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Editorial

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It is now more than 30 years since the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) launched its first journal *Higher Education Research & Development (HERD)*. From its inaugural issue it was already recognised that there were far too many higher education articles that had only limited impact on the everyday decisions of teaching staff (Powell, 1982). Much has changed within Australasian higher education since the launch of *HERD*. As the sector has expanded so too have the number of people other than academic staff who are now responsible for the quality of teaching and learning in higher education.

What has not changed from the early days of *HERD* is the observation that many people involved in higher education are looking for guidance from the literature on how to tackle the challenges they face in teaching and learning. If anything, the challenge of making sense of a more diverse, widely dispersed and sometimes difficult to access literature has become even more acute. The number of peer-reviewed publications, conference proceedings and project reports continues to grow as Centres like the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching in Australia and AKO AOTEAROA New Zealand National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence build the evidence base for practice through their many grants and award schemes.

This growth in the literature on higher education has made the need for reviews of higher education research all the more necessary if we are to strengthen the conceptual structuring of knowledge within the field and identify directions for future research and innovation in teaching and learning practice. Review articles are distinct from original research articles

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published in journals such as *HERD* as they essentially examine the existing literature with the aim of historically and theoretically locating a research topic's key principles, current dilemmas, and possible futures. The aim of *HERDSA Review of Higher Education* is to provide such articles written by knowledgeable people in the field in order to build a comprehensive understanding of the ideas and arguments that have the greatest potential to benefit contemporary Australasian higher education in the current political and social context.

To ensure that we have articles of the greatest value to the academic community HERDSA surveyed Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Academic) and Pro Vice-Chancellors (Teaching and Learning) from across the Australian higher education sector on the short and long-term challenges they are facing as leaders of change in higher education. They ranked the sixteen topics that emerged from an analysis of the most recent higher education research outputs produced in the region (Velliaris, et al. 2012). The result of this survey was list of issues that have been under-explored or are emerging in our new competitive higher education environment. Having identified the short-term priorities for the sector HERDSA invited five reviews of the two main priority areas in higher education teaching and learning in Australia.

The first volume of *HERDSA Review of Higher Education* begins with a review of one of the most influential ideas in higher education teaching and learning identified in our survey of DVCs & PVCs. When asked who is the most influential researcher in Australian higher education that could address the top priorities facing the sector, the most common name offered by survey respondents was John Biggs. In his article on constructive alignment in university teaching Biggs reviews the development of his version of outcomes-based learning and how it is being implemented across the sector. His review of the research shows that constructive alignment has proved to be an effective approach to curriculum change but it requires time and effort to develop institutional policies and procedures that focus on quality enhancement that will support a systems approach to designing teaching and assessment.

The top priority from the higher education literature identified by DVCs and PVCs was how to manage the different approaches students adopt towards their learning. In this volume we look at this issue from the experience of two different groups of students. Firstly, Karen Nelson and John Clarke review the importance of the first year experience to the success of students at university. They outline the development of thinking around supporting the first year and summarise what is required to achieve whole-of-institution approaches that build on earlier experiences in First

Year Experience (FYE). They present their Student Engagement Success and Retention Maturity Model (SESR-MM) as an effective means by which institutions can concentrate on first year student engagement and student maturity.

In addition, many studies on the approaches to student learning contrast the differences between the more individualistic model used by Australasian cultures when compared to social structures adopted by International students from Confucian cultures. Sophie Arkoudis and Chi Baik review this research to show that greater interaction between international and domestic students is desirable in higher education. They identify a number of ways in which institutions can make significant movement towards this goal by adopting their Interaction for Learning Framework which is designed to encourage greater peer interaction between domestic and international students.

In their review of the changes in English language provision that have developed along with the growth of international students, Judith Rochecouste and Rhonda Oliver argue that English language provision has shifted from a largely voluntary service to becoming increasingly embedded within units of study. Their review of English language provision focuses on the international students' learning strategies adopted outside of formal learning activities.

The second priority area reviewed in this volume is educational technology. Within the higher education literature there are still a number of open questions surrounding the use of educational technology created by the rapid changes in information and communications technology being adopted in today's technologically-rich learning environments. Simon McIntyre tackles the question of how we can provide wider access to educational technologies now that digital technologies have become more widely available throughout society? McIntyre argues that organisational structures may be preventing academics from developing the digital literacies necessary to take advantage of the many advantages of using technology for educational purposes. He argues that academics need to look beyond their own institutions for opportunities for informal professional development if they are to narrow the digital divide.

As the literature on higher education continues to expand, reviews of these kinds will increasingly be necessary if we are to address some of the top priorities in teaching and learning facing the sector. For many of us it is a continual struggle to remain up-to-date with the large number of research specialisations in tertiary education and how they apply to our own institution. There is often no single solution to broadly defined issues that

face a higher education sector that increasingly operates in complex, global, multi-campus environments dealing with diverse student bodies. Sustained change in learning and teaching requires buy-in, engagement and commitment from staff across an institution. *HERDSA Review of Higher Education* will provide its readers with timely information and authorative advice on the major issues confronting higher education. It is hoped that by doing so the journal will make a contribution to the field by synthesising the existing research into an accessible resource for academics, developers and policy makers that will encourage discussion within higher education institutions in the region.

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2. References

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