

Vico tried to stop the bandwagon we now call the French Enlightenment (Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Descartes and all). It's reported that he failed. His Counter-Enlightenment *magnum opus* (*La Scienza Nuova*, 1725) largely disregarded in its time, found few influential supporters (though Michelet was one, so was Coleridge). It was then forgotten for a century or two.

Its modern "rediscovery" through the work of Croce, Horkheimer and Berlin is credited with starting a new revolution spanning epistemology, philosophy of history, and cultural anthropology. Some claim that the very notion of "culture" (as distinct from race, society, nationality) can be posthumously credited to Vico.

Here we have an early Maverick (maybe a Luddite before its time) capable of igniting, through sheer brilliant recalcitrance, a fire so durable that it would reignite centuries later. I reckon Vico's spirit is out there now in the intergalactic aether, wearing a big grin on its luminous face, thoroughly enjoying the incandescence he started.

A modern educational Maverick

I promised the Editor I'd fit this, and the forthcoming pieces, into a schema

planned for the next three Issues. Neither Mavericks nor Luddites were mentioned in that exchange. Sensing him scowling at my longwinded and apparently irrelevant introduction, I'd best come clean and reveal the connection. What I have in mind is actually the present – and future – of Higher Education Research.

The tenuous connection enters via a Maverick/Luddite character whose name is Dwayne Huebner. Don't feel embarrassed if you've never heard of him – I did education Masters and PhD and his name was never mentioned.

Huebner's birth (1923, probably Michigan) locates the greater part of his career in the US of the late 'fifties to the 'seventies. That's when the foundations of virtually all today's mainstream curriculum theory and educational research were being laid.

Starting as an elementary schoolteacher Huebner became an active and respected player in educational theory. His distinguished academic career included Professorial posts at Columbia Teachers College and Yale Divinity School.

But Huebner didn't ever make the 'big league'. His name isn't on the Honours Board of great contributors to C20th educational thought. Philip Jackson's 1992 *Handbook of Research on Curriculum* doesn't mention him, though the 'giants' of the field are all there: Bobbitt, Dewey, Tyler, Schwab.

The editor of his collected writings (one of his students Vicki Hillis) suggests a reason for this "failure". Huebner, she argues, anticipated – sometimes by a decade – every single major advance in curriculum thinking over those thirty years. But nobody listened, or heard, or understood what he was saying at the time. A maverick.

A fine collection of Huebner's writings, most of them modest short pieces for newsletters, conferences etc, has finally been published². Some chapter titles indicate the wildly 'undisciplined' directions of his thought:

- (1): The Capacity for Wonder and Education; (4): The Art of Teaching; (13): Language and Teaching; (17): The Thingness of Educational Content; (19): Poetry and Power: The Politics of Curricular Development; (26): Spirituality and Knowing.



Behind or ahead of the times?

Huebner has probably been disregarded historically not because his scholarship was poor (it wasn't), nor because his contributions lacked brilliance, or relevance, or significance (they didn't, as Hillis' volume proves). I think it was because he took a stand against the bandwagon of educational research that started rolling relentlessly onwards through that period. And it's still rolling today, even in Australia.

He "Mavericked" it. He "Ludded" it. He said, in effect, "I reckon you're all destructively heading in the wrong direction (though you sincerely think it's the latest and best thing). Disregard me now if you will, but one day I know I'll be vindicated".

The conventional Luddite stigma is that they are behind the times. Huebner's writings demonstrate that he was ahead of his times. Perhaps what I'm trying to argue here is that "behind" and "in front of" the times is actually a paradoxical binary (opposites being simultaneously true in the same events). And one of Huebner's recurring themes was the fundamentally important place of TIME (past, present, future) in education.

Hillis writes: "Huebner asserted his view that educators are lost, that they will remain lost as long as they accept the promise of a 'quick fix' through slogans and bandwagons, as long as teachers do not act to change the educational world". And that's where the educational research connection enters.

Here's a few of (what I think are) Huebner's best lines. Remember they were written during the years when the "scientific" study of learning and curriculum was in its heyday of invention and popularisation. That ideology – that learning and curriculum are directly susceptible to the methods of natural scientific study – soon became the Bandwagon you had to be on. And you have still to be on it today, otherwise you're a nobody.

"Conceptions of purpose, objectives, or learning, if they are needed at all, are components of an ideology, not of the acts in the classroom" (p.18)

"It seems ... efficacious to conceptualize curriculum as social policy – a continual realization through classroom action of the beliefs, values, expectations and desires of those in positions of control" (p. 96)

"The dependency (on the part of educators) upon an economic model and a

learning technology has all but destroyed imaginative formulation of significant questions. The educational myth which states that goals must be identified, and the learning activities devised for each these goals, is ... hardly an adequate model for curriculum planning" (p. 98)

"It seems to me that the unquestioning acceptance of these (learning and objectives) is one of the reasons that the curriculum person has failed to generate the ideas necessary to keep educational institutions and language abreast of the times" (p. 132)

"The search for clear and unambiguous goals is a fanciful and, to a large extent, idle search ... To find the purpose of the schools is thought to restore the calm and enable educators to drop out of the troublesome process of living historically" (p. 132)

"It is all too easy to forget that debate about educational objectives is part of the continuous struggle of rival political ideologies, which has its consequences in who controls the educational environment" (p. 133)

"It is when the educator must deal with the student that he seemingly drops the concern for the past or for the future, and focuses on the present. If he remains focussed on the past or the future he loses contact with the student, and the educational process may suffer. It is by criticising the category 'learning' that the significance of the present is brought into perspective with the past and the future" (p. 133)

"We are afraid, maybe even ashamed, to acknowledge that that which we are about as educators is politics: a struggle to maintain, maybe even change through destruction and reconstruction, the world we make with others. If we acknowledge that we are political we necessarily risk defeat ..." (p. 232)

"Why are we lost? I think it is because we have let the school become our center and we have become an appendage, nothing but a role or functionary in somebody else's institution ... We do their things, maintain their world, distribute their awards. And they reward us by a humdrum comfortable lifestyle, perhaps with tenure and retirement, access to the more common goods of our production lines, and permit us the privacy of sex and family life, but deprive us of public vitality and joy, clean air and water, safe, comfortable, exciting urban areas that support our well-being and sociality" (p. 232).

"If we remember this then we can recognize that the struggle to remake the school is a struggle to make a more just public world." (p. 232)

"Freedom to converse requires an

acceptance that conversation can be a meaningful and significant end in itself. As a mode of human encounter it needs no justification, for it is one way in which man recognises his solitude, his freedom, and his fraternity with others" (p. 91)

Higher Education Research

The unquestioned dominance of student learning as focus of today's bandwagon of Higher Education Research would, without much doubt in my view, make it one of Huebner's targets. And that would include much of phenomenography as well as a great deal of more conventional research. I've tried to imagine which research approaches might satisfy his conceptions of appropriateness, and the nearest I can suggest would be the hermeneutic mode.

To adopt a Huebnerian stance is very risky business. I'd have to be mad as a hatter to apply for a Higher Education Research position anywhere in Australia and admit in my interview to be "quite uninterested in student learning". Or to apply for a teaching post and stress my "substantial disenchantment with the whole notion of educational objectives, goals and aims". That's REALLY Maverick territory.

Having read – pretty closely and carefully – all Huebner's published essays I don't think I can in all honesty regard him as a fool, nor his ideas as misguided or ill-conceived. He represents a seriously defensible position.

No question, though, that it's radically unorthodox stuff. And – in terms of the direction the rest of Higher (and Primary, and Secondary) Education have been taking for three generations – Huebner will continue to annoy us. His ideas push against the popular grain. His thinking has him swimming against the main current. He asks you to march to a different drumbeat.

I rather like that idea. So I'd like to "thank the Lud" for Mavericks. And those on today's Bandwagon can go it alone. It will have to roll on without me – the world of timeless Mavericks like Dwayne Huebner is far more interesting.

- 1 This information comes from April Carter's "Direct Action and Liberal Democracy" (Harper & Row, 1973)
- 2 Hillis, V. 1999. *The Lure of the Transcendent: Collected Essays by Dwayne E. Huebner*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc.



Conference Reports 2000

July each year is conference time and in this issue we report on three important conferences.

Flexible Learning for a Flexible Society

Australian Society for Educational Technology / Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia 2 - 5 July 2000, University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Australia

Snapshots were invited from a number of delegates in an attempt to reflect the different perspectives of the conference communities (ie from a range of disciplines, geographical location, roles in education and length of involvement with the association, society or conference community). They have been compiled by **Dr Carol Bowie** (Griffith Institute for Higher Education, Griffith University).

Participants had the opportunity to explore and discuss the challenges of change, from a variety of perspectives, in four strands that reflect different dimensions of change, all of which are important for education as we enter the new millennium: changing learning contexts; changes in the workplace; supporting change; and changing research paradigms.

In *Changing learning* contexts we reflected on the ways in which students, teachers, and curricula have changed in terms of aspects such as the impact of new information technologies, location time and the characteristics of students. *Changes in the workplace* looked beyond schools and universities to the locations where we, as school or university teachers, industry instructors or trainers, and facilitators make a unique contribution to lifelong learning and wellbeing of the nation in a variety of ways.

In a climate of change we need to be aware of ways in which *Supporting change* will benefit all stakeholders. This strand explored strategies to support change from the personal to the systemic level. Finally, our decision making should be informed by high quality research that links theory to practice. This will require new ideas and *Changing research* paradigms that will assist us to reconceptualise practice and develop more effective teaching and learning strategies.

The Keynote speakers included

- Dr Anne Moore, Virginia Polytechnic, USA
- Prof Sue Johnston, University of New England, Australia

- Assoc Prof Ron Oliver, Edith Cowan University, Australia

The ASET HERDSA 2000 conference website is at:

<http://cleo.murdoch.edu.au/aset/confs/aset-herdsa2000/>

The next HERDSA conference will explore Learning Partnerships and will be held at the University of Newcastle 8-11 July 2001. For details email Juliane.Ward@newcastle.edu.au or check out the website at

www.newcastle.edu.au/conferences/herdsa2001

These snapshots, invited from some participants, of their personal experiences of this conference illustrate the challenges of making choices about many concurrent sessions and the adventurous spirit and risktaking involved in being embedded in a conference community and venue for a few days

Snapshot 1

This conference opened on a high note with Professor Peter Swannell's welcome to campus. I was expecting this to be the typical Vice-Chancellor's welcome, "Welcome to USQ. We have 20,000 students blah, blah, blah." I was delightfully surprised to hear his depth of understanding of how the development of new technologies requires the development of new pedagogies while retaining the fundamentals of motivation, interaction, and content.

Particularly effective was his ability to parallel his experience as Vice-Chancellor to his experience as a structural engineer. He noted the following sequence of events whenever a new material or new technology is introduced:

- First people will ask, "Why should I use it?" (What we've always done before has worked perfectly well. If it was good enough for me....)
- This is followed with, "OK, if you insist that I use it, I will. But I will use it in exactly the same way as I've used other materials before." (Always resulting in something worse. His examples: the first plastic sandals were made to look like woven leather and the first iron bridge was built to look exactly like a wooden bridge, complete with mortice joints, etc.)
- Finally people will determine, "OK, if I'm going to use this new material, I'll investigate its strengths and weaknesses so that I can optimise its possibilities."

The keynote speakers offered thought-provoking presentations on organising for and institutionalising new learning strategies; creating portable, scalable network-based learning tools; the state of the art of technology in primary and secondary schools.

One of the most impressive individual papers was presented by Catherine Manathunga of QUT. She demonstrated an online lecture format that "breaks away from merely uploading lecture material or notes onto the web." Her format integrates the lessons learnt from traditional, paper-based open learning with the interactive capabilities of the web and the advantages of face-to-face classroom sessions. She demonstrated one module of a sociology of education course, designed for 800 first year students. The module consisted of online lecture notes or videos to which students would have to respond to question prompts. Students then bring their answers into face-to-face tutorials for



further discussion. Her website was simple in terms of graphic design, etc., but she had the pedagogy right!!! I am hoping to get access to this website for the purpose of demonstration and modification at my university.

Dr Nancy Hunt

Director

**Teaching & Learning Services
Lincoln University, Canterbury,
New Zealand.**

Snapshot 2

I attended the conference to understand from an academic or teaching and learning perspective the issues arising from the introduction of flexible learning environments, ranging from online environments to the built environment. The papers that were about the physical space and environment such as Jamieson, Trivet and Chalmers, were discussed from the point of view of teaching and learning outcomes. The focus on the built environment from the point of view of learning and teaching in a high technology/changing world, for me, raised a number of important issues. As a university architect, I found the discussions and interest expressed by the delegates in the relationship between the learning environment and educational philosophy, stimulating. It is the sort of discussion I wish to encourage between the designers of the university facilities and the academics.

The broader issues of the development of online modes, learning environments and its impact and pedagogy; the challenge of how it is introduced; the rate of change of the technology and its social impact were addressed in the plenary sessions. However I would have liked more opportunity for discussion about the papers or issues raised.

Thanks for the opportunity to participate in the conference.

Elvis Jeannot

**Planning Manager; Buildings and
Grounds Division Deakin University.**

Snapshot 3

Professionally, the conference provided a good opportunity to compare where QUT stood in comparison with other universities in the move to 'flexible delivery/learning'. The reports from the U of Q and Griffith U. on the progress of their Ipswich and Logan campuses was very valuable as I am involved in the planning of a new 'high tech' building at the Carseldine campus of QUT.

Personally it was a chance to meet up with my ASET colleagues from around Australia. We have been meeting at our biannual conferences since the late 80's. I was also able to learn about the fate of media and staff development units at other universities. There have been lots of organizational changes while some units have been closed.

At all conferences the quality of presentations is uneven. My impression of the sessions that I attended, the quality was about average, some very good some not so great. With so many papers and a conference of only 3 days we did not often have enough time for questions and discussions. Perhaps if we had an extra day with longer sessions there would be more opportunity for debate about papers.

The food was outstanding while the conference dinner was a great night. I had broken a long standing personal rule never to stay in university colleges and after my 3 nights in college at the conference I have decided to never again break my rule. I personally do not enjoy shared bathrooms, no in room TV and no central heating.

In the end both ASET and HERDSA are concerned about teaching and learning issues and the success of the conference proved that.

Geoff Roberts

**Queensland University of Technology,
Brisbane Australia**

Snapshot 4

So many papers, so little time! This was my first opportunity to take part in a flexible learning conference, and there was a smorgasbord of papers that interested me — some from presenters who'd flown halfway round the world for 20 minutes in front of their colleagues. As a teacher who uses online forums as a form of assessment, I particularly appreciated Graham Salter's presentation dealing with online discussion groups (co-authored by Phil Nanlohy and Steve Hansen). I also admired the perspective of Peter Blakey, who cautioned us not to forget the human beings who have to deal with our technological innovations.

Two of the non-academic things I'll also remember fondly about ASET-HERDSA 2000 are the feet and the food. Those coloured feet on the routes between the venues put many a lost, wandering soul back on the right track. As for the food, it was well worth following the feet for. Can't tell you about the conference dinner though, because I didn't stay for that. In the end I couldn't bear the thought of spending a

second night in the dreadful accommodation I'd paid for, and instead opted to tackle the 2-hour drive home after the Tuesday sessions had ended.

Dr Cathy Jenkins

Journalism

**Griffith University, Brisbane,
Australia.**

Snapshot 5

The Conference was supposedly about flexible learning in a flexible society. I would argue that many people attending the conference had disparate views of what flexible learning is and how it should operate, and that the institutions in which most of us teach are rather inflexible or uncomfortable with such changes. I found the diverse meanings of flexible learning somewhat confusing and the attempt to make flexible learning an all encompassing concept reminded me of the confusion over the meaning of sustainability. Ultimately it will mean different things to different people. This will make consistent implementation difficult and institutional support diffuse. However support for change is critical and change needs to be supported across degree programmes and not isolated into "hot spots" of activity. The hard reality of reduced government funding and industrial uneasiness in the university sector remained unacknowledged and the increasing difficulty of being innovative, doing more and more with less and less resources and being "flexible" in an increasingly "doom and gloom" environment was not tackled head on at this conference. As a practitioner I needed strategies that will help me cope with the changing climate in higher education, and they were sadly lacking in the conference presentations. Also more emphasis on evaluation and whether altered teaching strategies or approaches have resulted in better learning or increased student competencies needs to be confronted. The instruments with which we now evaluate student learning and competencies are crude and blunt. I felt the conference offered very limited critique of teaching and learning and its effectiveness. Another area to develop.

Dr Lisa Alexandra LOBRY de BRUYN
**School of Rural Science and Natural
Resources**

**University of New England, Armidale,
Australia**

Creating futures for a new millennium

First Year in Higher Education: 4th Pacific Rim Conference

5-7 July 2000, QUT Brisbane Australia

Snapshots were invited from a number of delegates in an attempt to reflect the different perspectives of the conference communities (ie from a range of disciplines, geographical location, roles in education and length of involvement with the association, society or conference community) and compiled by **Dr Carol Bowie** (Griffith Institute for Higher Education, Griffith University).

The theme for the 2000 conference was *Creating Futures for a New Millennium*. The conference was designed to provide a forum to address a wide range of issues connected with the first year in Higher education, including innovative programs, research findings and course design / concepts helping students to be more successful learners. The keynote speakers included

- Professor Sohail Inayatullah, Professor of Futures Studies, IMC, UNESCO Chair, Centre for European Studies, University of Trier, Germany
- Professor Penny Boumelha, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) at The University of Adelaide, South Australia
- Professor Ian Lowe, Honorary Professor of Science, Technology and Society at Griffith University
- Dr Charles Glassick, Senior Associate, Carnegie Foundation

The conference website address is:
<http://www.qut.edu.au/daa/asdu/fye/home.htm>

The next Pacific Rim Conference will be held in Hawaii 9-13 July 2001. For further information email J.Donaldson@qut.edu.au.

Snapshot 1

This fourth conference in the series continued the task of reviewing research and practice on the first year of undergraduate study through: 4 pre-conference workshops; 4 keynote speeches; 58 refereed papers and 7 posters. Any conference participant charts a pathway according to their interests, and my background in educational development may explain this conference snapshot.

Headlines: Craig McInnis and his colleagues were funded to reproduce their 1995 survey of student experiences of the first year learning environment with their report due for release soon. Building a data set over time whilst responding to changes such as patterns of paid employment for full-time students or responses to information technology in teaching, provides FYE specialists with the research base for policy, practice and new research.

Topics and Themes: The FYE concerns: attrition; transition and support programs; course design and teaching practice; supplemental instruction; cultural diversity; and student writing problems were all represented. Of the 58 papers, 20 dealt with strategies and innovations in teaching and learning, indicating a substantial interest amongst lecturers and educational developers. The future, defined in both general and scholarly terms, provided the keynote theme and gave participants the sense of wider context for their specialism that transforms a conference into a learning community.

Futures: Hopefully the end of conference questionnaires will steer the organisers of future conferences, but in the meantime here is my wish list. First, a focus on developing creativity from first year – essential for lifelong learning, sustainable globalisation, and a renewed sense of community. Secondly a deeper alliance between academic and student support staff – students need both groups – and their different ways of knowing the student experience are key factors in meeting the needs of first year students.

Bill Johnston,
Centre for Academic Practice,
University of Strathclyde, Scotland.
(b.johnston@strath.ac.uk)

Snapshot 2

At QUT in July we were welcomed with the sunshine, the rain forest gardens, exquisite old buildings, and walkways over the jungle into Z Block, where the community buzzed, the networking raged, and the collegiality blossomed over coffee, in class rooms, in the City Hall, or at dinner on the Brisbane River where the food and the view were only outdone by the Beat of that Band!

Sohail Inayatullah, keynote speaker and peripatetic global futurist, who works in three countries, invited us to create our futures with a multicultural perspective. He reminded us that love is a way we construct our world, and that we have responsibility for our own spirituality. The east is largely ignored in the current frame of modernity. He illustrated the many ways of knowing that are

overridden by western thinking, and compared a western metaphor of the future (a state-of-the-art spaceship heading out into unlimited possibilities), with an eastern one (a blindfolded passenger in the back seat of a car being driven to an unknown destination). Every country has its tyranny, and each country creates an imagined past which then becomes an idealised future. We can create new futures by sharing our cultures in an effort to take the culture out of its dogmas. Dogmas that currently oppress higher education will result in a convenience university, one that survives on the net, teaches by distance education, uses a just-in-time approach, and awards no tenure. For those interested in further reading re neo-humanism education and futures, Sohail recommends *New Renaissance* at www.ru.org or *Futures*, the journal.

Craig McInnis stimulated considerable workshop discussion on benchmarking practice, in addition to providing critical in-press trends from his First Year Experience comparison 1994-1999, and a benchmarker's guide to obtaining efficient evidence of outcomes. He also raised the need to develop student-friendly employers who are more amenable to adaptable hours that recognise faculty timetables. Sue Spinks propounded the need for quality informational feedback from lecturer to student and provided useful working examples. Tim Moore, setting out from a perspective of both vertical and horizontal student transition, presented a web-based literacy support program as having some initial constraints but good potential. Patricia Cartwright outlined TULIP (Teaching Undergraduate Literacy in Programs), a CUTSD funded program, where critical literacy is embedded into the content of the Education curriculum, and where effective outcomes have been achieved through journaling. And Jane Gunn-Lewis questioned the use of IELTS and TOEFL as accurate predictors of tertiary performance for resident mature-age learners.

Barbara Hilliard
Academic Skills Co-ordinator
Australian Catholic University



Snapshot 3

Firstly, Queensland in July is definitely preferable to Victoria! After an absence of five years, it was great to see the extent of the riverside development in Brisbane and travelling to QUT by River Cat for the Craig McInnis Workshop on 5 July was definitely the way to go. A packed room listened to the results of Craig's continuing research into study patterns of first years, which, as usual, were meticulous and interesting. Oh that we could do as well with our benchmarking activity!

Thursday 6 July was the start of the conference proper and shock horror! Were we being called upon to play party games so early in the morning? It was challenging to find answers from members of my blue group to the twelve questions in five minutes. I'm not used to quizzing my Dean on whether he has an unusual interest, talent or hobby! And what is "hongii" anyway? Activity two proved to be a winner and I have to thank the organisers for unknowingly putting me in touch with two interesting colleagues from Edith Cowan and Swinburne.

The Keynote Addresses were thought provoking and varied, each speaker bringing to the audience apposite personal experiences to enhance their viewpoint. As ever, concurrent sessions over the two days provided the greatest difficulty in decision-making, as there was a wealth of "show and tell" and research from which to choose. It is evident that Australia wide, transition to higher education is being taken seriously

and universities are collaborating to develop programs of benefit to first year students of all ages. Maybe we are finally looking in the light for what we need to do?

Karen Postill
Institute of Disability Studies
Deakin University, Melbourne,
Australia.

Snapshot 4

What most impressed me about this conference was the inclusion of an indigenous perspective in the first day's welcome. I've attended at least a dozen professional gatherings in Australia, and this is the first time I've ever heard aboriginal views expressed. An interesting contrast to my experiences here in New Zealand, where it seems every conference I attend includes a Maori powhiri.

The keynote speakers were quite stimulating and gave thought-provoking presentations, however none of them were speaking on topics directly related to the first year experience. The conference papers were generally of good quality. Retaining first year students seems to be a high priority across Australasia. I was struck by the number of presentations that highlighted the importance of peer networks in helping students adjust to and succeed in university study. There were three that I found particularly relevant to my university's drive to maximise student retention. They were:

A Peer Assistance Support Scheme (PASS) for First Year Core Subjects.
Judith Watson, University of New South

Wales. I loved the PASS acronym! In all three core subjects supported by this scheme, students who have participated in PASS regularly obtain better academic results than other students....a significant positive relationship between final grades and the frequency of PASS attendance. Qualitative results show these students also are more satisfied with their university experience.

A Jump Start. Linda Thies, Deakin University. A multidisciplinary team approach consisting of three working parties (Transition/Orientation, Teaching/Learning, and Residential Life) which coordinate their efforts in a University-wide initiative designed to support first year students. (They had a great brochure for distribution to entry students.)

Learning Teams and Learning Diaries in First Year Business Studies. Bill Johnston, University of Strathclyde, Scotland. This paper details an interesting first year subject that is designed to be team-based and integrative of five key skill areas: computing, communication, team working, numeracy, and problem solving. Students are assessed based on their team accomplishments and their individual reflections recorded in learning diaries. Results indicate not only improved academic performance, but also the positive benefits of establishing supportive social networks.

Dr Nancy Hunt
Director - Teaching & Learning
Services
Lincoln University, Canterbury, New
Zealand.

Twelfth International Conference on

Assessing Quality in Higher Education: AQHE – 2000

RMIT Storey Hall, RMIT University, Melbourne, June 28-30, 2000

G.Srikanithan

The Conference Details:

The Centre for Management Quality Research at the RMIT University hosted the conference in collaboration with two international institutions:

- Planning and Institutional Improvement, Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis, USA, and
- Caledonian Conferences, Glasgow Caledonian University, Scotland, UK.

The conference is the 12th in the series of Annual International Conventions in the area, and the second

time it was scheduled in Australia (the last one was held in Brisbane in '96). The other venues have been virtually around the world, in Europe, America and Asia. Last year's conference was scheduled in Manchester, UK. The conference attracted 130 senior academics and administrators from around the world. While there was a predominance of Australasian delegates (about 50%), due to 'home ground' advantage, the rest of the numbers were evenly distributed among other continents of the world. There were significant representations from South Africa (12), USA (15) and UK

(18). The representation from Asia (12) was well distributed among all the broad regions of the continent.

The main objectives of the conference were to:

- To bring together a group of Australasian academics and administrators with their international compatriots, to develop a new awareness in the area of excellence in education,
- Provide renewed inspiration to the University staff to maintain the momentum for new innovations.



The Conference Programme:

AQHE-2000 primarily focussed on global trends and issues. Approximately 50 contributed papers and workshops were presented the delegates from Australia, UK, USA, Asia and Africa. The conference explored eight major themes centred around the following four key areas which influence educational quality:

- Development of a quality system,
- Staff development,
- Graduate employability, and
- Institutional performance.

A number of leading international experts in the area of Quality in Higher Education addressed the conference as keynote speakers:

- Professor Lee Harvey, Director, Centre for Research into Quality, University of Central England, and Editor 'Quality in Higher Education': The "Graduates Work Project"- Implications for HE Quality
- Mr Stuart Hamilton, Executive Director, Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee (AVCC): A New Model for Quality Assurance in Australia
- Marvin W Peterson, Professor of Higher Education, University of Michigan: Strengthening Institutional Support for Effective Student Assessment: The US Experience
- Professor Paul Ramsden, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning), University of Sydney: Strategic Management & University Performance

While it is almost impossible to attempt to capture the variety of themes of discussions in the course of the conference, there was a significant difference in emphasis with respect to the last time it met in Australia (in '96 at Brisbane). The overriding concern at that time was quality assurance. Now the debate has widened somewhat towards issues of institutional effectiveness issues both here and abroad. One of the highlights was a Panel Session which featured a case study of collaboration among five major Australian Technological Universities. Their topic: "Benchmarking for improvement, innovation and quality - an ATN (Aust. Technologies Network) case study", was echoed in a number of presentations.

Even the 'New Model for Quality Assurance in Australia', as per Stuart Hamilton, from AVCC, will emphasise institutional innovation, rather than documented procedures. Many papers talked about implementing Baldrige Awards Criteria in Universities. It was all climaxed by the inspiring addresses by Prof. Ramsden and Prof. Harvey. Ramsden talked about how 'Strategic management' will be the determinant of universities' performance in future, while Harvey emphasised that the community's perception of the quality of the 'Graduates Work' will play a key role in future.

Professor Peterson's address blended well with the emerging theme emphasising 'New Approaches' when he talked about getting away from the tired old ways of assessing learning to getting into 'Effective Student Assessment'.

In the usual tradition, the conference programme followed an overall format with a mixture of keynote addresses, parallel contributed papers, workshops. The interactive work by Interest Groups which met several times during the conference allowed the delegates to discuss their 'Current realities' in the context of 'Emerging trends'. All this stimulated a dynamic learning environment for all participants.

'Other' Attractions:

Conferences now a days can ill afford to get away from celebrating 'social' side of the congregation of 'like minds' from far corners of the globe. On the first day the delegates experienced a 'bonding' exercise through the Melbourne's own 'Play Back Theatre' which dramatised the personal stories and experiences of many delegates. A climax was reached when a Kiwi delegate's experience in the jungles of Africa was dramatised. All the delegates readily responded to the call to portray the wild animals, and the roar in the hall tested the acoustic limits of the ultra modern Storey Hall auditorium!

During the second day's dinner the activities reached a 'new height', when the delegates headed for the 46th floor of ANZ tower in Collins Street. There, in the majestic Redmond Barry Room of the Victorian State Government, the Minister for Post-compulsory, Education, Hon. Lynne Kosky M.P. hosted a dinner in honour of the delegates. Feasting on the grand views of Melbourne all around was

as important to the delegates as enjoying the fare.

There was a brief cultural interlude in the middle of the packed second day's activity, when the delegates took time out to visit the modern art exposition of German Artists in the RMIT Art Gallery, a part of the Storey Hall Complex. Many were convinced that intrigues of modern art could at least be as complex as quality systems in Higher Education!

In Conclusion...

The organisers were satisfied that their primary purpose in bringing the Australasian and international delegates together to develop a 'focussed dialogue' on the trends and directions in Higher Education was well served. Many of the delegates were resolved to make it to the antipode when the Conference circuit moves to Glasgow next year.

How to Know more about Conference Transactions?

The organisers have addressed this question as well. A Compact Disc currently under compilation, which will have a basic record of all the keynote addresses, current (and, in a number of cases updated post conference) versions of papers, brief reports of interest groups and even some 'interesting' photographs of the conference. The cost would be \$50. Please contact the author if you are interested.

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Research in Higher Education Progress Reports

International students as learners: perceptions of students and staff at one Australian university

Susan Jones, Margaret Robertson and Martin Line

International students comprise an increasingly significant proportion of the student population in Australian higher education. They come from different cultural backgrounds and with different expectations of the teaching and learning process. Mismatches between the expectations of these students and the staff teaching them may lead to problems, or at least, to a less than optimal start to their Australian educational experience. Ballard & Clanchy (1991)'s excellent little book provided many of us with an accessible synthesis of ideas on teaching students from overseas. However there is still room for further exploration: in particular the voices of the students themselves need to be heard. Here I summarise the results of a two year study undertaken at the University of Tasmania: HERDSA conference attendees may have heard one of us speak at the Society's conferences in 1998, 1999 & 2000, while our paper on the first phase of the study has just been published (Robertson et al. 2000).

Our project aimed to identify and demystify major teaching and learning issues for international students at the University of Tasmania. The impetus for the study came partly from a realisation that some staff felt inadequate and without support for dealing effectively with growing numbers of international students. Like Samuelowicz (1987) we felt that it was vital to invite comments both from the students themselves, and from the staff teaching them. In the first phase of the study, we used the Delphi technique (Whitman, 1990) to survey both students and staff. This technique is designed to develop a consensus view through an iterative survey procedure. It provides a compromise between a qualitative study and the reductionist approach implicit in quantitative analyses. First, participants (staff and students separately) were asked for their opinions on five open-ended questions; their written responses were then grouped into like categories. The second round asked participants to rank the summarised issues in order of importance to them. After a third summary and ranking round,

a reasonable consensus was achieved.

The initial questions to students were:

1. What difficulties, if any, have you experienced as an international student during this course?
2. Which of the problems have been resolved? Please list these and the solutions.
3. Which of the problems are ongoing?
4. What, if any, racial discrimination have you observed at the University?
5. Is there anything else of relevance that you would like to tell us?

Staff were asked a similar set of questions but question 1 sought information on their difficulties in teaching international students of non-English speaking backgrounds.

As you might expect, the areas of difficulty identified in the first round of the surveys included experiences both within the university and in relating to the general community. However, as a group, the international students show an almost passionate desire to be accepted, to 'fit in' and to overcome the hurdles of lifestyle changes. Specific problems noted by both staff and students included language difficulties, 'inappropriate' study methods, difficulty with independent learning, isolation and problems mixing with local students. The staff who reflected on these issues showed a deep desire to support the students, with high levels of agreement on the teaching strategies needed for improved outcomes. However while the students saw their limited English language skills as the root of their study problems, the staff were most concerned about more fundamental problems with learning styles: international students were perceived as having a poor concept of 'multiple answers', poor skills in critical thinking and analysis, and as being reluctant to engage in discussion. However it is important to report that some staff commented that they found it difficult to assign ranks to the problems identified in the first round of the survey, pointing out that it is not possible to generalise about any group of students.

There was another facet to the student responses. While the teachers focussed on ways in which they could help their international students adjust to university learning, the students themselves revealed a broader picture. Homesickness, monetary pressures, cultural differences, perceptions of racism within the broader community all contribute to the stresses experienced by these students as they make the adjustment, not only to a new way of learning, but to being part of a new community. The message here is that, even with the range of support services provided by the university, the 'whole student' approach seemed to be the missing element.

In the second phase of the study we focussed on identifying practical strategies to ameliorate some of these problems. Through one-to-one interviews we sought to encourage dialogue on the personal experiences and views of international students and the academic staff who teach them at this university. Finding students willing to be interviewed was a major hurdle, but those who did participate were open and frank about sharing their experiences. They were very aware of cultural differences in teaching and learning styles and understood the need to adapt, and to become responsible for their own learning. However, they clearly needed help in making this adjustment. This may not require a great effort on the lecturers' behalf: examples of such help include more explicit explanations and modelling of assignment requirements, or a slower pace of lecturing, with careful repetition of major points, and provision of written notes as back-up material.

Again language problems were brought forward as a major hurdle, highlighting the need for more effective bridging programs, both before and after arrival in Australia. Indeed Coley (1999) has already suggested that in many cases international students may meet the formal English language prerequisites of Australian universities without being adequately prepared for study. The University of Tasmania has recently



introduced a Foundation Studies program (fast track 24 weeks; extended program 34 weeks) in which academic studies in a chosen area are combined with English language training.

Many of the students we interviewed commented on the opportunities for personal growth during their time in Tasmania: many come here specifically to experience a different culture, and they place a high value on such experiences. It is vital that the host institutions understand and accommodate this. As one staff member commented, the University has a responsibility to make sure that international students are made to feel welcome. Several staff also stressed the educational and cultural benefits to our local students of having international students at the university.

Finally many of the perceived problems of international students were also identified by staff as being relevant to local students. This emphasises the need to view our international students as representing one end of a continuum regarding learning styles and cognitive skills. Schemes set in place to assist

international students as learners will inevitably be of benefit also to local students. Teaching in a student-centred way and encouraging appropriate staff development will contribute to a general increase in awareness of effective teaching and learning strategies across an institution.

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Honours study at Flinders University: perspectives of students and coordinators

Cathy Hawes

The Honours year is a significant transition stage for students in terms of work demands and expectations and also in the changed status from undergraduates to potential postgraduates. Students are expected to exhibit a degree of independence and negotiate a different relationship with staff from that of an undergraduate. The Honours year tests their initiative, independence and self discipline as well as their scholarly potential.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experience of Honours at Flinders University from the perspectives of both students and academic staff coordinators who manage the students' programs. The Coordinator manages the Honours program within the Department or School, which generally covers one discipline area. Some may also supervise Honours students. Ethical approval was gained from the relevant university committee.

A student questionnaire was designed to explore all aspects of Honours study. Questions covered basic demographics, decision to do Honours, problems encountered, supervision, information, support at department, university and personal levels, withdrawal, the impact of employment and family commitments on study and advice to future Honours

students. The questionnaire was posted to all enrolled Honours students at Flinders in mid 1999.

Data Collection

Of 441 enrolled in Semester 1 1999, 54.8% were female. The overall response to the questionnaire was 40.5% (n=178). Their age ranged from 19 to over 45 and 71% were full time.

Interviews were conducted with twenty students who indicated their willingness to be interviewed on the survey.

A separate questionnaire was designed for Honours coordinators. They were asked about their length of experience, why students did Honours, problems faced by students, quality of supervision, their knowledge about Honours students' work and family commitments, students' knowledge of support available, resources provided by their program, their view of the role. They were also asked if they were willing to be interviewed. Questionnaires were posted to all coordinators (n=32) in mid year. The response rate was 84%, of which 21 were male and 6 female. The length of experience as Honours coordinator varied enormously-from 6 months to 29 years! However, 44% had between two and five years' experience.

The interview allowed the coordinators (n=8) to talk about their philosophy of the Honours program and their feelings about their role as coordinator and explore issues in depth.

Questionnaires and interviews of students and coordinators were obtained from all four Faculties at Flinders, viz. Social Sciences, Education, Theology, Humanities & Law, Health Sciences and Science & Engineering.

Study Findings: Students

The major reasons cited by the students for doing Honours were to improve job opportunities and interest in the subject. Women students were only half as likely as men to have had academic staff members suggest Honours study to them. The students perceived many worthwhile aspects of Honours study viz. intellectual stimulation, research opportunity, personal fulfilment, job opportunities and a stepping stone to a research career. Most felt that the decision to do Honours was the right one.

However, problems were experienced by about half the students. Women were more likely to report a lack of confidence and stress. Men found time management a problem, while older students were more likely to report that other commitments were a problem. Women,



in particular, were much more likely to have employment and family commitments that placed significant restrictions on their time for study. Many students felt that they hadn't been given enough information about what was expected of them.

Overall, the supervision experience of the students was positive. The part time students, however, were slightly less positive than the full time students. The most often reported problems with supervisors were unclear expectations and accessibility, followed by poor communication. Women and younger students were more likely to report that their supervisor was difficult to access, while men were more likely to indicate a lack of interest in them by their supervisor.

Students stayed in the program despite the problems because they didn't want to be seen as quitting, they received encouragement from their supervisor and family, they found personal satisfaction in continuing and took pride in achieving their goals.

Support from family and friends was important; family members, for example acted as field assistants, took over housework and proof read assignments. Some students lacked this backup where the family could not understand the amount of time needed for study.

Students' relationship with the academic staff of their Department or unit changed during the Honours year. They felt that they belonged more and that the staff listened to them and took an interest in them. Some felt that they were 'in between'-no longer in the undergraduate

group and yet not a postgraduate. Some, however, didn't feel any sense of belonging at all.

Students found that Honours was 'worthwhile, extremely challenging', an 'enjoyable course', 'extremely stimulating' and an 'excellent opportunity'. Others found it a more negative experience-felt 'miserable and depressed', experienced a 'lack of communication', and a 'lack of coordination', 'felt isolated and alienated' and found it 'time consuming and stressful'.

Students enthusiastically expressed advice for new students! This included an exhortation to start early, to be prepared for a lot of work, to work steadily and to keep in touch with their supervisor and other students for advice in solving problems.

Study Findings: Coordinators

The perception of Honours study differed in part between the students and the academic staff coordinators. The Honours coordinators were much more likely than the students to state that students studied Honours out of interest in the subject and to pursue a research career. Coordinators believe that the major problems faced by students were time management and other commitments. These were given lower priority by the students.

The coordinators were asked to rate the qualities of a good supervisor; good communication, being encouraging and accessibility were the three top qualities. Interestingly, these were cited as problem

areas by the students. Students were not as positive about their supervisors as the coordinators were.

The coordinators also had a different perspective from the students on resources. For several resource categories, all the coordinators said that they were available, yet the students had not found this. The coordinators saw their role as the students' advocate. Several expressed their enjoyment of the role, despite the problems in dealing with some students and supervisors. For example, one stated: 'I learn a lot from the students'; 'it is a privilege'. However, they found it 'administratively complex' and 'a steep learning curve' with 'no formal training so I had to muddle through'.

Conclusion

The Honours program at Flinders presents a challenge for students. Academic staff, Honours coordinators and supervisors alike, can ease the transition by being aware of the issues students face. Students can feel isolated, stressed, fear failure, may be unsupported by family and lack information about what is expected. They may have heavy commitments of employment and family responsibilities. Students need strategies to interact with their supervisor, to build up support networks with other students and to use university resources.

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A package deal: some pros and cons of U.S. introductory psychology textbooks

Helen Pennington

Introductory psychology courses at New Zealand universities are typically based on U.S. textbooks and their ancillary materials. As so many students take these courses, and as information received earliest tends to have the greatest influence on attitudes, it seems likely that U.S. introductory psychology textbooks leave a lasting impression on many New Zealand university students, whether or not the students go on to take further psychology courses.

Because I teach a large introductory psychology course, using a U.S. textbook "package", I became interested in investigating these textbooks. I began the research project in the usual way by reviewing the published literature, and

found it to be fairly extensive but patchy. Most of the journal articles deal with the textbooks' treatment of some specific topic, which could be anything from Pavlov's apparatus to parapsychology. Several articles examine quantitative or structural features, such as length, number of chapters, or sources cited most frequently. A few authors have written on broad qualitative aspects of the textbooks, or on issues such as students' views on various textbook pedagogical aids.

Several major themes can be identified in this literature. U.S. introductory psychology textbooks are prone to oversimplification and inaccuracy, but newer textbooks may be better in these respects. There are striking

uniformities in the textbooks' main structural features, but a lack of consensus as to key topics, authors, or sources. The textbooks contain too much material.

On the basis of my literature review, I identified some aspects of U.S. introductory textbooks which had not been studied fully, recently, or indeed at all. In choosing which of these aspects to investigate, I took into account their importance, textbook authors' claims to have covered them especially well, and my own interests. Using a straightforward content analysis approach, I have searched and followed up textbook index entries, examined specific chapters and sections, and analysed features such as



special questions or discussion sections. In each part of the project, I have used a convenience sample of about 10 recently published textbooks. The sample, which has been gradually updated from one part of the project to another, always includes a number of textbooks well-known to teachers of introductory psychology.

In one part of the project, I looked at the textbooks' coverage of cognitive aspects of ageing (Pennington, 1999), choosing this topic because I also teach in the area of adult development and ageing. I found that the textbooks varied considerably in terms of sources cited and specific topics covered. For instance, no source was cited in as many as half the books, and nearly 90% of sources were cited in only one book. Some topics which are standard in textbooks on adult development and ageing (topics such as intelligence, memory in general, and cross-sectional versus longitudinal designs) were included in all or nearly all the textbooks. But other mainstream topics (such as working memory, slowing of information processing, implications of training studies, and laboratory versus real-life cognitive performance) appeared in half or fewer of the textbooks. On the other hand, when compared with those from an earlier study (Whitbourne & Hulicka, 1990), my results suggest that the coverage of cognitive aspects of ageing in introductory textbooks has become somewhat more comprehensive and well-balanced in recent years.

In another part of the project I looked at the textbooks' promotion of critical thinking (CT). Virtually all contemporary introductory psychology textbooks claim, in their prefaces, to make a special point of fostering CT. They typically say that they do it through a combination of an integrated approach (modelling CT in the way material is presented throughout the text) and through special components within each chapter. The most common components mentioned are various kinds of special questions and discussions. As I have a particular interest in developmental psychology, I examined all the special CT components in the human development chapters of my sample of textbooks. I focused on the kinds of thinking which these components seem to require of the student, partly because this was not the focus of the most relevant recent article (Griggs, Jackson, Marek, & Christopher, 1998). I found the quality of these components to be very mixed. Some of the special questions, in particular, are decidedly dubious. Their main deficiencies include: lack of suggested answers (either explicitly supplied, or embedded elsewhere in the book), vagueness, and failure to require anything

more than practical applications or value judgements. A report on this part of the project is to be published (Pennington, in press).

The most recent part of my project evaluates the textbooks' claims to emphasize cultural diversity. In contrast to the most relevant recently published study (Hogben & Waterman, 1997), which looked broadly at the textbooks' treatment of various kinds of diversity, I concentrated on the coverage of specific cultural diversity topics, and on the extent to which a cultural diversity perspective is applied to certain broader topics. I found considerable variability in coverage between textbooks and between issues. Some topics, such as cultural variations in the meanings of self and abnormality, appear in virtually all the textbooks, but other arguably equally important matters are covered in only a few. In assessing the appropriateness of the textbooks' coverage, I compared it with what cross-cultural psychologists themselves say should be included. (See Hill, 2000; Markus, Kitayama, & Heiman, 1996). The match is not very good. Some topics - such as Ekman's work on facial expression of emotion - are over-emphasized. Others - such as research methods, and cross-cultural differences in attributional biases - are typically overlooked. There seems, predictably, to be a strong emphasis on straightforward concrete issues. Even when more thought-provoking themes are introduced, they tend to be accompanied by rather simplistic examples. For instance, the issue of cross-cultural differences in the meaning of abnormality is typically illustrated by photographs of people wearing striking tattoos or jewellery, or engaging in esoteric rituals. This kind of approach is likely to reinforce the unfortunate perception that culture is something strange and exotic (Hill, 2000). I have found cultural diversity themes to be integrated rather weakly with other textbook material, in that there are many missed opportunities for making useful links between specific topics and important cross-cultural themes discussed elsewhere in the text. For instance, although all the textbooks include the theories of Piaget and Kohlberg, only about half of them discuss the cross-cultural universality of these theories.

I intend to investigate these textbooks further. As well as looking more thoroughly at their handling of diversity issues, I would like to look at the validity of some of their other claimed special emphases, their coverage of some topics in developmental psychology, and the whole issue of integrative themes.

Inevitably, most teachers of large introductory psychology courses will continue to use U.S.-style textbook packages. These packages do have considerable practical advantages, particularly in the form of their ancillary materials, such as study guides, electronic test banks and state-of-the-art resources for instructors. The literature suggests, though, that the textbooks should be used with caution: the lecturer needs to consider carefully how best to supplement them and counteract their deficiencies. The common problems of erratic and unbalanced coverage, oversimplification and inaccuracy, can be minimised by careful textbook selection, and by providing students with additional material. My own preliminary findings prompt me towards the view of Blumenthal (1991) that the most fundamental weakness of these textbooks is their tendency to present topics in an incoherent catalogue-like way, rather than in the context of integrative themes. The lecturer can try to mitigate this problem, in the classroom and in student assignments, by making additional explicit links among the textbook's various issues and topics.

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Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Kerry Chamberlain, of the School of Psychology, Massey University, for his helpful comments on this report.

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Work in Progress

The collective consciousness of information technology research

In the relatively new field of *IT research*, rapid expansion and fragmentation of the territory has led to different perceptions of many dimension of the field. The aim of this project is to investigate dimensions of the collective consciousness of information technology (IT) research. The present study is a preliminary exploration of differences in how IT researchers, see:

- research, and particularly *IT research*
- the information technology research field, or territory. What are the features of the field? What are its boundaries?
- The information technology research object. How do IT researchers see the 'things' underpinning their research? How do they collectively constitute or

'shape' the object of IT research? What kinds of shared understandings do they have, of what it is that they research? How do their understandings differ?

- The significance and value of IT research projects.

Variation in ways of seeing these different facets of IT research is essential to the development of the field. Understanding this variation will provide important insights into the expanding and changing nature of IT research. These insights will be of interest to all IT researchers as creators of that domain, including new researchers being inducted into the domain.

Researchers Dr Christine Bruce, Professor Binh Pham, Faculty of

Information Technology, Queensland University of Technology.

Funding Body: Seed funding for the broader investigation has been provided by the Information Systems Management Research Centre. A separate study into varying ways of seeing the significance and value of IT research has been funded by a QUT Scholarship in the Professions Grant \$19,902.

Keywords: information technology research, researchers' collective consciousness, research object(s).

Contact: Christine Bruce, School of Information Systems, Queensland University of Technology, 2 George St, Brisbane, Qld 4000. E-mail: c.bruce@qut.edu.au.

Conference Announcement

The conference "Effective Teaching and Learning at University" will take place at the University of Queensland on 9 and 10 November 2000.

This is a conference for university teachers, with particular focus on effective teaching and learning Special Science Based Stream: There will be a special stream focused on

teaching and learning in science, including biological science, engineering, health science, medicine and other areas relying substantially on physical, biological or applied sciences.

Detailed information is available on the CONFERENCE WEB SITE —
http://www.tedi.uq.edu.au/conferences/teach_conference00/



Book Review

Innovations in Science Teaching 2

Edited by Ivan Moore and Kate Exley. 1999. Birmingham: Staff and Educational Development Association. ISBN: 1 902435 04 4. (SEDA Paper 107-204pp, £14. Order through: office@seda.demon.co.uk)

Reviewed by John Dearn

Academic staff developers might want to argue that improving teaching must involve changing the beliefs that academic staff have about the nature of teaching and learning. However, this approach can sometimes sit uncomfortably with the demands of practicing classroom teachers for how-to-do-it recipes free of educational jargon.

This collection of UK case studies sits squarely in the second camp. Only nine of the 27 cases that comprise this booklet contain any references to the literature, so do not expect any in-depth analysis of problems and issues related to science teaching. What we have instead is a useful collection of innovations in science teaching that are well worth a look.

The 27 case studies are grouped under 6 headings with biology well represented: Environmental and Life Sciences, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Human Sciences, and Science Education. A particular feature of the collection is that the case studies are indexed under three headings: *Characteristics of the Teaching and Learning Strategy*, *The Problem Tackled* and *Transferable Skills* and

Competences Developed. This means that one can identify projects that, for example, embody group work or those that attempt to develop in students time management skills.

The usefulness of this approach is limited, though. For example, the case study entitled *Use of the Internet* in the *Study of Environmental Issues* by a group from the University of Southampton, claims to tackle the problems of increasing group size, the part-time student, the relevance of the topic, teaching overload, staff assessment, financial resources, human resources, physical resources and the quality of contact time. At the same time it is claimed to develop in students initiative, independence, management/leadership, time management, planning and organisation, written communication, finding information and information technology. Ambitious claims indeed.

As might be expected, many of the projects take a student centred approach with a focus on actively engaging students in their learning e.g. *Teaching statistics through a project orientated approach*, *Problem-based approach to experimental design*, *'Discovery labs' in the chemistry laboratory* and *Using problem solving exercises and tutorials to facilitate students centred learning*. It

was good to see attention given to what transferable skills and competences the innovations were attempting to develop in students, perhaps a legacy of Dearing.

As in all descriptions of teaching innovations the weakest element is that of evaluation. All the case studies have a section on evaluation though, as might be expected, what is being evaluated differs depending on the project. In some projects it is accessibility to learning resources, in others it is whether the students were positive about the learning environment. These are, of course, legitimate issues, but the basic question of whether the innovation actually improved learning outcomes remains elusive in most cases.

No doubt many will find the rather scant accounts frustrating. While not quite in the 53 ideas or the 2000 tips class, the case studies each occupy just 2 or 3 pages which can be somewhat limiting if one wants to explore some of the issues in depth. Nevertheless, there is enough here to "provide inspiration and guidance" as claimed in the introduction.

John Dearn is Director of the Centre for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Scholarship at the University of Canberra

Innovations in Teaching English and Textual Studies

Edited by Simon Avery, Cordelia Bryan and Gina Wisker. 1999. Birmingham: Staff and Educational Development Association. ISBN: 1 902435 11 7 (SEDA Paper 108. £16. Order through: office@seda.demon.co.uk)

Reviewed by Gillian Whitlock

The review by Gillian Whitlock has had to be held over to the next edition because of space limitations.



News of HERDSA Branches

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Annual General Meeting

The AGM was held on 3 February, during the Teaching and Learning Forum, which is a collaborative effort by the WA universities, and was run Curtin this year. Eighteen members attended. New office bearers were elected for 2000 to 2002. The committee consists of 10 members – three each from Curtin and Murdoch and two each from ECU and UWA.

Committee membership (2000-2002)

Jennie Bickmore-Brand (Murdoch)

Stuart Bunt (UWA)

Geoff Cooper (UWA) Treasurer

Barbara de la Harpe (Curtin)

Richard Fuller (ECU)

Romana Pospisil (Murdoch)

Alex Radloff (Curtin) Past President and Secretary

Heather Sparrow (ECU)

Jan Thomas (Murdoch) President

Marjan Zadnik (Curtin)

Seminars

As in the past, each of the universities is taking turns to organise seminars. Details of seminars planned for the rest of the year are listed.

Other initiatives

Jan Thomas sent a letter to each of the WA Vice Chancellors, describing the benefits of HERDSA membership to teaching staff and requesting that each University fund a one-year HERDSA membership for academic staff who are successful in gaining university Teaching Excellence Awards. So far, Professor Lance Twomey, Curtin VC has agreed to provide membership for approximately 10 award winners at Curtin.

Stuart Bunt has undertaken to develop the WA Branch HERDSA web page

Western Australian Branch Seminars

Seminars

Details of seminars

planned for the rest

of the year.

September

Professor Peter Elbow,

University of Massachusetts, Amherst,

Topic to be announced.

October

Panel presentation on Postgraduate Supervision.

Dr. Irene Styles, Murdoch and Prof Rob Frazer, UWA.

November

Prof Lance Twomey, V-C, Curtin University.

Vision for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.

VICTORIA

The branch is planning a state conference in November 2000 with Professor Veronica Brady as the key presenter/stimulator. Further details from Di Challis, diana@deakin.edu.au

Special Interest Groups

Special Interest groups are designed to bring together those who have a common interest to share ideas, report progress on projects and where possible to work on collaborative projects. They are by nature temporary, springing up where there is a need but being wound up when interest wanes. They need enthusiastic and active participation to make them work. Some of the HERDSA groups have been inactive for sometime so it is encouraging to read that the Student Learning group is working on a number of ideas to keep itself alive in the coming year.

ADSIG

Academic Developers

Barbara Grant (The University of Auckland) convened ADSIG for the second year running. Erika Martens (La Trobe) <e.martens@latrobe.edu.au> continued as the list owner. The list currently stands at around 140 members. She supplied this report on the activities of the list for the past year.

Our main activity has been the seeded discussions on the list. Stanley Frielić sowed the first seed in September last year, with a reflection on two papers from the HERDSA Conference in July - Lee Andresens's "For Earth's Sake! Just what are we teaching?" and Melanie Purcell's "Imperatives for unbiased holistic education". Shortly after, the latest Eidos surfaced for a pre-publication debate. The topic was, broadly speaking, whither academic development. In early February this year, Eidos came back on the scene asking: "Is Management the Evil Empire? And if so, what can Managers - or anyone - do about it?". The last seed, in March, was Erika Martens' "New technologies, stress and quality of learning". This seed got many

responses - it's obviously an issue on many people's minds. However, overall contributions have been patchy and the spread of contributors narrow.

The list is also being used for enquiries for information on various issues.

Other activities this year were to post a blurb about ADSIG on the HERDSA website; to archive the discussions (Erika Martens has agreed to do this); and to check out about setting up a database inside the HERDSA website in which current research projects could be listed (Peter Kandlbinder is working on this).

Barbara is standing down as convenor in July this year so the future activities are uncertain. Any offers to maintain the SIG?

HELM

(Higher Education Leadership and Management)

Convenor: Val Clifford.

Email: clifford_v@usp.ac.fj

STUDENT LEARNING

Convenor: Gillian Boulton-Lewis, Queensland University of Technology.

Email: g.boulton-lewis@qut.edu.au

Listserver: mailserv@qut.edu.au

To join send a message to the listserver, leaving the subject line blank and in the body of the message put:

Subscribe HERDSIG your email address.

Members of the SIG met at the conference in Toowoomba and decided that they should keep the SIG going for another year at least. Subsequently Gillian posted a report to the list and this is an edited version of the report.

Members resolved that they would;

1. Try to organise another symposium or two of papers from the SIG at the conference next year in Newcastle.
2. Seed the Listserver occasionally with summaries of research for discussion

and comment. (Gillian promised a summary in early August).

3. Perhaps set up their own website if anyone can volunteer the time and expertise.

It was suggested that some people had lost interest in the SIG because there was a perception that it was only concerned with phenomenography and research in conceptions of learning. That is not the case at all. We are interested in work or research that is concerned with any aspect of investigating or facilitating student learning in higher education or the workplace. Quantitative and qualitative paradigms are welcomed as are practical applications in teaching and setting up learning environments. This would also include learning inventories, learning processes, problem based learning, cross-cultural learning, learning styles and so on. Despite the above some people asked about websites for phenomenography. Here are some URL's for example:

<http://www.ped.gu.se/biorn/phgraph/welcome.htm>

<http://www.ped.gu.se/biorn/phgraph/hongkong.html>

<http://www.fit.qut.edu.au/InfoSys/bruce/anabib/title.html>

Any member with ideas about other websites that the HERDSA Website might link with please contact Gillian.

Members were asked to reaffirm their membership of the SIG and their interests in student learning by sending Gillian one or two lines describing that interest.

If you are no longer interested in the SIG please unsubscribe and consider joining another SIG.

If you have any other suggestions please contact Gillian.

UNILEARN

(Language and Learning)

Convenor: Dr. Anita van der Wal

Email: alaev@cc.newcastle.edu.au



News from the HERDSA Executive

The HERDSA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE met at the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, before and after the annual conference. The items of business included:

Resignation of Heather Koch

Sadly, Heather Koch tendered her resignation as HERDSA membership and publications officer, to move onto greener pastures of full-time work. At a party in the HERDSA office on Monday 5th June Angela Brew expressed the good wishes of HERDSA and sincere thanks for the wonderful work that Heather had done for HERDSA over a period of about six years and presented her with a gift and flowers.

Editors of the HERD journal

Peter Ling, Elaine Martin and Mike Prosser have resigned as editors of the HERD journal. Profound thanks was expressed to them for the wonderful job they have done. They have produced a journal of the highest standard which is a true credit to themselves and HERDSA.

A call for expressions of interest for the position of HERD editor(s) has been prepared and published.

Republication

Overseas publishing companies have approached HERDSA regarding overseas republication, in a revised form, of selected Green Guides. Legal advice is being sought to ensure that any such arrangements are mutually beneficial to publishers and authors.

Status of Branches

Branches have formed over the years, and the recent revision of the constitution caused the Executive to realise that the relationship of branches to HERDSA national needs to be defined.

Financial matters

The 1999 – 2000 financial year has been a busy one in that we have been preparing for GST and changing the way we manage and present our finances. In addition we have had a year of declining income and have been seeking ways to remedy the situation.

With the introduction of an Australian GST on 1 July 2000, HERDSA is required to collect GST. We have also looked into GST issues for state branches within Australia, which have very small annual turnovers. In order to maintain branch independence in managing their local financial affairs and to keep reporting requirements to a minimum for branch treasurers, branches have been registered under the new tax system as "units" of HERDSA. They now have an Australian Business Number (ABN), which enables them to

carry out transactions without any tax penalties, but are not required to collect or remit GST to the ATO.

Of some concern are HERDSA's rising costs (due mainly to cost-of-living increases) and diminished income from sources other than memberships. In addition, institutions are no longer willing or able to absorb what had been previously hidden costs of such expenses as the secretarial support and consumables associated with such core activities as HERDSA publications. Increased workloads have meant that many HERDSA members are not able to accommodate HERDSA projects and activities on behalf of the membership as part of their community service.

Executive Projects

The Executive is currently concentrating its work on four areas each being a designated New Annual Projects (NAP):

- 1 Developing a Communication Strategy for HERDSA
- 2 Review, renew, extend the HERDSA prompts for good teaching.
- 3 HERDSA to offer a qualification for individuals seeking accreditation
- 4 Development of a process to support HERDSA Executive work

These are projects to further HERDSA's strategic plan. It is through these NAPs that we hope members other than the Executive will feel inspired to carry forward an initiative; branch or SIG are invited to propose and work on a NAP. Further details can be obtained from the HERDSA President.

Missed the conference!

Improving Student Learning Strategically

4-6 Sept 2000

UMIST, Manchester, UK

Check out the website <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/ocsd/isl/isltop.html>



HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Volume 19, Number 2, July 2000

Special Issue: Scholarship of teaching

Editors: *Elaine Martin and Peter Taylor*

Introduction

Elaine Martin

Scholarship of Teaching: A model

Keith Trigwell, Elaine Martin, Joan Benjamin and Michael Prosser

A Useable, Trans-disciplinary Conception of Scholarship

Lee W. Andresen

Scholarly Practice in Work-based learning: Fitting the glass slipper

Ern Reeders

Place and Space in the Design of New Learning Environments

Peter Jamieson, Ken Fisher, Tony Gilding, Peter G. Taylor and A.C.F. (Chris) Trevitt

The Scholarship of Teaching: What does it look like in practice?

Joan Benjamin

Developing the Scholarship of Teaching in Higher Education: A discipline based approach

Mick Healy

Inviting Conversations? Dialogic Difficulties in the Corporate University

Erica McWilliam, Alison Green, Nancy Hunt, Martin Bridgstock and Brad Young