HERDSA news

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The magazine of the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia

Inside

From learning lab to lecture hall; Wordcraft, Helen Sword's new column; Postcard from Saudi Arabia; Powerful knowledge; Artificial intelligence versus natural stupidity; Student view; Professional learning; Effective student projects

From the Editor

Maureen Bell

Autumn semester will be almost over when this edition of HERDSA NEWS crosses your desk. Our cover shot by HERDSA member Patrick Halloran reminds me of different times when we read the books from the shelves rather than lap-topping and it was often a competition to find texts and reference books. These days students are accessing lecture notes online and, at least at my university, the greater struggle is for a parking spot. So as times change so does HERDSA. Over the last two years we have adopted a more modern style and added several new columns. It is my pleasure to introduce another regular column from internationally recognised writing expert, Professor Helen Sword. Helen will answer your questions about academic writing, productivity and wordcraft. In addition we are incorporating a piece from student Bijay Sapkota and I hope this will continue as a regular column from various writers.

Jason Lodge contributes our FEATURE article and he posits the need for a coherent narrative for higher education research. My first discipline was Psychology and I have often thought higher education research might benefit from a deeper connection to educational psychology. I am challenged by Jason's view that laboratory-based research suggests some harmful myths are being perpetuated including one of my favourite theories — 'learning styles'. PERSPECTIVES writers Tony Harland and Navé Wald contend that the purpose of university teaching is not the development of graduate attributes but rather that students graduate with 'powerful knowledge'.

As usual you will find our regular writers Roger Atkinson and Bob Cannon and others. SHOWCASE is a space where HERDSA members offer their successful ideas, projects and research findings. HERDSA funding has supported Hong Kong branch in implementing a successful active learning experience for student project teams. Thirteen teams from seven local universities were selected to implement their projects and compete for an award. Anna's article focuses on the student response to the experience.

July brings the HERDSA conference around again and I am always impressed by the energy and enthusiasm of contributors. I particularly look forward to the poster session where I can seek out ideas for future SHOWCASE articles. I look forward to catching up with you at the *HERDSA 2018 Adelaide conference* in South Australia which I think of as the 'wine' state. Please do come and say hello.

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Congratulations to HERDSA Hong Kong Branch members, Treasurer Dr Theresa Kwong and Secretary Dr Peter Lau, on their marriage

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From the President

Allan Goody

A lot can happen in the months between issues of HERDSA News. And for me it usually involves a whole lot of learning. To end 2017, I was invited by RedCAD, the Chilean Network of Centres for Teaching and Learning, to speak at their annual conference. RedCAD is a very robust network of universities doing much the same work as HERDSA. They will soon join ICED as a member network, a first from South America.

While in Santiago I visited six universities which represented the spectrum of universities in Santiago – from private to public and well resourced to less well resourced. The common trend across these six universities is the enthusiasm for enhancing teaching and learning. I witnessed some great work being undertaken, for example at the University of Chile where undergraduate students are heavily involved in researching teaching and learning with a passion that we don't often see in our own academics. And they were doing it because they wanted to know more about learning. Another very encouraging sign of the future that many of the academic developers were much younger than we often see in our own institutions.

In February I was invited to speak at a conference of INCATHE, *the* Israeli Network of Centres for the Advancement of Teaching in Higher Education. Again, I was impressed by the enthusiasm for teaching and learning. Their biggest challenge is convincing the Ministry of Higher Education of the importance of quality teaching and learning and the work of academic developers. My talk was heard by senior staff from the Ministry and hopefully provided some boost for the teaching and learning centres in their quest for greater support.

In between these two visits, I attended our local Teaching and Learning Forum in Perth which continues to attract a significant number of academics keen to share their best practice. Two keynote speakers, Angela Hill and Beverley Oliver addressed key issues in the changing higher education environment.

Bev spoke to her area of employability and the need to recognise those extra-curricular activities and attributes that employers seek in graduates. Bev's talk spoke directly to an issue I have been contemplating a lot in recent times, that is the heavy focus on the retention of students and ensuring they are employable. The criticism by the Government of universities with low retention and graduation rates illustrated to me what I think is an unhealthy obsession with retention rates and the 'demonisation' of students who do not graduate. Rather than beating ourselves (and our students) up for not completing the traditional degree we should be rewarding those students who persevere for even a short time and who realise that higher education is not for them or that their chosen university is not providing what they want in their learning journey.

While retention and completion are goals we should pursue, there should be multiple exit points from an undergraduate degree that provide formal recognition and achievement. Of course, this requires universities to offer a first-year curriculum that provides those basic attributes that prepare students for work and life in general (with dare I say less emphasis on disciplinary knowledge). And low and behold I discovered at a recent graduation ceremony at James Cook University (JCU) that such formally recognised exit points do exist. Bravo.

Angela's talk addressed the need for a critical curriculum to prepare students as global and activist citizens. This resonated with my idea of a first-year curriculum that speaks to citizenship, life and employment skills that allow students to exit a degree program with tangible skills when they so choose.

Another piece of learning which in a sense tied all the other learning together came at JCU where I witnessed the graduation of twenty-two academic staff from the University of Papua New Guinea with who I have been working for the past two years – an example of truly transformational education. Dame Carol Kidu, in her address, spoke of her challenges in a time of natural disaster in Papua New Guinea. In her hour of desperation and struggles with relief efforts she received sage advice to "not react but respond". Perhaps it may sound like a subtle difference but to respond rather than to react to challenging situations is a far more positive way of engaging and moving forward as we confront the challenges in higher education.

Dame Carol also spoke of the need in these troubled times to focus on the Power of Love over the Love of Power. Ah, if only that bit of wisdom could get through to our leaders. These two pieces of advice are from someone far wiser than me. I encourage you to be open to learning from both unexpected and familiar places.

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Learning lab to lecture hall

Jason M. Lodge

The last few decades have seen immense progress in our understanding about how the brain and mind learn. This has been in no small part due to the rapid advancement of imaging technologies that allow us to peer into the human brain in real time while it is engaged in many different cognitive tasks. While this kind of research might tell us about the basic processes of learning, it is a long way, spatially and temporally, from the firing of a neuron to the education of professionals, scientists and scholars in our universities.

As a psychological scientist by training working in academic development roles, the distance between the laboratory and the classroom has been my core area of interest for most of my academic career. When I started this journey, I naïvely thought that highly controlled laboratory research in cognitive neuroscience and experimental psychology could be implemented seamlessly into learning and teaching practice, fundamentally changing what we do in our lecture theatres, tutorial rooms and lab classes. How wrong I was.

What I was not prepared for as I embarked on this journey was the complexity of teaching and the contested nature of what counts as evidence of learning in higher education. I did not recognise that I was representing one end of a continuum of the paradigm wars that had seemingly been in full swing since the early 1900s when Dewey and Thorndike argued about the best level of analysis for understanding and enhancing education. The war had many guises; rigour vs. relevance, laboratory vs. classroom, basic vs. applied, causational vs. correlational and so on.

Over time I have tried to understand the various ways we bring our disciplinary traditions and methods to higher education research. With colleagues Kelsey Palghat and Jared Horvath, I have tried to better understand how these differences play out in interdisciplinary collaboration. At times, it seems though our philosophical differences as qualitative researchers, social theorists or psychological scientists are intractable. It is becoming apparent that our inability to develop a common paradigm as educational researchers might be doing us great harm in the field of applied research.

There is a rich history of research attempting to understand the student experience and the complexity of higher education in context. While it might be tempting to say that the paradigm wars serve a purpose by providing multiple perspectives, there are several key areas that appear to be symptoms of this ongoing antagonism. Some clear and robust findings from laboratory-based research suggest that harmful myths are being perpetuated because they have face validity in the classroom context. The most obvious example is the learning styles myth. There is no evidence that designing instruction to cater for auditory, visual or kinaesthetic learners makes any difference whatsoever to student learning. Ignoring the basic science can therefore have consequences if we continue to build practice on assumptions with no basis.

Of greater concern is that, without a coherent narrative about what higher education research is and what it does, policymakers and governments will look to others for advice. We are perhaps already seeing this with the current Australian federal government more likely to listen to economists, star management professors from Harvard and consultants from large accounting firms than experts in higher education. Arguing about appropriate ways of understanding and enhancing student learning is not helping our collective cause. This has been most evident in Australia when we failed to make a coherent, united argument in defence of the Office for Learning and Teaching. When the Australian government threatened to cut funding to the National Health and Medical Research Council in 2011, there was no such problem for the health professions who presented a united and sucessful front in opposition to the cuts. Of course, the health and medical professions are powerful lobby groups but, with Australia's higher education sector generating over $25 billion in exports annually a similarly effective case could be made if we presented a united front.

My point is that we, as researchers from different traditions, have a tendency to privilege one form of evidence over others. There are strengths and weaknesses in all approaches. There is no gold standard for quality student learning. Over time I have come to

recognise the validity in the critique of 'psychologising' education. Despite the power of experimental studies to determine cause and effect relationships, these approaches can be overly reductionist. Higher education will not be enhanced through a continuing series of functional magnetic resonance imaging studies of brain activity and learning. Assuming direct translation of these studies to practice leaves less room for qualitative aspects and situated understandings of quality student learning. There have been many examples where researchers have over-extended the inferences they make. However, this is true across the whole spectrum of paradigms.

> *"Design frameworks provide a systematic approach for incorporating evidence of different kinds into practice. This allows a synthesis of the science of learning, design of instruction, and art of teaching."*

So how can the learning sciences; the interdisciplinary endeavour to understand and enhance learning; contribute to higher education? The International Society for the Learning Sciences defines the area as follows:

> Learning Sciences investigations include fundamental inquiries on how people learn alone and in collaborative ways, as well as on how learning may be effectively facilitated by different social and organizational settings and new learning environment designs, particularly those incorporating information and communication technologies, as in computer-supported collaborative learning.

The learning sciences have had an uneasy relationship with higher education research due to the strong quantitative tradition of most researchers in this field however I see great opportunities in linking quantitative and qualitative research in higher education. The learning sciences provide ways of determining what works at a fundamental level. When combined with open science practices, there are great possibilities for collaborative and rigorous means of testing out interventions and approaches.

That is not to say that the translation process, from the learning laboratory to the lecture theatre, is easy. As has been argued on many occasions, the distance between the brain and the classroom is 'a bridge too far'. It simply isn't viable for neuroscientists to tear out of the laboratory, fresh images of student brains in hand, and provide rock solid answers to pedagogical problems. Teaching is context and content dependent, complex and difficult. To address this complexity requires researchers from different traditions working together to understand how basic research might help improve practice and to work with practitioners to understand the kinds of questions that emerge in the classroom and could be tested in the lab. The translation process needs to operate in both directions.

When it comes to how evidence from the learning sciences can be used in practice, the results from these studies can only go so far towards practice. What the learning sciences are fantastic at doing is providing principles about student learning. There are countless examples of robust and effective approaches. Many are reviewed by Dunlosky et al., including spaced practice; interleaving; and the testing effect. What the learning sciences cannot provide is the understanding of the context, of the students in that context and of the most effective approaches for specific teachers to use in specific contexts. There remains a gap between principles and practice.

What has become apparent to me through the work of Peter Goodyear (see for example Teaching as design in the *HERDSA Review of Higher Education*, *2*) is that design is the critical piece in the equation. Design frameworks provide a systematic approach for incorporating evidence of different kinds into practice. This allows a synthesis of the science of learning, design of instruction, and art of teaching. I particularly like design frameworks because they are largely agnostic to the type of evidence used to inform the features of the design. There is room at the table for multiple perspectives and evidence in many different forms.

As a psychological scientist, I now appreciate that I can't provide silver bullets for enhancing higher education. However, as a teacher and as someone who tries to help others with their teaching, I can use design as a way of understanding how the learning sciences might help improve what we do in practice. My hope is that design might help us to end the paradigm wars and provide space for many methodologies and forms of evidence. Although perhaps that might just suggest I'm more naïve now than when I started this journey.

Associate Professor Jason Lodge is a principal research fellow in the Australian Research Council funded Science of Learning Research Centre, and Associate Professor of Educational Psychology in the School of Education at The University of Queensland. Jason's research concentrates on the application of the learning sciences to higher education. Jason is also currently serving as an associate editor for Higher Education Research & Development and co-produces and co-hosts the Beyond the Lectern podcast.

Links

Dunlosky (2013). Improving students' learning with effective learning techniques: http://doi.org/10.1177/1529100612453266

Goodyear (2015). Teaching as design: http://www.herdsa.org.au/herdsa-review-higher-education-vol-2.

Lodge (2016). Do the learning sciences have a place in higher education research? http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2015.1094204

Palghat, Horvath & Lodge (2017). The hard problem of 'educational neuroscience': http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tine.2017.02.001

Who's who in HERDSA

Jennie Billot

I'm an Associate Professor and Head of Researcher Development at the Auckland University of Technology. I'm fortunate to have a position in which I can develop initiatives that enable researchers at all stages of their careers to develop their researching capabilities. I also have scope to extend opportunities for supervisor development, as well as enhance the university's research culture.

HERDSA provides a great opportunity to be part of a community that values higher education and works to enhance research and scholarship in the sector. *I have remained a member since my first conference attendance because of the positive 'feel' amongst the delegates and the relaxed atmosphere in which people can network.* This feeling of 'belonging' encouraged me to join the organising committee for the Auckland HERDSA conference and review paper submissions for the annual conferences.

These positive experiences *encouraged me to apply for HERDSA Executive membership and I am now into my 3rd term* on the HERDSA NZ Committee and have been fortunate to be part of conversations with colleagues who have similar interests. I have always wanted to give back to an organisation that supports its members so well, so I became a reviewer for the HERD journal and ended up staying for about 6 years. I'd like to think that I have supported the HERDSA community in different but related ways, including mentoring, networking and writing for publication. I am now trying to get Special Interest Groups (SIGs) off the ground.

I initiated a research blog about five years ago even though I am not a regular blogger. The content is aimed particularly at postgraduate students. The blog encourages greater communication between researchers, identifies resources and features research stories. It's a humming success and is now led by a passionate editor, Dr Anaise Irvine at AUT. Approximately 50% of readers are from New Zealand with about 5,000 subscribers overall. Check it out at: Thesislink.aut.ac.nz

As a reader I often have several different books on the go. I have just finished *The Tobacconist* by Robert Seethaler. It's a sad story of a boy in Vienna in 1937 who discovers how a bond between two unlikely people in an ordinary existence can support his personal development amidst experiences within a racially driven war. I am reading *Daring to drive* by Manal al-Sharif. It's a very informative and moving story of a woman who grew up in Saudi Arabia and became extremist before changing and being arrested as the first woman to be caught illegally driving a car. Having worked in Saudi Arabia it took me behind the metaphorical and real curtains of women's existence in a tightly controlling nation. *Disobedient Teaching* by Welby Ings is my other book of the moment. Welby is a respected colleague and I found strong resonance in his call for teachers to act authentically and empathetically. His personal story is interwoven through the examples he gives of how to positively change educational practice.

I have passions which might appear at two ends of a continuum. I want to make a difference in higher education through contributing to student and adult learning. There's nothing more rewarding than watching my research students attain a doctorate after years of concentrated work and commitment. And… my young grandson of 22 months, Oscar, who makes my heart sing. His naturally happy demeanour, engaging smile and savvy expression reminds me that we can learn a lot from the very young. When I have had a heavy day, fifteen minutes with Oscar turns me around.

I really appreciate authenticity in others. I admire the Dalai Lama's humility and philosophy: "I'm just one human being, but I believe each one of us has a responsibility to contribute to a happier humanity.

I am fortunate to have a beach house in Northland which we visit regularly. It has a 400 metre driveway through twelve acres of native bush and the house sits at bird height. Staying there is hugely restorative, reminding me that the natural environment needs to be protected as well as enjoyed.

One thing that might surprise people is that I always wanted to be a pilot. I flew a plane solo aged sixteen, in a country where air personnel spoke a foreign language. I experienced some of the same feelings that Jean Batten expressed in her book *Alone in the Sky* though my trips were certainly shorter than hers.

Around the branches

Across Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong our branches offer added value to HERDSA members. HERDSA Branch Chairs are shown above, from left to right: Karin Oerlemans (ACT), Anna Siu Fong Kwan (HK), Sharron King (SA), Tracy Douglas (TAS), Elizabeth Levin (VIC), Melissa Davis (WA).

ACT

Chair: Karin Oerlemans

ACT HERDSA has had an unhurried start to the year. But our first event, hosted by Pamela Roberts at CSU was a great introduction to the HERDSA *SoTL* Modules, presented by Deb Clarke, also from CSU. Further planning is on the way for a session on constructive alignment/curriculum planning as a round table, reflecting the many changes going on at our local universities. And of course there will be the ever popular pre-conference practice session at CSU in June.

It is going to be a busy year, after a slow beginning.

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Hong Kong

Chair: Anna Siu Fong Kwan

Our Branch Treasurer Dr. Theresa KWONG and Secretary Dr. Peter LAU got married last December. The Branch executives believe that HERDSA activities have played a strong nurturing role in tying the knot.

Our Roadshow 2018 conducted by Prof. Dawn Bennett was a huge success. Dawn's workshop on *employABILITY* and a session on critical reflection were presented at five universities (CUHK, PolyU, HKUST, HKU & HKBU) with 200 participants, covering all eight universities in Hong Kong and some higher education institutes. Colleagues found the Roadshow has inspired them to think more about linking their work to equipping students' employability. They appreciated the explicit examples of different disciplines and actual examples of how 'small things' can be done to arouse student awareness within the curriculum. The rich resources developed for students and instructors were particularly admirable.

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South Australia

Chair: Sharron King

The SA Branch continues to focus on the busy build up to the conference. We are delighted to have all three speakers in place, the workshop day programmed and now as the conference submissions have closed we are proceeding to peer review phase. Other activities that surround the conference such as the welcome drinks, the various breakfasts and the dinner are also being planned. Keep an eye on the conference website, twitter feeds and other social media to stay up to date. We look forward to seeing you there.

Along with other branches Adelaide is also hosting *Developing employABILITY as metacognition: Opportunities for learning, teaching and research* in April, and we will try to squeeze in one other event before the conference in July.

In other news, we are delighted to announce two new members to our Executive Committee, Joy McEntee from the University of Adelaide and Andrea Duff from the University of South Australia, who will take over the roles of President and Vice President after the conference has been convened.

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Tasmania

Chair: Tracy Douglas

In November, HERDSA Tasmania members attended and presented at the University of Teaching Matters conference *Making a Difference* and participated in *Performance of Teaching* and *Writing a Teaching Philosophy* workshops on the Launceston and Hobart campuses. In January, Tasmanian branch members, Dr Andrea Carr, Dr Steve Drew and Dr Jo-Anne Kelder facilitated a *Getting Ready for HERDSA 2018 – Writers Boot Camp* to assist staff in the preparation of abstracts for the 2018 HERDSA conference. The boot camp format enabled staff to discuss scholarly writing and work on their submissions for HERDSA and other learning and teaching conferences/ journals. Peer review opportunities were also provided through this initiative.

An upcoming event for HERDSA Tasmania branch members is the *Developing EmployAbility* workshop presented by Dawn Bennett in Launceston.

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Victoria

Chair: Elizabeth Levin

For the end of year Victoria Branch decided to compile a newsletter to distribute to members and friends of the branch. This included a summary of and links to all the events hosted by the branch during 2017, as well as a review of articles executive members had recommended. This initiative was well received by members. In February we held our AGM and we now have a new Chair, Assoc Professor Theda Thomas from ACU. We have also decided to add a communications portfolio

to the executive positions. We are in the process of planning events for 2018 which will include Prof Dawn Bennett's *Developing EmployABILITY* roadshow in mid-April, as well as forums around hot topics such as academic integrity, student mental health and wellbeing, and academic identity.

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Western Australia

Chair: Melissa Davis

We have recently welcomed Judith Dingham, Trevor Cullen and Linda Riebe as new members of our committee, and thank the following outgoing members for their contributions: Sharon Delmege, Abigail Lewis, Natalie Lloyd, Barclay Jones and Lisa Tee. Our plans for 2018 include encouraging member engagement with the SOTL modules, the *employABILITY* workshop by Professor Dawn Bennett, seminars by WA academics, our annual *HERDSA Rekindled*, and 'rekindling' presentations from other conferences.

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HERDSA Branches and SIGs

Funds are available for local and branch networking and development activities.

HERDSA members may organise activities such as colloquia, fora, post-conference presentations, network meetings, speakers and Special Interest Groups.

To inquire about funding contact your local branch Chair, or the HERDSA President.

Science, technology, maths and engineering = STEM

Sally Male

At the WA Teaching and Learning Forum 2018 Andrea Carr and Jo-Anne Kelder held a workshop in which they described how to achieve an ambition I have long held – yet previously feared was too challenging to attempt.

Universities collect data for quality assurance, and teachers and researchers also collect data for education research. For both, data such as student grades, assessment responses, learning management system access, student and staff questionnaire responses, and focus group responses, are invaluable. However piecemeal approaches are often taken to collecting data for quality assurance and separately for research.

The problem has frustrated me. Time is wasted by staff and students on duplication of data collection. Researchers spend excessive hours preparing, reviewing, amending, and reporting on numerous ethics applications, often for small research projects. Students are approached independently to participate in various, tedious forms of data collection and presented with numerous different information sheets and consents forms. Opportunities for data collection are missed due to lack of time to prepare ethics applications. Response rates are small due to students being over-surveyed.

In the health sciences at University of Tasmania; Carr, Kelder and colleagues successfully combined data collection for both quality assurance and research purposes, streamlining the processes for staff and students, and enabling more comprehensive, and reliable data collection. Their solution, *Course Evaluation and Research,* is likely to adapt to any discipline. A single ethics application is made for all potentially relevant data collection from students and teaching staff. A simple online system allows for students and staff to give or withdraw consent. Every semester, after grades are finalised, data are systematically collected across all year levels of a program, anonymised, and stored. Longitudinal, comprehensive data are then available to analyse for quality assurance and for research, and the imposition on students and staff is minimal. Carr and colleagues have prepared templates and resources. Look out for them at HERDSA Conference 2018.

HERDSA PORTFOLIOS

Lee Partridge and Susan Blackley

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

At the last HERDSA executive meeting a new portfolio of *Professional Learning* was created. The portfolio encompasses two previously existing portfolios, *HERDSA Fellowships* and *New Scholars.* Further it was decided to include the activities of the Talking About Teaching and Learning (TATAL) group in this portfolio to round off the collection of professional learning currently offered to members.

A little something about the TATAL and New Scholars areas of activity…

TATAL workshops have been happening at HERDSA's annual conference since 2011. Originally started by HERDSA Life Members Robert Kennelly and Coralie McCormack, the workshops start pre-conference and extend with meetings during the conference. Participants work through a structured process which helps them begin to reflect on and share aspects of their teaching. They are guided through the construction of their teaching philosophy before continuing to more closely examine other aspects of their practice. Participants share 'stories' about their teaching. The focus of their stories, by more than just a happy coincidence, relates to the criteria that candidates for the HERDSA Fellowship must address. The groups that form at each conference have the option of continuing to meet either online or face-to-face following the conference. It is no coincidence that several HERDSA Fellows started their journey in a TATAL group. Details for this year's TATAL meeting will be in the conference program.

The *New Scholars* activities have been thoughtfully managed for many years by Deb Clarke. The recognition that people new to teaching and learning research needed some introduction to the discipline underpinned the original portfolio's existence. New scholars have the opportunity to connect socially at the annual conference. If they were early career academics they are also eligible for a best paper award by an early career researcher. Under the same banner, Deb Clarke introduced a buddy scheme which operates at the conference to support those who have not previously attended a HERDSA gathering to make connections and feel welcome.

The HERDSA online SoTL modules were also a product of the New Scholars group. The modules which provide a self-paced guide to new researchers in teaching are available to all HERDSA members at the link below. Institutional licences can also be purchased. Four institutions have acquired licences allowing staff and students to access the resources. Recently, HERDSA gifted use of the modules to the Royal University of Phnom Phen in Cambodia.

Links

SoTL modules: www.herdsasotl.org.au
HERDSA Fellowship: www.herdsa.org.au

HERDSA FELLOWSHIP

There are currently thirty-eight HERDSA Fellows across Australia and New Zealand. Forty-four Associate Fellows have commenced their journey of reflective practice towards the completion of their fellowship portfolio and application to be admitted to the Fellowship.

The Fellowship is open for any HERDSA member to apply. While you do not need to be very advanced in your teaching career it is advised that you have at least a few years of experience, as the process is one of reflection and development, and for that process you need something to work with.

Once you apply and are accepted, and you begin to work towards your Fellowship, you are considered to be an Associate Fellow. You are connected with a mentor. You may choose your own mentor or you can request to have a mentor assigned to you. Mentors must be current HERDSA Fellows.

Associate Fellows have up to two years to complete and submit their portfolio for assessment. Existing Fellows can become assessors by becoming accredited and joining the college of assessors. The process of accreditation involves attending an assessors' training workshop that is held each year prior to the conference. The workshop is free and there is financial support of $150 to help you attend the workshop, whether or not you are attending the conference. Once you become an accredited member of the college of assessors you will review an honorarium of $100 each time you review a portfolio.

Fellows meet socially every year at the conference at a dedicated dinner held at a local restaurant and can stay in touch and informed through their Facebook page.

Links

Fellows: https://www.facebook.com/groups/130729257399909/about/

HERDSA fellowship scheme: www.herdsa.org.au/node/105

STUDENT VIEW Bijay Sapkota

I caught up with Bijay Sapkota, UTS student and now National President of the Council of International Students Australia at the last HERDSA Conference. I asked him what drives him to work so hard for student engagement in higher education (Ed.).

When I came to Australia I discovered a fantastic education system. I got to meet a lot of international students. I saw there was an open opportunity for me and everyone is so supportive including the dean of studies and teachers. I was one of the most lucky international students in Australia because I never experienced racism in this country. I really want to contribute in the area of student engagement and multiculturalism and in institutional governance. When students get actively engaged in university governance it is a great benefit for the university and for the students and there will be a harmonious relationship.

After the Nepal earthquake I raised about $40,000 and mobilised 100 volunteers. Billions of dollars were contributed from people all around the globe, I saw such harmony and love. The concept of the global citizen came into my mind and I started thinking somebody is doing something for my country which I really love. I must do something for others as well.

With the growing International students' population, I believe it is important that universities recognise the issues international students face. These include housing, workplace exploitation, administrative procedures around the reduction of study load, underrepresentation in decision making bodies, cultural cohesion and others. The university has a role to play in getting potential student leaders on board. The majority of students don't really know about the importance of leadership and engagement in the university. I am an engineering student. If I talk to my friends about conferences they say what are you doing? You are wasting your time. My suggestion for the universities would be to engage students in the governance bodies and implement strategies such as transforming orientation by providing more information to students about what the University has to offer. Students who are engaged will be proactive and this will impact on the quality of university education and ultimately benefit the education system as a whole. Engaged students develop into great graduates. It is not my books that created me as I am now – it is conferences, being on boards, meeting with different committees.

I recently had a conversation with twenty international student leaders around Australia. When universities make decisions international students are underrepresented on the decision making bodies. When a decision is made – let's say a course is to be removed because it is not making a profit – how might this impact an international student? They have to get a new CA, a new course, or take the credit and go to a new university, get a new CA, new visa processing - a lot of administrative hassles, which significantly impacts on the marketing strategy of the university in the future. So my recommendation is to get international students sitting on faculty boards and university boards. These are not just students – these are marketing agents as well – I market for Australian education wherever I go.

In regard to the lectures, I think lectures should introduce global references into the curriculum so that international students will be able to contribute in the global community via employment or entrepreneurship or leadership in the sector.

Photo: Bijay at the TEQSA conference with Sophie Arkoudis and Chris Zigouras, photo Gregory Totman

HERDSA

The Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia is a scholarly society for people committed to the advancement of higher and tertiary education.

HERDSA NEWS supports the HERDSA aim to encourage and disseminate research on teaching and learning and higher education development. We publish SHOWCASE articles that demonstrate proven and effective teaching practice, ideas, scholarly projects and research related to teaching and learning.

To discuss a proposed contribution to HERDSA NEWS contact the Editor, mbell@uow.edu.au.

HERDSA New Zealand

Barbara Kensington-Miller

Written by Rob Wass, Branch Secretary

The HERDSA (NZ) branch is looking forward to a productive year and we already have a number of activities booked in. The HERDSA-TERNZ medal is presented annually to a New Zealand researcher. In 2018 the award will be made for: *Sustained Contribution to the Research Environment in New Zealand*. The deadline for submissions is 15 September 2018. Further information is available from the HERDSA (NZ) branch website.

A new initiative for 2017 was the Academic Developers Symposium held in Wellington. This very successful event was sponsored by Ako Aotearoa and HERDSA (NZ) and there are plans for a similar event in 2018.

The Tertiary Education Research New Zealand (TERNZ) conference is an annual event with an emphasis on creating time for discussion and space for reflection. The 2017 TERNZ Conference was held at the end of November at Massey University. As in previous years, the informal nature of the conference with plenty of space for interactions and discussions was welcomed by the participants. Conference abstracts are available at the link below. The 2018 TERNZ conference will be held at Victoria University, Wellington, NZ.

In 2018 we plan to hold a *HERDSA revisited* event where presenters from the HERDSA conference are able to re-present their research, receive feedback and continue discussions started at the HERDSA conference. HERDSA revisited is likely to be held in August in Auckland and Dunedin.

Ashwini Oadatt is one of our committee members from the University of Auckland who is completing her doctoral research. You and your colleagues are invited to participate in her doctoral research. The research investigates the extent to which networked experiences can support the development of our capacity to teach with technologies. To find out more contact Ashwini on the link below. Please circulate the request in your networks.

Organisation is underway for the HERDSA annual conference to be held in Auckland, New Zealand in July 2019. Colleagues from around the world are invited to visit beautiful New Zealand in 2019.

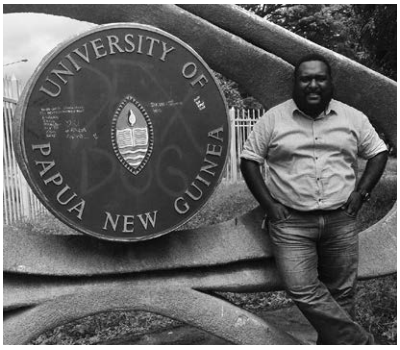
Save the date

Tertiary Education Research in New Zealand (TERNZ) Conference

28th-30th November 2018 at Victoria University of Wellington

TERNZ provides a forum for enquiry into learning and teaching in the New Zealand tertiary sector. The conference website will be available online soon and a call for papers will be made in July.

Recognising outstanding service



Nehemiah Akia

Roger Landbeck Professional Development grant

Nehemiah Akia has been awarded the HERDSA Roger Landbeck Professional Development grant. Nehemiah will use the grant to expand his knowledge and practice of teaching English communication and contribute towards the development of teaching and learning within his discipline.

Nehemiah is a full-time tutor at the University of Papua New Guinea (UPNG) and assists senior lecturers with lectures, tutorials, field trips, editorial work, outreach and distance education. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in literature from UPNG and a Graduate Certificate in Education (Academic Practice) from James Cook University.

Nehemiah explains that education is a flagship sector in Papua New Guinea, a developing country with multi-diverse cultures in which there are over eight-hundred languages. Whilst English is the language of instruction many students face problems with their communication skills upon entry into university. To find a working solution to this problem Nehemiah will extend his Graduate Certificate program and visit Australian universities to observe their practices and procedures and the ways they deal with similar issues associated with communication skills.

The award of this grant to Nehemiah by the HERDSA community will help students improve communication skills at UPNG and more broadly in Papua New Guinea, and support academics in implementing strategies to improve the teaching of communication skills.

Denise Jackson

OLT Citation

HERDSA member Associate Professor Denise Jackson has received an OLT Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning for her sustained contribution to graduate employability and employment outcomes through research leading to an innovative, evidence-based and nationally recognised School-wide work-integrated learning program. Denise is Academic Discipline Coordinator - Work-Integrated Learning in the School of Business and Law at Edith Cowan University.

Denise has a strong interest in graduate employability and has actively explored - through leading five internal research projects, three internal teaching and learning projects and three externally-funded research projects -- ways to develop and assess student employability and improve graduate employment outcomes. Her research is widely recognised and ongoing through participation in national and international research projects. Central to her success has been embedding the findings from her research into practice. Her work has fostered sustainable industry partnerships and produced high impact programs which prepare Business and Law (B&L) students for the complex world-of-work.

Denise has received a number of research and teaching and learning awards within and outside the university. Her research interests include graduate employment and underemployment, the transition from university to the workplace, career development learning, professional identity development and work-integrated learning.

Alison White

OLT citation

HERDSA member Alison White has received an OLT Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning for implementing an employability framework using innovative teaching and curriculum design elements that supports clinical physiology students to develop their professional identity and clinical proficiency. Alison is Senior Lecturer, Course Convenor and a Program Director of undergraduate and postgraduate students in the School of Environment and Science at Griffith University.

By embedding a transitioning and employability framework in the Graduate Diploma of Clinical Physiology, Alison has driven improvements in her students' level of clinical proficiency and professional identity. By employing innovative teaching techniques, incorporating realistic clinical scenarios, reflective writing, career development learning and authentic assessments, she has fostered a motivational and supportive learning environment.

Alison had over ten years experience in the health industry in roles varying from senior clinical scientist to senior managing scientist, as well as experience as a national clinical examiner and educator. She is currently an accredited medical sonographer and practicing clinical scientist. Her dual role as a clinical practitioner and educator, combined with her background in the health profession, has enabled her to draw on contemporary real-world knowledge and practice to enhance student learning in the university environment.

Meanderings

Robert Cannon

Beginning the day by reading newspapers is not a good idea. If I intend to face the world in a positive frame of mind, the morning news will almost certainly leave me despairing. This is particularly the case when it comes to accounts of what politicians do and say. Why are they so irrational, dismissive of evidence, and lacking common sense, I ask myself? Similar dark thoughts about those responsible for leading education also occur.

About the standards crisis engulfing courses at South Australia's TAFE, Adelaide's *The Advertiser* (December 9, 2017) reported that a former student awarded for excellence said their training was so bad they would not employ themselves. *The Advertiser* opined "Something goes badly wrong, a scapegoat is found, and the minister in charge says the joint was broken when they got there and people really should give them credit for trying to fix it. It often has the credibility of an arsonist delivering a fire extinguisher".

How did we create such disarray after years of effort invested in professional development and quality assurance? I suppose we should be grateful quality assurance was in place to identify these shortcomings. But why didn't the quality arrangements prevent the mess?

Additional to quality woes in education, academics are expressing their disquiet with freedom of speech matters. The University of Waikato, a retiring professor has claimed, has a 'fascist society' where staff are not free to say what they think, and the Vice-Chancellor has made it worse. The University's VC disagrees (http://tinyurl.com/yb79jwpg). In another news item, one academic is said to be worried that New Zealand risks creating the restrictive culture prevalent in Australia, the United States, and the UK (http://tinyurl.com/mgqgbkx).

Glancing over the daily email feed of new journal articles is not uplifting either. "Higher education is in great need today, as never before, of a periodical that is consistently stimulating, exploratory, cogent, authoritative, consequential, and enjoyable – and whose critique of educational policies and developments is informed by a humane concern for culture and society." This quotation comes from *The Times Higher Education Supplement* (March 21, 1980). Surely matters have advanced since that gloomy assessment? After all, there are more writing courses, more writing guides, and many more editors. And haven't educational standards risen over the theirty-seven years since this withering assessment?

You might argue that I have missed the point. Academic writing is not meant to be "stimulating, exploratory, cogent, authoritative, consequential and enjoyable". Academics are just following the Principle of Sound Learning offered in 1908 by Cornford in his classic text *Microcosmographia Academica; Being a Guide for the Young Academic Politician*.

Cornford's Principle of Sound Learning is that the noise of vulgar fame should never trouble the cloistered calm of academic existence. Hence, learning is sound when no one has ever heard of it. 'Sound scholar' is a term of praise applied to one another by learned people who have no reputation outside the University and a rather odd one inside it. Cornford advises that if you should write a book – and you had better not, he warns – be sure that it is unreadable, otherwise you will be called 'brilliant' and forfeit all respect.

So, does this academic development advice written 110 years ago have currency today? The age of this advice should remind us of the institutional durability of universities. Clark Kerr, former chancellor of the University of California System, gave an historical perspective on universities. Kerr noted that since the foundation of the Lutheran Church in 1530, sixty-six Western institutions that existed then still exist today in recognisable form – the Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church, the parliaments of Iceland and the Isle of Man and 62 universities (from George Keller, *Academic Strategy*, 1983).

But back to Cornford. Mindful of the fact he does set out to advise on academic politics, he nevertheless makes no mention of teaching or research. He does mention learning, however. This gem illustrates his thinking: "…the first necessity for academics engaged in the pursuit of learning is freedom from the burden of political cares. It is impossible to enjoy the contemplation of truth if one is vexed and distracted by the sense of responsibility."

So, in my morning meanderings, frustrated as I am with newspapers and

journals, I decided to explore books about universities. Titles are of two kinds, the gentle and the alarmist.

First, some background. The invited keynote speaker at a Canberra conference on foreign aid early this year began with a heartfelt observation that it was a relief to leave the US and arrive in Australia, a country she described as one of gentle calm and civil politics. The spontaneous laughter from the mostly Australian audience signalled what people thought of that observation, uttered as it was at the height of the Barnaby Joyce affair! Her comment and audience reaction reflect the underlying anxiety with which we view current events. Universities are a part of this anxiety. Books about universities further demonstrate this anxiety. Here we find a waterfall of woes.

Australian academic, John Smyth, has written a withering account of what is wrong with universities. In forceful, uncompromising prose on page 3, he writes:

> When massive and possibly irreversible damage is inflicted upon a social institution with little or no opposition, then this ought to be a cause for alarm. When the work of that institution is poorly understood, or mischievously misrepresented in the wider public imagination, then this ought to add urgency to the angst. When that institution happens to be the last remaining place in which social critique and criticism is incubated, nurtured, fostered, encouraged, and supported, then our indignation ought to be almost in hyper-drive. Well, that is the situation in contemporary universities today, and most of what is occurring is largely invisible, and is being covered up or shrouded with a logic that is simply laughable. Put as directly as I can state it, what is happening to universities is placing our societies in a parlous and possibly terminal state.

The title of Smyth's book is as uncompromising as his writing: *The Toxic University Zombie Leadership, Academic Rock Stars and Neoliberal Ideology* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

Smyth writes about western universities generally and not exclusively about Australia. So, what about American universities? Do books on offer there reflect our keynote speaker's implied views on the United States in any way?

Consider these titles: *The Great Mistake: How We Wrecked Public Universities and How We Can Fix Them; The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All Administrative University and Why it Matters,* and *Education's End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life*.

Not only Americans express alarm. From Canada, we have *Lowering Higher Education, the Rise of Corporate Universities* and *The Fall of Liberal Education*. From Ireland *Degrees of Nonsense, the Demise of the University in Ireland* and from Britain *Killing Thinking: The Death of the Universities and Universities at War*.

There is more. A review in *The Conversation* (August 17, 2017) uses the labels ‘apocalyptic’ and ‘irresponsible’ to describe a book by Jonathan Jansen who was Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Free State in South Africa. The review of Jansen’s *Fire – The End of the South African University*, argues that what South Africa's universities need from their leaders now is not prophecies of doom, but deeper thought about the transformative potential of this difficult historical moment. As is common these days, the commentaries following the article illuminate sharp discord between universities and their communities.

By way of contrast, Melbourne Vice-Chancellor Glyn Davis' new book, *The Australian Idea of a University*, described as a “powerful meditation” on the cover blurb, illustrates the gentler character of Australia noted by our Canberra keynote speaker. The calming chapter subheading 'Diversity as Prudence' reflects this gentleness.

If you do not like those titles, I can present others such as *The Death of Expertise*. Author Tom Nichols writes “The death of expertise is not just a rejection of existing knowledge. It is fundamentally a rejection of science and dispassionate rationality, which are the foundations of modern civilization”. Academic experts abandoning their public duty by retreating into jargon and irrelevance is partly to blame, he asserts.

And there is more from Nichols with which we, as educational developers, have been complicit. He writes about the consequences of student evaluation of teachers which creates an acceptance of the layperson becoming accustomed to judging the expert.

I have long thought that one area we educational developers have neglected is to provide an understanding of the history and the purpose of universities in a free society. There is an absence of political champions of the idea of the university with the stature of a Menzies or a Whitlam and debates are more focused on commercialisation, funding, VC's salaries, misdemeanours, and protecting students' expanding range of sensitivities. I suggest that if we educational developers had more vigorously prosecuted the values of universities and their key role in a free society, then maybe we might not be in the situation we are today.

And now here comes some relief from the gloom. In writing this conclusion, I do so with a sense that I must end on a brighter note than the results of my meander here through the ills of academia. What could be better than selecting Glen Wright's *Academia Obscura, The Silly Side of Higher Education* for inspiration? This humorous romp through academic eccentricities and the slightly unhinged life in universities guarantees a laugh from Wright’s catalogue of the absurdities of academic practices and policies. I can do no better than to conclude with the author's observation that you do not have to be mad to work in a university – but you probably are.

His concluding advice? “I implore you to own your insanity”.

Robert Cannon is the Education and Research Adviser to Australia’s education aid program, INOVASI, in Indonesia. Robert was formerly Director of the Advisory Centre for University Education at the University of Adelaide and is a HERDSA Life Member.
cannonra@icloud.com

Artificial intelligence versus natural stupidity

Roger Atkinson

In earlier times I was much involved in designing learning materials for production by manual typing and printing, transitioning to production with word processors and other computer software, then to partly online or blended, and eventually to fully online. A transition over those decades to paperless, or almost paperless, during which I acquired a deeply ingrained ambivalence about computers and ICT. Did computers save time and reduce workloads, or waste time and increase workloads?

Of course, many years of almost fantastic improvements in performance, reliability and software design have minimised the 'waste time and increase workloads' factor. But from time to time I encounter irritating and frustrating reminders, to be discussed in this musing about some recent personal incidents in the 'waste time and increase workloads' category. Although these incidents are not especially noteworthy or unusual, and may be similar to incidents encountered by many members of HERDSA, the important part of this musing is how such incidents may provoke attitudinal changes and new cautions about artificial intelligence, or 'AI'.

The first frustrating incident was in mid-January, during my work for WA's Teaching and Learning Forum. After some years of normal connecting to the website (wand.edu.au) used for TL Forum communications with presenters, up popped 'Can't securely connect to this page ... This might be because the site uses outdated or unsafe TLS security settings. If this keeps happening, try contacting the website's owner.' Meanwhile, numerous other websites that I use frequently all gave normal connecting, and no other TL Forum workers were encountering problems with their access to wand.edu.au. After about 15 hours, normal connecting returned for wand.edu.au, so I thought it was only a temporary problem with that site. A relief, it was a busy time for TL Forum organising. But within a day, it happened again: 'Can't securely connect...' and the Apple equivalent, '... can't establish a secure connection...'. Sadly, it was not a temporary problem. The recommended action, 'try contacting the website's owner', which I tried via the edu.au domain registrar and a 'whois' search, lead into an ownership maze. I tried the online help pages by Apple, Microsoft, Bigpond and Netgear (provider of our home's ADSL modem-router-WiFi base station), with no clues forthcoming. However, various blogs suggested some relationship between 'Can't securely connect...' and the problem known as 'Weak Diffie-Hellman and the Logjam Attack'. Oh well, that's beyond me, so I gave up, and turned to the usual last resort, which is re-install or upgrade all software at my end. After doing that for Safari and OSX Yosemite on my Mac, the next to do was Netgear. Rather surprisingly, success! Netgear firmware upgrade from V1.1.00.20 to V1.1.00.26 solved the problem, though it did nothing to explain it, or sooth my irritation over a time wasting that totaled perhaps 12-15 hours spread over four days, or dissuade me from considering this to be an instance of 'AI' that was not so intelligent.

The next time wasting incident related to a very routine action during my copy editing for the journal *Issues in Educational Research*: look up an email address for an author. After failing to find the address within the usual minute or two, I emailed the co-authors to inquire. But my normally very reliable outgoing mail server, mail.bigpond.com, refused to accept, telling me that 'The server response was: '[hexadecimal number omitted] Message content rejected due to suspected spam'. After time wasting experiments, I found that the 'suspected scam' was due to a URL that I had included as I thought it was relevant for the co-authors to know. The first part of the URL was https://www.xxxxxxxx.com/ (I'm using xxxxxxxx to conceal the identity of the author - it is not a word associated with spam). Bigpond rejected the full URL and also rejected 'www.xxxxxxxx.com' and 'xxxxxxxx.com', but accepted 'https://www.xxxxxxxx' and 'xxxxxxxx'. Only an hour wasted in testing and identifying, but the incident prompted larger questions. Firstly, I did not know that Bigpond was reading the body text of my emails to look for spam. That is very irritating. Secondly, what does this incident say about the quality of the AI underlying Bigpond's spam checker?

Another two recent time wasting incidents also concerned email traffic for *Issues in Educational Research*. Two of the journal's associate editors who use *Gmail* addresses provided by Google encountered some problems with

non-arrival of emails containing new submissions. One advised, 'Re: 2 missing articles. I found them in my SPAM folder ... have discovered that a *Gmail* mailbox search does not find anything in the SPAM folder.' That is a little surprising, one could expect *Gmail* to use advanced AI for classifying email as spam (and for advising the recipient, just in case the AI was not smart enough).

In another incident, *Gmail* rejected some IIER submission emails before invoking its spam test. The *Mailman* list software which distributes IIER submissions to our associate editors gave me, as list administrator, the following terse reject by *Gmail* concerning a submission from a prospective author with email address @yahoo.com.in, 'host gmail-smtp-in.l.google.com ... SMTP error from remote mail server after end of data: ... Unauthenticated email from yahoo.co.in is not accepted due to domain's DMARC policy. Please contact the administrator of yahoo.co.in domain if this was a legitimate mail ...'. Google's *Gmail Help* pages are comprehensive, generally easy to follow, have good referencing to advanced technical information, and the purposes are usually commendable, such as 'To help fight spam and abuse, Gmail uses email authentication ...', and '... you can help combat phishing to protect users and your reputation.' However, little is said about evidence concerning the value of DMARC's contribution to these commendable purposes: is it 'small', 'middling', substantial', 'don't know'? Also, little is said about the underlying AI procedures for identifying unauthenticated email that may be spam, and how reliable these may be.

Could it be a little unfair to suggest that the AI geeks who create programs to combat spam and phishing should be providing more evidence about their efficacy? Have I an acquired bad habit after many years of reviewing research journal submissions in educational technology and educational research generally, namely asking about evidence for the utility, efficacy, stakeholder benefits, adoptability, sustainability, etc., of your innovation, your research findings, your new method for teaching your subject, etc.? Why become irritable about 'time wasting', when I could think 'lifelong learning' about very interesting and important ICT matters? Have I forgotten the myriad ways for ICT to save time and reduce workloads?

> *"If the programmers who are creating software for less complex purposes, such as detecting spam and countering it, cannot always get it right, how can we trust the software for very complex roles, as in advanced applications of AI? "*

Am I citing incidents that are not related to AI as the term is understood in contemporary AI researcher and developer communities?

To return to the important part of this musing, which is how such incidents may provoke attitudinal changes by time wasting and creating more work, thereby reducing one's sense of trust in computers. The reduction in trust may be countered in part by reflective questions, as in the preceding paragraph, but we are entering an era of more and more trust in computers being demanded, owing to AI advancing into more and more complex roles, such as driverless vehicles, humanoid robots, computer marking of NAPLAN essays, and assisting in judgment of minor disputes in civil law. If the programmers who are creating software for less complex purposes, such as detecting spam and countering it, cannot always get it right, how can we trust the software for very complex roles, as in advanced applications of AI? Many observers, perhaps a little unfairly, mention the phrase 'natural stupidity'. The linking of 'artificial intelligence' and 'natural stupidity' has been around for some years, perhaps most frequently in the sentence 'Artificial intelligence is no match for natural stupidity'. Google the exact phrase to obtain evidence. My preferred version is 'There is a fuzzy dividing line between artificial intelligence and the natural stupidity of the programmers who created it'.

Perhaps that is an overly irritable response to the time wasting I have experienced. For a less grumpy perspective on AI, I offer 'Be alert, not alarmed', borrowed shamelessly from a 2002 campaign by the Australian Government (now a forgotten campaign, but you can still Google the exact phrase). For a broader perspective, consider all the non-AI related ways for irritating time wasting by computer software, for example, will we ever get a version of *MS Word* that is crash proof?

Roger Atkinson retired from Murdoch University in 2001. His current activities include honorary work on the TL Forum conference series and *Issues in Educational Research*.

Website: http://www.roger-atkinson.id.au/
Contact: rjatkinson@bigpond.com

Links

See http://www.roger-atkinson.id.au/pubs/herdsa-news/40-1.html for this article in HTML, including links to numerous references for this topic.

YOUR TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Develop your teaching philosophy in a workshop experience at the HERDSA conference.

The workshop (Re) Valuing Higher Education; what is my teaching philosophy? is designed for HERDSA members by the highly successful TATAL group.

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Information

dale.wache@unisa.edu.au; stuart.schonell@utas.edu.au

http://herdsa2018.aomevents.com.au/pre-conference/#pre_conference_workshop

Wordcraft Helen Sword

How do we bring passion and creativity into our scholarly writing?

In this new column, internationally recognised writing expert Professor Helen Sword answers your questions about academic writing, productivity and wordcraft.

Pablo Picasso famously declared that "Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up". Likewise, just about every academic I have ever met is a passionate and creative researcher. The problem is how to keep that passion and creativity alive in our writing, rather than succumbing to the myth that 'serious' scholars publish only passion-free, conventional prose.

This dilemma can be especially acute, I suspect, for researchers in higher education. Many of us have come into educational research through our work as teachers and scholars in other disciplines. We care deeply about higher education, and we have compelling stories to tell. At the same time, however, we may feel insecure about writing and publishing outside our home discipline. Rather than sticking our heads above the parapet, we hunker down behind the ramparts of conventional academic prose: structured, impersonal, safe.

So how can we muster the courage and confidence to write differently? Start by considering when, where, how and from whom you first absorbed the lesson that passion and creativity have no place in academic writing. Perhaps your PhD supervisor warned you to tone down your 'journalistic' writing style (translation: "your writing is far too accessible and engaging to be taken seriously") or your high school English teacher forbade you to use the word 'I'. Do you really need to keep following their rules forever?

Next, recall how you mustered the confidence to write and submit your first higher education article, especially if you were not trained in the field. Most likely you looked at some published articles in leading journals and copy their structure and style, whether or not you actually enjoyed reading them. Not a bad way to master a new genre – but a convention is not a law. When we imitate the status quo rather than pushing the boundaries of the possible, we end up with the lowest common denominator: safe, soulless, cookie-cutter articles that all look and sound exactly the same.

Finally, empower yourself to write differently. Identify a few passionate, creative academic writers whose work you enjoy reading, and have a go at emulating their style. Your research stories will pulse with energy.

Do you have a burning question about academic writing that you would like to see answered in this column? Send it to Helen Sword at h.sword@auckland.ac.nz with the subject line 'Wordcraft'.

About Helen Sword

Helen is a scholar, award-winning teacher, and poet who has published widely on modernist literature, higher education pedagogy, digital poetics, and academic writing, including five single-authored books from major university presses. Helen received her PhD in Comparative Literature from Princeton University and is now Professor and Director of the Centre for Learning and Research in Higher Education at the University of Auckland.

A passionate advocate of creativity and craftsmanship in scholarship, teaching, and the arts, Helen has received a University of Auckland Teaching Excellence Award for Innovation in Teaching, the HERDSA-TERNZ Medal for her impact on the tertiary education research environment of New Zealand, and a University of Auckland Research Excellence Award.

Helen's popular academic writing workshops for faculty and doctoral students have taken her to more than 60 universities and conferences in 17 countries across North America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australasia.

Links

Helen's new article, *Frustrated academic writers* is coming out in HERD soon. The online version should be available within the next few weeks. The article does pretty much everything Helen advocates here.

Helen also points out that HERD editors are open to publishing experimental, outside-the-box academic prose. For an example look at Frances Kelly's 2015 article *A day in the life (and death) in a public university*.

Books

Air & Light & Time & Space: How Successful Academics Write. Harvard University Press, 2017.

The Writer's Diet: A Guide to Fit Prose. The University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Websites

www.helensword.com

The Writing BASE - a diagnostic tool designed to help you broaden the dimensions of your writing practice: http://writersdiet.com/base.php

The Writer's Diet – a test to identify paunchy prose, then follow the no-nonsense advice in the book to strengthen and tone your verbal muscles: www.writersdiet.com

From the Herd Editorial Desk

Craig Whitsed and Wendy Green

Questions of *value, values* and what it means to *re-value* higher education will be addressed at the 2018 HERDSA conference. These questions are central to the aims and scope of *Higher Education Research & Development* (*HERD*), and for this reason, we have decided to align *HERD*'s 2020 Special Issue with this year's conference theme. With the multiple challenges facing the sector - increasing corporatization, decreasing public funding, massification, increasing diversity, the focus on graduate employability, our complex research environment - *how* and *what* we value and for *whom* have become increasingly urgent questions. We believe that *HERD* should play a role in leading conversations about the value of higher education, and the values those in the sector embody and disseminate by providing a platform for further, fuller explorations of higher education as a field and space.

The title for the 2020 HERD Special Issue will be *Re-valuing higher education: Learning(s) and teaching(s) in contested spaces*. In the forthcoming call for submissions, we will invite articles that explore and critique the values that underpin approaches to, and practices in higher education from the varying perspectives of all of the sector's stakeholders.

In other news, *HERD*'s 2019 Special Issue, *New Perspectives on reading and writing across the Disciplines* with Guest Editors Judith Seaboyer (UQ) and Tully Barnett (Flinders) is well underway. We believe that this Special Issue will be of interest to a great many of our readers and are looking forward to its publication.

We are also looking forward to this year's HERDSA conference where we will be facilitating a session on peer-reviewing. The contribution of reviewers to the Journal cannot be understated – our reviewers are the life blood of the journal. Our aim is to provide quality feedback on all submissions reviewed by the journal, and with this in mind, our session at the conference will focus on building reviewers' confidence and skills. We encourage anyone who is already reviewing for one or more journals or would like to start reviewing to come along.

In the same vein, we would also like to acknowledge the work of all our Associate Editors, who make a significant and valuable contribution to HERD. Finally, we are seeking new members of our team of Associate Editors and our College of Review. For details of criteria and responsibilities for both of these roles please contact Emily Giles, our Managing Editor at herd.giles@gmail.com.

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ESSENTIAL READING

Bernadette Knewstubb, Co-Editor of HERD, discusses an article from HERD 37/1 (2018) Robins, T., Roberts, R. & Sarris, A., *The role of student burnout in predicting future burnout: exploring the transition from university to the workplace.*

This article wouldn't normally be on my personal reading list, reporting a discipline-specific quantitative study. Numbers aren't my thing. But as I scanned it I found myself challenged by the more general questions it raises. The longitudinal research article explores the relationship between student burnout and early career burnout within the health professions. Burnout in the study is based on Masalach, Jackson and Leiter's (1996) definition, a "psychological syndrome related to prolonged stressors at work and characterised by three components *exhaustion*, *cynicism* and *low professional efficacy*".

They report higher cynicism and exhaustion among students in their final year of study than towards the end of their first year of work. Burnout in students appears to relate to burnout in early career beyond the first year. We are called on to explore this issue across disciplines and consider the development of guidelines and interventions to prevent students burning out before they even enter the workforce. Reading this, I found myself reflecting that among the multitude of purposes for study, whether personal, social, affective or economic, none are effectively met if our students are overworked so that education becomes a chore to be survived. As an empirical piece that challenges us to think well beyond its immediate findings, this is well worth the read.

Postcard from England

Susan Bolt

You've probably heard the news about the 'Beast from the East' that swept the UK as winter turned to spring. I got quite a surprise when I arrived at work to find the car park covered in snow. How would I know where to park? I lined up my car a reasonable distance from another car and hoped for the best. To my surprise when the snow had dissipated at the end of the day and the lines were visible, I was actually within the width of a parking bay but had overshot it by a nose. How did the driver of the car next to mine manage to park perfectly within a bay? I surveyed the scene and noticed that there was a lamp pole aligned with the central dividing line between rows of parking bays. In the future I will use the lamp pole as a reference point, as well as other cars.

When my car arrived in the UK from Australia it had to meet UK standards. Its speedometer was converted from kilometres to miles and although much of its identity was the same its registration number changed to align with UK equivalence. Although it was described differently to all intents and purposes similar functions occurred, speed and distance were measured and it complied with legal requirements.

Since I returned to the UK after spending the Christmas break in Australia I have experienced an intense time of calibration as a result of participating in events hosted by the HEA. I attended the Professional Development Course for External Examiners in London on 8th January at the University of Hertfordshire followed shortly afterwards by External Examining Developing the Developer on 22nd January in Edinburgh. As there are an estimated 15,000 external examiners in the UK, this was essential professional development. I was heartened to see the work of O'Connell, De Lange, Freeman, Hancock, Abraham, Howieson and Watty (2015) which investigated the impact of calibration on variation in assessment of accounting learning outcomes in Australian universities disseminated and held in high esteem. I reflected on my own participation in similar projects in the Australian HE sector and my prior experiences in the schooling sector and made connections between my prior experiences and current context.

In January I also attended the HEA D1-3 Standardization event at the University of Leeds and the HEA D4 Standardization event at the University of London. These events were repeated several times over at different locations throughout the UK to enable colleagues to reflect on their judgements and calibrate their conceptions of D1-4 of the Professional Standards Framework to strengthen consistency and confidence in the processes and outcomes of a scheme which provides professional recognition and qualifications in learning and teaching in HE internationally. I enjoyed meeting new colleagues and engaging in these activities.

Attending these events has helped me to connect my past knowledge, understanding and experiences with the UK context. At times I have felt like a second language learner because familiar concepts were called unfamiliar names and contextualised slightly differently. I am calibrating my understanding and use of language to fit my new context.

I have fond memories of the work I did with colleagues on the HERDSA Executive and HERDSA Fellowship Panel of Assessors to calibrate our professional judgements of portfolio submissions. I am grateful to all HERDSA Fellows who contributed to this process either by mentoring colleagues, providing samples of their portfolios, and serving as members of the Panel of Assessors or providing leadership on the Executive.

I have enjoyed hearing from HERDSA News readers who have contacted me after reading my postcards. So if you feel like getting in touch with me please do. My email address is suebolt@liverpool.ac.uk

Colleagues attending the HEA D4 Standardization Event, University of London

Falconry with Carlos, Karin, our driver, and cousin

Postcard from Saudi Arabia

Karin Oerlemans

As-salāmu ʿalaykum

The phrase, *As-salamu alaykum*, meaning "peace be upon you", is certainly an apt reflection of our recent journey to Saudi Arabia. It is both a blessing and a welcome, an indication of the generosity and hospitality that typifies this country and its people. Our small team, consisting of Carlos Montana-Hoyos (UC), Elke Stracke (UC), and myself, travelled to Dammam, in South East province of Saudi Arabia, in early December 2017. Our purpose was to visit the women-only College of Design at Imam Abdul Rahman Bin Faisal University (aka University of Dammam) to conduct research on the implementation and evolution of the previously developed "Industrial Design curriculum for the first female-only Industrial Design programme in Saudi Arabia".

It was the final stage, and a highlight, of a project which had its beginnings in 2015. At this time, we three, as part of a much larger team of academics and curriculum people, were privileged to be asked to write a new Industrial Design curriculum for the college, the first of its kind in Saudi.

We travelled with the intention of conducting our research, to better understand cross-cultural, gender, and multidisciplinary aspects of design education and curriculum development in the Middle East. But, as I think is always the case, it became so much more, with some incredible moments of sharing and learning about a very hospitable and generous people! So, let me go back to the beginning of the journey and share some of the highlights.

A journey these days always starts with a plane flight, which is never fun. But we were excited, though for Elke and myself a little apprehensive about what we would experience at the other end. This was primarily because of clothes! Yes, clothes of all things. It was difficult, as a woman, to gauge what would be acceptable clothing. So many blogs and websites, semi-official and official, gave very conflicting advice about the required clothing for women visiting Saudi Arabia. But a visit to the embassy in Canberra provided us the information that it was no longer so strict and so long as we were modest we could just wear our normal clothes. So, taking that advice, I resisted the purchase of abayas or other traditional Saudi items of women's coverings and went in my own clothing. Elke, however, decided to "be prepared' and had two abayas in her suitcase. But once we were in Dammam we found that it was perfectly acceptable to wear our own loose and modest clothes! This is not possible for the Saudi local women, but certainly for expatriates and female visitors in this province. Even so, we were assured that the clothing protocol for locals was slowly changing – and so during a visit to Saudi, you will see a whole variety of female coverings, from the stricter burqa and niqab to the less strict abaya and hijab. So, despite our 'modest' gear, our uncovered heads were a bit of a standout – in a country where even the males wear the red and white keffiyeh (head covering) held in place by a black agal. During one of our evenings visiting a souk, we were taken to a place where our male host, Dr Saeed, showed us how these were made, still in the traditional method.

We had a number of excellent hosts during our visit – and their generosity is unparalleled. Gift giving is a tradition, and we had brought with us some lovely items of modern Australian designed art. But, as we discovered, you cannot out give a Saudi! During a visit to a chocolate factory, where we viewed the crafting process of handmade chocolates, we were given gorgeous roses and also walked away with a large box of beautiful chocolates. But this did not distract from the fact that almost all of those who were doing the hand wrapping were women. They were housed in a separate wing from the males, and males could only enter once the women were fully covered. So, there was always a little wait before we entered with our male colleague! But, as I mentioned above, protocols are changing. More importantly, having women in the workforce is, in fact, an important change to earlier days, when women were not allowed to work at all. Women in Saudi are now encouraged to complete their education and enter the workforce. During our visit to several factories and small industrial design workshops, we were extremely pleased to meet with many senior Saudi women who held executive positions. This included our host at the university Dr Sumayah, the highly respected Dean of the College of Design.

One of our gifts, which continues to bring much pleasure – I am having some

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Forget graduate attributes; try powerful knowledge

Tony Harland and Navé Wald

It is commonly held that 'knowledge is power' (*scientia potestas est*), a phrase often attributed to Francis Bacon. The nexus between power and knowledge has continued to occupy philosophical thought, perhaps most notably that of poststructuralists such as Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault, who unpacked the complex dynamics between knowledge and power. More recently, and explicitly in the context of education and curriculum design, scholars such as Leesa Wheelahan and Michael Young have turned to the power/knowledge nexus from an educational sociology perspective. They advocate a formal education underpinned by a knowledge-based curriculum that should aim to equip students with 'powerful knowledge'.

What exactly powerful knowledge is and what can be done with it is not always clear. After synthesising the various conceptualisations of powerful knowledge, we take Young and Wheelahan to suggest powerful knowledge is disciplinary specialised, theoretical, and context-independent, produced by subject specialists in special institutions, and only transmitted in specialised institutions. This knowledge is powerful because it goes beyond the individual's personal everyday experiences and empowers those who have it to evaluate the strength of arguments; to apply knowledge beyond specific contexts; and to become responsible citizens able to meaningfully engage with issues of public importance.

Powerful knowledge is thus specialised knowledge that is disciplinary-based and distinguished from 'everyday' knowledge and from 'inferior' knowledge which means that the quality of knowledge claims is also an important factor. For individuals to be able to make that differentiation, what is needed is an insight into how knowledge is produced. This is known as 'epistemic access', which largely means having a theoretical and practical grasp of research methodology in a particular subject.

Confusion may arise when advocating for teaching context-independent knowledge through practising research, which is always contextual. For teachers who are aware of ideas around contextual teaching and learning this may seem contradictory. The two concepts – context-independent knowledge and contextual learning – are related but by no means conflicting. Contextual learning is a pedagogy, a method, to teach students difficult theoretical knowledge or concepts. This teaching method is based on students making sense of such knowledge by applying it to a context they are familiar with. This pedagogy, however, is not to be confused with theoretical knowledge being context-independent, which refers to the nature of that knowledge. Students can learn it by situating it in a number of different but familiar contexts, but it is also applicable to many new contexts. In short, powerful knowledge is about theoretical context-independent knowledge, which is a particular form of knowledge. Contextual teaching and learning, however, is about a pedagogy for transmitting and understanding context-independent knowledge.

Our academic imagination was captured by this concept, partially for its obvious and immediate appeal; who wouldn't want to have such a thing as powerful knowledge? But its appeal is much more profound and multi-layered, for it is ultimately connected to discussions and debates about the purpose of education, and more specifically for us, of higher education. To engage with the concept of powerful knowledge we decided we needed a more precise conceptualisation of this important but rather vague concept. Reflecting the Young-Wheelahan model we contend that a student has powerful knowledge if he or she is able to: produce knowledge; evaluate knowledge claims; and apply the skills and knowledge required for knowledge creation and evaluation in other contexts.

We recognise these are the qualities *academics* have, which are learned initially through a postgraduate research apprenticeship. Following Wheelahan, to these three abilities we added a fourth, which is: being able to use that knowledge for the benefit of oneself and others. As educators we cannot be certain that our graduates, once equipped with powerful knowledge, would use it for the benefit of society. But by equipping graduates with adequate analytical tools, abstract thinking, and the confidence to face the unknown; we suggest the potential for their meaningful engagement in society's matters is higher.

Our second task was to adapt the concept of powerful knowledge to the context of the research-intensive university. This was arguably easy to do, since theoretical knowledge is still a pillar of university education. But theoretical disciplinary knowledge alone is not likely to provide students with epistemic access to how knowledge is being produced. Epistemic access would thus necessitate a curriculum that includes the theoretical and practical components needed to design and conduct research. In our university, for instance, some departments teach research methodology and ask students to conduct primary research during the final stages of the undergraduate degree. However, many do not have this capstone experience.

Third, rather than leaving powerful knowledge as an abstract concept or ideal, it is important to draw direct links to teaching practice and curriculum design. So we posed the questions, What kind of curriculum is best suited to enable students to develop the attributes that constitute powerful knowledge, and how can one teach this?

We propose that academics in the research university have powerful knowledge, and students can achieve powerful knowledge through a research-based curriculum, where students are trained as researchers. This entails, in addition to learning theoretical subject knowledge, teaching students how to design and carry out original research and embedding this knowledge through practical research experience, similar to the postgraduate model. One could rightly argue that research is always contextual, but a research-based curriculum is an effective way to teach students theoretical knowledge, while encompassing both subject and methodological knowledge. As noted above, it is through putting the abstract into context that students can more easily learn, but much of this learning is context-independent.

Such an authentic research-based undergraduate curriculum is based on the key components of time, values, and knowledge and skills. Students need to have enough time to learn how to do research so a single semester will not suffice. In the program we are studying, undergraduates start three years of training and experience research from day one. The research experience should be founded in a group of values that make the research experience authentic. It should mirror as much as possible how more established academics conduct research, with the students themselves being the leading researchers. This is important for students' personal growth, as they learn to develop collaborative relationships with peers and teachers, and are compelled to assume responsibility for their work.

Of course students need to learn subject and methodological knowledge and skills to enable them to succeed. These components instil in students a sense of responsibility, confidence and care. Importantly they enable students to create and evaluate knowledge, and provide epistemic access and develop critical thinking. The combination of these personal and knowledge outcomes constitute powerful knowledge.

While it cannot be guaranteed, it is important that educators provide an education that enables students to translate powerful knowledge into powerful action, and contribute to society beyond their chosen discipline or career path. Powerful knowledge is ultimately what higher education should offer students and wider society. We contend that powerful knowledge is a more adequate articulation of the purpose of university teaching than is the development of graduate attributes.

Tony Harland (on the right in photo) is Professor of Higher Education and Head of the Higher Education Development Centre at the University of Otago. Recent research includes student learning through research and the accessibility of the idea of 'powerful knowledge'. Dr Navé Wald is a geographer with an interest in development studies, food politics and grassroots civil society. He is researching academic freedom, authenticity, peer review and assessment.

Links

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New HERDSA Guides

Improving Teaching and Learning in Science and Engineering Laboratories
by Caroline Baillie, Trina Jorre de St Jorre, Elizabeth Hazel

Laboratory work is a hallmark of education in science, engineering and technology-based fields. In the laboratory, students can explore their understanding of theory through putting it into practice, and finding motivation in investigating scientific phenomena, or creating something that actually works.

The design and delivery of laboratory classes and the forms of student assessment used in them, need to be examined critically for their contribution to effective student learning. With this new Guide, we attempt to shift laboratory experiences to those which would encourage deeper approaches to learning - more meaningful engaged experiences in which students were able to develop creative critical thinking, alongside the important work of transferring theory into practice.

www.herdsa.org.au/ publications/guides

Student Learning and the experience of teaching

Michael Prosser and Keith Trigwell

At first glance the relationship between teaching and learning might seem unremarkable. Nevertheless it has been the topic of extensive research and debate for many years. Philosophers of education like Paul Hirst (1971), argued that a clear understanding of teaching is vital because a teacher's understanding of teaching affects what he or she does in the classroom. Some go as far as claiming that there is no teaching unless students are learning. For Hirst, the clearest definition of teaching is the intention for someone to learn something and considering the learners' experiences and needs.

Prosser and Trigwell (2017) have likewise explored the different intentions behind university teachers' approaches to teaching. Their area of concern is the differences between teacher- and student-centred approaches to teaching and learning. They are primarily interested in how university teachers can grow and develop to become more focused on student learning. Their review of the research on the experience of teaching finds evidence that teachers can grow and develop as long as the focus is on the teacher's underlying intentions and conceptions of teaching and learning rather than simply attempting to change the strategy used to teach.

This is consistent with Prosser and Trigwell's relational views of teaching and learning. They argue that the variables that students bring with them to their learning experiences, and the varying learning processes they experience while learning, lead to different learning outcomes. It is this 3P model (presage, process and product) of the teaching-learning experience that shows how teaching influences student learning. The 3P model was originally proposed as a model for understanding student learning and has been extended significantly over the last 40 years to show the principles hold true in a variety of disciplines and different cultural contexts regardless of the type of teaching activity that was involved. Their review shows that what is consistently found in these studies is that the different perceptions of the learning situation are directly related to how students approach their learning. The relational model holds that when teachers are focused on changing students' conceptions, their students are more likely to report adopting deeper approaches to learning.

The challenge from Prosser and Trigwell's perspective is that teachers can have greater or lesser levels of sophistication in how they describe teaching. Prosser and Trigwell offer the example of strategies associated with learning technologies. A simple conception of learning technologies would be orientated towards access and information delivery while a more sophisticated conception displays an awareness of how to integrate learning technologies to support student learning.

For Prosser and Trigwell the value of the 3P model of teaching-learning experience lies in making more explicit the range of elements that make up the learning experience for students. By understanding how these variables interact teachers and course designers can create university experiences that promote student learning. While there may only be an indirect connection between the way teachers design and teach their courses and the quality of their students' learning outcomes, this research helps define the kind of learning experience that needs to be created in order for students to approach their learning in ways that lead to those high quality learning outcomes.

Reference

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The authors

Michael Prosser holds honorary professorial appointments at the Universities of Tasmania, Sydney and Hong Kong. He has published widely in the field of teaching and learning in higher education, much of his early research work with Keith Trigwell. Mike is a past editor of HERD and he has been elected a Life Member of HERDSA.

Keith Trigwell is Professor of Higher Education at the University of Sydney where he was Director of the Institue for Teaching and Learning from 2006 to 2010. His book *Understanding Learning and Teaching* is a summary of 10 years of learning/teaching research with Michael Prosser.

The reviewer

Peter Kandlbinder is Executive Editor, HERDSA Review of Higher Education.

HERDSA Review

In addition to the article reviewed here, Volume 4 contains: *Past, Present and Future: Acknowledging Indigenous Achievement and Aspiration in Higher Education* (Page, Trudgett, & Sullivan) and *The Australian higher education student experience: A personal reflection on 15 years of research* (Krause).

http://www.herdsa.org.au/publications/journals.

L to r students Peh Bo Fang, Lin Tzu Yuan, Lin Yun Kuan

A project to hear the student voice

Anna SF Kwan

If the role of higher education is to provide students with meaningful and relevant learning experiences, do you think the existing higher education has been fulfilling this role? From students' perspective, is the existing learning arrangement appropriate?

To celebrate the 20th Anniversary of Hong Kong Branch in 2017, a project *Redesigning Student Learning Experience in Higher Education (RSLEIHE)* was launched in October 2016. The project included an awards scheme, a symposium and a publication. For the awards scheme, full-time undergraduate students were invited to propose a team project to inform us of their needs, their ideas and views on optimal arrangements of university education processes. A total of thirteen teams from seven local universities were selected to implement their projects and compete for the awards.

During their six-month projects, students engaged in a variety of activities, which included conducting research on student classroom experience, working with faculty members to improve learning and teaching in classrooms, providing their peers with learning support on-line, organising and participating in overseas and local co-curricular programs, and involvement in research projects run by faculty members.

In the symposium on 22 August 2017, the eleven teams who had completed their projects were invited to share what they had learned from their projects with about a hundred participants. Based on students' presentations and project reports, their views on redesigning student learning experience in higher education can be grouped into four categories: improving classroom processes; supporting and extending classroom learning; tapping the learning resources within campus; and arranging learning and serving opportunities outside campus.

In the area of improving classroom processes the students considered learning in university classroom is essential but considerable improvement needed to be made. To improve classroom learning processes, the inclusivity of the classroom should be strengthened. Policies and strategies should be developed and implemented to accommodate students from different language and cultural backgrounds. Student diversity in the classroom should be seen as value-added learning resources.

The learning process needs to be more meaningful and engaging. It is vitally important to provide students with opportunities for applying the knowledge and theories they have learned. *Integrative learning opportunities are highly recommended to help students* make connections among concepts and experiences so that students are empowered to apply their learning to novel and complex situations.

Experiential learning activities should be structured as independent courses or included in different parts of courses to encourage meaningful and systematic learning with a feedback loop. Specially designed learning processes such as simulations and learning materials with multi-media should be employed to nurture students' critical thinking, creativity, problem solving and team work abilities.

Providing support and extension for student learning in class was considered necessary. Students themselves can make good use of social networking media to encourage knowledge sharing among peers. With the support of teaching staff, students can take the initiative to set up on-line learning platforms to encourage student-led online discussion to deepen learning in class. Materials and mini-teaching sessions can be developed to help their peers to master difficult content aspects in challenging courses.

To tap the learning resources within campus, students recommend their peers to take an active role to seek learning opportunities within campus. Through involvement in research projects carried out by faculty members, students can gain valuable experiences which are beneficial for their developing professional awareness and practice. To assist their peers to connect with faculty members and their research projects, students even initiated an online platform to facilitate the 'matching'.

Outside campus learning is crucial for students to connect with, learn from and share with local and overseas communities. Students appreciate study tours with a clear focus and with an extension learning element in which

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A strategy for developing reflective practice

Mark Minott

The Reflective Approach to Teaching Practicum Debriefing (RAPTD) is a strategy that aids early career academics in self-directed evaluation. It also supports university teacher educators working with early career teaching academics and school-based mentors in the task of developing student teachers' ability to reflect.

The ability to reflect is a basic attribute for all teachers and the development of student teachers' ability to reflect is now expected in all credible teacher education programmes. Given the changing landscape of teacher education and training with an emphasis on school-centred teacher education and training programs, school-based mentors need to be equipped to develop reflection in student teachers. RAPDT helps to resolve this issue and is thus both significant and timely.

Earlier research carried out with trainee teachers has led to the development of a practical, user-friendly tool that offers a systematic, yet reflective way to debrief student teachers after a teaching episode. The RAPTD can be easily incorporated and used during regular debriefing sessions with student teachers and early career teaching academics. The RATPD's strengths lie in the fact that it encourages student teachers to think critically about their own learning and what is taught; and about their own behaviour as teachers. Not only to focus on techniques and methods of teaching or the daily issues that teachers face in their practice, as important as those are, but to consider the "self as teacher" which is a major facet of being and becoming a reflective practitioner.

The RATPD is enacted through the use of a series of reflective questions and the research data reveals the usefulness of the reflective process. Responses show that participants observed and learned about teaching techniques, the day-to-day operation of the school and classroom, and the general school context. The reflective questions facilitated the expression of both positive and negative experiences of teaching and revealed the overall belief among participants that teaching is a difficult yet rewarding task that requires much effort on the part of the teacher.

The process revealed the extent to which the observation or teaching episode caused changes in beliefs, values, and assumptions about teaching and encouraged participants to think affectively by targeting their values, beliefs, and assumptions in relation to teaching and learning. All of the research participants pointed out that the experience confirmed their beliefs, values, and assumptions about teaching. The process enabled participants to explore what they learned about 'self as teacher'. Participants were encouraged to personalise the teaching practicum exercise by examining and disclosing personal feelings and subject content deficiencies.

Some of the challenges facing student teachers in this reflective process have been highlighted from previous research and the use of the RAPTD. Student teachers are sometimes reluctant to share their perceptions and what they truly believe about a particular issue or situation encountered, while some may be unwilling to talk about emotions, values, beliefs, and assumptions.

These challenges can be ameliorated by mentors and academic developers who can reassure participants during debriefing sessions that what they say in the tutorial room is confidential. Making it clear that discussions are not to be recorded will also help participants feel more comfortable, especially where personal and emotional issues are discussed. Do not record all that is discussed in the session, especially if one senses that what is being discussed is personal and emotional. Additionally, after each session, invite each participant to read and edit records taken during their own individual sessions.

Dr. Mark A. Minott is a HERDSA Fellow and Post-Doctoral Research Assistant at the University of Roehampton, London, United Kingdom.

Links

Examples of Mark's publications including A Reflective Approach to Teaching Practicum Debriefing in Teacher Education and Practice 25 (2) 287-301, may be found at: http://www.freewebs.com/faynot/

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now, as it stirs the memories – is a packet of Arabian coffee. The coffee in Saudi is a light brown in color, not the traditional black as drunk in much of the rest of the world. It is served in a small decorated glass, without milk or sugar, though often accompanied by one of the many varieties of dried dates. And it is served wherever you go. As you enter your hotel and whilst you are waiting to register, you will be offered a glass. As you visit people, you will be sure to be offered a glass. As we visited industries and travelled to interview officials we were offered a glass. It is a delightful way in which to show hospitality. One evening Elke and I were taught how to correctly pour the coffee, how to accept another glass, and how to politely refuse. Such etiquette around a moment, a small glass of perfectly flavored coffee!

There were many memorable moments during our trip. The people, generous, kind, hospitable who welcomed us into their lives for a short time. The students, who during the interviews for our research, all spoke excellent English – did you know that English is a compulsory second language in all Saudi Arabian schools?

The staff at the College gave generously of their time and praise for the curriculum our larger team had developed. But perhaps my most favorite moment was when we left for the airport.

Our driver, (yes, we had a driver – women are still not allowed to drive, and the roads are CRAZY!) had already been more than generous in his time, sharing his knowledge of many local customs. Speaking excellent English, he unswervingly answered many of our questions. And plied us with Arabic coffee and dates! But on that last journey, he took us into the desert and there introduced us to his hawk. He shared with us his love for hawking, still a favorite pastime for many in Saudi Arabia. And so, on this last trip, we had the opportunity for admiring, holding and just learning one more thing about this fascinating place that is Saudi Arabia.

To say we enjoyed our time would be an understatement. We were enriched, not just from the opportunity to write the curriculum or to conduct our research, but also from the wonderful people that we met along our way. So, let us end with the traditional greeting, as one who leaves, *As-salamu alaykum*, hoping one day to return.

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students are invited to plan their own follow-up activities to share their learning with others. By organising and implementing the follow-up activities to serve the community, students can deepen their understanding of what they have learned and enhance their ability in planning, implementation and evaluation as well as their motivation to serve others.

As *RSLEIHE* project organisers, we can conclude that this project was a great success. First, the aims of this project have been achieved. Local examples of student-centred, student-initiated, future-orientated teaching and learning experiences have been created and shared. Student voice and ideas on optimal learning arrangements in higher education have been brought up and discussed. In addition the project has created some admirable impacts. Students' ideas are highly useful and practical which can be readily applied in any campus. As a result, one project has been awarded funding for continuation in the university while another project has attracted collaboration among different universities.

We find some of our students have demonstrated good understanding of pedagogical concepts such as experiential learning. This makes us believe that student and faculty co-creation of learning and teaching in higher education is very possible and promising. Hong Kong Branch is planning to make this project a bi-annual event, another signature activity along with our dinner dialogues, as a powerful vehicle to fulfill our role in the advancement of higher education practices in Hong Kong and beyond.

Anna SF KWAN is Chair of Hong Kong Branch, who has been serving HK Branch since 1997.

Links

Redesigning Student Learning Experience in Higher Education Project: http://bit.ly/2yoWG8q

New HERDSA Guides

Leading the Academy: Distributed Leadership in Higher Education
by Sandra Jones

This HERDSA Guide has as its focus future leadership possibilities for the higher education sector. While recognising the important ongoing role of positional leaders, the author recognises the contribution of the many experts who comprise the higher education sector. In so doing, distributed leadership is promoted as an approach for the academy. While distributed leadership has been adopted across the sector for use in many diverse applications, much potential for increased adoption remains.

This HERDSA Guide aims to increase the sector's understanding of, and practice in, distributed leadership. It brings together research into the theory and practice of a distributed leadership approach. The question then becomes one of how an increased distributed leadership practice can be supported across the academy.

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