



Rethinking Generic Graduate Attributes

By Simon Barrie

The issue of Generic Skills has received considerable attention over recent years as universities seek to renew and articulate their purposes and demonstrate the efficient achievement of these, particularly in response to calls for accountability. As an articulation of the core outcomes of higher education as a process (HEC, 1992) generic skills (or generic attributes as they are also known) are an obvious focus for such quality assurance activities. However, despite the high level of interest from government, employers, society and students, as well as the recent flurry of curriculum development activities (see B-HERT, 2003), earlier concerns (Clanchy & Ballard, 1995) as to the flimsy theoretical or conceptual basis for generic skills have persisted.

In a time where "research-led and evidence-based" approaches to teaching and curriculum development are expected (Prosser & Barrie, 2003), this lack of a sound theoretical basis from which to plan and monitor improvements is a significant concern. Instead of being research-led, much of the current activity around generic attributes is grounded in the assumptions and presumptions which characterised the re-emergence of the generic skills agenda in the early nineties.

The University of Sydney has attempted, in a small way, to address this missing conceptual basis as part of its five-year institutional project on generic graduate attributes. The project does not pretend to have all

the answers in terms of the theoretical basis for generic skills, however it does provide one perspective from which we might move forwards. This article outlines the background to the university's *Generic Graduate Attributes Project* and invites other members of the higher education community to participate in the next stages of this work.

Universities' claims of certain generic qualities on behalf of their graduates are not new. Indeed the University of Sydney's first statement of generic attributes of graduates dates back to 1862, and there are similar statements to be found in the archives of American universities (Yale has an interesting 1828 statement) and in many British universities. While today's statements of generic attributes undoubtedly have their roots in these early statements, in Australia these days "Generic Graduate Attributes" are considered to be;

The qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students should develop during their time with the institution. These attributes include but go beyond the disciplinary expertise or technical knowledge that has traditionally formed the core of most university courses. They are qualities that also prepare graduates as agents of social good in an unknown future. (Bowden et al., 2000)

Statements of such graduate attributes have become commonplace in Australian universities over the last decade. In fact, since it was made a

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From the Editor

In this issue Sharon Parry has provided a very useful and important comment on the issues paper "Building University Diversity" from the Department of Education Science and Training in Australia. She suggests that HERDSA members should take the lead in addressing the issues raised. I think this also suggests that it would be helpful to have a place for HERDSA members to contribute to the discussion in a way that allows for rapid response. This leads me to draw attention to Roger Atkinson's article on Blogs. Is there a place for a HERDSA Blog or some other on-line forum where members can debate important issues in higher education? I would be happy to hear your views on this. Certainly it would be good to hear the voices of HERDSA members taking a leading part in commenting on important policy issues in higher education.

Chris Rust and his colleagues from Oxford Brookes University have presented workshops on their research into assessment at several recent HERDSA conferences. They describe the way their thinking and understanding about the issue developed in a fascinating article that unfolds like a serial story and reminds

us of the need for patience in the research journey.

Simon Barrie reports on an important long term project which seeks to provide a sound research-led basis for developing graduate attributes in the curriculum. He invites members to contribute to this project with their own case studies.

In the last issue of HERDSA News Lesley Parker described some details of the new Carrick Institute of Learning and Teaching. In the UK the Higher Education Academy has been established in York with Paul Ramsden moving from Sydney to be its first Director. Ranald Macdonald from Sheffield Hallam University writes about recent developments in the UK higher education scene and how they have impacted on his institution. I am hoping the August issue of HERDSA News will feature recent developments in teaching and learning in the US to complete the survey.

This year is election year for the HERDSA Executive Committee so please study the insert in this edition and consider who should be nominated for the vacant positions.

Roger Landbeck

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Rethinking Generic Graduate Attributes

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condition of government funding a few years ago, every university in Australia now has a statement of the generic attributes of its graduates. However, one wonders if every graduate of each of these universities lives up to the rhetoric of these statements.

Certainly the recent round of AUQA audits of universities have focussed renewed attention on the question of what universities actually do to achieve such generic learning outcomes in their graduates. In most cases the AUQA audits have revealed the need for more systematic addressing of generic attributes in curricula. However, even in cases where initiatives were noted to be in place, the evidence typically advanced in support of institutional claims is restricted to policy statements and relatively surface mapping strategies (see Sumsion & Goodfellow, 2004 for a discussion of the pitfalls of mapping). At the very least it seems reasonable to expect that universities might provide evidence that they have appropriate teaching and learning strategies in place (see Bath et al., 2004) to realise claims that their graduates *are likely* to have achieved such outcomes. Possibly even to provide evidence through assessment practices that their graduates *have actually achieved* such outcomes. The only outcome measure advanced by most Australian universities relates to data from the national Course Experience Questionnaire, which probes graduates' perceptions of the development of some very simplistic formulations of generic skills, (formulations which are often unrelated to the universities' specific claims of generic attributes). In addition to the AUQA results, recent surveys of Australian employers (DETYA, 2000) and two recent national reports (Hager, Holland & Beckett, 2002, Bowden et al., 2000) have also pointed to the need for significant curriculum reform to fulfil universities' current claims of generic graduate attributes. Indeed many universities have taken up this

challenge in recent years and several major whole-institution curriculum development initiatives are now underway in Australia (B-HERT, 2003).

The interest in generic attributes is of course not restricted to Australia. In the UK generic or key/core skills have been part of the HEFCE agenda for many years, albeit with a more "employable skills" focus in recent years. Unlike Australia, UK universities' efforts to foster the development of such skills have sometimes received extensive government funding. However, in a review of practice in the UK, Drummond, Nixon & Wiltshire, (1998) came to the conclusion that despite the existence of some excellent isolated initiatives the overall picture in regard to graduate attributes and the higher education curriculum is one of patchy uptake and implementation.

The overall picture of personal and transferable skills in the UK higher education sector is not very encouraging. Certainly there is little evidence of effective practice on any large scale. There is however considerable evidence to suggest that, sometimes major, development programs have had only limited success. (Drummond et al., 1998, p. 23)

In light of the recent flurry of curriculum development initiatives in Australian universities and this not very optimistic picture of the outcomes of major initiatives in the UK, it is perhaps worth considering why these initiatives in the UK have met with such limited success. This seems particularly prudent as the current round of major Australian innovation and development initiatives seem unlikely to receive the additional government funding that supported such undertakings in the UK.

For many years authors have been critical of the lack of a coherent theoretical model underpinning the generic skills agenda (Bennett, Dunne & Carre, 1999). The absence of a conceptual base is perhaps best exemplified in the variety of terms that are used—apparently

interchangeably—to describe these generic outcomes. Are skills the same as qualities? Certainly competencies are not the same as capabilities to many authors. And what is the basis for assuming these outcomes are generic or transferable? These are but a few of the challenges pointing to the need for clarification about what we mean by generic skills. A further pointer to the confusion that permeates the area can be found in the lists of generic skills / attributes / competencies (pick a term!) themselves. In many cases the lists position what might be termed broad motherhood statements (along the lines of "graduates will be ethical") alongside low-level technical skills, (for instance "graduates will be able to use a computer"). Beyond the variation in the policy statements there is variation in the way policy is interpreted, (or not), by the academics responsible for implementing curricula to foster the development of such generic attributes (see for example the wealth of initiatives in publications such as Fallows & Steven, 2000). As various authors have noted:

The complexity associated with the development of these skills coupled to their permeation throughout courses ... leads to a level of confusion which is unacceptable. (Kemp & Scagraves, 1995, p. 327)

In light of this apparent complexity and confusion, the absence of a theoretical or conceptual basis from which to address graduate attributes is of concern, particularly if we are to take a research-led and evidence-based approach to our teaching. Moreover, if as academics, we are unclear as to what exactly we are aiming at, then it seems reasonable to expect that students will be even less clear as to what they should be learning and employers and society at large will be unsure of what they are getting in the way of graduates.

In seeking to avoid the "patchy" implementation that has characterised generic attributes initiatives in the UK and with the aim of fostering approaches to teaching and curriculum



development that are based in research evidence, the University of Sydney initiated a graduate attributes initiative that is somewhat different to many of the other initiatives currently underway in Australian universities. Rather than simply updating and mapping its existing list of graduate attributes as it had in the past, the university embarked on a five year project which sought to first establish a conceptual basis for its work in this area. The initial research used a phenomenographic approach to identify the key aspects of (the considerable!) variation in how academics understood the concept of generic attributes in the context of the courses they taught. The differences found did not simply reflect discipline backgrounds, they represented quite different ways of thinking about the nature and place of generic attributes amongst the more familiar "content" outcomes of university learning. The variation identified went a long way towards explaining the variability in uptake in generic attributes curricula at the university. The understandings ranged from a belief that such attributes were not even part of a university course to more complex understandings that encompassed differing relationships between generic attributes and discipline knowledge (Barrie, 2004). Accompanying these different understandings of "outcomes", were different approaches to teaching these attributes. These ranged from variations of teacher-focussed approaches to learner-focussed approaches and learning community engagement approaches, with the resultant differences in the quality of the learning outcomes achieved (Barrie, 2003).

Building on these findings the university formulated a two-tiered policy statement of graduate attributes based on the two most complex conceptualisations identified in the research. The policy's top-level attributes recognise that some generic outcomes are complex interwoven aspects of human ability, which are difficult to explicitly teach or assess in traditional university experiences. In the context of the University of Sydney these have been described as *Scholarship*, *Global Citizenship* and *Lifelong Learning*. Attributes that

might be described as attitudes or stances that allow a graduate to prosper in a postmodern world (Barnett, 2004). The second tier abilities are a different way of understanding these overarching abilities, a more explicit way, and one that is realised differently in different discipline contexts. At this level generic attributes are realised as clusters of personal skills and abilities. These clusters of attributes were identified as: (1) *Research and Inquiry*; (2) *Information Literacy*; (3) *Personal and Intellectual Autonomy*; (4) *Ethical Social and Professional Understanding*; and (5) *Communication*.

There are other, less complex understandings in the hierarchy of conceptions of generic attributes which are also important as they support these more complex ways of viewing generic attributes. While not articulated in the statement of generic attributes, the revised policy recognises the role of these foundation skills initiatives (as we have called them) in providing the basis for the development, in the context of the usual courses taught at the university, of the university's graduate attributes. It even recognises the role of initiatives that might be broadly classed as university preparation courses. Such preparatory conceptualisations are not of themselves sufficient for developing graduate attributes, but they can provide a necessary basis from which students can work to develop graduate attributes (for a full discussion of this see Barrie, in press).

This different approach to developing a statement of generic attributes brings to light the underlying assumptions academics hold regarding the place of a graduate attributes in university curricula. Rather than seeking to impose a single "correct" definition, the approach recognises the reality of such disparate understandings and incorporates these in a university's statement of graduate attributes. A key aspect of the Project's approach was the formation of university wide working group. Rather than just establishing yet another committee, the project sought to foster the development of a learning community within the working group. The aim was to establish a space in which different voices could be heard and the disparate understandings of

generic attributes recognised and learnt from (see Bowden & Marton 1998 for a discussion of learning in this sort of community). Using this perspective, it was possible for the University's existing conglomerate list of different types of generic graduate attributes to be reorganised, rather than redeveloped from scratch, and the role of the different types of initiatives already in place to be recognised. More importantly from the point of view of the project's success, the approach provides a vocabulary that allows debate and discussion about graduate attributes that goes beyond the assumption of a shared meaning implied by a shared vocabulary.

I mean, we all think communication skills are important don't we?
... But what do you mean by communication skills?

Because the second tier of the policy recognises the embedded and contextual nature of graduate attributes each faculty has taken responsibility for developing its own statement of graduate attributes under the structure identified. The approach taken was a highly consultative one, with the different faculties of the university validating the new policy framework through consultations with their respective staff, employer and student groups. This means that the staff and students of the university now have a clear articulation of what the attributes of (for example) *Research and Inquiry* are like at the Sydney Conservatorium and in the Faculty of Science, and what the *Communication* attributes are of graduates of the Sydney College of the Arts as well as of the Faculty of Economics and Business. These statements are available on the project web site at <http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/GraduateAttributes/interpretations.cfm>. As well as supporting work within the university, these faculty statements are being used by researchers at other universities to investigate areas such as research-led teaching (Hoddinot and Wuetherick in preparation—come to the HERDSA 2005 conference for an update!).

More interestingly still, the different faculties in the University are embarking on a range of research and development initiatives to investigate the teaching and learning of graduate attributes in their contexts.



The development and assessment of critical thinking skills in Agriculture and a PhD Scholarship in Engineering investigating the relationship between the faculty's attributes, curriculum and professional standards are just two examples. Because of the common framework of five second-tier attributes, there appears to have been great acceptance of applying ideas from one discipline context to another and of collaborating across disciplines. Hopefully this is something that will get over the "you can't do that on my discipline" and the "not invented here" syndromes that plague dissemination and uptake of teaching ideas.

To further facilitate the exchange and cross-fertilisation of ideas we are starting to build a database of teaching and learning initiatives that address each of the attribute clusters. These are collected under the common framework of the five second-tier attributes: (1) *Research and Inquiry*; (2) *Information Literacy*; (3) *Personal and Intellectual Autonomy*; (4) *Ethical Social and Professional Understanding*; and (5) *Communication*. We have opened up the database to contributions from colleagues in other institutions in Australia and overseas. You are welcome to read the statement of attributes developed by colleagues in your discipline here at the University of Sydney and, if you feel you have a teaching and learning idea that you would like to share, submit a case study under the relevant attribute. You can submit a one-page case study through the easy to use web site at <http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/GraduateAttributes/cascstudyInput.cfm>

The project is still in its early stages and with three more years to run we are certain we still have major hurdles to face in implementation. In particular, the specification of graduate attributes in the way we have means a need to foster student-focussed approaches to teaching. This is because the research found that such approaches were consistently associated with these conceptions of graduate attributes. Currently we are grappling with the best way to integrate generic attributes in statements of learning outcomes at a unit of study level. Related to this is the vital challenge of developing assessment criteria

and standards that relate to these new outcomes. It is these criteria that will make graduate attributes a reality in how students approach learning at the university. An even greater assessment challenge we are still to face is how to incorporate the rich diversity of out-of-class student learning experiences associated with engaging in a learning community like a university. The development of assessment portfolios that are integrated with course and subject assessment is something we are investigating in this regard.

While the project is only just moving into the implementation phase, we are already finding that there is a high level of ownership and buy-in across the institution. Staff in faculties are now engaging in institutionally supported and recognised research and development projects, collaborating across the usual faculty divides and contributing and supporting to the vibrant learning community that is forming around the project working group. Recent feedback from one of the faculty members of the project suggests that in part this because of the different way the project has used the research findings to frame its work:

This is one of the most useful and vibrant working groups I've been involved in her ... It has been so helpful to have a common language to talk about what we do and to learn about what other faculties do ... Being able to go back and talk to my colleagues and understand where their barriers and resistance are coming from and also knowing that what we are doing lines up with what is happening across the university makes it so much easier to get change happening. (Working Group Member 2005).

The project's achievements to date are very much the result of the contributions and commitment shown by all members of the working group. Clearly its achievements in the next implementation stage will be even more dependent on their efforts and without then the project would not be viable. I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank my colleagues in the Graduate Attributes Working group for their contribution to the project. On behalf of the group I would also like to invite other HERDSA colleagues to get in touch with us if they would like to participate in the project, particularly through

sharing case studies of their teaching and curriculum initiatives or through benchmarking our faculty statements and curricula with colleagues in other universities.

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Active Artefacts: Representing our Knowledge of Learning and Teaching

By Rhona Sharpe, Helen Beetham & Andrew Ravenscroft

This article originally appeared in the June 2004 issue of *Educational Developments*, the newsletter of the Staff and Educational Development Association in the UK. It is reproduced here by kind permission of the authors.

Introduction

As teaching in higher education becomes more evidence based, there is drive to integrate research with practice, leaving developers with the challenge of how to support staff to make greater use of available theoretical concepts and research evidence. Bridging this gap between research, theory and practice is now

an issue for educational developers in areas, such as:

- Postgraduate accredited programmes in teaching in higher education require that participants demonstrate their understanding of relevant theory and adopt a scholarly approach to their teaching. How can we ensure that this process supports the development of effective practice? (e.g. Sharpe, 2004);
- Funded programmes of innovation, dissemination and change have highlighted the need to produce deliverables which translate the knowledge acquired during the life of the project into a shareable and useable form (e.g. Beetham, 2001);
- In our eagerness to be academically credible, and to more thoroughly understand our own work, educational developers are becoming more scholarly (e.g. Eggins & Macdonald, 2003). How can we ensure that our developing understanding of teaching, learning and assessment is made available in a form which can be used by practitioners?; and
- In the field of e-learning where there is pressure for rapid changes in response to emerging research, there is discussion on how we develop a more suitable

and sophisticated discourse that is shared by researchers and practitioners, and which supports and promotes educational change (e.g. Ravenscroft, 2004).

The focus of this discussion then is on how research and practice can be represented in such a way that is useful to practitioners in changing their practice. This seems to be especially important for new areas of research where it is important for results to be published quickly or where practitioners are being asked to make changes based on established research or theory. We ask if there are ways we can create more sophisticated representations of knowledge which will be useful to practitioners or indeed whether representations will ever be adequate on their own to elicit change. As a contribution to this discussion, this paper reports on data collected from a workshop at the 8th Annual SEDA conference (Sharpe, Beetham & Ravenscroft, 2003). In this workshop practitioners generated and shared ideas for creating representations of knowledge and a possible framework was presented for using these to support practitioners to change their practice.

Examples of Representations of Knowledge

It is a tragedy that so much of the energy on learning research in universities has had so little influence on the practitioner. With some powerful exceptions the two communities seem to work in isolation. This is no longer good enough. A much greater sharing of information and ideas is essential if the research is to be of practical value and practitioner behaviour is to be better informed.

(Sloman, 2002, p. viii)

The problem Martyn Sloman presents so forcefully in the preface to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's publication "How do people learn?" has largely been brought about because the representations of knowledge used in academia have tended to be difficult for practitioners to access. The ones we are probably most familiar with are text based representations presented as scholarly papers in journals, books and conferences. It may be that these

TABLE 1. Examples of text based representations of knowledge

Type of representation	Example (available to view on the web)
Books, papers and articles	Published in journals such as <i>Active Learning in Higher Education</i> or <i>Teaching in Higher Education</i> . ¹
Case studies	ASTER (assisting small group teaching through electronic resources) published 33 case studies from their TLTP project. ²
Guides	e-Learning series of booklets produced by LTSN Generic Centre comprises guides for senior managers, heads of department, teachers, learning technologists and support staff. ³
Principles	Seven principles of effective teaching: a practical lens for evaluating online courses. ⁴ (Graham et al., 2001)
Tools and toolkits	Evaluation Cookbook produced for the Learning and Teaching Dissemination Initiative. ⁵ (Harvey, 1998)
Summaries	ERIC digests ⁶ are short reports on topics of current interest in education providing both an overview and links to more detail.
Databases	The "No Significant Difference Phenomenon" ⁷ provides links to research studies investigating technology based education.
Bibliographies	Annotated bibliography of research into the teaching and learning of the physical sciences at the higher education level provided by the LTSN Physical Sciences subject centre. ⁸

have little impact because the terms used by educational researchers may be unfamiliar to practitioners – and in any case are often contradictory and contested—while the ways in which practitioners discuss their own work may be context dependent and untheorised. This problem has been recognised and educational developers have been busily interpreting much of the educational literature into more useable formats or devising dissemination strategies for funded projects which emphasise use as well as awareness (see for example TQEF Project Briefing on Dissemination). Table 1 lists some examples of text based representations from the teaching and learning in higher education field.

In the examples in Table 1, the aim has been to represent knowledge in an accessible and useable way. Accessibility has been improved for instance by removing the use of specialist jargon, e.g. the publisher's web pages for the Institute for

Learning and Teaching in Higher Education's own journal *Active Learning in Higher Education* quotes a reader as saying "It is refreshing to see both a high practically orientated content in an educational journal, and material that can be easily understood by those of without training in Eduspeak" (Active Learning, 2005). In addition, resources might be made accessible by appealing directly to different audiences such as the LTSN e-Learning Guides which have been written for different groups of higher education staff. Of course the resources are also made more accessible by being freely available at the click of a button.

To move the discussion beyond text based representations and accepted formats such as case studies or guides, the 27 workshop participants at the SEDA conference were encouraged to think of other forms by which knowledge and practice can be shared. They generated a wide range of examples of representations



including imagery, narrative, face to face discussions, multimedia and performance. Their full responses have been loosely collected into similar types in Table 2.

With such a broad range of representations to choose from, the obvious question for developers is whether some forms are more effective than others in promoting change. There has certainly been a move towards using representations that are drawn from the real life experiences of other practitioners, and emphasising the context within which these stories were created. Ottewill, Shepherd and Fill (2002) noted the proliferation in the number of case studies being collected and conducted a comprehensive survey of the case studies available at the time. The collection of cases studies from the ASTER project, explains that "each case study report contains information on the teaching context, motivations for change, and the C&IT introduced and their effects on both teaching and learning" (ASTER, 2002). Similarly the Evaluation Cookbook includes not just the information on evaluation methodologies, but also "serving suggestions" of evaluation methods demonstrated in practice alongside guidance for the practitioner on conducting their own evaluation study (Harvey, 1998). So what seems to be important in these representations is that they are credible, true to life and context specific.

Enhancing Representations of Knowledge to Support Changing Practice

Even with such a full and creative list of representations, and the moves to contextualise knowledge for specific groups or situations, it is still a big jump from knowledge (however represented) to changed or improved practice. Studies which have investigated how practitioners actually adopt new approaches show that the picture is more complex than making a choice between available types of representations. Beetham (2002) found that people who had actually changed their practice reported that a crucial turning point was often the opportunity to witness *the real thing, in the real context,*

TABLE 2. Further examples of representations generated by workshop participants

Visual & imagery	Dialogues & stories	Presentational
Diagrams	Discussions	Seminar presentations
Charts	Electronic conversations	Workshop outlines and materials
Timelines	Mentoring conversations	Groups' explanations
Film, video & DVD	Observation of classes	OHP inventively used
Posters	Groupings of experts and learners	Audio
Images & photographs	Expert witness	Lecture
Pictures, drawings & paintings	Expert panels	
Visual maps, mind maps & spider diagrams	Peer discussion	
T-shirts	Stories	
3-D models	Narratives	
Storyboards	Discipline based case studies	
Displays	Pen portraits	
	Action research projects	
Interactive	Informational	Performance
Self-guided field trail	Database	Role play
Play, puzzles & games	Notice boards	Street theatre
Websites	Summaries	Game shows
CD-ROMs	Guide – essential 10 points	Improvisation
Quizzes	Hypertext guide	Dramatic scenario
Computer models	Advance organiser	Puppets
Experiments	Patterns and pattern languages	Poems
Tasks		Song
Simulations		
Expert systems		

with the real people, in other words, to actually watch a new approach or tool in action. This might be in the context of a teaching observation or a lunchtime workshop in which a colleague described and illustrated what they had done. When pressed about the kinds of *representation* that had actually had an impact on their own practice, participants in this study were most likely to cite narratives from colleagues about *what they did, what went wrong, and how they survived*. There was also a strong tendency for these practitioners' use of knowledge resources to be mediated by another person, such as a mentor, staff developer or learning technology specialist. This study then, found that, at least in the early stages of adopting a new approach, practice is most effectively supported by richly contextualised representations, mediated by expert users. As practitioners become more expert

themselves, their focus changes to one of "peer supported experimentation". In both cases, however, effective use of representations was mediated by collaborative activities, whether between a mentor and mentee or between mutually-supporting colleagues. Other studies which have asked academic staff what they found useful in professional development, have confirmed the importance of colleagues and collaborative strategies (Ballantyne, Bain & Packer, 1999; Ferman, 2002).

This suggests that representations of practice need to become "living" artefacts, enhanced by their participation in collaborative activities. For example, expert practitioners in Beetham's (2002) study expressed a preference for representations they could interact with – comment on, adapt, annotate, use in their own work, or contribute to. Some examples of active representations, in which

elements of the development process are captured, are given in Table 3

Just as representations can be enhanced by activities of this kind, we also know that communities themselves need collaborative tasks and goals if they are to develop. This suggests that collaborative resource development can be a highly effective way of developing shared practice. Another way of expressing this is through the observation that projects have to have outcomes (concrete representations), but that it is often the process that is most valuable. In attempting to assess the value of collections of case studies to changing practice, Ottewill, Shepherd and Fill (2002) confirmed that it was relatively easy to identify the benefits for the creators, but more problematic to evaluate their worth to their intended audience.

Using a combination of workshop responses and the authors' own research experience, we argue that these active representations bring knowledge alive by mediating social and cultural communicative practice. The examples in Table 3 illustrate how they do this through a number of

their features that help practitioners to bridge the theory-practice gap:

1. **Ownership.** Most of us follow constructivist principles that we need to create our own knowledge representations, or at least to create our own interpretations or personal meaning of the knowledge base. The enhanced representations allow for such personal contributions such as questioning presenters at the OTiS conference, contributing to course bibliographies or databases. The Learning in the Connected Economy course has used the idea of "companion" activities in response to the intensiveness of running collaborative, constructivist tasks with online groups of learners. The companion activities use electronic databases to support learners to exchange information, and contribute to and develop ownership of a resource (Weller, Pegler & Mason, 2003).
2. **Reflection and review.** Representations need to be available when practitioners have time and opportunity to think about their own practice. For novice practitioners this will often mean structured time, perhaps in staff

development sessions, workshops and appraisals. However, even highly motivated and expert practitioners need time to engage with representations, prompts to review and reflect on their own practice, and help in translating between the theoretical and practical aspects of the situation.

3. **Contingency.** Representations that offer themselves as "complete", for example reports, case studies, theoretical articles, are inherently less usable than representations that offer "room" for the practitioner. Examples of this would be toolkits, reflective pro-formas, or real-life dialogues with other practitioners, which support practice through a form of structured dialogue.
4. **Dynamism.** Enhanced representations are dynamic and frequently changing rather than static and fixed. This is because they are constantly being added to by new users, by peer review etc. The value of dynamism is particularly relevant to practice areas such as e-learning where new tools and approaches are constantly available and representations need to adapt quickly to remain

TABLE 3. Examples of active representations of knowledge

Type of representation	Example
Papers + responses	The Journal of Interactive Media in Education (JIME) ⁹ adopts an open peer review process with papers linked to online discussion forums. Final papers are published with summaries of their review comments. http://www-jime.open.ac.uk/
Case studies + discussion	The Online Tutoring Skills (OTiS) Project hosted an online conference in May 2000 where case studies were presented in advance and delegates had the opportunity to discuss them with authors. The papers and transcripts of discussions were edited into an e-book. http://otis.scotcit.ac.uk/
Editable resources	The Scottish electronic Staff Development Library (SeSDL) hosts a library of digital staff development resources to which users can both submit their own and download other's granules. http://www.sesdl.scotcit.ac.uk/
Interactive toolkits	The Evaluation of Learning and Media Toolkit is an interactive system for lecturers to analyse their teaching methods and mediums for course delivery. http://www.ltss.bris.ac.uk/jcal/
Group created bibliographies	In the Oxford Brookes Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education, the first online activity asks participants to post a review of a single educational publication which has influenced their practice. The postings are edited into a series of linked web pages creating a bibliography for the course.
Activities using databases	In the UK Open University course Learning in the Connected Economy, participants submit completed "companion" activities to a course database as well as select and analyse other activities retrieved from the database.

useful. Examples of dynamic representations include the draft documents in JIME, collaborative resources, evolving ontologies and knowledge trees.

5. Support for peer learning.

The importance of networks for sharing information cannot be over-stated. Representations of practice do not just encode "what to do" in a particular situation but are important repositories for the community's values and culture. If our conclusions about enhanced representations are correct, the need is not simply to distil "the best examples" of represented practice for future use, but to establish peer processes whereby representations are constantly created, shared and tested.

Effective active representations therefore not only help individual practitioners to bridge the theory-practice gap but also support processes of peer learning. What is most noticeable about these examples is that they blur the distinction between creation and use. Traditional representations of knowledge are created by the author(s) or designer(s) and then published in a final and fixed state, to be accessed by readers and users. Active representations allow for the possibility of collaborative creation and use, offering facilities for commentary and feedback, peer review and refinement in the light of experience.

However, there are challenges in establishing and sustaining these processes. In the academic community it is *authorship* that is valued and rewarded, while in the commercial community it is *product design*. Peer review, collaborative projects and open source software are examples of movements that undercut these prevailing values. However, with time at an absolute premium, it is often difficult to identify the pay-off for individuals who undertake the work of annotating, collating, synthesising, commenting, evaluating, re-contextualising, and re-developing.

We can make use of external incentives such as professional accreditation, teaching promotions

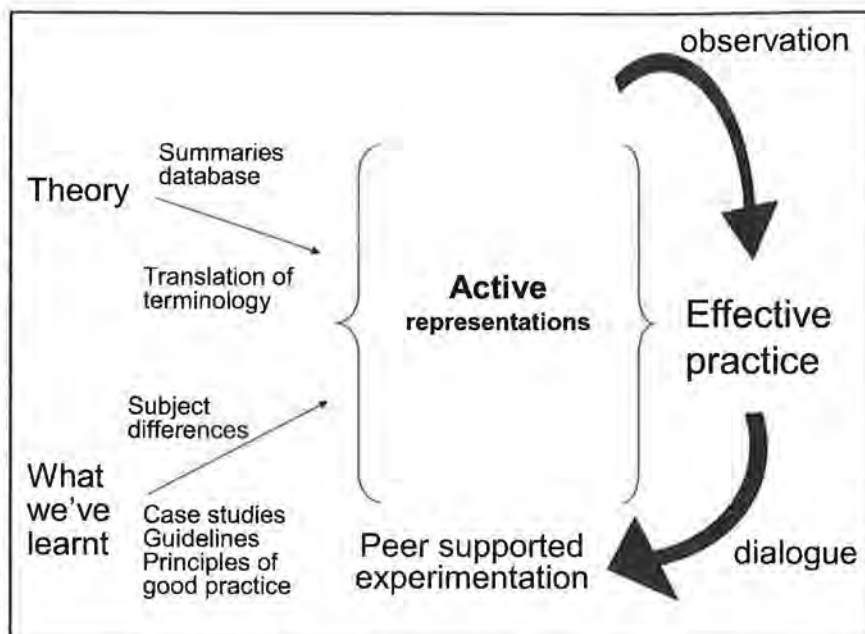


FIGURE 1. A framework to support the process of learning from representations of knowledge

and small-scale project funding. There are also intrinsic incentives such as the provision of easy-to-use pro-formas as a trade-off against provision of feedback and comment. The JIME journal uses an excellent example of peer review which gives intrinsic reward for participation: commentators are willing to devote time to considering another author's work in the belief that not only will this enhance their own understanding (and prestige), but that they will benefit from the same peer feedback system in their turn. Even without peer review, an organic relationship can be facilitated between authors, developers, users and the artefacts themselves, as in annotated collations of materials such as SeSDL, the Learning in the Connected Economy database or the PCTHE course bibliography.

A Framework to Support the Process of Learning from Representations of Knowledge

Traditionally the types of process outlined above have been possible only by inserting representations into training and development programmes, facilitated by specialist staff. Many of the representations in Table 2 reflect this. However,

we believe that new information and communication technologies make it possible to develop and use representations in new ways, which blur the distinction between representations as finished artefacts, and representing as a collaborative activity. Active representations of the kind outlined in Table 3 can support a process of peer supported experimentation within the context of online communities of practice. It is important to say that in focussing on representations within this framework, we do not wish to deny the continuing importance of specialist staff to the process of development, especially for novices to a particular approach, but rather to note the power of well designed representations to fulfil many of the requirements of effective professional development in a fast-changing context.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to the participants of the workshop at the 8th Annual SEDA Conference, who engaged so thoroughly and left behind their answers sheets which have formed the basis of this paper.

Conclusions

We have argued that representations of knowledge need to be accessible, credible and contextualised if they



are to be used by practitioners. We have also argued that in order for knowledge to have impact on practice, practitioners need to engage with it through a process of peer- or mentor-supported experimentation. And finally we have argued that this should lead to practitioners feeding back into the representations themselves through active enhancements such as comment, peer review and collaborative development. We have offered some instances of new information and communication technologies being used to support enhanced representations, coupled with communities of shared practice. At present the opportunities and incentives to engage in this kind of representational community are limited. We look forward to a time when they will be more widespread among learning practitioners.

Endnotes

1. Details of the journal *Active Learning in Higher Education* are available from the Sage Publications site at <http://www.sagepub.co.uk/journal.aspx?pid=105463&sc=1>
2. The ASTER case studies are available on the project's website at http://cti-psy.york.ac.uk/aster/resources/case_studies/case_studies.html
3. The e-Learning series of booklets are available to download from the UK Higher Education Academy site at <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/1682.htm>
4. This often cited paper was first published in *The Technology Source* and is now available from the SUNY Learning Network at <http://sln.suny.edu/sln/public/original.nsf/0/b495223246cabd6b85256a090058ab98?OpenDocument>
5. The *Evaluation Cookbook* can be viewed online or downloaded in full from <http://www.icbl.hw.ac.uk/lti/cookbook/contents.html>
6. The ERIC digests are available from <http://www.ericdigests.org/>
7. The No Significant Difference Database can be searched at <http://www.nosignificantdifference.org/>
8. The annotated bibliography of research into the teaching and learning of the physical sciences provided by the LTSN Physical Sciences subject centre is available from <http://www.phys.sci.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/annotatedbibliography/annotatedbibliographyfull.pdf>
9. The Journal of Interactive Media in Education available from <http://www.jime.open.ac.uk>

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“Staying the Distance”: The Unfolding Story of Discovery and Development through Long-Term Collaborative Research into Assessment

By Berry O'Donovan, Chris Rust & Margaret Price, with Jude Carroll

This article actually has two purposes: on the one hand, we describe our activities over the last decade or more which sought to address a growing requirement in the UK to make assessment standards and processes more transparent to students and other stakeholders. We hope the evolution of our research and practice, undertaken at The Business School, Oxford Brookes University will lead to identifying more generic approaches to developing students' understanding of assessment standards and processes and we have evolved a model for describing how we see the links between the projects we have done so far. The other intention of this article is to create and encourage others to react, contribute and respond to our ideas. As you will see, we are moving towards a community of practice model and see articles such as these as one way to encourage its development.

The Traditional Model of Sharing Assessment Standards

Arguably, in the past, academic communities were more stable, homogeneous and close-knit (Ecclestone, 2001). Academic programmes were less fragmented with components running over longer time periods during which understanding about all manner of things, including assessment standards, could be transferred between staff and students. Students gradually “came to know” academic standards serendipitously through trial and error via feedback and informal discussions with tutors about the nature and values of their subject of study. Assessment judgements relied on the tacit professional expertise of

teachers who functioned as an elite “guild” whose conclusions were inexplicable, and inaccessible to the layman (O'Donovan, Price & Rust, 2004).

The Explicit Model of Sharing Assessment Standards

Perhaps the past was never as the idealised memory describes but certainly, in the UK, since the 1980s, opportunities for informal sharing of assessment requirements and standards have been eroded. Academic communities themselves, and the often modular courses they offer, are more fragmented with less contact time between students and tutors. One response has been to formalise and codify expectations and standards with increasing dependence on explicit systems and procedures such as learning outcomes and disciplinary benchmark statements (Winter, 1994). Those who invested energy in such measures a decade ago did so believing, or at least hoping, that explicit articulation would be sufficient explanation for students and that they would use this information to improve their learning and performance.

We certainly did when, in 1996/7, we created a criterion referenced assessment grid for use across the School by students and staff (Price & Rust, 1999). The grid (which is available at: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources.asp?process=full_record§ion=generic&id=347) sets out grade descriptors against each of dozens of criterion used to assess undergraduate work. We created the grid to encourage the use of appropriate criteria and to provide students and markers with

information about the standard to be applied for each criterion. Perhaps naively, we hoped this would lead to markers being consistent in the standards they applied and students being guided in their learning by referring to transparent statements about what was expected.

We were disappointed. These first attempts to clarify and make standards transparent, while rationally sound, proved not to work in practice (Price & Rust, 1999). Students either did not refer to the information or could not satisfactorily interpret it. Our first action was to be even tighter in the language we used but as Sadler argues, verbal descriptions of standards are context dependent and always somewhat vague or fuzzy. They are often a matter of degree – indicative of relative rather than absolute positions (Sadler, 1987). What the words “highly evaluative” or “reasonably coherent” means will depend on the assessor's expectations and knowledge of the context. It became clear to us that each grade descriptor would have to be reworked anew for each assessment. We concluded that this “ever more specific” route was never going to lead to a balance between precision and utility, a point later confirmed by Yorke (2002). We would also have found Snowdon (2002) helpful and the suggestion that there is a cost (in terms of time and resources) to codifying knowledge that comes from the need to create a shared context and that this cost increases the more diverse an audience's experience and language. So whilst this focus on explicit articulation could be considered currently the dominant logic of UK higher education, it is arguably only of limited use in today's context of more fragmented programmes and overworked academics who serve

an increasingly diverse student population.

The Social Constructivist Model of Sharing Assessment Standards

But we still wanted to find a way of making our assessment standards transparent and useful so we tried another tack: an alternative to ever greater precision in articulation is to actively engage students (or other stakeholders) in using and applying the standards enabling them to make sense of standards within what Vygotsky (1978) calls personal and cognitive constructs. This new direction appealed because it was more student-centred and linked with Lea and Street's "academic socialisation" approach (1998). We saw that meaningful knowledge is derived from tacit as well as explicit knowledge of assessment standards (O'Donovan et al., 2004). Action research, undertaken with large classes of 300+ students, showed that we could make a difference in only a very modest amount of contact time. This was more encouraging. Since 1999, students have had opportunities to consider exemplars, practice marking and discuss assessment criteria and standards. Our findings, measured over three consecutive years, show students who undertake an optional 90 minute assessment marking workshop demonstrate a significant improvement in performance compared to those who do not, even though baseline comparison of the performance of participants and non-participants, undertaken prior to the intervention, shows no significant difference in performance (Rust, Price & O'Donovan, 2003). One year later, participants still demonstrate improved performance although, not surprisingly, with a minor reduction in the effect.

More recently, and with less obvious success, (Price, O'Donovan & Rust, in press) we have experimented with different ways of encouraging students to engage with assessment feedback, in the belief that this also should help to improve their future performance.

We then thought that, if it works, a social constructivist approach to assessment should not be limited

to pre-assessment processes, or just offered to students. The entire assessment process at every stage could benefit from such an approach. In a recent paper we argue for a "social constructivist process model" of assessment (Rust, O'Donovan & Price, 2005) in which students and staff are actively engaged with every stage of the assessment process in order that they understand the requirements of the assessment process, the criteria and the standards being applied.

The Cultivated Community of Practice for Sharing Assessment Standards

But in 2004, our thinking took another step. We knew about Lave and Wenger's (1991) ideas that deep learning requires an environment that includes social relationships and co-participation, calling this "a community of practice". Northedge (2003) also emphasises the importance of knowledge communities, accentuating the socio-cultural nature of learning, modelling learning as "*acquiring the capacity to participate in the discourses of an unfamiliar knowledge community, and teaching as supporting that participation*" (p. 17).

We could see considerable interest in the concept of communities of practice within higher education both as a context for deep learning and for orientating students into the requirements of an academic community but we could not see how or even if such communities could be triggered and fostered nor others who were trying to do so. Indeed, Wenger (1998) suggests that higher education fails to cultivate thriving learning communities as learning within HE is largely viewed as an individual process, separated from the rest of an individual's activities and resulting from an explicit "teaching" process that has a beginning and an end. Gibbs, Angelides & Michaelides (2004) suggest students should engage as interactive partners in a learning community, relinquishing the passive role of "the instructed" within processes controlled by academic experts. Yet, despite these sorts of exhortations, Parker (2002) found the reverse, describing instead *a worrying number of students in*

young Hippocrates' position – they had applied for university with high hopes and a very vague idea of what the course was for, and in their first and second year were still waiting for someone to show why they were there (p. 376).

This struck us as the fourth, and possibly ultimate, new approach in our ongoing search. It moves learning practices on, keeping hold of the three previous (and valuable) approaches plus, via a subtle shift of focus, adding Lea and Street's ideas (1998) about how students and teachers input into and become part of the "academic literacy" practices of their disciplinary community. For students to fully "come to know" assessment standards arguably they must participate as partners in the assessment process, both formal and informal "*where participation, as a way of learning, enables the student to both absorb, and be absorbed in the culture of practice*" (Elwood & Klenowski, 2002, p. 246). Anyone who is absorbed into such a culture will acquire tacit and explicit knowledge held by the community but more importantly, students who start off as peripheral participants can practice and imitate then move to fuller active engagement.

Interrelationship of Approaches

Figure 1 sets out for consideration these four approaches to sharing standards defined by whether the inputs and activities involved are formal or informal and the extent of student involvement in the processes.

It is important to note that the different approaches to students "coming to know" assessment standards dominant within each quadrant are not mutually exclusive. Movement around our proposed matrix (as depicted by the curved arrow) does not mean that when moving into a new quadrant, all preceding approaches and insights are redundant and superseded. The matrix, and in particular the second, third and fourth quadrants can be viewed as a "nested hierarchy" in that each quadrant encapsulates the understandings of the preceding approach. This mirrors Lea and Street's hierarchical model of approaches to academic literacy (1998) and reflects our "continuing

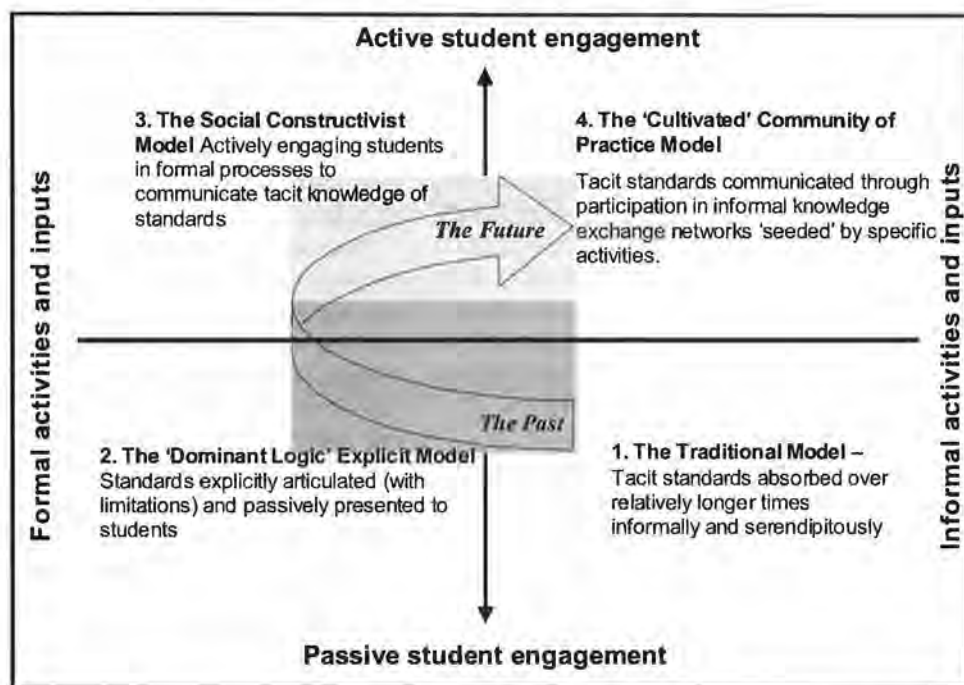


FIGURE 1. Approaches to developing student understanding of assessment standards

journey" through the intricacies of assessment research and practice.

Where Do We Go From Here? ASKe And Ye Shall Find

Currently, we are continuing our "journey" with a focus on spreading social constructivist initiatives in assessment practice and academic conventions, as well as exploring relatively uncharted territory of cultivating a community of assessment practice both through socialisation activities and through the creation of bespoke "social learning space".

Our research and practice has recently received a real boost through the award of a "Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning" (CETL) supported by £4.5 million funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England. (More information on CETLs can be found at: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/TInits/cetl/>) ASKe "Assessment Standards Knowledge Exchange" will be based at the Business School at Oxford Brookes University and supported by Oxford Centre of Staff Learning Development. This exciting opportunity will enable us to work with students, other colleagues in Higher Education and a wider spectrum of community stakeholders

in the UK and internationally. Our goal is the same as it has been for over a decade: to improve student learning through sharing and applying an understanding of assessment standards but now we also want to do this within a broad community of practice and add more specific attention to the problems of student misconduct and plagiarism (Carroll, 2004).

The Centre gives us an opportunity to move assessment beyond a focus on technique to create a collective and holistic perspective on assessment standards. We are perhaps moving nearer to ensuring and exploiting assessment's position at the centre of learning. We would be very interested to hear from others working in a similar field or anyone interested in contributing to the development of the Centre. If you want to keep in touch with the progress of the project we will be setting up a website but in the meantime contact Abi Ball (aball@brookes.ac.uk) to be added to the mailing list.

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BRANCH REPORTS

New Zealand Branch

Towards the end of 2004, the NZ Government announced several new policies and initiatives for the tertiary education sector as a whole. Two have particular significance for tertiary teachers.

1. The first was announced under the heading "New measure gives students a voice in tertiary education". That voice will be available as an element of a new policy called the *Performance-Based Element of the Student*

Component (of Funding). The Government funding streams for research and for learning and teaching, previously merged, are now differentiated and there is already a "contested" portion available for each institution within the research funding stream. That portion is determined through the Performance-Based Research Funding regime (PBRF) which all NZ HERDSA members are likely to hold strong views about. This new policy sees the introduction of a similar regime for the learning

and teaching funding stream. There are, however, some important differences in the way the two schemes will operate. For PBRF, the measure used to determine allocations from the contested portion is aggregated ratings of the research performance of individual staff. For the performance based element of learning and teaching funding stream, students are the focus rather than the individual teacher and three broad "indicators" are to be used:

- a. Successful completion rate

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A History of HERDSA - A Personal View

By Roger Landbeck

This article started life as part of a briefing package for new members of the HERDSA Executive Committee. Several members of the Exec thought it worthy of a wider circulation and so asked me to publish it in *HERDSA News*. I would appreciate receiving additions, comments, interesting experiences from members to add to the history.

This is a personal history of HERDSA and so does not claim to be a strictly accurate record. I was appointed to Griffith University in October 1974 as a member of one of the new academic units that were beginning to be established in Universities around Australia at that time. As an aside, to show how things have developed in the 30 years since then, the PC had not been invented and computing was done with punch cards. I joined HERDSA the following year and attended one of the first annual conferences of the society, which was held in Canberra.

The society had been formed in 1972 as a result of the interest of a few academics, like Barbara Falk (now a life member of HERDSA) from the Centre for Studies in Higher Education at Melbourne University, who met during an annual conference of ANZAAS.

The 1975 conference had a format that has never been repeated since. Delegates were given a choice of joining a team, who considered issues relating to topics in higher education, such as curriculum development and assessment. They remained with the team for the three days of the conference and the team produced a report for the final plenary session. The next year the format was changed to what has now become, the very familiar, parallel paper sessions. In recent years there have been experiments with formats to improve the conference experience such as symposia and round table sessions. However in my experience the most

satisfying learning experiences have come through active participation in workshops.

Each year the conference venues were shared between capital cities in Australia, centred on a university with accommodation in halls of residence. During the last 15–20 years there has been a move towards the use of hotel accommodation by delegates and the employment of professional conference organisers. Furthermore institutions are no longer willing to be generous about the use of facilities for conferences.

Sometime in the 80's the conference moved to New Zealand for the first time in recognition of the growing number of members there. Since then the conference has visited New Zealand in 1991, 1998 and 2003. The 2004 conference held in Miri, Malaysia, was the first time a full conference had been arranged outside Australia and New Zealand. I recall sometime in the late 80's the conference was split between Perth and Singapore.

Branches were established in the 80's to promote local activities in teaching and learning and encourage more academics to join HERDSA. The Queensland branch held a very successful state conference in 1998. However branches have been very difficult to sustain so several are no longer active, nevertheless, others like New Zealand, Western Australia and Hong Kong are thriving.

Special interest groups were formed to meet the interests of particular groups in higher education such as academic developers, those in leadership positions and those in language support groups. However, they were never very active or effective and only the language and learning group, UNILEARN, now survives. At the 1999 conference the student learning group organised an afternoon session in which their members presented a series of papers.

This would seem to be a useful activity, both for the conference and for a special interest group, and would be worth reviving.

HERDSA News began publication early in the life of the society as a vehicle for sharing news with members (note this was pre-email days, if you can conceive of life without electronic communication!) and it also published some short articles on teaching and learning written in a journalistic style. This genre has continued at the present time with an increase in the number of articles compared with news.

However there was a growing desire among some members for a scholarly journal published by the society and thanks to the vision and drive of John Powell then acting director at the UNSW Centre and a President of the Society, *Higher Education Research and Development* (HERD for short) was launched in 1981. Initially HERD was produced in-house, first in Sydney then in Brisbane but it is now published by Taylor and Francis and has become a respected international journal.

At about the same time the Green Guides began publication to provide academics with short, practical help with the varied aspects of teaching. The first guide 'Supervising Postgraduate Students' was written by Ingrid Moses, who was then working at TEDI in the University of Queensland, doing pioneering research into postgraduate supervision. The second guide 'Up the Publication Road' by Royce Sadler has been one of the most successful.

After several Green Guides had been produced there came a call for a different type of guide, aimed at practitioners. So the Gold Guide series was launched, the first one being written for clinical teachers. Others followed on the social responsibility of scientists, lab work and fieldwork. Sales have dropped markedly in recent years, possibly due to the increasing



availability of resources on the web. However a number of guides have been modified and reprinted by higher education societies in South Africa and Canada. Furthermore the two types have now been merged into one Guide series with a small number of new ones still being written and some of the most popular being revised.

There has been an on-going debate over the years about whether HERDSA is a society mainly catering for academic developers and therefore does not appeal as much as it potentially should to practitioners. I do not have the breakdown by membership categories to back that up but it certainly is something to keep in mind. It is worth noting that six of the ten initial HERDSA Fellows were practitioners.

In 1985 the first HERDSA Visiting Scholar, Professor Don Woods, a chemical engineer from McMaster University, ran a series of workshops on teaching and learning in Australia and I think New Zealand. The aim of the programme was to invite academics, who had distinguished themselves, both in their discipline and in teaching, to run interesting and stimulating events, which would attract a wide variety of academics to think about teaching. In 1985 teaching and learning were definitely not high on the agenda. Don Woods was followed by Georgine Loaker, an English Professor from Alverno College, David Humphries (Chemistry, McMaster) and more recently Tom Angelo (1998) and Charles Glassick in 2000. One major problem with the programme is to balance the need to hold workshops in several venues without exhausting the scholar.

In the late 80's with the growth of the society there was a need to establish an administrative office with some part time staff. Initially this was housed in the Problem based learning and research centre (PROBLARC) at Newcastle, courtesy of Penny Little. However with further growth the office moved to the Cook Primary School in Canberra where it shared office space with the Australian Association for Adult Learning. Two part time paid positions were created, with Coral Watson managing the

office and Heather Koch looking after the membership administration. The resignation of Coral in August 2002 led the Executive to rethink the office arrangements. In December 2002 an agreement was signed with Support U, an office management service in Sydney, to run the administration of the society with Jennifer Ungaro as part time manager. Jennifer's full time job is manager of the Institute of Teaching and Learning at Sydney University so she is ideally qualified for the task. Roger Landbeck also took on some administrative responsibilities.

In the 90's a List serve was established to communicate more speedily with members. The list was moderated and most of the postings concerned with job opportunities or conferences. At an Executive Meeting in July 2002 it became clear that by no means all HERDSA members were subscribers to the list so it was agreed to subscribe every member and Roger Landbeck took over as moderator. He now makes a weekly posting to members. There are about 100 non-members who are subscribers.

Perhaps the most significant development of recent years has been the Fellowship Scheme to recognise quality teachers. After much discussion by the Executive and a lot of hard work by a small group led by Angela Brew a pilot project was launched at the Perth conference in 2002. One year later at the Christchurch conference the first HERDSA Fellowships were awarded to the ten volunteers who had successfully completed the project. The scheme continues to evolve with promotional publicity being sent to Pro-Vice Chancellors of Teaching and Learning in July 2004.

Earlier, in the mid 90's, HERDSA had made a contribution to the growing interest in teaching in higher education by publishing "Prompts for good teaching" aimed at assisting debate in institutions about how to encourage teaching. The prompts are still available in hard copy and on the web but in need of revision, particularly with development of e-learning.

The composition of the Exec tries to ensure representation from all states in Australia and from New Zealand. Over the years the Exec has experimented with different ways of

distributing committee responsibilities and currently has returned to the concept of portfolios. It has also sought to identify the core business of the society and concentrate on that. Unfortunately it is no longer possible to hold a face-to-face meeting in November which makes it difficult for the committee to function efficiently especially in the year when the majority of the committee are new. The high workload on academics means that it is difficult to devote the amount of time to a professional society that was possible in earlier times, which means finding different ways of operating so that the society can continue to function.

A new development is the invitation from bodies like DEST and AVCC for the President to attend various meetings and serve on important committees. However with that comes the expectation that the President will be at the Professorial or Pro-Vice-Chancellor level. This is not easy to meet given the large workload on staff at these levels.

HERDSA has grown to become one of the leading professional societies of its kind in the world with members in many different countries. It has the potential to have an important influence into research and development into teaching and learning in higher education. May the next 30 years be even more successful than the past 31 recounted by this potted history.

Roger Landbeck was Senior Lecturer in the Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching at Griffith University from 1974 to 1991. He then spent the next 6 years as the first Director of the Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching at the University of the South Pacific. During this time he collaborated with France Mugler to investigate how South Pacific students learn. On his return to Australia he became editor of HERDSA News.

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Recent Developments in Learning and Teaching in the UK

By Randal Macdonald

Introduction

Reading Lesley Parker's account of learning and teaching in Australian universities in the last edition of HERDSA News, including a concise account of what is happening in the UK, reveals similar trends and pressures throughout the higher education sector, though with significant differences reflecting economic, social and political circumstances. Whilst it might be interesting to go into greater depth in describing what is happening in the UK readers might be more interested in how the developments are experienced by one individual in one institution. So, in this article I want to outline the major developments in the UK and then reflect on how they provide some of the context for my work as an academic developer in Sheffield Hallam University.

However, I must begin with a recognition that, whilst what I am describing applies to England, it is not necessarily the same in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland which, since the devolution of many powers from Westminster in the early 1990s, have adopted different approaches in some respects, not least to some aspects of quality assurance and the support for learning and teaching.

The main headlines include the changes indicated in the Government's January 2003 White Paper on The Future of Higher Education, the English Funding Council's learning and teaching strategy, changes in the Quality Assurance Agency's approach, and the bringing together of a number of agencies into the Higher Education Academy. From an institutional perspective these have, not surprisingly, provided a mixture of challenges and opportunities, not least in the amount of money being provided to support change.

The Future of Higher Education

The January 2003 White Paper in one sense drew together some of the recommendations of the Dearing Report (1997) whilst at the same time providing a new set of issues to be addressed by the sector and individual institutions. Much of the media attention focused on the introduction of variable student fees and addressing student debt but, as an academic developer, there was much else to interest me, not least a commitment to widening participation to 50 percent of 18–30 year olds and making higher education more inclusive through increasing the diversity of the student population. The further move to a mass higher education system has led, or perhaps should lead, to the need for a radical review of curriculum structures and pedagogic approaches. The overarching theme of the White Paper with respect to learning and teaching was on how to ensure universal good provision:

All providers should set down their expectations of teachers with reference to national professional standards, should ensure that staff are trained to teach and continue to develop professionally; should have effective quality assurance systems and robust degree standards; and should value and reward good teachers. (FoHE 4.13)

What a lot is contained in that very short paragraph! It includes the requirement that all new teaching staff will receive accredited training by 2006 as well as the establishment of professional standards for teaching (a consultation on this is currently taking place); further assurance of degree standards and the publication of external examiners' reports; initiatives to develop, recognise and reward good teaching; and the spreading of "best practice" in teaching through what has since become The Higher

Education Academy. The White Paper also set out procedures for measuring and recording student achievement, including the requirement for all students to leave with a transcript of their achievements and to engage in Personal Development Planning as part of the curriculum. A review of the Honours classification systems was also set in place which, hopefully, will lead to a more meaningful statement of a student's overall achievement.

HEFCE's Learning and Teaching Strategy

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has for a number of years had a learning and teaching strategy which has sought to redress the perceived, and perhaps even real, imbalance between teaching and research, through a focus on quality enhancement and rewarding excellent practice:

We aim to support higher education providers in exploring and developing new approaches in learning and teaching to respond to pressures of global competition and an increasing diversity of needs. (www.hefce.ac.uk)

The strategy has provided support at three levels:

- *Institutional* – through the requirement for institutions to provide a learning and teaching strategy with, subject to monitoring, the provision of Teaching Quality Enhancement Funds (TQEF) as an entitlement;
- *Subject* – by the establishment of 24 Subject Centres and a Generic Centre within the Learning and Teaching Support Network to develop, gather and disseminate good practice in learning and teaching at a subject specific level or through more generic themes. A further subject strand has been the Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) which, on the basis of achieving



good earlier quality assurance reports, allows for a subject area in an institution to bid for up to a quarter of a million pounds over three years to further develop and disseminate aspects of learning and teaching. The fifth, and final, phase of FDTL projects have just started, though they have been somewhat overshadowed by the introduction of Centres for Excellence (see below); and

- *Individual* – as part of a concern to recognise and reward individual excellence, the National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTFS) “celebrates excellence in teaching by recognising individuals who are outstanding as teachers and promoters of learning” (www.ntfs.ac.uk). The scheme began in 2000 with twenty Fellowships awarded each year until 2004 when it was increased to fifty. Awards are worth fifty thousand pounds to the individual to be used over three years “for the benefit of learning and teaching in Higher Education”.

The latest addition to the support for learning and teaching has been introduction of Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs), and interestingly their title had changed from Centres *of* to Centres *for* Excellence by the time institutions came to make their bids. So, whilst excellence had to be demonstrated, the intention is to ensure that the excellent teaching practices are rewarded and that there is further investment in these practices to bring about “substantial benefits to students, teachers and institutions”. The outcomes of the two-stage bidding process were announced in January 2005 with 74 CETLs awarded up to five hundred thousand pounds a year for five years and up to two million pounds for capital spending. A total of three hundred and fifteen million pounds has been committed to this initiative – the largest single amount committed by the English Funding Council to a single learning and teaching initiative.

The Higher Education Academy

Established in 2003, the HE Academy brought together the Institute

for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE), the Learning and Teaching Support Network and the National Co-ordination Team for the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund. The ILTHE had been a membership organisation made up of those who applied for individual membership or who had undertaken an accredited institutional programme in learning and teaching, often having received recognition from SEDA.

At the recent launch of the CETLs, the Chief Executive of the HE Academy, Professor Paul Ramsden, made it very clear that the Academy was not the same as the ILTHE. It is **not** a membership organisation, professional body or association and has the main aim of delivering on behalf of the funding bodies and the Government. Its subscribers, the Higher Education Institutions, are the main clients and this is where the main switch in emphasis is being felt most, with its main focus on “enhancing the student experience” being realised through support and brokering, helping institutions provide a better service to students. Previous members, who had paid an annual subscription, are now registered practitioners with, as part of the consultation on professional standards in teaching, a requirement to engage in continuing professional development.

The main activities of the Academy are Registration and Accreditation, Programmes (including support for FDTL, CETLs and the renamed Subject Networks) and Research and Evaluation. Readers will be interested to hear that the Director of Research and Evaluation is Mike Prosser, formally of the University of Sydney.

Quality Assurance

The UK’s Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) has the remit “to ensure standards of HE qualifications and encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of HE” (www.qaa.ac.uk). There is not the space to go into much detail here, save to say that institutions and individuals still experience mountains of paperwork whilst preparing for the various audits, engagements or reviews. The QAA is seeking to define clear and explicit standards through providing frameworks, subject

benchmarks and codes of practice. Perhaps one difference between countries worth mentioning is that in Scotland there has been an attempt to shift the emphasis from audit to what has been called enhancement-led institutional review (ELIR), with a forward-looking enhancement focus and the explicit engagement of students in the process, though this is becoming more prevalent across the system.

What has it Meant for Me?

Well, we certainly live in “interesting times” and for me, personally, the current emphasis on learning and teaching by the Government and HEFCE has provided great opportunities to bring about significant differences across the institution. It might almost be true to say that “we are all educational developers now”; I called a session I ran with a colleague at the 2002 ICED Conference in Perth, “Enhancing Educational Development in the 21st Century: From the Margin to the Mainstream”. And this is where most academic developers in the UK feel themselves to be today, at the heart of policy, decision-making and activities around developments in learning and teaching. The requirement for all English institutions to have a learning and teaching strategy in order to draw down the TQEF monies has been invaluable. In my own institution we receive about two hundred and fifty thousand pounds a year which we have used to fund Research Assistants to promote evidence-informed and evaluated changes to practice, multimedia developers to support the introduction of our virtual learning environment and other e-learning developments, and direct support for projects in our four Faculties. Personally I am not great fan of project funding because of the often poor track record of embedding and sustainability, but it has meant far greater numbers of staff engaged in change activities.

We have also been encouraged to make links with the raft of other strategies we have been required to provide for the Funding Council, including widening participation, disability, information technology, human resources, research and estates.



This "joining up" of strategies has sometimes been somewhat contrived but it has resulted in departments which had previously worked largely independently having to talk to each other. So, in developing the University's scheme for Recognising, Rewarding and Developing Excellent Teaching, leading to the award of University Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) Fellowships, I have worked closely with our Human Resources (HR) Department both to develop the scheme and acquire the funding from HR Strategy funds.

My institution has had considerable success in both the Fund for the Development of Teaching and Learning (FDTL) and the Centres for Excellence (CETLs), in no small part because of the intensive support given by myself and others based on previous experiences of working with projects and the Funding Council. In Phase 5 of FDTL we were awarded three projects and we were successful in bidding for a Centre for the Promotion of Learner Autonomy (of which I am Co-Director) and a Centre for Enhancing, Embedding

and Integrating Employability. We also made a successful collaborative bid with Coventry University for the Centre for Inter-Professional e-Learning (CIPEL) in Health and Social Care. The resultant kudos and money will provide enormous opportunities for us to further develop learning, teaching and assessment across the university and much wider. Truly "interesting times".

I also find myself working closely with our Academic Registry, providing an academic input on issues such as course validation, plagiarism regulations and assessment practices and procedures; with Student Services Centre on disability, widening participation and student support; with Facilities Directorate (estates) on developing appropriate learning environments; and with the Learning Centre on resources for learning. As a senior academic developer in the University I draft all major strategy and policy statements on learning, teaching and assessment and then have the responsibility for co-ordinating their implementation.

All in all there is very little time to get bored and plenty of opportunity to make a difference. Academic developers increasingly find themselves in very senior positions, including at HEFCE and the HE Academy as well as in institutions. The CETLs, Subject Networks and other initiatives have resulted in a significant growth of roles which require the skills and attributes of academic developers, even though those in these positions might not think of themselves by this name.

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- b. Course retention rate
- c. Results of a new National Student Survey

Institutions will be ranked on the basis of their performance across this basket of indicators and the lowest ranked two public institutions and thirteen private providers will be required, in the first instance, to enter into a dialogue with the Tertiary Education Commission. In the course of that dialogue they may be able to make a credible case that the ranking does not denote poor performance. If they cannot do this, they will be required to develop a "remedial action plan". The outcomes of that plan will then determine whether a portion of their funding is at risk (3% in the first year, rising potentially to 5%). Understandably, there are concerns about aspects of this approach

including appropriateness of the indicators and the "big stick" element. Its effectiveness will also depend on the quality of the dialogue.

Development of a sound National Student Survey will be a major project for 2005. Fortunately, there are the obvious precedents that can be drawn on: Course Experience Questionnaire, National Survey of Student Engagement (US) and National Student Survey (UK). Neil Haigh, NZ Branch Chairperson, who was on a reference group associated with the development of the policy is now a member of the Technical Working Group for the development of the Survey instruments and processes. The branch has also indicated its wish to contribute to this project in other ways.

2. The second key announcement was that the Government would establish a National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence during 2005. The overall brief for the Centre is the promotion of effective teaching and learning by:

- describing the components of effective teaching and learning
- documenting systems and practices (with examples and case studies) required for effective teaching and learning
- providing a clearing house for research on teaching and learning
- networking educators at local and regional levels
- undertaking research into teaching and learning.

The centre will also explore the case for tertiary teaching

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Inquiry-Based Learning: A Case Study in Asian Studies

By Pam Allen & Hollie Greeves

Abstract

This paper discusses a modest attempt to challenge and interrogate conventional ways of teaching and learning in the university context, through introducing elements of inquiry based learning (often referred to as "problem based learning" at tertiary level) into a first year Asian Studies syllabus.

Beginning with an overview of some of the literature on Inquiry-Based Learning, we then discuss the practicalities of implementing it at the tertiary level, and into the Asian Studies IB syllabus in particular.

Introduction

The genesis of the project was fourfold, deriving from:

- the desire to develop a culture of inquiry in the university;
- fostering the idea of the university as a "community of learners";
- the development of interdisciplinary programs; and
- re-thinking appropriate assessment tools.

The principal aim was to investigate ways of delivering content that involved less "transfer of knowledge" from lecturer to student and more interrogation, inquiry and critical thinking on the part of the students.

What is Inquiry-Based Learning?

Inquiry-Based Learning (also known as "problem-based" or "project-based" learning in some literature¹) is what Biggs describes as an *active* method of learning. In essence, it is a learning style that requires students to "question, speculate and generate solutions". (Biggs, 2003, p. 4)

IBL operates on the premise that students should display a high-level of engagement with their learning.

By contrast, students relying on the traditional lecture-tutorial mode of higher education are typified by low-level engagement. Low-level engagement results in part from teaching approaches characterised as "didactic and directive", emphasising recall of theoretical knowledge (Fenwick, 2002, p. 7; Bligh, 1995; Mann & Kaufman, 1995) and requiring students to do little more than take notes and memorise disjointed chunks of information. So, although they may be meeting the 'knowledge' outcome of their course, they are not employing the critical thinking, interrogation and inquiry techniques needed to be good researchers or to write good-quality academic analyses.

Biggs (2003, p. 4) argues that IBL can lift levels of achievement of students who display low-level engagement with topics. This is because it is no longer an option for them to take a surface approach to learning. Rather, they must ask questions and rely on their own research skills to ensure they are tackling those questions in an effective manner and with the best resources available.

What is Knowledge?

"Knowledge" can be broadly categorised into objective knowledge and subjective knowledge (Brew, 2003, p. 9). Objective knowledge is a "quantity of something we are building up" (Brew, 2003, p. 9), a pre-determined set of ideas that have some hierarchical basis. Subjective knowledge takes into account the fact that learning and the acquisition of knowledge takes place in certain contexts. Such knowledge is a "product of interpretation and negotiation" (Brew, 2003, p. 9), allowing the learner to take control. This is an essential element of IBL, in that "students are seeking knowledge rather than just being given it".

(Hillman, 2003, p. 6) They decide which bits of information they will use, and how. "Meaning is generated by the interplay between new information and existing concepts". (Gibbs & Habeshaw, 1989, p. 20) Information literacy is, *ipso facto*, inherently linked with notions of subjective knowledge.²

Cautionary Case Studies

While good teaching is aimed at getting all students to use higher cognitive level processes (Biggs, 2003, p. 9), IBL cannot simply replace the traditional lecture-tutorial format without careful consideration. One of the most important aspects of ensuring a smooth transition into IBL courses is the role of the teacher(s). The teacher has the capacity to either empower or disempower the students, and incorrect pedagogy has the potential to undermine, rather than enhance, the quality of course delivery. The lecturer or tutor "must guide, probe and support students" initiatives, not lecture, direct or provide easy solutions'.³ In IBL, the difference between tutorials and lectures should be made more explicit than it is made in the traditional format. Tutorials are not just another lecture, they are an opportunity for students to air concerns, ask questions and contribute their ideas to their academic communities of practice. It is the perfect opportunity for students to engage both socially and academically with their peers and mentors. Put differently, "learning needs to be seen as a social practice". (Brew, 2003, p. 12; Lave & Wegner, 1993, p. 98)

An example of the potential pitfalls of IBL is outlined by Biggs (2003, 77), who stresses that courses based on IBL must create an atmosphere "where students will feel free to admit error". They need to feel that the questions they ask will lead



to understanding rather than provide them with the answers straight away. A teacher's attitude must be conducive to this IBL atmosphere—otherwise it will fail the students. Biggs cites a problem-based learning course where the teacher's attitude undermined the IBL process, because she replied to every question put to her, "that's for me to know and you to find out". Inevitably, the students stopped asking questions, PBL developed a bad name at that university and so did the tutor! This could have been avoided, had the tutor fully understood the nature of questioning in PBL.

As Biggs (2003, p. 63) stresses, "students need to find academic activities meaningful and worthwhile" in order to be successful in their studies.⁴ As long as they use critical thinking techniques and appropriate research skills, they will meet the learning outcomes of their particular course. This is why most IBL literature emphasises the potential for lifting levels of both engagement and achievement in students. Teachers themselves often "conclude that being interested in a topic, having a plan for how to research it, and having a purpose for engaging in the project" are intrinsic to their own learning and therefore must be applied to their own teaching. (Rief, 1999 in Farnwick Owens, Hester & Teale, 2002, p. 617)

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Previously taught in traditional mode, comprising two lectures and a tutorial, with assessment being a tutorial paper, major essay and examination, this unit was ripe for an overhaul. While most students⁵ found the content enjoyable and relevant, our perception was that they were not engaging at a high level with that content. The "transfer of information" model reigned supreme.

The obstacles to that "overhaul" included the following structural "givens" of the university context:

- Lectures (video-conferenced);
- Teacher-centred tutorials;
- Conventional assessment tools;
- Examinations;
- Large class sizes; and
- Centrally-controlled timetables.

The areas offering most scope for IBL renewal were deemed to be the tutorials and assessment activities.

The anticipated outcomes of incorporating IBL into the syllabus were:

- Greater integration between learning outcomes and assessment instruments;
- Increase in students' active engagement with, and ownership of, their own learning; and
- Increased student satisfaction with the unit;

Tutorials

To unsettle the pattern of tutorials being led, rather than facilitated, by tutors, some of tutorials were replaced with online discussion boards, using the Web CT platform. In line with the emphasis on critical inquiry in IBL, students were expected to post their own questions, as well as respond to questions posted by the lecturer. Discussion boards remained open for a week, giving students time to reflect, read further and return to the board to post a response and/or a follow-up question to a given posting. This simple initiative, while hardly startlingly novel, nonetheless led to a greater level of student engagement with the set readings, with the questions posed by the tutor and their peers, and with their fellow students. It also reduced the anxiety levels of many students who do not enjoy speaking openly in the traditional tutorial environment, and was welcomed by students who were juggling demanding work / study / parenting schedules. There was a participation rate of almost 100%, far greater than in most face-to-face tutorials. Furthermore, some students requested that some of the discussion boards be kept open for more than a week as a vibrant discussion had developed, and they wanted to keep it going

Assessment

Two assessment tasks replaced the traditional tutorial paper. The first was a simple role play, in which students were asked to research, prepare and present an interview with an Asian person who has "made a difference" to his/her nation. With a strict time limit for the presentation of five minutes, and the requirement of a rigorous

bibliography and consultation with library staff, the task proved to be a very useful test of students' information literacy skills.

The second task challenged most students' notions of what constitutes "knowledge". They were asked to read and review a piece of short fiction focussing on Asia, with a view to understanding that fiction can present us with a version of the "truth" that may be equally as valid as that presented in history. Feedback from students indicated that they enjoyed the challenge of aligning "authorised" versions of the truth with these "imagined" versions, and that it gave them a different insight into how knowledge is constructed.

Evaluation

Feedback gleaned from students through the university's formal evaluation process, SETL⁶, and focus groups on both campuses was overwhelmingly positive. Furthermore, there was clear understanding and endorsement on the students' part of the principles underlying the initiatives outlined above. In particular:

- They understood that the aim was to provide a clear articulation between the learning objectives of the unit and the assessment;
- Many commented favourably on the fact that they were being challenged to think; and
- Many commented that they felt more in control of their own learning in this unit than in others they had studied.

Closing remarks

IBL is characterised by the use of "real world" problems as a context for students to learn critical thinking and problem solving skills. Additionally, IBL aims to equip students with the necessary skills to allow smooth transition into the workforce (Biggs, 2003, p. 233) or into postgraduate education. This benefits both the students and their potential employers. In a tertiary environment that stresses the importance of lifelong learning, IBL can be a vital tool for enhancing the teaching and learning outcomes of today's universities.



Endnotes

1. These two latter terms are used mainly in relation to medicine, science and mathematics rather than the humanities, which is our interest here. Henceforth in this paper Inquiry-Based Learning will be abbreviated to IBL.
2. A useful definition of information literacy is that provided by Kormilda College: "The ability to access, evaluate and use information from multiple formats to assist in the process of critical thinking and problem solving." <http://www.kormilda.nt.edu.au/KICpages/Infolit/infopol.htm> Sighted 28 February 2005
3. <http://www.udel.edu/pbl/cte/jan95-what.html> Sighted 28 February 2005
4. See also Hillman, 2003, 6
5. Enrolment in semester 2 2004 was just over 100 students, across two campuses (Hobart and Launceston).
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New Zealand Branch Report cont ...

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qualifications and take initiatives that will increase the quality and availability of professional development options.

Our Branch is delighted that the Government has taken this step having been supportive of a proposal for such a centre that Neil had previously developed and presented to the Tertiary Education Minister.

Concurrent with this announcement, the Government signalled that it was setting up a

Teaching Matters Forum. The forum, which is intended to operate through the internet and meetings around the country, will provide the Minister with feedback on the views of tertiary staff about topical matters and issues and give related advice. The latter will include advice on the establishment of the National Centre. Again, the Branch has been pro-active in signalling its wish to be actively involved in this Forum.

Given these developments, the NZ Branch is looking forward to a year that will present us with opportunities to be influential in shaping national initiatives. Alongside that agenda, we have adopted the theme "Indigenous Issues in Tertiary Education" as a focus for our other activities.

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A Sequel – Jewel in the Shamrock: Improve Student Learning at Trinity

Robert Kennelly's experience of the Introduction of the Teaching Portfolio Process using Reflective Practice at Trinity College Dublin.

In the last newsletter I shared with you my initial experiences of working at Trinity College, Dublin, as an academic developer and of my planning, marketing and implementation of teaching portfolios with reflective practice. I have now been here eight months and I am no longer nervous!

In my previous article I described the introduction of the program "Developing teaching portfolios with reflective practice", whose rationale was to create a learning community who would meet regularly to present and discuss aspects of their teaching and their students' learning and to document these teaching investigations.

The program included seminars on writing a teaching philosophy statement and on an introduction to teaching portfolios in September and October 2005. In November, 25 academics participated in three portfolio workshops facilitated by Nona Lyons, an acknowledged teaching portfolio expert from the United States who is currently a visiting research scholar at University College Cork.¹ The process of these workshops allowed participants to gradually develop their teaching portfolios over time. The workshop content included:²

Workshop 1; Constructing a Teaching Portfolio: With what kind of entries?

The "entries", that made up their portfolio, consisted of an analysis of a teaching event (a lecture or a

series of lectures using a particular teaching strategy, a summative assessment, a classroom assessment technique or some evaluative data), the results of that teaching event (what did the students learn and how did they feel) and finally, reflection on the result (a consideration of what they do next and how does this inform their teaching philosophy and link to other "entries").

Workshop 2; Making Inquiries into Teaching and Student Learning: How do we know what students know and understand? Evidence?

Evidence to support "entries": How do we know what our students know, understand and can do?

Reflections: What do we learn about teaching and learning from engaging in this inquiry. Uncovering student knowing and unknowing through classroom assessment techniques;

Workshop 3; Assessing Portfolio Evidence; with what framework and using what criteria?

Draft criteria for providing peer feedback was developed and trailed during later presentation sessions.

At each workshop some participants would present their philosophy statement or one of their entries. This would be followed by discussion, which encouraged further reflection about nuances that had not

been considered at first. This added, in an iterative way, to the development of a fuller and ongoing interrogation of the teaching and learning experience.

At the end of these workshops participants then began to write and organise their material for a presentation and a written submission of part of their portfolio, which consisted of:

1. A philosophy statement;
2. Two entries about their teaching and their students learning, and
3. A reflective link back to the Teaching philosophy.

These part portfolio presentations were given over three sessions from December to February 2005. Each presentation took about 30 minutes followed by discussion, peer and then facilitator feedback. Again as had happened in the earlier workshops the feedback provided further insights for the presenter and so another iteration began.

The part portfolios described in some detail a specific experience, analysis of that experience and what is being done or what is planned to be done to improve the situation. In some cases participants reported on using specific classroom assessment techniques to improve feedback to students and to themselves about their teaching.

Without exception participants displayed a passion for the teaching of their discipline and a profound interest in what their students were learning. The investment in time, given the

constraints within which most Trinity academics operate, was prodigious.

The participants' presentations and submissions demonstrated considerable reflection about specific teaching strategies. For example, one participant examined a specific course (unit) over a three year period during which time there were a number of poorly planned changes (reducing contact hours in a laboratory class) forced on the lecturer by circumstances outside his control. His portfolio charted the changes he made to the course over time to cope with a situation that made teaching difficult and student's learning problematic. One of his reported reflections was

... was the realization of where my main skill (and enjoyment) lies: in responding directly to a student's questions and reading the "question behind the question".³

The value of the reflective process was further amplified in written evaluations from participants (December 2004). Some of the key points were:

- Participants reported the value of learning from inter disciplinary colleagues. One participant said "... you people know more about my teaching, especially failures and the way I think about my teaching than my departmental colleagues";
- Participants reported the importance of reflection. One participant said "... that the portfolio should be 'embedded' as opposed to a scrapbook of evidence ... that it should reflect my ongoing evolution as a teacher and learner" and another said "... developing an entry (for my portfolio) could result in a change in my philosophy and in the way I teach"; and
- Participants reported learning about new class room assessment techniques (CATS) to use to give students formative feedback and or get feedback on their learning or the teachers' teaching.⁴

The immediate plans for the program are:

1. The facilitation of three portfolio network meetings (March and April 2005) to support and encourage participants in the development and finalisation of the final entries in their portfolios;
2. Submission and feedback on the completed teaching portfolio (May 2005); and
3. A recognition ceremony for those completing the program (June 2005).

What are the institutional learnings so far?

To encourage and support interrogation of teaching and learning one needs appropriate training and a supportive community where trust allows members to admit mistakes, reconsider their teaching and their teaching philosophy in light of their recorded teaching and learning experiences. It is important that academics have access to peer, facilitator and academic developer feedback. The feedback should be both commentary on content from the perspective of good practice as well as encouraging the on going dialogue by asking questions about why and what did they do to their students!

It is also important for the institution to support such a community with resources and strategies that encourage an intrinsic interest in investigating teaching. Trinity has situated this particular program in a suite of complementary strategies, which will, at least over time, provide a culture where teaching and student learning is perceived as being important. The complementary strategies are:

- The voluntary introduction of a student feedback system in 2001;
- Introduction of the Provost Teaching Excellence Awards in 2002;
- The learning innovation projects in 2002; and
- The introduction of teaching portfolios into the promotion process.

What have I learnt so far?

1. The process takes time, even when you have the support programs in

place. Do not under estimate the impact of an institution's culture.

2. The term "reflective practice" is considered jargon by some of my colleagues and needs to be explained in context. As Biggs (2003 p. 259) points out the reflective practitioner needs "a theory of teaching".⁵
3. Integrate teaching portfolios with reflective practice in tandem with complementary strategies.

I have enjoyed this experience at Trinity; there is still three months to go; time to complete the first year of this exciting development in teaching and learning. I appreciate the opportunity to write to my colleagues about a year in Dublin.

End Notes

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2. Material developed by the author (in collaboration) for marketing the Teaching Portfolio program at Trinity College, Dublin. September 2004.
3. A participant's teaching portfolio, February 2005.
4. Participants' written evaluations on the program, December 2004.
5. Biggs J. (2003). *Teaching for quality learning at university*. Buckingham: SRHE.

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THE HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY COLUMN

“Building University Diversity” and Implications for Australian Higher Education

By Sharon Parry

The release of the latest issues paper, “*Building University Diversity: Future approval and accreditation processes for Australian higher education*” by DEST provokes consideration of some key challenges in the higher education sector because it goes to the heart of the standard of Australian awards in the global market for higher education. The paper opens up for debate the concept of the university in the global marketplace where diversity, accessibility and equivalence are countervailing forces. Within this debate are changing conceptions about what constitutes research, what scholarship concerns and the idea of the research-teaching nexus.

One focus concerns Australian universities having the capacity to accredit their own awards. This essentially Humboldtian tradition dominated the UK and Australia, as well as many other higher education sectors (but not France, Norway or eastern European countries) in the twentieth century. In this view, teaching and research inform each other, with their complementarity adding value to both pursuits. But in this view, knowledge is assumed to be produced within the confines of universities which legitimate the knowledge for social application. Among other observers, Gerard Delanty (2001) describes how the makers of knowledge have become more closely situated with those who use it, a development that has placed knowledge production squarely in the settings where it is utilised – and therefore legitimated. National governments have reinforced this process through their recognition that students are not the only stakeholders

in the higher education process. Industry, commerce and the world of work also play a legitimising role. Conceptions of what makes a university are therefore changing, bringing into focus the question of how awards are accredited. Universities no longer possess exclusive intellectual authority to determine the social robustness of knowledge.

Parallel to these developments is a counter-movement: the Bologna Process, the platform from which 40 European nation states began to press for equivalent educational standards and awards to encourage flexibility and mobility among EU citizens. Since flexibility and mobility are highly prized in the global market for graduates, the need to demonstrate equivalence is making considerable impact on higher education sectors around the world, including Australia. *Building University Diversity* acknowledges this tension.

At issue is whether greater diversity among awarding institutions, which are currently confined to self-accrediting universities under existing protocols, can accommodate common features in degree structures, in credit transfers and in quality assurance measures and processes. The issues paper contextualises mass higher education as a commodity with a significant contribution to GDP. It also highlights the importance of marketability, competitiveness and client-centredness to the commodity of higher education.

The higher education sector is confronted with the question of whether it is essential to assume that research informs teaching,

thereby adding value to it. But this assumption needs to be unpacked further. In one sense, the assumption is a vast generalisation. The implicit assumption that approximately one-third of academics' time is being devoted to research activity was questioned by Kogan (2004), who points out that “Of approximately 105 thousand full time teachers in the UK system, only 43% were entered in the RAE competition in 2001”. So we must acknowledge that not all university teachers are actively involved in research activity. But a considerable proportion are actively engaged in research. What would be the cost of constraining active engagement in research and under what kind of circumstances should it occur?

Building University Diversity first cites Kogan (2004) and then Henkel (2004) as identifying important disciplinary culture and quality assurance benefits of the teaching-research nexus, only to dismiss them using Henkel's (2004) comment that there is “no clear statistical correlation between academic performance in research and teaching”. The discussion paper assumes also that to excel in one is to sacrifice the other, which is consistent a view that the sacrifice is greater for researchers who have the distraction of students needing their attention and time. To suggest this view, *Backing University Diversity* draws upon a survey of Australian universities by McInnes (1999) who found that an increase in research time was achieved by a sacrifice in teaching-related activity. However, while the benefits of the nexus to students are acknowledged



in the issues paper, the symbiotic relationship between the cognitive and social aspects of knowledge production and utilisation are ignored. In particular, no account is taken of Henkel's (2004) warning against a shift of emphasis in the idea of the teaching-research nexus in favour of the process of knowledge acquisition and student learning. There is a real danger of underestimating the importance of substantive knowledge and its development, epistemological underpinnings and transdisciplinary aspects both in the process and outcomes of learning. Knowledge amounts to more than mere skills, because it encompasses coming to know different ways of seeing and solving problems, and of furthering the development of human values.

Maurice Kogan (2004) notes that there are drawbacks for both in separating teaching from research. Into the mix, several observers of higher education systems have added the question of whether teaching needs to be informed by research, and whether scholarship is might be a useful substitute. But there is no definitive conception of scholarship. Not surprisingly, *Building University Diversity* prompts discussion about what constitutes scholarship, citing both Boyer's (1990) four dimensions of scholarship and the definition used in the UK Research Assessment Exercise: "the creation, development and maintenance of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines, in forms such as dictionaries, scholarly and critical editions, catalogues and contributions to major research databases".

Unfortunately, neither of these definitions do justice to the importance of knowledge informing practice and practice informing knowledge. There is no doubt that knowledge-making is a dynamic, proliferating and maturing process as Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons (2000) describe. Kogan (2004) acknowledges: "Each discipline intensifies and diversifies itself and the knowledge components of higher education steadily become more esoteric". He goes on to cite Clark (1991): "It becomes difficult if not impossible to maintain these necessary concentrations in the traditional locales of teaching and study. Hence the development of

research devoted groups without teaching programmes and students' needs on their minds".

But movement from traditional locales should not necessarily equate to separation, nor should it give legitimisation to teaching-only academics. On this point, Kogan argues for "disciplined enquiry" because "universities have traditionally been the guardians of free enquiry and social critique. It may be that their avocation has been swamped by the press of student numbers ... it is essential, however that academics will continue to take up the function of the critical intellectual, and to do that effectively must require sustenance of expertise and involvement in their own subject areas".

Acknowledging the push towards equivalence in standards and among awards, both Henkel (2004) and Kogan (2004) raise the question of whether the benefits of the teaching-research nexus are as essential to undergraduate education as to postgraduate education. On this pivotal issue, *Building University Diversity* is curiously silent on the way forward for Australia—although it does acknowledge that there are arguments in support of the link between research and postgraduate education. So the challenge is to identify the purpose and role of undergraduate education, the nature of expected graduate attributes and whether values, attitudes and capacities are as important to Australia's graduates as are skills and abilities.

The very idea of a university is being reconceptualised, as are conceptions of research and scholarship. These reconceptualisations have considerable implications for the standard of university awards at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, so of course questions about how institutions are accredited must be addressed. *Building University Diversity* (4.4.3) acknowledges these difficulties and associated complexities, including the accreditation of institutions themselves as distinct from the courses they provide.

A central consideration given scant attention in *Building University Diversity* concerns the role and purpose of higher education to nation states. Guy Neave (2005) observes

that the key to the global massification of higher education after World War 2 was the recognition that education determined life chances. He further notes that this objective eventually undermined itself because of the special relationship between social cohesion and economic development, the tension between which grows as economies flourish. He notes, "one only has to consider how far reform of higher education turns to 'business practice' as the yardstick of its successful modernisation ...". Neave points to the detachment of the university from public service and away from its central mission, the trend towards skills training and "the technical and operational skills and attitudes that accompany performance in the private sector, and continual system change and upheaval as three features that challenge the very idea of a university". He asks, "... whether the university may be said to be symbolic of any kind of unity—regional, (or) national unity ... - let alone alone of solidarity and cohesion ...".

These considerations are some of those generated by the discussion paper, *Building University Diversity* and ones that HERDSA members should take the lead in addressing openly.

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I.T. IN HIGHER EDUCATION COLUMN

Blogs and Wikis: What'll They Think of Next?

By Roger Atkinson

Although I am an enthusiast for information technology and educational technology, I do realise that there is, in some quarters (or even in many quarters), a feeling that IT and edtech sometimes go too far, and that terms like blog, blogging, and blogosphere could constitute a kind of IT overload last straw. Do academics really need yet another “new technology”, another “killer app”, etc, that they have to know about and perhaps even use?

One way (there are lots of other ways) to consider this question is in a very academic way. What is appearing in the academic research literature about blogs and wikis? How does that relate to the interests of typical members of HERDSA, in contrast to the interests of techno-enthusiasts? To begin, an excursion into definitions. Brief definitions of blog and wiki are provided by *Wikipedia*:

A weblog, web log or simply a blog, is a web application which contains periodic posts on a common webpage. These posts are often but not necessarily in reverse chronological order. Such a website would typically be accessible to any Internet user. (*Wikipedia*, 2005a)

A Wiki or wiki ... is a website (or other hypertext document

collection) that allows users to add content, as on an Internet forum, but also allows anyone to edit the content. “Wiki” also refers to the collaborative software used to create such a website... (*Wikipedia*, 2005b)

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* spiced up its definition by naming blog as its “#1 Word of the Year for 2004” (based on numbers of online lookups):

Blog noun [short for *Weblog*] (1999) : a Web site that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer (*Merriam-Webster*, 2005)

A 500 word encyclopaedia style definition by Jill Walker begins with the paragraph:

A weblog, or blog, is a frequently updated website consisting of dated entries arranged in reverse chronological order so the most recent post appears first... Typically, weblogs are published by individuals and their style is personal and informal. Weblogs first appeared in the mid-1990s, becoming popular as simple and free publishing tools became available towards the turn of the century. Since anybody with a net connection can publish their own weblog, there is great variety in the quality, content, and ambition of weblogs, and a weblog may

have anywhere from a handful to tens of thousands of daily readers. (*Walker*, 2003)

Readers in pursuit of definitive definitions will find this elusive; there is usually no precise distinction between blogs and wikis, and often you encounter imprecise qualifiers such as “typically”. Furthermore, some writers on blogging take issue with the concept of definitions, because they may constrain the purposes and visions that underlie blogging. From Torill Mortensen:

If blogging can be defined within the known genres and boundaries, it can also be restricted and controlled according to known rules and made to submit to already predefined aesthetics.

...In the quest for a voice, for power and influence and a way to define themselves in the upper middle class, or even among artists of the avant-garde, the blog can be a tool. The question is: will it be a tool for strict socialization and cultural oppression, with tight limits, or will it remain open for redefinition, for the individual expression and, not the least, for celebrating diversity and tolerance online?

... Defining weblogs should allow for the users’ experiences, not just for technical or overly



formal typologies. (Mortensen, 2004)

Torill Mortensen identified positively with Walker's (2003) definition, "...a definition written from observing the practice of a large community generously...", and also sought to put the technologists firmly back into their boxes, by criticising an "... eagerness to define weblogs according to the software through which it is published..." (Mortensen, 2004). Furthermore:

... in some definitions of weblogs these technical aspects are prominent, in the way art forms are defined by the sophistication of materials and techniques. We can understand this as another expression of the need to define weblog form rather than weblog intent or sensation. Defining weblogs through the software and technical solutions creates instant exclusion through terms that appear to be neutral and obvious, but which also work as constructions to exclude those without a certain level of technical skills or the understanding of the significance of these different software tools. (Mortensen, 2004)

Nevertheless, the same writer acknowledged a creditworthy role for blog and wiki technologists (is there no need then to worry about "a kind of IT overload last straw", as I did above?);

Weblog software and blog clients are tools to meet the needs and interests of users with a low amount of specialised knowledge of how to communicate online, and are often used by a wide range of users with little communicative sophistication. The simplicity of these tools, however, also make them very useful for specialists who have much knowledge of certain areas, but little time and opportunity to learn about online publishing—such as scholars. (Mortensen, 2004)

The brief illustrations above suggest to me that standard definitions are not sufficiently illustrative. Adopting Mortensen's (2004) preference for defining weblogs by "intent or sensation" (quoted above), I compiled Table 1 to summarise a few illustrative examples of academic writing and researching about weblogs, attempting to cite key emphases ("sensations") and main purposes ("intent") or context features in the authors' works.

Table 1 is intended to be illustrative rather than comprehensive, and an avenue into research on blogs in contrast to a summary of research findings. This is due in part to there being "...not a lot of refereed published material on the subject of blogs in general, let alone work that focuses specifically on blogs in education". (Williams & Jacobs, 2004) A similar view was advanced by Mortensen & Walker (2002), "There is a considerable amount of popular writing on weblogs, but there is to date no published research on the topic...". Nevertheless, Table 1 can be used to illustrate three main points.

Firstly, blogs and blogging have attracted attention in a range of academic topics. Whilst these include research (or "knowledge creation"), scholarly publishing and some others, the main cluster of interests is upon teaching and learning practices relating to critical reflection, for example, "learning journals", "personal journals" and "reflective journals". These are not new topics, but citing them seems to me to indicate a firm grounding and principal direction for further research into blogs in education. One topic with widespread implications has been flagged by several writers proposing alternatives to conventional, class-only online discussion groups:

Weblogs, it is argued, offer new opportunities in the development of social, cognitive and teacher presence online and should be considered in the development of or alongside established OLEs [online learning environments] (Farmer, 2004)

...can students actually learn critical skills regarding the internet and online culture when most of their tertiary education involving the World Wide Web involves one password protected system which is geared toward pointing inward, not outward? (Leaver, 2005)

Secondly, Table 1 (and reading of the references!) suggests that the underlying technologies, embedded in weblog software and blogging clients are not matters likely to be of special interest in research into blogs and blogging. Research into blogs is not a specialised domain only for techno-enthusiasts, and in my view weblog software and blogging clients are not revolutionary advances beyond standard website technologies. This

may be due to the "...simplicity of these tools" (Mortensen, 2004) or the "... simplicity of the mechanism of blogging" (Williams & Jacobs, 2004). For a quick and easy test of this simplicity, you may like to examine a very basic blogging facility with guest access at Edith Cowan University (Oliver, 2005).

Thirdly, most of the studies cited in Table 1 are explorations and developments of ideas, or are uses of blogs for teaching purposes. There are relatively few studies on blogs that test research hypotheses by the quantitative or qualitative techniques as commonly used in educational research (therein lies an opportunity!). However, a conference in Sydney in May 2005 will publish a significant number of research studies on blogging. (*Blogtalk Downunder*, 2005)

Returning to my opening questions about blogs, in particular, *Do academics really need yet another "new technology"?*, the short answer is "not really", or words to that effect. However, my longer answer (actually another question, as one often does in academic writing) seeks to outline the real or the more important opportunity: *Can we build upon the simple technological infrastructure of blogs, to obtain a beneficial advance in particular applications - reflective journals for teaching and learning purposes, research group communications, scholarly publishing, and others still to be identified?* To which the short answer is "yes", though *How?* is not amenable to short answers.

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TABLE 1. A few illustrative examples of "weblog intent or sensation"*

Authors	Aspect emphasised	Main purpose or context
Ferdig & Trammell (2004); Trammell & Ferdig (2004)	online personal journals	strategies for using blogs in the classroom; pedagogical implications of classroom blogging
Herring, Scheidt, Bonus & Wright (2004)	content analysis of randomly selected weblogs; genre analysis	weblogs bridge a gap between standard web pages and conventional, asynchronous computer mediated communications
Huffaker (2004)	personal journals or diaries	promoting literacy in the classroom
Paquet (2003)	personal knowledge publishing	uses in research
Raynes-Goldie (2004)	...a social technology that can ... bring order to informational chaos	information management and knowledge creation
Smith (2004)	... precursors to new overlay [virtual] journals, or even new forms of journal	scholarly publishing, open access, deconstructed journal, distributed journal
Walker (2003)	...a continuum from confessional, online diaries to logs tracking specific topics or activities through links and commentary...	narrative theory, digital narrative, thematic approaches to narrative
Armstrong, Berry & Lamshed (2004) (RMIT)	use of blogs by students as learning journals	integrate the personal aspect of a journal or diary that documents the student's journey through the learning with the immediate publishing capability of the web creating ... a collaborative, public discourse on the reflections of learners.
Bartlett-Bragg (2003) (UTS)	...integration of blogging into pedagogical practices for educators.	introduction of blogging ... represented as a five-stage process
Farmer (2004) (Deakin)	...communities of inquiry in online learning environments	comparing conventional online discussion board tools and weblogs
Leaver, T. (2005) (UWA)	critical thinking and peer to peer learning	...compensate for the inward looking nature of WebCT by also using (blogs) [in] unit <i>Self.Net: Communicating Identity in the Digital Age</i> .
Leung & Matthews (2004) (UTS)	... students to critically reflect on their technologies of interest weekly through a weblog (or blog)	... emphasise the symbiotic relationship between reflection and good practice.
Oliver (2005) (ECU)	... a very simple tool that provides students with private Webspace to record their views and impressions.	... encourage learners to reflect and to think about their learning
Segrave, Holt & Farmer (2005) (Deakin)	...[blogs] can excel in facilitating the sharing and celebration of successful praxis, as well as offering opportunities for self organised development	academic professional development for effective online teaching and learning
Williams & Jacobs (2004) (QUT)	...reflective journals ... blogs and academic discourse are natural allies	MBA blog for coursework at Queensland University of Technology
* Australian authors (last 8 rows) have a university name or acronym appended. Full names in references.		



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RESEARCH IN HIGHER EDUCATION

PROGRESS REPORTS

The three research projects presented here were first reported in HERDSA News as commencing about four years ago. I contacted the investigators to see if they were prepared to provide a progress report and these are their responses. Editor.

Evaluation of the Northern Women's Community Midwifery Project

By Jen Byrne

Any woman who has had a baby will know that this time in their lives is so very special. With so many uncertainties and questions, the opportunity to know the midwife who will undertake all her antenatal care, be on call to support and care for her during her labour and birth and to have that same midwife visit her for up to six weeks seems almost too good to be true. If transport is unavailable the midwife will undertake antenatal checks in the home and all postnatal visits after hospital discharge are undertaken in the home. If things become complicated the midwife will still care for her in consultation with the appropriate medical officer or other health professional.

This is the exact service the Northern Women's Community Midwifery Program offers to women living in the northern metropolitan area of Adelaide. The Northern Women's Community Midwifery Program (CMP) commenced in 1998 following application for the Commonwealth Alternative Birthing Services Program. The CMP program was the first publicly funded midwifery led continuity of carer model in South Australia. The CMP is unique in Australia as it promotes access to women with social and financial needs. Women who access the project include young women, Aboriginal women and those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

The project offers homebirth, birthing centre and hospital birthing with a known midwife who works closely with community groups and relevant services in the area.

The CMP midwives are employed by the Department of Health. They work in a team with each woman having a known midwife and a second midwife who will be there if she chooses a homebirth, but also will help out if it is a particularly long labour or the known midwife is on leave or at another birth. There is increasing evidence that midwifery continuity of carer models are satisfying for both women and midwives, while also reducing interventions in labour.

Due to funding constraints the CMP evaluation was undertaken only on the setting up of the program, which at the time, until permanent funding was secured in 2001, was called a Project. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected using multiple methods of collection from clinical outcomes, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, a time and motion study and records and documents on the implementation of the project.

During the set up evaluation it was found that in the beginning the midwives spent a great deal of their time developing the model, addressing structural issues, fostering relationships with hospital midwives and obstetricians, community

groups and due to the uncertainty of permanent funding, involved in lobbying government departments.

From the beginning of the Project until 30th September 2001 a total of 222 women were enrolled. Their ages ranged from 14 to 40 with the median age being 25 years. The majority of women were Caucasian (82.4%) however a significant and increasing number of Indigenous women joined the program (14.2%) compared to the State incidence of 2.5% of birthing women. This was the result of effective liaison between the community midwives and the local Aboriginal community based in the northern metropolitan area. Of the 21 Aboriginal women who had given birth by the end of the evaluation period, 7 of them were under 20 years old and 9 had their first baby. Interestingly, also the birth weight of babies born after 37 weeks gestation and to Aboriginal mothers were of similar weight to Non-Aboriginal mothers average of 3298 grams compared to 3604 grams.

Another interesting statistic was the number of home births in the program (13.6%) compared to the State incidence (0.2%). Most women would rarely access homebirthing, particularly if socio-economic disadvantage was an issue, due to the costs associated with privately employing a midwife in private practice for a home birth.



Given the women that used the CMP included pregnancies of all risks and particularly social risk there was no significant difference in the type of birth women in the program experienced and those comparable to the State figures which included 68.2% normal vaginal births and 20.3% Caesarean births. The type of analgesia used in labour did show a significant difference, with 37.7% not using any analgesia compared to the State figures of 29.5%.

Almost 92% of women in the CMP commenced breastfeeding or expressed breastmilk for their baby after birth. Statistics on how many women continued breastfeeding are not available, however, anecdotally, women do continue to breastfeed longer due to the consistency of information and the support offered by the midwives for the first 6 weeks after birth. After 6 weeks women are referred to the Child and Youth Health Services.

During the evaluation period it was found that midwives working in this model did have challenges particularly related to the industrial award that remunerated midwives under a nursing award that did not take into consideration the nature of midwifery

"caseload" work. The nature of this model is that a great deal of work is done at unpredictable times including night time and weekends. Babies are born around the 24 hours of the 7 days of course, so the 8 hour shift catered for in the nursing award just doesn't fit with midwifery. As there was no industrial award the midwives needed to keep diaries and time sheets that meant overtime or weekend work was paid either at penalty rates or taken as time in lieu. A nursing award which is meant to remunerate hourly shifts was very inflexible in this context. At the beginning of 2004 an industrial award for midwives was negotiated with the Australian Nursing Federation and the Department of Health to reimburse midwives working in continuity of carer models.

The CMP model demonstrates the potential to offset costs to the community by an early intervention approach that provides comprehensive maternity care across acute and community settings. Disadvantaged women have access to a service which has provided meaningful choices in their pregnancy and birthing in context of continuity of care. Despite many challenges in making institutional change, the CMP has provided a broad

scope of practice for midwives in a publically funded community based service that has demonstrated positive outcomes for midwives and women.

Among the 17 Recommendations from the evaluation two main aspects are for a further evaluation of the CMP now that it is operating at full capacity and that the model is extended to other areas both metropolitan and rural to enable women to access this highly beneficial women-centred model of midwifery care.

Jen Byrne is a lecturer in Midwifery at Flinders University. She has been an integral member of the team that has developed the 3 Year Bachelor of Midwifery at Flinders University. Jen has been a member of the Advisory Committee for the Northern Women's Community Midwifery Project and been supportive of developing publicly funded models of midwifery in South Australia. Jen is also a lactation consultant and currently undertaking her PhD related to support for women during pregnancy

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HERDSA Conference 2005

New Feature

Activity session is the term used to describe a variety of contributions focusing on, for example, a speculative idea, a technique, a creative use of space, a walk and talk session, an experiential exercise, a poster or a demonstration. Imagine a space with lots of activity. There will be small groups discussing issues. There will be groups sharing ideas around a poster or computer terminal. There will be indoor and outdoor spaces for creative activities of various kinds. Activity sessions will be scheduled for 30 minutes.

Activity sessions will be held in the second half of the morning sessions on Monday 4 July and Tuesday 5 July. Join us there.



Measuring Changes in Self-handicapping Behaviours and Perfectionism in Research Higher Degree Students as a Result of Attendance at a Defeating Self-sabotage Workshop Series

By Hugh Kearns, Angus Forbes & Maria Gardiner

For the past several years the Staff Development and Training Unit at Flinders University has conducted a series of workshops for Research Higher Degree (RHD) students entitled *Getting Your Thesis Finished – Defeating Self-sabotage Behaviours*. This series consists of six, once weekly, two hour workshops and a one hour follow-up session one month later. It is aimed at identifying and overcoming internal barriers to participants' progress. Participants learn to identify patterns of behaviour that could be sabotaging their progress, and using a cognitive behavioural approach will identify and challenge the cognitions behind their behaviour.

The current research project, investigates whether self-handicapping behaviours and perfectionism in a population of RHD students is susceptible to modification as a result of participation in this workshop series. It involves measuring self-handicapping behaviours and perfectionism before and after participation in the workshops.

Previous work by the authors with groups of research higher degree (RHD) students has identified a number of self-handicapping behaviours (eg perfectionism, procrastination, overcommitting) that impact on the students' progress in their studies. Perfectionism in particular has been widely studied. In some cases perfectionism can lead to great achievements and successes but it can also result in frustration, disappointment and failure (Blatt, 1995; Burns, 1980). Perfectionism has

been found to be greater among gifted students (Siegle & Schuler, 2000).

Self-handicapping and perfectionism can be a major handicap and impediment to the completion of work, particularly in areas where there is no absolute right answer. This is the case in higher degree research where the outcomes of the research will be open to scrutiny and criticism irrespective of how thorough the researcher has been. If this workshop series can be shown to modify the RHD students' level of self-handicapping and perfectionism there is the potential that this can facilitate their progress and increase their efficiency and effectiveness.

The aims of the study are :

- i) to measure the levels of self-handicapping and perfectionism in a group of RHD students;
- ii) to investigate the distribution of self-handicapping and perfectionism across enrolment type (full/part-time), gender and stage of candidature;
- iii) to evaluate the impact of a workshop series using cognitive behavioural principles on levels of self-handicapping and perfectionism in a group of RHD students; and
- iv) to investigate the relationship between levels of self-handicapping and perfectionism and the person's perceptions of satisfaction with progress in their candidature

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Hugh Kearns is the Head of the Staff Development and Training Unit at Flinders University. He lectures, researches and consults in the fields of time and self-management particularly in an academic context.

Maria Gardiner is a clinical psychologist in private practice and honorary research associate in the School of Psychology at Flinders University. She regularly consults to organisations on matters related to psychological wellbeing and performance enhancement and is an internationally published author in this area.

Angus Forbes is a lecturer in the School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry at Flinders University. He holds a Master of Psychology (Clinical) and has been registered as a Psychologist in South Australia since 1989. He has several years' experience teaching undergraduate psychology topics, and has also been involved in various areas of psychological research best described as Health Psychology. In his current role as Lecturer in the Master of Mental Health Sciences he is involved in teaching and clinical supervision. He currently specialises in the cognitive behavioural treatment of problem gambling, anxiety and other related disorders.

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Is it Time Well Spent? The Relationship Between Time Management Behaviours, Effectiveness and Work-Related Morale and Distress

By Hugh Kearns & Maria Gardiner

To work in the higher education sector is to be very familiar with the confound of "so much to do and so little time". Increasing student numbers, a greater diversity among the student population, fewer staff, and mounting administrative responsibilities are permanent features of our academic landscape. Academics feel the demands of their students, that there isn't enough time to prepare their teaching, that the administration load is just not possible to fulfil—and on top of all that is your research. Administrative professionals within universities also describe demands that are constant and relentless, which provide them with little opportunity to control their time and day. And today's students will tell you that with demands of lectures, study, assignments, exams, technology and work, there is barely any time for a life.

Little wonder then that the time poor are turning up at time management courses and reading self-help books hoping to find an extra few hours in the day. And there are many courses and books available advocating time management practices such as writing lists, planning ahead, prioritising the importance of tasks (e.g. Booth, 1997; Collis & Leboeuf, 1995; Fontana, 1994; Mackenzie, 1997; Lakein, 1973) and avoiding bad habits such as procrastination (Sherman, 1989; Covey, 1989).

But does any of it work? And which bits? And does it apply to a university environment? Despite the high "guru-factor" in time management, few of the claims made have been subjected to empirical investigation. Do the strategies and behaviours they promote actually increase effectiveness? And if they do does this reduce or increase the person's stress. These questions led to the current study which aimed to test the claims that people who manage their time well are more effective and feel less stressed and to examine the relationship between various outcomes and specific time management behaviours in academic

staff, administration professionals and students.

The study is being conducted at Flinders University and the participants are staff and students attending training courses in the Staff Development and Training Unit. We expect about two hundred and fifty participants to take part made up of approximately equal numbers of academic and general staff members, and students.

A questionnaire has been developed specifically for this study, which measures time management behaviours and time management effectiveness. Work-related morale and distress were also measured.

Time management behaviours. Thirteen items were used to assess the frequency of various time management behaviours. The items were developed using the content of time management courses run at Flinders University, which in turn were drawn from the time management literature. Items were selected to reflect each of the four theoretical factors of time management behaviours, purpose, planning and prioritising, avoiding interruptions, and being organised. Items included "how often do you find yourself avoiding tasks which are important but unpleasant?" and "how often do you set deadlines for yourself when necessary?"

Time management effectiveness. Participants were asked six questions relating to how effective they felt they were at work. Items included "How much control do you feel you have over your time at work".

Work-related morale and distress. Work-related morale and work-related distress were measured using Hart, Griffin, Wearing and Cooper's (1996) 14-item scale. Seven emotions reflect work-related morale (e.g. enthusiastic, proud), while seven reflect work-related distress (e.g. tense, unhappy).

Preliminary Findings

Preliminary results from this study indicate a clear hierarchy of time

management behaviours in predicting effectiveness and work-related distress and morale. We hope as a result of this study to be able to provide advice to academics, general staff and students on which behaviours are more likely to help them make the most effective use of their limited time and to reduce the stress associated with working in higher education.

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