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Editorial

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A 2013 survey of Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Academic) and Pro Vice-Chancellors (Teaching and Learning) from across the Australasian higher education sector asked them to imagine five years into the future and rank a series of issues that were derived from the higher education literature from the previous five years (Kandlbinder 2013). In addition to identifying their priority issues the survey respondents were asked to nominate any significant challenges they could anticipate in meeting their top priority in 2018. Naturally these prospective priorities were purely speculative, yet the barriers to change were consistent with what we have learned from attempting whole-of-institution change. DVC-As and PVC-T&Ls saw a need for a commitment to change from staff across the university if any change to learning and teaching was to be sustained and widespread. Several respondents mentioned the need for internal cooperation between university managers—like Deans and Heads of Schools— if we were to create better learning environments for students. In addition, as is the case whenever encouraging innovation, they recognised the need to build the capacity of their staff to operate within multi-disciplinary teams through periods of uncertainty.

What this shows is that DVCs and PVCs were anticipating large scale, whole-of-institutional change in the area of learning and teaching over the next 5 years. Of greater interest is which of the anticipated priorities from this survey have eventuated five years after the initial survey. One area that has not materialised as predicted is teaching performance indicators. When imagining the future DVC-As and PVC-T&Ls expected that academic staff will be asked to focus more on learning than content delivery and this will bring with it an increased focus on measuring teaching performance. There

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was considerable speculation at the time that the government would identify mandated performance indicators for teaching to address challenges in learning quality perceived to be facing higher education institutions. At the time performance systems relied mainly on data from student evaluations, assuming that students are best placed to judge teaching effectiveness. To this day a definitive set of teaching performance indicators remain elusive and governments appear reluctant to make significant proportions of funding contingent on teaching performance until indicator systems incorporate a range of valid and reliable quantitative and qualitative indicators.

The two reviews in this volume of HERDSA Review of Higher Education focus on two areas on the long-term priority list of DVC-A sand PVC-T&Ls that have become essential to their work. Firstly, Owen Hicks provides an overview of the broad spectrum of aspects that contribute to our understanding of the curriculum in higher education. Hicks acknowledges that the term 'curriculum' does not have high levels of currency in higher education, but he still believes that we can learn something useful by trying to understand how the concept is being used, especially considering the region is going through an unprecedented period of curriculum re-design. Hicks reminds us that the concepts of curriculum are widely used even if the terminology is not. His review found that instead of discussing the curriculum as such, it is more likely to talk about teaching and learning in higher education. This focus on teaching and learning has brought a far richer literature to discussions of curriculum than thirty years ago when these discussions were based on concepts largely borrowed from the school sector. With that larger literature comes a broader, more complex, and more contested understanding of the term. Hicks argues that we need to bring some kind of order to the diversity in the literature if we are to have any hope of tracking emerging themes.

Hicks introduces two interesting dimensions to the discussion of the definition of curriculum. Firstly, his own preference is for a pragmatic definition that describes the what, why how, when and where of learning. He adds to this a more nuanced understanding of the curriculum as an object, arguing that if we are describing 'a course of action' then it is more than curriculum documents that define the curriculum. Any definition must recognise that the race is always in the process of being run and include the students' experiences, including the unintended or unanticipated learning experiences.

Having established his definition of curriculum Hicks discusses the potential of curriculum to impact the activities within universities. While it is possible to influence all levels of the university from whole-of-institution

down to specific learning and teaching activities, Hicks could find no systematic analysis of what occurs when issues of curriculum are addressed at the program level. In addition, Hick found little evidence of higher education institutions attempting to evaluate the effectiveness or success of curriculum initiatives at the whole-of institution level, not even at the most basic level of have the curriculum goals been achieved. Partially, this may be due to the difficulty in evaluating at the whole-of-course or whole-of-institution level. Hicks argues that it is not good enough to suggest any curriculum renewal is successful because it was widely accepted within an institution and it is this area where Hicks says the sector can do much better.

Dawn Bennett reviews the second of the long-term priority areas that have now become central to the work of DVC-As and PVC-T&Ls as predicted. Bennett sees a significant consequence to an oversupply of university graduates created by almost half the Australian population engaging in higher education at a time when university level jobs are disappearing from a labour market. For Bennett, the solution is a redefinition graduate employability to align with the broader purposes of higher education and to make it relevant to the current and future workforce. She defines employability as the ability to create and sustain work over time (Bennett, 2018 p. 39). Her definition comes from her primary focus on the creative industries workforce which has experienced precarious work for centuries. As this type of work grows across the labour market, Bennett sees a typical graduate experience is likely to be as enforced entrepreneurs who create and manage their own work and professional development needs. This way of working requires students to be able to conceptualise their future working lives, which is a form of metacognition that Bennett calls "employABILITY thinking" (Bennett, 2018 p. 39). This is a focus on students understanding about why they think the way they think, how to critique and learn the unfamiliar, is a corrective to the students usual employability development strategies which are dominated by attempts to achieve a high grade point average (GPA).

Bennett argues that employability development is most effective when it is aligned with disciplinary knowledge, skills and practices, recognising that teachers are the most influential people in students' learning journeys. She is aware that it is hard for academics to take on ever more responsibilities at a time when they are going through the same workforce transformation as other professions. To begin with Bennett would like to see greater inclusion of alumni in undergraduate teaching as a form of whole-of-career professional learning for alumni. She suggests multiple ways alumni could be compensated for their time from monetary payment through to institutional

service. Bennett believes that the inclusion of alumni in undergraduate courses would provide a model for students on how to design professional learning initiatives that they will need to manage their own future careers.

Our two authors offer DVC-As and PVC-T&Ls new ways of thinking about the priories that have shifted to become key priorities to their work. Both see the curriculum as a central piece in the answer to the challenges of whole-of-institutional change. They push us to broaden our definitions of key concepts in order to embrace diversity and help us to re-engage with the purpose of a higher education. Whether we are at the end of curriculum change as Hicks imagines or at the start as suggested by Bennett will become clearer when we look back in another five years' time.

1. References

Kandlbinder, P. (2013) Emerging priorities in learning and teaching in Australasian higher education. Milperra, NSW: HERDSA.