CHANGING UNIVERSITY
LEARNING AND TEACHING

Engaging and Mobilising Leadership,
Quality and Technology

Editors

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and Geoff Danaher

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Preface

John Rickard

The field of scholarship related to university learning and teaching is increasingly important, reflected in the growing influence of institutions such as the Australian Learning and Teaching Council and the Higher Education Academy in the United Kingdom, as well as in the enhanced breadth and depth of the scholarship of learning and teaching, with a number of specialised academic journals and research centres. *Changing University Learning and Teaching: Engaging and Mobilising Leadership, Quality and Technology* seeks to contribute original and significant research to this field of scholarship.

As such, the book brings together chapters from scholars operating in many different academic contexts who share a commitment to optimising the learning outcomes of students. The chapters elucidate the challenges confronting the university sector within an increasingly globalised education marketplace, where the need to engage culturally diverse and geographically dispersed students in effective and authentic learning practices has never been greater. In particular, the book considers the role of leadership, quality and technology in transforming learning and teaching within contemporary universities.

*Changing University Learning and Teaching* therefore takes up the challenge posed by contemporary higher education’s location in a contested terrain. Universities have been variously constructed as bastions of privilege, repositories of cultural heritage, generators of innovation, vehicles of socioeconomic mobility and disseminators of counternarratives and sociocultural inequities. Those engaged in university learning and teaching must contend with these and other large questions about the purposes and impacts of higher education.

One crucial dimension of that challenge is the concern that the changes evident in university learning and teaching are too piecemeal, responsive and small-scale to be effective and sustainable. This concern fuels a charge that universities—like other educational systems—often fail to develop and adopt wide-scale improvement and reform, and that outmoded and even marginalising policies and practices are remarkably resistant to wholesale renovation.
The contributing authors take up this dimension of the challenge confronting contemporary higher education by focusing on three key elements of efforts to change university learning and teaching more sustainably and systematically. Leadership, quality and technology serve as three foci within the book that provide particular insights into the problems and possibilities facing learning and teaching practices in today’s universities.

The leadership—quality—technology-prism is inextricably linked to the delivery of effective and authentic learning practices, but we must look through that prism from the perspective of the student first, and that can occur only after we have developed a true and authentic appreciation and understanding of the context of the student’s behaviour. If we want truly to transform learning and teaching within contemporary universities, we need to learn more about the ‘whole’ learner, the person, and to interact with students so that we understand their stories—their circumstances, their goals. Through this interaction (learning from them) we can lead and inspire, guide and support, and stimulate and empower culturally diverse and geographically dispersed students—whatever their stages in life or backgrounds—to learn and follow their own aspirations.
Foreword

Roger Murphy

Universities have been referred to in the past as institutions which are strongly committed to researching nearly everything—except their own practices. This rather unkind characterisation does of course contain a grain of truth, in the sense that research into the teaching and learning that go on in higher education institutions has not been nearly as prevalent or as strong as it should have been for quite a considerable period of time.

This book represents a positive contribution to building a firmer body of scholarship in relation to the vitally important area of teaching and learning in higher education. As the title of the book implies, this is an area of great change, which demands time, reflection, scholarship, empirical research and the application of creative, thoughtful and insightful minds. Anyone with the slightest knowledge of the higher education sector will know how dramatically the context is changing, and anyone with an interest in teaching and learning in universities will know about the challenges involved in getting practices to change to adapt to contemporary requirements and assumptions.

There are of course still people who hold on to the view that teaching in higher education simply involves very intelligent lecturers standing in front of lecture theatres full of eager young undergraduates transmitting essential knowledge to them preparing them for privileged and successful lives. Anyone holding such a view may not see the need for a book like this, although if they could be persuaded to read it maybe their views might start to change.

This book addresses a wide range of issues relating to the teaching of a diverse range of subjects, in a diverse range of settings, to a diverse range of students. It takes the reader into very many contested terrains, and addresses key issues relating to leadership, quality and technology—all of which are of course complex areas demanding scholarly consideration. It is authored by a diverse group of academics, mostly working in Australian institutions, although several draw on their experiences of working in other international settings. Although the focus is on teaching students within Australian universities, there is a strong emphasis on the internationalisation of Australian higher education, and frequent references are made for example to the need to consider and address the needs of Asian students, who in increasing numbers are enrolling for their higher education within Australia. This international
focus increases even further the relevance and applicability of the book for readers in other parts of the world.

No one really knows where higher education is heading in terms of a journey away from the old fashioned lecture theatre based transmission model of learning. Today’s young—and not so young—learners live in a world dominated by communication technologies, social networking and opportunities to be very mobile and flexible in the ways in which they learn about and interact with the world around them. There are significant signs of higher education starting to respond to this changing culture and context, and several chapters look at ways in which the new technologies can be harmonised to enrich university learning. The blending of such approaches with more conventional forms of learning is an exciting area for all academics to reflect upon. Also in a country the size of Australia such trends interact with critical social issues relating to opening up access to higher education for those who find it difficult to relocate themselves to the big cities where higher education has generally been situated. Broadening access to higher education is one of many important themes which take this book well beyond a simple technical consideration of alternatives approaches to teaching within universities.

Higher education has always been a contested area, and it needs to remain so if it is to fulfil its function within democratic societies. The spirit of this book is one of exploring different viewpoints, approaches and opinions, and as such it stresses the contested nature of many current debates within higher education. In this sense leadership and quality issues are also dealt with in a critical way, exploring how such concepts can be operationalised, critiqued and reformed.

Hopefully readers of this book will have some of their prior assumptions challenged. If that happens then it will have made a significant contribution to a long-term change process, which it regards as necessary.
Editors’ Introduction

Jeanne McConachie, Michael Singh, Patrick Alan Danaher, Fons Nouwens and Geoff Danaher

Contemporary universities are located at the intersection of a host of competing pressures and priorities. Consequently they both initiate and respond to change in relation to many of their core activities, including learning and teaching. The question remains to what extent that change is effective and efficient and whether and how it benefits students and teachers alike. This book takes up the challenge of engaging with that question, specifically in relation to the three crucial domains of leadership, quality and technology.

The book is therefore directed foursquare at two intersecting elements of university learning and teaching, each focused on a different sense of the key term ‘changing’:

1. as an adjective, to map and understand the several ways in which learning and teaching in higher education are continuously adapting and mutating in response to multiple pressures and stimuli;

2. as a gerund, to record and interrogate the ongoing efforts by the contributing authors and many others to maximise the transformative potential of that learning and teaching.

As the first of the three domains identified above that constitute the book’s structure, leadership is considered the means to conceptualise and oversee effective change to university learning and teaching; it can also be the site of resistance to such change. Leadership can be variously understood as collaboration, empowerment, management, strategy and vision. While the chapters in the book take up leadership in many different ways, the underpinning proposition is that transformative change is greatly facilitated by, and is generally dependent on, the exercise of engaged and engaging leadership.

Secondly, quality occupies an ambivalent space in relation to changing university learning and teaching. On the one hand, quality understood as one or more of excellence, fitness for purpose, value or worth evokes the kinds of attributes to which university learners and educators might wish to aspire. On the other hand, concerns about the managerialism and reductionism held by
some to characterise the impact, if not the intent, of the Australian Universities Quality Agency and equivalent bodies in other countries demonstrate the potential perils of a too narrowly envisioned approach to such change.

Thirdly, technology has always been associated with learning and teaching; its effective use has enhanced the implementation of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Contemporary universities rely on increasingly prevalent and sophisticated technologies, not only to provide delivery in new modes (such as distance and online education) but also to underpin administrative and support structures (such as content and course management systems). Technology can help to change university learning and teaching in ways that are enabling and transformative or marginalising and restrictive, depending on the people who and the systems that design and implement it.

Separately and in combination, then, leadership, quality and technology constitute processes that can facilitate changing university learning and teaching in ways that make higher education more productive, relevant and potentially transformative. The chapters in the book explore multiple manifestations of engagements with and mobilisations of those processes, as well as several of the influences on and the effects of those engagements and mobilisations.

It is through these explorations that the book addresses three key questions that derive from a focus on changing university learning and teaching:

1. Which types and examples of leadership are most effective in which contexts in generating productive and sustainable change in university learning and teaching?
2. How can different notions of quality make possible new and more empowering forms of university learning and teaching?
3. In what ways does technology help and hinder innovation and transformation in university learning and teaching?

In addressing these questions, the book presents a set of accounts by Australian and international educational researchers of demonstrated strategies for engaging and mobilising leadership, quality and technology in and for changing university learning and teaching. While those accounts deploy a multiplicity of theoretical, methodological and empirical resources to frame and inform their respective analyses, they have in common a general commitment to enhancing, and at the same time an ongoing interrogation of, the scholarship of learning and teaching in higher education.

*Changing University Learning and Teaching: Engaging and Mobilising Leadership, Quality and Technology* was conceived in 2006, with the proposal being circulated widely to potential contributors. The editorial process was rigorous, with each chapter being scrutinised initially by one of the editors.
and revised by the author/s before being read by at least two anonymous external referees and subsequently revised again by the author/s. At each stage some chapters were rejected or authors decided not to proceed in the light of the feedback that they had received. The intention was to maximise editorial support while also ensuring the highest possible standard of evidence and argumentation and of contribution to knowledge.

On that basis, we have pleasure in introducing Changing University Learning and Teaching to you. We commend the efforts of everyone involved in writing, refereeing, editing, printing and publishing the book, and we anticipate its involvement in the broader project of enhancing students’ learning journeys and outcomes, of acknowledging the work of academics, administrators and other staff members and of enriching the scholarship of learning and teaching in contemporary universities.
Section One: Leadership
Introduction

Jeanne McConachie

Like beauty, leadership is in the eye of the beholder. Leadership is perhaps as crucial to changing university learning and teaching as it is difficult to conceptualise in that field. Certainly the capacity to envision and enact substantial, systematic innovation in educational decision-making, policies and practices simultaneously across multiple networks of stakeholders is complex and often stressful. However, it is vital if quality and technology are to be enabled to take their parts in enhancing outcomes at individual and institutional levels. Such capacity requires foresight, insight and hindsight in equal measure, as well as the involvement and participation of those various stakeholders acting with goodwill and in good faith. In this way leaders may influence others not only to see but also to own a common vision.

As we argued in the editors’ introduction, leadership can be understood as collaboration, empowerment, management, strategy and vision, among other possible incarnations. It can also be a vehicle for generating productive change in university learning and teaching as well as a site of resistance of such change. Personal and collective values come into play, framing as they do people’s educational aspirations and experiences and their hopes and desires for what universities might be able to deliver for them and for others.

This section’s organising question—also explicated in the editors’ introduction—is “Which types and examples of leadership are most effective in which contexts in generating productive and sustainable change in university learning and teaching?” The focus is clearly on highlighting the diversity of possible approaches to theorising and exercising leadership across multiple contexts of university education. At the same time, there might well be commonalities and convergences that could repay careful attention to see if lessons of leadership, particularly in education, can be learned and adapted beyond their immediate confines.

In Chapter One, Mark A. Tyler, Robert D. White, Catherine H. Arden and Patrick A. Danaher investigate selected aspects of sustainable and transformational leadership in a suite of further education and training teacher education programs at an Australian university. They deploy qualitative data from a forum with stakeholders to distil principles and strategies for achieving such leadership, while fully acknowledging the constraints and obstacles. The authors link leadership for change in their programs with broader discourses in further education and training and in teacher education, alerting us to the constant need to attend simultaneously to macro and micro arenas of action.
Chris Robertson and Robyn Cox use Chapter Two to canvass the challenges and opportunities of leadership in a different teacher education faculty, this one in the United Kingdom. The authors explain how national government legislation and policy-making, combined with policy change emanating from a legal enquiry, acted as a stimulus for innovation in the faculty. The authors also discuss wholesale change in curriculum and pedagogy and associated working practices. The chapter illustrates the close interconnections among the book’s three guiding themes, with leadership initiating change as technologies for management, curriculum development and staff development.

Chapter Three, by Catherine Layton, Anna Corbo Crehan and Matthew Campbell, moves the focus from teacher education to policing studies in an Australian university, relating their work in teaching their discipline to wider shifts in the professional status of the associated occupation. The authors demonstrate how their and others’ academic identities are located at the epicentre of complex global, national and local flows of information and ideas. In the process they reveal the divergences and sometimes the tensions in the worldviews of different members of educational partnerships. They report on a series of initiatives that succeeded in mobilising leadership to generate and sustain change in their teaching and their students’ learning, partly through the benefits of collaborative action.

In Chapter Four, the final chapter in this section, Michael Singh and Linan Yao shift our attention once again from policing studies in Australia to international English language testing in China. The chapter interrogates the research-teaching-learning nexus as it applies to this field of scholarship, while making explicit a disjuncture between Australian research in that field and a Chinese student’s lived experience of taking the test. The authors contend that academic leadership is needed to maximise this nexus if research findings, teaching goals and learning outcomes are to be brought into closer alignment.

Back to this section’s organising question: “Which types and examples of leadership are most effective in which contexts in generating productive and sustainable change in university learning and teaching?”. From further education and training to teacher education to policing studies to international English language testing, we can see both the need for and the benefits of conceptualising and practising leadership that is directed squarely at bringing about and sustaining desired change. Because leadership is in the eye of the beholder it has different meanings to different people. Therefore, while effective leadership varies widely from context to context, effective leaders exhibit commitment, courage and determination in designing and following through with strategies that enhance learning and teaching, sometimes against considerable odds.
Chapter One:  
Leadership for Mobilising Change in Educating Teachers for Further Education and Training

Mark A. Tyler, Robert D. White, Catherine H. Arden and Patrick A. Danaher

Abstract

This chapter explores constraints and capacities in enacting leadership that seeks to mobilise change in educating teachers for Further Education and Training (FET), a complex and contested field intersecting Technical and Vocational Education and Training. FET curriculum is located at the crossroads of competing expectations and priorities by multiple stakeholders, including government policy-makers, accreditation authorities, industry, students, teachers and teacher educators. Conceptualising, implementing and evaluating leadership and associated change that attend to and synthesise these stakeholders’ perspectives is crucial to ensuring that FET teacher education is as effective, efficient, productive and potentially transformational as possible.

The chapter interrogates the authors’ efforts to enact this kind of leadership for mobilising change in a single Australian university’s FET programs. In particular, it draws on qualitative data from a “FET Forum” with a large number of local stakeholders and the reflections of a non-participant observer, clustered around the two foci of curriculum and educators. The data analysis is framed by six dimensions of sustainable and transformational leadership distilled by the authors from current leadership research. These six dimensions are accompanied by specific suggested principles for enacting this kind of leadership in contemporary FET teacher education. These findings support the proposition that sustainable and transformational leadership is worth the potential risks associated with pursuing such leadership as a vehicle for engaging and mobilising productive change in FET learning and teaching. Those risks in turn highlight the unstable forces and competing discourses of current university work for which this leadership approach proffers possible strategies rather than guaranteed panaceas.
Introduction

In this chapter we pursue four key points of an overarching argument, each point prosecuted in a separate section of the chapter:

- The contemporary world of Further Education and Training (FET) teacher education in Australia is complex, contested and characterised by competing discourses and priorities that complicate the work of FET teacher educators.

- The FET teacher educators who are co-authors of this chapter have elaborated a particular approach to effective leadership that stands them in good stead for mobilising change around such key questions as curriculum (re)design and engaging stakeholder perceptions.

- The FET Forum described below provides a detailed example of how selected dimensions of that leadership approach can be deployed to mobilise that kind of change in relation to curriculum evaluation.

- The dimensions of that leadership approach can likewise be harnessed to facilitate and implement productive change in university learning and teaching, both for FET and more broadly.

In pursuing these four points, we take up specific aspects of the challenge of change within the contested environment of higher education for example, the competition experienced between on-campus, face-to-face teacher education programs and off-campus distance teacher education programs, and that among the various stakeholders who act in sometimes separate and sometimes aligned ways to shape teacher education programs. We engage with particular aspects of learning and teaching as they are enacted within one individual site: the Faculty of Education at the University of Southern Queensland (USQ), specifically through the lens of the faculty’s FET pre-service teacher education programs. For purposes of clarification, the term “Further Education and Training (FET)” is used to describe those programs in the Faculty of Education at USQ that contribute to training Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) teachers for the Vocational Education and Training (VET) secondary education sector, as well as adult educators for industry and community education and training roles. FET stakeholders are diverse individuals and groups who have a direct interest in the makeup and deployment of these programs.

Our intent is to explore our enactment of leadership as a group of academics who occupy various responsibilities for these programs and who have a shared professional commitment to responding effectively to interests, concerns and contestations of the kind outlined above. In particular, we seek
Leadership for Mobilising Change in Educating Teachers for FET (Mark A. Tyler et al.)

to make particular meaning from FET stakeholder feedback about the content and delivery of the programs. That enactment of leadership was manifested in how we negotiated the task of facilitating stakeholder feedback, how we conceptually wrestled with its meaning and how we translated and transformed this meaning into practice.

The data that we obtained were taken from our organisation of, and engagement with, the FET Forum. The forum was a gathering in 2006 of 20 FET program stakeholders which included representatives from Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutes, Queensland secondary schools, the Australian Defence Force and current students and graduates of USQ’s FET programs. The primary aim of this forum was to make explicit participant voices and to use these voices as a means to evaluate programmatic actualities and possibilities. This chapter explores a different but clearly resonant focus: our enactments of leadership in facilitating and harnessing the articulation of those voices and consequent changes in curriculum offerings. The forum provided us with an ideal site for such an exploration, given the current organisational focus on program rejuvenation at USQ and this book’s emphasis on multiple forms of leadership for change in university learning and teaching.

Figure 1–1 depicts a conceptual framework developed by the authors in a previous publication (Danaher, Tyler, & Arden, 2007), which proposes a theoretical model for interrogating curriculum through a trifocal lens of leadership, quality and technology. First, leadership is seen as sustainable and as generating widespread ownership of change and lasting improvements to practice (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004). Second, quality interrogates dominant educational practice and leads to the transformation of practice (Rowan, 2003). Third, technology is the creation of sociotechnical environments (Fischer & Sugimoto, n.d.) in which technology’s status as being intertwined with society (Warschauer, 2002) is acknowledged above its more traditional functions of curriculum content or delivery tool. In this model these three lenses are focused on the crucial aspects of meaning making and the resultant practice within an educational enterprise. The model provides a conceptual framework that can be adapted to generate an exploration of any or all of the three central educational elements—curriculum, educators and learners (the first two of which are the focus of this chapter)—in engagement with questions about leadership, quality and technology that serves to illuminate how we, as educators and learners, interact with the curriculum and go about making meaning, performing practice and transforming futures.
In this chapter we guide our inquiry by focusing on the leadership aspect within the model in relation to the intersection between curriculum and educators. This focus is consistent with the argument outlined above: curriculum is in urgent need of the leadership values and strategies of the teacher educators whose work is portrayed here. From this perspective, Figure 1–2 emphasises our focal points by emphasising the curriculum, educators, making meaning and transforming elements. Having drawn attention to these elements, we move now to offer a contextually grounded answer to the question, “How as educators do we enact leadership as we attempt to transform curriculum and co-construct new meaning to produce a momentum for quality change within the FET programs at USQ?”
The argument presented in the chapter is that enacting a particular kind of leadership (highlighting sustainability and transformation) to mobilise effective and productive change at the site of the study requires bringing together and integrating multiple perspectives on FET teacher education. This argument has been structured into five sections. First, the context and issues framing the FET curriculum are articulated. Second, six dimensions of sustainable and transformational leadership are distilled from a review of current leadership research. Third, the study’s approach to gathering the stakeholders’ perspectives is outlined. Fourth, we articulate the relevant themes that emerged from the data, clustered around leadership enactment and change mobilisation. Fifth, we elicit a set of specific principles for, and examples of, enacting sustainable and transformational leadership, both for FET teacher education and for university learning and teaching more broadly.

FET Curriculum: Context and Issues

In a previous paper, the authors noted the considerable burden placed on the FET curriculum by the combined weight of multiple—and often competing—stakeholder needs and expectations, resulting in the need for FET students
and teachers to negotiate individual and collective pathways among different and sometimes contradictory discourses and understandings (Danaher, Tyler, & Arden, 2007). This situation places consequent and additional pressure on FET programs to steer a course among three sets of potentially contradictory imperatives:

- To address the Queensland College of Teachers’ (QCoT’s) accreditation criteria for teacher registration (or their equivalents in other Australian states) whilst simultaneously ensuring sufficient coverage of dominant topics within an increasingly complex and fluid Australian VET system
- To prepare senior secondary vocational educators who are able to ‘hit the ground running’ in the school environment whilst addressing the knowledge and skill requirements of TAFE teachers and trainers in industries as diverse as hospitality, horticulture and the defence forces, and
- To provide the degree of recognition and credit transfer for industry skills and VET qualifications required to retain market share in an increasingly competitive tertiary education sector whilst fulfilling the requirements of meeting standards and providing equity and support for students as well as ensuring that graduates have been challenged to question and critique dominant practices.

These are the challenges faced by FET curriculum developers and educators and therefore by the authors of this chapter. As we elaborate in the chapter, these ‘real world’ problems require particular kinds of leadership to be brought to bear on them, in order to mobilise specific principles for change in FET teacher education. The findings and discussion provide examples of data and principles that reflect possibilities for the enactment of sustainable and transformational leadership in this field.

More broadly, discussion of the competing demands of and on various stakeholders—and in particular educators and employers—revisits the longstanding debate about the role and purposes of education in our society, and the relative merits of general and vocational education which has been a feature of education in our contemporary world. More recently, the debate has shifted to incorporate a critique of the lifelong learning agenda, with universities said to be under heightened pressure “to attend to the needs of the marketplace” (Gouthro, 2002, p. 337), and VET structure, curriculum and delivery accused of being driven by unquestioned imperatives of skill development for increased productivity and economic growth at the expense of sustainability (Anderson, 2007). Notwithstanding this critique, it has been noted that concerns in the vocational education literature have shifted from
the debate about the ‘what’ (what will be learned) to the ‘how’—the “journey to vocational competence” (TAFE and Community Education Policy and Support Unit, 2004, p. 5). There have been calls for “an evidence-based approach to the practice of teaching”, based on practitioner studies of “what works for whom under what circumstances and with what effects” (thereby highlighting FET teacher professionalism), which should in turn inform the design and content of university curricula (TAFE and Community Education Policy and Support Unit, pp. 24–25). Despite the potential limitations of such “evidence-based approach(es)” (Davies, 2003), this is consistent with Chappell (2003), who argues that vocational teacher education should not be tied to any particular educational theory but should adopt “… a more pragmatic position in which ‘constructive alignment’ … or appropriateness to different purposes and settings … has become the key guiding principle” (p. 4). What are needed in this contentious and constantly shifting terrain are the dimensions of an approach to leadership that will mobilise change effectively to negotiate pathways through the terrain while also promoting educationally oriented strategies and values.

Towards Sustainable and Transformational Leadership

A review of the leadership research which we believe is directly applicable to our notions of appropriate leadership enactment centres on the concepts of sustainable and transformational leadership. But before we move to explicate these two notions we need to articulate our position on the leadership versus management debate (Lingard, Hayes, Mills, & Christie, 2003). We concur with Re (2007) that, “While there has been an increase in the discussion and the rhetoric concerning leadership and management competencies, the jury is still out … ” (p. 1). Notwithstanding, we do acknowledge leadership and management as important ingredients in the success of an enterprise (Kopp, 2005) but prefer to emphasise the voices of leadership that move away from notions of new managerialism (Gouthro, 2002) and towards those that focus “on improving the quality of teaching, learning and educational outcomes and promoting the best thinking about teaching and learning” (Woolf & Carpenter, 2006, p. 1). This is a conceptual space where education for democratic citizenship speaks to us at a greater volume than does the concept of education as a market (Gouthro), even though we concede the increasing reach of the latter. Indeed, our view of leadership includes its capacity to seize opportunities afforded by the marketisation of education to forge new alliances and associations that might contain the seeds of new and alternative educational futures.

Hargreaves and Fink (2004) tell us that “[s]ustainable leadership matters … [by] go[ing] beyond temporary gains in achievement … to creat[ing] lasting, meaningful improvements … ” (p. 8). Based on their
Changing University Learning and Teaching

research, sustainable leadership lasts because it encourages others to enact leadership from the outset, by enabling those others to share the vision of the community/school through distributing leadership (a different process from delegation or shedding executive workloads). These leadership strategies not only groom new leaders but also act in authentic and socially just ways to promote the success of others and to encourage diversity of experience and thinking. These researchers’ final argument is that “[s]ustainable leadership is activist” (p. 11). This assumes an emancipatory position (in the sense of seeking to liberate education from capture and control by a neoliberal agenda) in which campaigning to improve the functioning of an enterprise is enacted persistently by all concerned. A crucial aspect of this position is acknowledging that such improvement is presumably the goal of all members of the educational enterprise, yet some of those members are operating from diametrically opposed viewpoints. On that basis, working to synthesise both the commonalities and the divergences evident within those viewpoints while respecting and valuing such diversity is a complex but important task.

Starting with an overview of sustainable leadership draws for us a picture in which the contemporary leadership research appears as a cross pollination of concepts and theories. For example, Spillane, Halverson, and Drummond (2001) also talk about a distributed leadership perspective in relation to school principals and Oakes, Quartz, and Lipton (2000) offer an example of activist leadership in an attempt to emancipate civic responsibility in schools. Arguably one of the most useful repositories of leadership comes from research into transformational leadership, particularly when it highlights authentic action (Price, 2003) and empowerment rather than dependence (Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003). Our inclusion of this notion is based on its resonance with the concept of sustainable leadership, for transformational leaders are seen as “transformational agents [who] create and sustain an organisational culture that nurtures creative efforts and facilitates the diffusion of learning” (Callan, 2005, p. 10).

Avolio (2005) argues that there are (at a minimum) four interrelated sets of behaviours that are enacted by transformational leaders. These relate to:

- inspiring others by communicating an attractive and vivid vision in relation to the organisation’s stakeholders
- creating opportunities for and encouraging creativity and innovation
- providing a role model for staff, and
- placing importance on considering the individual within an organisation.
It is from this perspective of sustainable and transformational leadership that we have synthesised a conceptual lens through which we can identify and interpret enactments of leadership in relation to the FET Forum conducted by USQ’s FET team. Our lens seeks to illuminate an enactment of leadership that demonstrates the following six dimensions that we have distilled from the current research literature:

- Encourages the enactment of leadership in others
- Articulates a forward-looking, positive vision
- Encourages and promotes innovation
- Encourages cross fertilisation of ideas
- Seeks, acknowledges and caters for individual contributions, and
- Is activist in taking an emancipatory position.

Like any conceptual framework, this approach’s utility depends on its applicability to specific research sites. The discussion below exemplifies each dimension with reference to USQ’s FET programs, the site of the study being reported here.

From an exploration of the relevant leadership research we move to an explanation of the method that we employed to interrogate those aspects of the FET programs that emerged from the preceding discussion of context and issues—for example, the means through which we sought and gave life to stakeholder needs and expectations in our attempts to reinvigorate the FET curriculum. In the discussion section we then analyse the data collected in the light of what was revealed above from the selected research on leadership.

**Gathering the Stakeholders’ Perspectives**

Local FET stakeholders were invited to participate in the aforementioned FET Forum. Table 1–1 provides a breakdown of the numbers of stakeholder representatives who participated in the forum. In the interests of quality assurance and strategic planning, as well as an enactment of curriculum leadership and change mobilisation, the authors sought these stakeholders’ perceptions of, and suggestions for the delivery and outcomes of the FET programs at USQ.
Table 1–1: FET Stakeholder representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder representative groups</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduated FET students (present at forum)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled FET students</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical and Further Education (TAFE)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary schools</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Defence Force</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University academics</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observer researcher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The forum sought responses to the following questions:

- In what way are current FET programs meeting stakeholder needs?
- What are the evolving secondary and post-secondary market needs? And
- In what way can the faculty be more flexible in order to meet the emerging and evolving stakeholder/market needs?

Appropriate clearance was obtained from the university human ethics panel with participants being provided with information sheets and signing the correspondence consent forms.

The forum took the form of an introductory session over lunch, three separate and concurrent one-hour focus groups and a final half-hour plenary session. During the introductory session moderators explained the rationale and format of the forum and outlined the FET curriculum. Each of the three focus groups addressed the same questions and issues, and the plenary session summarised each group’s discussions and ended with a further period of reflection among all participants.

The use of focus groups proved to be an effective approach for providing useful stakeholder feedback whilst maximising what Stokes and Bergin (2006, p. 26) described as “extrinsic advantages such as speed and cost.” Mindful of the possibility of “moderator bias”, and because it was not practical in this instance to involve “a series of complementary moderators” in each group, a non-participant observer was involved to assure the credibility and trustworthiness of the data (Prince & Davies, 2001, p. 207). On reflection, the method was effective in eliciting data relevant to the authors’ enactment of leadership and mobilisation of change in relation to the FET programs and the associated curriculum.
Emergent Themes for Leadership Enactment and Change Mobilisation

The chapter draws on three sources of data in its exploration of the enactment of leadership to mobilise change in FET learning and teaching at USQ:

- Participant feedback during the FET Forum
- The systematic observations of a non-participant observer, and
- The forum facilitators’ reflections on their leadership actions in the light of that feedback and those results.

This section synthesises those findings from the first two data sources (see also White & Tyler, 2006) organised according to the previously highlighted two elements of the model identified in Figure 1–1 and magnified in Figure 1–2: Curriculum and educators. The next section interrogates these emergent themes on the basis of the third data source: the forum facilitators’ analysis of their enactment of the already identified six crucial dimensions of sustainable and transformational leadership.

Data about the element of “Curriculum” indicated that in many respects the most contested—and hence most in need of the enactment of leadership—was this very theme. There were two principal sources of this contentiousness: government legislation and policy-making; and stakeholder expectations.

Government legislation and policy exhibited power through such agencies as QCoT, which is responsible for accrediting teacher education programs in Queensland, and such mechanisms as QCoT’s five Professional Standards that graduating pre-service teachers are required to demonstrate. While the need for such certification across universities was generally accepted, and while the articulation of standards was mostly linked with enhancing the professional status of teaching, some individuals and groups felt that the effect (if not the intent) of QCoT was to privilege the voice of the senior secondary teaching component of the FET curriculum over that of future teachers in TAFE institutes and other private providers of Vocational and Technical Education. By contrast, the influence of the Australian VET system, through such processes as national industry-based curriculum, quality assurance and qualifications frameworks, was resented by some stakeholders whose focus was school-based VET.

This contentiousness of the FET curriculum was evident also in the multiple and sometimes competing stakeholder expectations revealed in the findings. For example, while some forum participants acknowledged the curriculum’s effectiveness in straddling the two systems of school and TAFE, this overlap was seen by other participants as a disjuncture, with one vocal TAFE representative asserting that the training packages used by TAFE
and other private providers are not curricula and that both university staff members and pre-service teachers needed to enhance their understanding of such packages.

Indeed, while there was a recognition that the FET curriculum helps to facilitate a partnership between schools and industry, there was also some disquiet that responding to the current skills shortage (“Government focus—skills shortage”) might inadvertently devalue the social justice and other more ‘liberal’ imperatives of the FET programs.

A different set of expectations attached to what were identified as the “changing needs of clients (younger generations)”, and hence to the perceived need to “Have our programs tailored more to the needs of the learner in terms of where they’re coming from (knowledge, skills, experience, gaps etc.) + where they want to go.” While this aspiration for learner-centred programs was commendable, the diversity of the sectors represented by the various stakeholders who participated in the forum highlighted the complexity of giving it full effect (see also Danaher, Danaher, & Moriarty, 2007). For example, there was reference to the “Discourse” associated with such sites as “TAFE + workplace + school setting”, as well as to the importance of developing “Workplace literacy.” Our argument is that enacting leadership in the FET teacher education domain entails recognising, analysing and engaging in multiple fora with these kinds of complexities and potential contradictions.

The emergent theme from the “Educators” element had a less overt focus. It was directed in the three sources of data gathering at the different groups of educators with a stake in the FET programs. It was nevertheless clear that there were both commonalities and differences among those groups in relation to the programs. These commonalities and differences in turn helped to frame how the FET staff members approached the task of leadership enactment and change mobilisation by synthesising the commonalities while valuing and building on the differences.

The commonalities centred on a strong sense on the part of school teachers, teachers in TAFE Institutes and other private providers and the FET staff members that FET continues to be less valued than that component of senior secondary schooling directed at helping students to achieve university access. Thus, in addition to the references to lack of time, competing and relentless pressures and in some cases stress and burnout associated with the work intensification of contemporary educators, concerns were expressed about a perceived lack of recognition and valuing on the part of school, university and government decision-makers. This meant that FET stakeholders were more likely to position themselves as having to struggle for scarce resources inequitably distributed and as needing constantly to advocate for FET as a valid, valuable and viable educational sector.
Leadership for Mobilising Change in Educating Teachers for FET (Mark A. Tyler et al.)

The differences focused on a perceived lack of understanding on the part of other FET stakeholder groups of a particular group’s specific requirements and contexts. This was most striking in conversations between secondary school and TAFE teachers, with each group responding to separate government department legislation and policies and hence to differences in such processes as student assessment. This was exemplified by a set of comments clustered around “Secondary vs. TAFE teaching—there is a difference”, “Re-educating school teachers for TAFE teaching” and “Sectors have special requirements, e.g., curriculum.” While the forum provided an excellent opportunity for participants from particular groups to listen to and learn from members of other groups, at least some of the discussion reflected a desire to communicate participants’ own imperatives that they felt were not acknowledged by other groups. All of this set the scene for the authors’ ongoing reflections about the current state of play and potential alternatives with a view to enacting leadership to mobilise change in FET teacher education and beyond that in university learning and teaching.

Interrogating the FET Forum for Leadership Enactment and Change Mobilisation

Earlier in the chapter we distilled six dimensions that we posited are crucial ingredients of the enactment of sustainable and transformational leadership, whether in terms of mobilising change in university learning and teaching or in other spheres of endeavour. Our task in this section is to use these six dimensions as an interrogatory lens for analysing our reflections on the findings reported above and on our leadership actions in relation to such initiatives as the FET Forum as both a process and a set of outcomes. In doing so, we elicit a number of principles and we identify specific corresponding strategies that we argue can provide a foundation for the enactment of such leadership in mobilising change in the FET programs at USQ. From this perspective, we see that enactment as having important implications for the conceptualisation and implementation of pre-service VET teacher education programs, centred on VET’s fluid and shifting status in the Australian educational landscape. More broadly, we contend that such a status encapsulates much about the pressures and possibilities in conceptualising and exercising leadership in and for changing contemporary university learning and teaching.

Encourages the enactment of leadership in others

For leadership to be sustainable and transformational it needs to be authentic, and authentic leadership perpetuates itself in and through others. Authentic leadership inherently involves learning from experience, and in that light it is therefore capable of being passed on to others. When leaders learn from their
experiences, apply those lessons in practice and communicate that learning and application, they become role models to others. As the nature of leadership is communicated to and nurtured in others, they in turn are encouraged to learn from and act in the light of the observed example.

The grooming of new leaders who learn from their and others’ experiences promotes diversity of leadership style and talent. As new and developing leaders find their individual leadership styles and identities, they enact those styles and identities in the leadership decisions and actions that they take. This was certainly the case with the FET Forum, where participants representing different organisations and stakeholder groups could be considered potential and actual leaders—and were certainly regarded that way by the forum organisers—on the basis of their separate and shared interests in and contributions to maximising the quality, utility and impact of pre-service VET teacher education. Thus the forum organisers felt that it was crucial for multiple and sometimes contradictory perspectives to be identified, encouraged and valued. At a practical level, this was important for ensuring cross sectoral acceptance and ownership of the programs being discussed. At a deeper and philosophical level, this was a vital element of encouraging the enactment of leadership in others.

**Articulates a forward-looking, positive vision**

The effect of that enactment of leadership in others is the perpetuation or succession of leadership in the short- and longer term. It also develops a forward-looking perspective on leadership. Dealing with the present can arguably be described as management, whereas preparing to deal with the future can correspondingly be regarded as the role of leadership. It requires looking forward to prepare today for what will be needed tomorrow. A vision of tomorrow is therefore necessary, and it must be supported by a positive belief or expectation that what is envisioned today is achievable and appropriate for tomorrow.

New and developing leaders are groomed for the present and the future, looking beyond temporary or short-term considerations so that the needs of both the present and the future are met. Effective leadership requires the articulation of this perspective so that there is a shared vision and understanding among existing and new leaders. A recurring theme in the FET Forum discussion was the complex challenges confronting individual organisations as well as the postcompulsory sector as a whole, signified in part by constant changes in official policies and priorities. Yet those challenges and changes also underscored the necessity of the articulation and sharing of a forward-looking and positive vision that would ensure some kind of continuity and maximise practical outcomes against the backdrop of a state of flux that could otherwise become paralysing and stultifying. The articulation and sharing of the beginnings of such a vision were specific examples of the enactment of leadership before, during and after the forum.
Encourages and promotes innovation

We can see that our attempts to innovate the USQ FET program curriculum—in the sense of adapting to meet constantly changing needs while also fulfilling our vision of education (like leadership) as being sustainable and transformational—have been helped as well as hindered by perceived problems and associated critical incidents derived from stakeholders’ competing expectations and experiences of the program. The FET Forum and the associated ongoing planning and development by the authors and their program colleagues constitute efforts to enact sustainable and transformational leadership directly focused on the encouragement and promotion of program innovation.

At the same time, we recognise the complexity of those efforts. The forum was an initiative in fostering collaboration and shared understanding and ownership, and it was successful in helping to generate productive relationships that continue to this day. On the other hand, the authors accept that the primary responsibility for leadership in innovating the USQ FET program curriculum rests with the USQ staff members, and that those programs are part of a much larger set of intersecting and overlapping networks.

Encourages the cross fertilisation of ideas

The FET Forum was conceived in part out of a recognition that the USQ staff members’ ideas and perceptions could only be strengthened by encouraging cross fertilisation with other stakeholders’ understandings. By contrast, the forum demonstrated that such cross fertilisation is neither easy nor automatic, because stakeholders’ ideas tend to differ—sometimes widely and contradictorily—within as well as across stakeholder groups. For example, while the forum small group exercise was useful in eliciting the range of stakeholders’ views, it also highlighted that some stakeholders are more readily disposed than others to listen to and engage with the competing views of other participants.

This is an important task for sustainable and transformational leadership—the ability to look beyond one’s own worldview, with its attendant psychological impulses of ego and security, to appreciate—even revel in—the ambiguity and complexity of most educational issues and to seek to find tentative and provisional ways of promoting shared understandings while respecting the right to hold alternative views.

Seeks, acknowledges and caters for individual contributions

Clearly, the results of these data are indicative of enactments of leadership in which voices are acknowledged, actively listened to and emphasised as valuable in relation to the FET enterprise. The act of disclosing such diverse and sometimes divergent perceptions and the ideas that this evoked are
testament to the degree of security experienced by stakeholders with regard to publicly (and privately) articulating what they thought. It would be fair to argue that these contributions were enhanced and fostered by the authors’ enactments of open-mindedness and intellectual responsibility.

Further to this point of the acknowledgment of individual contributions is our claim of enabling enactments of principled pragmatism. Moore, Edwards, Halpin, and George (2002) suggest that educators who self present as “decision-making individuals with a clear professional plan and purpose” (p. 554) act with effectiveness, regardless of the constraints that the external environment places upon them. These are educators whose identifications align with principled pragmatism. Even though it could be claimed that the data gathering methods above offered some constraint with regard to the hearing of the subtleties in all voices, stakeholders did provide pragmatic contributions that were effective in helping to secure QCoT second phase accreditation—for example, the clear enunciation of the stakeholders’ desire for the inclusion of diversity content in the curriculum.

Is activist in taking an emancipatory position

Our research has been unashamedly activist in orientation, especially in our attempts to emancipate the position of FET within USQ and the educational community at large. It has been a project through which the voices of participating stakeholders have been synthesised into an amalgam. This amalgam has promoted curriculum reform in terms of sustainability, and further claims to transform the higher education FET experience into one in which improvements in the satisfaction levels of all stakeholders are evident. Our activism has been professional in the sense that it has reinstated trust (Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002) in the voices of those who are affiliated with the FET enterprise and it has deployed those voices in an effort to gain purchase within the rationalist environment of program accreditation (Arden, Danaher, & Tyler, 2005).

At the same time, we understand the potential obstacles and threats to leadership conceived as activism directed at emancipation. For example, we accept that educational institutions and practices are composed of multiple and often competing interests and positions, including our own. From this perspective, the goals of activism and the intended outcomes of emancipation are contextually specific and situated, rather than being unanimously identified and agreed. Nevertheless we argue that leadership that is not conceptualised at least partly in terms of improving the lived experiences and the life chances of learners and educators is misguided and unlikely to achieve its full potential. This applies equally to enacting leadership and mobilising change in the VET teacher education sector and in the university field of which it forms a part.
Conclusion

What insights does this chapter afford our developing understanding of the role of teacher educators’ enactment of leadership in mobilising change in FET in one Australian university? At one level the chapter can be read as reporting an exercise in program evaluation and the authors’ efforts to establish clear and explicit links between the data presented at the FET Forum and strategies to enhance the FET teacher education program’s effectiveness. At a different level the forum data and the forum facilitators’ association of those data with the six dimensions of sustainable and transformational leadership distilled from the literature and presented as the chapter’s conceptual framework are intended to constitute evidence of the necessity and viability of a particular kind of leadership in changing university learning and teaching.

What clearly emerges from the preceding discussion is the need, if such leadership is to be enacted and such change is to be mobilised for the greater benefit of multiple participants and stakeholders, to strike a balance among several competing and potentially contradictory priorities. These priorities include: adhering to curriculum ‘imperatives’ issued by accreditation authorities; addressing the diverse needs and expectations of students and employers; recognising that these needs and expectations are likely to be borne of pragmatic, instrumental and perhaps even utilitarian motivations that are nonetheless valid; and recognising the responsibility that education and educators have to foster, enact and promote a particular kind of leadership that challenges, questions and critiques. Getting this balance right is clearly crucial in order to ensure that the mobilisation of change is about improvements that are achieved, not at the expense of less powerful voices, but by highlighting and attending to them in a conscious and systematic manner. What is not as clear is exactly who these less powerful voices are; who is in fact marginalised in the curriculum process?

The reporting of the above enactments of leadership was clearly focused upon the curriculum and educator aspects of our conceptual framework (an exploration of the perspectives of learners having been held over for a separate publication). Given that situation, and despite the forum’s and the chapter’s emphasis on garnering multiple perspectives and promoting leadership in others, it is appropriate to acknowledge that our future challenge for leading the mobilisation of change is to ask whose voices it is that are not being heard; to seek out contributions from those who have not contributed and to show leadership by emphasising these voices over those that are stronger and more powerful. This act of curriculum leadership can be represented in the model represented in Figure 1–1 by first bringing attention to the learner and second by turning the (centred) three-dimensional pyramid on its head so that the base—which represents other and less privileged voices—is exposed, and...
must be interrogated. Viewed from this perspective, and on the basis of the findings presented in the chapter, sustainable and transformational leadership should certainly be given an opportunity for functioning as a potential vehicle for engaging and mobilising productive change in FET learning and teaching.

**Acknowledgments**

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**References**


Chapter Two: “How We Do Things Around Here”: Educational Change and Effective Faculty Leadership in Post-Blair Britain

Chris Robertson and Robyn Cox

Abstract

Leadership in higher education both in Britain and internationally is constantly bombarded by the requirement for change. This change can emanate from individual university processes or form larger government policy directions. This chapter investigates a major policy change that emerged in the closing stages of Blair’s New Labour leadership and had as its genesis a single shocking event.

The “Every Child Matters” agenda requires all those engaged in the care and education of children in Britain to work together across professional boundaries to meet client needs. An agenda of this magnitude creates exciting opportunities for developing synergies and a plethora of possibilities for conflict, tension and contradictions.

By utilising an exposition of professional practice by Kemmis (in press), the authors seek to outline how informed leadership can ensure that the agenda is taken up by professionals, practitioners and emerging practitioners alike and that aspects of diversity and difference are respected along the way.

Education in Britain in the Post Blair Era

In Britain, the government has always had an ambitious agenda to improve schools, accelerate pupils’ learning and close the achievement gap between rich and poor students. This is well covered territory, but there is a need to step back from the rhetoric to examine the reality of the policy and to interrogate this agenda. A quick perusal of the key moments in British educational policy over the last half century points to the well worn swinging pendulum of vote winning and speech-making and warrants some further consideration in our current context.
The Labour government of the 1960s produced Circular 10/65 (Department of Education and Science, 1965) which suggested that providing a school system built on “equality of opportunity” would progress education and ensure progression, achievement and a socially just educational system which would in turn ameliorate class distinction. However, in 1988 the Conservatives put forward Educational Reform legislation which was built on the notion of individual rights, where consumer choice and competition would allow greater social mobility. New Labour (Department for Education and Employment, 1997) sought to walk a line between these two approaches and focus on developing “good schools” in which achievement, social mobility and the elimination of the achievement gap between rich and poor, and between Black and White, could be progressed.

The school systems in Britain are achieving: results at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 are the best that they have ever been across the broad range of groups. The schools are good and standards have been raised but still the machinery for inspection, improvement and reform continues onwards. Although Blair’s New Labour government appeared to have found the middle ground and yet other pressing agendas have crowded these achievements out and the need for social transformation emerged. In the closing stages of Blair’s leadership of the New Labour party a new and clearly focused policy emerged: “The Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners: Maintaining the Excellent Progress” (The Department for Education and Skills, 2004). Subsequently the mission of the Department for Education and Skills has become a:

- just society, where outcomes are determined by aptitude and ambition, not by circumstances of birth;
- safe, cohesive society, with young people entering adulthood able to make a positive contribution; and
- prosperous society, successful in a globalised economy and able to support excellent public services. (Department for Education and Skills, 2004, p. 3)

Clearly, New Labour had been aware of the success of its educational reforms at the micro-level through Standardised Achievement Test (SAT) results, Office for Standards in Research (Ofsted) inspection results and other measurable achievements—but in the closing stages of Blair’s leadership New Labour embarked energetically on an agenda of social reform with a focus on global impact.

This chapter presents an account of this change and of one English university’s engagement with it. The emergence of a government policy that proposed that education policy can launch an agenda of social change provided an opportunity which the university chose to embrace. This account analyses how, through skilled and proactive leadership, the university adapted and synthesised this government policy in order to implement its own change agenda.
The first section of the chapter focuses on the university’s context with respect to national changes in education and outlines the continuous nature of change at policy level in Britain. The second section gives characteristics of successful leadership and management of change in an academic environment. The third section presents the authors’ ‘working model’ of leading change which emerged as a result of participation in a national research and development project where case studies were the methodology employed. Acknowledging that such case studies provide a systematic way of looking at events, collecting data, analysing information and reporting the results, the authors fully support the view that the researcher may also gain a sharpened understanding of why the instance happened as it did (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The final section of the chapter presents one of the case studies from the research undertaken and puts forward a model of change at this university.

The “white water” of change

How can this far-reaching change be effected and what are the constraints on such change? An ambitious agenda such as that announced by Blair’s New Labour can only be seeking only to leave a lasting legacy on the education, health and social care services in this country. Such change is not uncommon or unfamiliar in British universities, in particular English faculties/departments/institutes of education, and from our experiences is also not an uncommon scenario in other universities in other countries (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Fullan, 1993). Furthermore, this change is impacting English universities significantly and particularly on faculties which focus on education, health and social care, whose core work is central to the ultimate success of this agenda. According to Morgan (1986), the majority of change in higher education arises from systemic and organisational sources in which there are multiple and contested policy initiatives. In addition, Pennington (2003) emphasises that “the volume, scale and complexity of contemporary change create a sense of almost continuous ‘white water’ at all levels within higher education institutions.” Change of this scale cannot be absorbed organically and requires explicit and skilful management. The authors as leaders and managers in the Institute of Education at the University of Worcester are therefore very familiar with managing change and are at the forefront of leading change within their own institution and nationally at both strategic and operational levels.

This chapter focuses on how one Institute of Education successfully engaged with and has become a champion of the national change agenda within the university. Our teacher training programs are long-established, successful and nationally well respected. Regularly subjected to inspections by Ofsted, we have to ensure that as a basic minimum the rigorous standards for our training programs are met and that trainee teachers completing our courses can demonstrate that they are competent when judged against these standards.
All English teaching training is governed by the same national standards, the Qualified Teacher Standards (QTS), set by a government agency, the Training and Development Agency (TDA).

In 2007 new standards were introduced for implementation by all accredited training providers by September 2007. These standards were developed concurrently with the “Every Child Matters” agenda (Department for Education and Skills, 2004) and the Children Act 2004 and, although they do not always explicitly refer to these documents, it is implicit that they are to be read through the eyes of “Every Child Matters”. The standards specify that to achieve QTS trainee teachers must be “aware of the current legal requirements, national policies and guidance on the safeguarding and promotion of well-being of children and young people.” This being the case, the standards demand that all new teachers enter the teaching profession fully conversant with the requirements and their implications for children and their families. Some of the new standards, however, have been specifically introduced to broaden the remit of teachers and others working with children. Some examples of this to quote from the “QTS Standards: Professional Attributes” would be to:

Q4. Communicate effectively with children, young people, colleagues, parents and carers
Q5. Recognise and respect the contribution that colleagues, parents and carers can make to the development of well-being of children and young people, and to varying their levels of attainment
Q6. Have a commitment to collaboration and cooperative working (TDA, 2007, pp. 8–9).

However, we were cognisant that the Standards alone would not drive the change agenda forward and that it would be critical “to consider policies and practices together as a unified agenda for change if we were to succeed in enacting a genuine right to learn” (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

As a general rule, academics tend to resist changes which are perceived to threaten their core values and practices; have a negative impact on individuals; or diminish group autonomy. Given this context, resistance to change, whatever its origin, was expected. No doubt in addition this would be complicated by the fact that the change that we were leading was cultural change, which seeks to accomplish both of Dearlove’s (1997) features of university institutional change: “top down”, which is invariably resisted, and bottom up approaches, which are slow and partial.

However, in terms of change per se, we were aware that many academics teaching in this area would argue that this is what they are doing already, that it was a return to the ‘good old’ 1960s and 1970s when education was
more child-centred and that nothing needed therefore to change. The danger
would be that nothing would change; staff would remain in their comfort zone
(Darling-Hammond, 1997).

Morgan (1986) and Schein (1985) both stress that culture is a dynamic,
evolving process, not at all static and that key individuals have a crucial role to
play in shaping and refining the culture. This is developed further by Hofstede
(1990), who stresses that particular practices transmit clear messages about
organisational culture, namely “rituals, heroes, and symbols.” We were aware
that beginning to challenge this organisational culture would not be simple.

So once we know that the change involves something of a cultural change
then how might this be attempted?

The character of leadership in this climate of change

Teacher training provision in the Institute of Education at the University
of Worcester has a strong reputation and a long and significant profile of
achieving good outcomes from Ofsted inspection process. Would staff
believe that changing the underpinning nature of the programs would leave
us vulnerable in inspection terms? Would they challenge how we would
ensure that high quality provision remained with such fundamental changes
to embrace? Our programs in England are developed in partnership with
schools and placements form a critical part of the inspection of initial teacher
training, so any risk assessment relating to changing the programs would
need to take the partnership on board. How could we ensure that our partners
would embrace such changes?

On a positive note, the philosophy of “Every Child Matters” is one that
most university and school teachers can embrace. Few would argue with the
principle of putting the child at the centre of all service provision and few
would argue with the need for greater and more effective communication
systems to operate between the service providers working with children and
their families. Thus, we believed that we could employ this as an important
driver which would draw colleagues together in a common cause.

There is, however, something extraordinary which sets this agenda for
change apart from other more centrally driven political devices. The Laming
Report (Laming, 2003) emerged as a significant policy change document
which resulted from the enquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié. Lord
Laming’s report into Victoria’s death reported that she had been grossly
abused and that the social workers and medical workers recognised this fact.
However, the communication among the service providers was patchy and
resulted in the abuse continuing. The tragic outcome for Victoria Climbié
challenged the status quo and generated the substance for change.
This challenge provided an opportunity for the professionals to challenge many theories and practices related to the child, the family and education and to transform education and teaching into a profession which truly helps all children achieve their potential, in line with the five interdependent outcomes of “Every Child Matters” (Department for Education and Skills, 2004): “be healthy”, “stay safe”, “enjoy and achieve”, “make a positive contribution” and “achieve economic well-being” (p. 9).

The interdisciplinary requirement of the “Every Child Matters” agenda (Department for Education and Skills, 2004) inevitably impacts fundamentally traditional ways of working in universities, where each discipline maintains strong professional/academic boundaries separating it from the next and each protecting its identity. It challenges this ‘siló’ mentality at its core. It requires crossing professional boundaries and the development of internal partnerships between, for example, education and health, education and sport science, education and social care and education and psychology and child mental health, which will lead to new professional and cultural understanding between groups. For universities this would require careful management of change internally by senior managers at all levels and in all faculties/institutes.

Pennington (2003) stresses that particularly sophisticated leadership skills are required “if short lead times are involved and several change initiatives are occurring simultaneously on a number of fronts, which was the case in this instance. Thus some aspects of the challenge were clear from the outset.” As stated earlier, we were also aware that “bottom-up” change can be slow and tedious and questioned whether we had the luxury of time to follow this preferred, if slow, route (Dearlove, 1997). Alternatively, we knew that “top-down” change would be resisted (Dearlove) so immediately we were faced with the difficult decision of which strategy we should use to guarantee success in the given time-frame.

These changes to ways of working that the “Every Child Matters” agenda requires prompt us to consider the work of Kemmis (in press) and his discussion of practice. He argues that neither practice itself nor the process of changing practice can be adequately understood without thinking about practice being also socially, discursively, culturally and historically formed. He emphasises the importance of understanding practice in a more multifaceted way which requires “using multi-disciplinary, multi-method approaches which allow it to be viewed from five perspectives, namely:

i. Practice as individual behaviour, seen in terms of performances, events and effects: behaviourist and most cognitive approaches in psychology.

ii. Practice as social interaction—e.g., ritual, system-structured: structure-functionalist and social systems approaches.
iii. Practice as intentional action, shaped by meaning and values; psychological \textit{verstehen} (empathic understanding) and most constructivist approaches.

iv. Practice as socially-structured, shaped by discourse, tradition: interpretive, aesthetic-historical \textit{verstehen} and post-structuralist approaches.

v. Practice as socially—and historically—constituted, and as reconstituted by human agency and social action: critical theory, critical social science.” (p. 4)

Kemmis’s (in press) argument for “opening up communicative spaces—public spheres constituted for public discourse…—in which both communities of practice and practitioners and their clients could explore problems and issues of practice and the effects and longer term consequences of particular kinds of practice” (p. 3) is promising. These communicative spaces could be utilised to focus on how services can better be brought together around the child, young person and family to deliver the components of well-being and to ensure cooperation among agencies. The government states its commitment to the belief that “Children and young people learn and thrive when they are healthy, safeguarded from harm and engaged. The evidence shows clearly that educational achievement is the most effective way to improve outcomes for poor children and break cycles of deprivation” (Department for Education and Skills, 2004, p. 8).

In a similar way Darling-Hammond (1997), in discussing effective ways of enhancing learning, argues that “new models of school reform must seek to develop communities of learning grounded in the communities of democratic discourse” (p. xv), a view strongly aligned with Kemmis’s (in press) “Reflexive—dialectical view of individual—social connections.”

When a community of professionals works together in a common domain with a common practice, this becomes a community of practice, well documented by Lave and Wenger (1998). The case study described below documents one community of practice’s engagement with the “Every Child Matters” agenda.

\textbf{The larger research and development program}

At the national level, the TDA recognised that full implementation of such a challenging agenda would require skilled leadership and management from senior colleagues (deans or their equivalent) in universities currently providing teacher training programs. Thus in 2006 a small working group of deans/heads of education, including one of the authors, was convened by TDA to begin the process of exploring:

1. Why change?
2. How can change be best implemented?
3. How do we know when the required change has happened?
4. What barriers to change might we face?
5. How do we evaluate the change process?

The work of this group has been specifically targeted at the English university sector which provides teacher training programs, with the aim of supporting early adopters of the changes and to provide a forum for sharing experiences in managing and leading the change within different university contexts. In the words of one of the members of the working group, all teacher training providers “face not simply an adjustment to existing programs and expectations but a radical reappraisal of purpose, expectations, knowledge, skills and culture.”

This exciting and forward looking project has acknowledged that many leaders in higher education are in their roles having proved themselves in their academic field and their professional practice, and often may have received no formal leadership training. It has also acknowledged that very little ongoing professional training is available for senior managers in education at universities. Thus this selected group of deans/heads was an ideal group with whom to explore the nature and character of leadership in a changing context at a national level. Over the two-year period of the group’s existence to date, we have collected our own case studies and data related to implementing this change; have shared individual strategies, successes and sticking points; and have supported one another to take our institutions forward into what has seemed at times a brave new world.

TDA has in response encouraged us to disseminate our findings at specific national/regional conferences and workshops, including regional conversations to facilitate discussions among deans/heads of education who were not part of the original working group. The data generated from the working group and related dissemination events have been incorporated into publications from the Agency. This has been a strategy designed to support and help other universities in England adopt the “Every Child Matters” fully into their initial teacher training and other programs and to manage this significant change agenda for universities and their stakeholders.

With the working group now moving into its third year of operation, its members are still finding the change process for leaders in university education faculties/departments an absorbing and challenging one. The process itself has generated enough material for a book, let alone part of a chapter, and so we shall skim over the detail and focus on some of the main findings and challenges at this point in time, two years into the project.
A working model of change for children

The changes needed to make to our university teacher training courses embrace the “Every Child Matters” agenda and involve a rethinking of who ‘the teacher of the future’ working in this new context would be. Some of the key characteristics which emerged included:

1. Good knowledge of how children and young people learn and how to overcome barriers to learning.
2. Good understanding of personalised learning and how to use this to ensure that each child and young person achieves her or his potential.
3. Clear understanding of the range of services available to children, young people and their families and the ability to engage and communicate with them as appropriate.
4. Good knowledge and understanding of curriculum subjects and pedagogy.
5. The ability to work with and gain the support of parents and carers.
6. The ability to work as part of a team (including members of other professions, parents or other experts) in the classroom and outside.
7. Understanding of the wider community context in which children, young people and their families live and how this context can impact children’s and young people’s achievement and well-being.
8. Clear understanding of teachers’ professionalism and of professional responsibility for children and young people.

We agreed that the teacher working in this new context would need the confidence to work creatively and purposefully in the classroom, school and community to meet the needs of all children and young people. Some of the key attitudes and abilities required would be flexibility, openness, team spirit, capacity to grow and develop, being actively engaged with enquiry and collaboration, having leadership qualities and a passion for learning, including their own continuing professional development and learning. This is a very different model of a teacher from those who have been trained since the 1980s in England, where the focus has been very much on standards of achievement within a culture of school league tables and competition.

We realised very quickly that the standards that we had been working to over recent years had driven out aspects of the teacher training curriculum such as the theories of learning and child development, in favour of English and mathematics subject knowledge. In understanding that the teacher of the
future needed to be better equipped in terms of theoretical underpinning, we realised that the change agenda within the university became clearer and more complex. How could we ensure that our newly qualified teachers embarked on their careers in teaching fully equipped to do what they now do well and to take on a broader professional role?

The Case Study: Change as a Technology

By revisiting Kemmis (in press) and the importance of understanding practice in a more multidimensional way, and also by looking at Franklin’s (1999) technology as practice and more recently as formalised practice, we can link change, leadership and culture. Franklin goes on to propose that technology can relate directly to culture, because culture, after all, is a set of socially accepted practices and values. Well laid down and agreed upon practices also define the practitioners as a group of people who have something in common because of the way that they are doing things. Franklin gives us a useful definition of this concept as “practice, the way we do things around here.” So, in order to give some of the flavour of how we do things around here, we describe the essence of the activities that we have carried out in order to demonstrate that change requires strong pro-active leadership.

By describing some of our practice relating to the changes inherent in the “Every Child Matters” agenda in the Institute of Education at the University of Worcester, we can demonstrate that leadership can be defined as a technology for management; a technology for curriculum development; and a technology for staff development.

A technology for management

After opening up this forum for discussion and debate, each academic centre audited its provision. At a later senior management meeting in education, each head of centre outlined her or his aims and what had been achieved to that point. These progress reports confirmed that already teams had engaged with some aspects of the agenda and were moving forward. Some senior managers had seen the “Every Child Matters” agenda as a real opportunity to implement aspects of learning and teaching which had fallen by the wayside. These included, for example, an acknowledgement that trainee teachers needed to know much more about child development and about theories of learning and that teacher training to include a more in depth academic approach.

As the Dean/Head of the Institute of Education was a member of the TDA “Every Child Matters” working group, this provided valuable input for the senior management team, alerting them to issues being considered nationally by this small group managing change.
Regular links with the Local Authority Children’s Service proved invaluable. At a senior management level it enabled the exploration of strategic issues and opportunities, including joint research. At a general staff level it enabled opportunities to explore different locations for student placements, input from different professionals into taught sessions and input from university staff into Children’s Services’ activities and projects. This was, and continues to be, extremely productive and exciting work for all involved.

A working group was set up within the University to explore the children’s agenda. Being a cross faculty/department with the promise of new, integrated course development from these interactions, the potential is great. The Faculties/Institutes of Education and Health and Social Care will have their first joint staff development day at the beginning of the new academic year to explore other opportunities of working together and breaching the professional divides. This practical strategy fully supports the argument put forward by Kemmis (in press), as outlined above.

**A technology for curriculum development**

A whole Faculty/Institute staff development day was held to explore “Every Child Matters: Five Outcomes, Many Implications.” A range of academic disciplines which form individual “centres”, including initial teacher training, attended and this, in itself, was a helpful start to the process. What we already did and did well was explored and shared. Gaps in provision were considered and action plans developed as a result. Resistance to change was strongly evident in some areas and individuals, particularly where the subject focus had a stronger tradition than maybe the child-centred focus. However, this was discussed openly during the day and acknowledged. Having an external facilitator to lead the day enabled a more objective approach and allowed staff to express their reservations and concerns, perhaps more openly and less personally. In addition, within the group, one centre, “Early Childhood”, already operated in a multidisciplinary context with many modules taught by a range of professionals. This provided a very positive and constructive exemplar of the benefits of this approach, along with its challenges.

New programs focusing on integrated children’s services were developed and validated for professionals working with children. This postgraduate program included modules on managing change and inter-professional relationships. Feedback from the students, all experienced professionals, indicated that there was certainly significant stereotyping in existence among professional groups and many problems in terms of professional language and common understanding to be surmounted. These programs also helped staff from different teams to gain first hand experience of the real challenges. This would in turn contribute to the revision of existing initial teacher training programs in the university.
Initial teacher training programs were reviewed and revalidated taking into account the new TDA standards and their requirements. This has led to a change in emphasis within the programs with a greater focus on learning and teaching. Alternative placements have been established to give students a wider opportunity to understand how different professionals work and the contexts in which they work. This has included a very positive pilot study in 2007–2008 which placed second year undergraduate students in schools which deal with pupils with severe learning and/or behavioural/emotional difficulties. This was a huge success but required careful and sensitive planning and preparation for all concerned.

A technology for staff development

During the period of the case study and related research, many staff took the opportunity to attend external, national events and conferences on “Every Child Matters”, allowing internal expertise and knowledge to grow systemically. Further research and publication have been undertaken by staff in this area and they are actively contributing to the formation of knowledge from which other professionals can draw.

Additionally, individual centres held “Away days” to focus on the modifications required to existing programs. Sometimes these involved input from headteachers or other experts who themselves were in the process of implementing this agenda.

Selection policies for all new staff appointments have focused on the change agenda and interview tasks have similarly engaged with this process. Staff from different professional backgrounds such as health, safeguarding and law have been employed to broaden expertise within the team.

Similarly the interview process for students has been amended to incorporate the attitudes and attributes that are now at the fore and interview questions include this aspect of the standards.

Thus, significant progress has been made over a two-year period. These achievements reflect a noticeable change in culture and, through strong leadership of change, we have indeed achieved a great deal. Education staff are now proactively taking the agenda forward for themselves, with research and publications emerging; philosophical changes taking place in learning and teaching; an increased engagement with looking outwards rather than inwards; and a more integrated approach to exploring and cohabiting Kemmis’ (in press) “communicative spaces” with other professionals. Most importantly, we are beginning to see the benefits of our strategic vision and its implementation for our newly qualified teachers who we believe are better educated and informed, and better equipped to ensure that every child whom they teach really does matter.
There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to
direct, or more uncertain of its success than to take the lead in an
introduction of a new order of things. (Nicolo Machiavelli)

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Chapter Three: 
Getting People Involved: Leadership for Change as an Occupation Professionalises 

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Abstract 

There are many concurrent political, technological and professional pressures on university staff to change their learning and teaching practices. Teaching and learning have shifted from private, often undervalued concerns to high stakes work. The tensions created by this shift are exacerbated in the context of emerging professions where a number of taken-for-granted assumptions are routinely being questioned and challenged. This chapter focuses on leadership in a School of Policing Studies at an Australian university, which employs staff from a wide range of professional backgrounds—from those with ‘traditional’ university backgrounds to those from a practice background with little (or no) direct experience in teaching or university work. This variety in backgrounds leads to mutual challenging of preconceptions about academic identity and therefore quality teaching and learning and leadership. By considering the serendipity-based genesis and growth of a group focused on academic identity in this School, the chapter seeks to identify the types of leadership which are important for generating and sustaining change in university learning and teaching as an occupation professionalises, and the contexts in which this might emerge. 

Introduction 

This chapter considers a type of leadership that is proving effective in generating productive and sustainable change in university learning and teaching, in the context of a police–university partnership. In particular, it demonstrates how the various pressures facing contemporary universities in relation to teaching and learning are increased in such partnership arrangements, thus putting more pressure on existing forms of leadership and calling forth new sources of leadership.
The context of this paper is a partnership arrangement between the New South Wales Police Force and Charles Sturt University to deliver entry-level education and training to aspiring police officers (an Associate Degree in Policing Practice). Within such a partnership arrangement the contours of ‘what is going on’ can change dramatically and quickly, as a result of one or other partner having altered needs or desires. In turn, this creates a need for flexibility and the easy accommodation of change. We describe a specific source of leadership that has been generated to manage the various pressures arising from change—in particular, change of an unpredictable nature. While our experience clearly indicates the importance of such leadership in tertiary contexts like our own, we envisage its having relevance in other tertiary contexts (though we do not have the space to consider this issue directly in the current chapter).

The Teaching and Learning Context: General

In this section, we explicate two sets of pressures: those that impact contemporary universities per se, and those that arise specifically as a result of a partnership arrangement between Charles Sturt University and the New South Wales Police Force.

There are many concurrent pressures on university staff to change their learning and teaching practices, mostly originating from outside of the universities themselves. International and national governmental pressures have moved universities from cooperative establishments to clusters of competitors with voices of different strengths, and from internally regulated institutions to externally accountable ones in which funding depends on certain research and teaching outcomes. There is an increasingly strident global demand for greater accountability, better governance and quality improvement in higher education, in part generated by Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) political pressures to link higher education to the goals of economic growth (Ramsden, 1991; Wilson & Lizzio, 1997), locally reinforced by the fact that the Federal government effectively has full control of university funding and policy (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2004). There is also pressure towards partnerships across a wide range of service sectors, in an attempt to leverage resources, particularly expensive human resources, and thus make the whole deliver more than the sum of its parts (Cage, Joyner & Miller, 2000). These multiple pressures tend to nullify the role and impact, of long-standing collegial processes regulating and monitoring standards, as outlined by Marginson and Considine (2000, pp. 9–11), and to introduce autocratic, non-participatory leadership styles into the university environment.
Teaching and learning have thus shifted from private, often undervalued activities, to high stakes work, with new governance-related committees and management and leadership roles to ‘support’ them. Where there are partnerships between tertiary institutions and occupational organisations, particularly in occupations which are just starting on an intended path to professionalisation, the partnership context can add further pressures to those already faced. For example, Marginson and Considine (2000, p. 4) indicate the increasing irrelevance of traditional university decision-making bodies against the emergence of ‘shadow’ structures that echo corporate models of governance. Arguably, any ‘shadow’ structures may be quite differently configured in partnership contexts, particularly those in which each partner maintains its own distinctive governance mechanisms as well as establishing joint ones. The partner organisations might have quite different primary concerns, which can sometimes function in the limelight, and sometimes in the penumbra. Whereas the university may retain collegial structures, even if they do not work quite in the way in which they used to, professionalising occupations might have quite different assumptions about the best ways to organise and govern themselves.

The contrast is particularly striking in partnerships between universities and police organisations where the latter retain a militaristic hierarchical structure. As identified by Reiner (2000), Skolnick (1986), Skolnick and Fyfe (1993) and others, the typical police culture includes missionary zeal that erodes, in the face of disappointment with the criminal justice system and the police organisation itself, into cynicism; a “them” and “us” culture, where “them” includes researchers and “do-gooders”; conservatism; machismo and racial prejudice; and, importantly, a “very pragmatic, concrete, down to earth, anti-theoretical perspective”, where the major concern is “to get from here to tomorrow (or the next hour) safely and with the least fuss and paperwork” (Reiner, pp. 85–107). This sort of attitude can manifest itself in, for example, police (im)patience with meetings in which discussion is prolonged and complex and does not arrive at a specific, actionable conclusion—meetings which contribute to university opportunities for and expectations of collegiality. In this context of competing institutional mores, these meetings poignantly represent differing assumptions about leadership. The pressure thus created can be a source of tension, which it is often difficult to articulate and, therefore, address, although it can prove, as we shall see, the stimulus for collegially-based interventions.

It is this very type of partnership, police-university, which provides the context for this chapter. In July 1988, a radical new approach to police training had been initiated in New South Wales, with the intention of shifting the occupation from a “limited expert” model (concentrated on law, procedures and simple forms of practice and a pledge of allegiance to the Queen) towards a “full professional” model, with recognition of the complexity of the job, the need for specialist expertise, core values, self-regulation and respect for
persons at its heart (Bradley, 1991). The proposed shift was firmly in the
direction of the culture and standards of long-established professions such
as medicine and law, and was thus intimately connected with longstanding
assumptions about what quality might be in universities.

While policing in NSW was clearly intent on professionalising, there was
not consistent agreement on how best to do this, particularly in terms of the
relationship between theory and practice (for example, between 1991 and
1994, there was a highly structured form of problem-based learning, replaced
by a more traditional curriculum for managerial reasons). By 1998, the drive
to professionalise took the form of a recruit education program jointly funded
and delivered by the NSW Police (as the organisation was then called) and
Charles Sturt University. The move to this partnership was in response to the
findings of the Wood Royal Commission (1997) that asserted a need for police
to be provided with external influences to improve their decision-making,
and to break down the walls of silence that permeated the police culture and
aided corruption. In other words, the issue of professional ethics, and how
education might support their acquisition, had moved to the fore.

These changes coincided with the more general phenomenon of public
sector reform, which has, according to Dupont (2007, p. 23), transformed police
services in Australia into “conventional ministerial departments completely
responsive to the instructions of their ministers.” This development has not
been without impact on the jointly delivered recruit training course, though
discussing it adequately would take us beyond the scope of this chapter.

The Teaching and Learning Context: Specific

There are four distinct areas of pressure that we have identified so far. First,
the School of Policing Studies, in which each of the authors is located, is the only
University entity located at the New South Wales Police College. The School’s
(and the College’s) main teaching commitment is the Associate Degree in Policing
Practice (ADPP), the entry course for those wishing to join the NSW Police Force,
with the School also teaching two Bachelor-level degrees also taught outside of the
partnership arrangement. The majority of staff at the College are serving police; of
the staff in the University School, only a very small number come from what could
be considered a “traditional” academic background, with no policing experience
(what we will call “non-practitioner academics”). Most staff are former or seconded
police, especially from the NSW Police Force (“practitioner academics”). Many
in this latter group have qualifications in adult education and training, ranging
from competency-based vocational education and training to those who have
considerable experience in cutting edge innovations in learning and teaching. Of
those with academic qualifications, most have studied by distance education whilst
working as police officers, meaning that they have had little ongoing experience of
traditional university environments and cultural practices. Thus, it is the dominant professional norms of policing culture that tend to be reflected in the professional preparation course rather than those of the University.

Clearly, this will produce tensions for those in positions of leadership within the University, due to the stark difference between militaristic notions of command and control, as held by, and taught to, NSW Police Force employees and managers, and the collegial understandings and critical thinking that are embedded in, for example, the objects of the Charles Sturt University Act (1989) and the governance structures established under it. These latter assume that debates will occur about many decisions and directions, whether or not there are also “shadow structures” (Marginson & Considine, op. cit.).

A specific set of the above-mentioned tensions arise as a result of a multi-skilling initiative in police teaching in the mid 1990s, which was based on an assumption that staff with a policing background are qualified to teach on any subject related to policing. This has important implications. First as is still the case with police employed in other areas of work, police personnel who teach in the School can be moved at short notice from one subject to another, ignoring the likelihood that a police officer may well be highly specialised in some areas of policing while being rather out of practice in relation to others. This viewpoint also fails to acknowledge that teaching a university course requires a depth of knowledge beyond what the lecturer can “manage with” as a police officer, and denies the role of scholarship in informing teaching practice and content. For instance, being able to apply the law and set out a statement correctly does not necessarily mean that you can teach the principles behind laws (which extend students beyond more than a mere rote understanding of them); that you can explain the reasons why statements should be set out in particular ways and include particular information; and that you can adequately explore and assess issues of social inequality and the like which inform the use of discretion when applying the law, particularly in active scenario-based assessments. Of course, staff can revisit their own learning to extend their knowledge in these ways. However, such an effort can too readily be undermined by the constant movement of some staff between subjects. In terms of leadership, and given that the police culture is the dominant one in the partnership context, this prevailing deference to police management practices can stymie attempts to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The second pressure is that, within the School and its police partner, there is ongoing debate about the appropriate focus of recruit education. There are competing views—indeed, sometimes irreconcilable views—of the validity of abstract academic knowledge, or “academic expertise”, in an environment where the dangers of police work appear to justify a primary focus on embedding technical proficiency. For some, this is further exacerbated by the fact that the impetus for university involvement in police recruit education arose from the Wood Royal
Changing University Learning and Teaching

Commission (1997), as outlined earlier, in which education and training delivered by a university was viewed as a tool to deconstruct the usually impermeable police culture and systemic corruption. Some police feel slighted by this conclusion, and, out of principle, struggle against “outsider” input. Even though the movement to professionalise had begun prior to 1997 amongst police practitioners seeking different forms of practice and greater recognition for that practice, the Royal Commission findings and the subsequent timing of the university-police partnership resulted in the perception that the partnership was in fact imposed on police. This has coloured police “acceptance” of it, such that debates ostensibly about the most effective form of recruit training, are often attempts to have the University justify its involvement. This tension is particularly evident in the field of ethics education, where there are ongoing debates about the place of such a defined field of study in police education/training and the proper balance between providing information about organisational policy (e.g., codes of conduct) and developing autonomous decision-making capacities in complex social contexts.

Third, issues of the proper focus of police recruit education also come to light as a result of the division of teaching load in the School. The non-practitioner academics tend to teach in subjects such as communication, ethics and law, and can have difficulty in having their knowledge recognised as a relevant expertise by the students studying at the College. Conversely, former police may rely solely on their policing experience (and not on any specific subject-related expertise they have developed), with the potential drawback (identified by Berg, 1990) of teaching through “war stories” that serve to merely reinforce cultural stereotypes. Whether or not this occurs rather depends on the reasons they applied for a job with the University in the first place. Discussions with colleagues have revealed various reasons as to why they had made the “move” from police to university. Some have stated a desire to develop themselves, the field of policing, and/or change policing, with a clear expression of the differences between University and police culture, identifying the idea of a less hierarchical leadership structure and freedom of thinking and actions as being the decisive factors. Others have identified that the role provides a means to be close to a job that they had to leave reluctantly, or a realisation of the lack of opportunities to use the skills and knowledge they had acquired in policing. From comments made during development sessions, the authors have gained the impression that some University staff have an underlying desire to see police education remain in the hands of the police. This impression however remains exactly that; it has never been verified explicitly by any individual.

Finally, staff who do not have a background in academic work face the same expectations about meeting performance criteria using measures such as the Course Evaluation Questionnaire (CEQ), the Student Experience Questionnaire (SEQ), and various online evaluations, as well as the adoption
of flexible learning technologies, as do those from “traditional” academic backgrounds. This puts pressure not only on the “practitioner academics” themselves, but also on their non-practitioner colleagues who are called on to play a greater mentoring role, as well as those in management positions for whom performance measures can have financial and other impacts. In terms of learning and teaching, the impact is most often felt in relation to time available for pursuing quality work, especially as informal mentoring is not something accounted for in work load calculations.

With all of these pressures operating in the background, a number of people within the School (both non-practitioner and practitioner academics) began searching out ways of doing things differently, of finding ways to produce sustainable change in their learning and teaching. Some had formed a post-graduate group to discuss (amongst other things) the ways in which undertaking further study was impacting their learning and teaching. Others had begun to reconsider their use of the online environment and CD-based learning tools as a way of deepening their students’ engagement with the teaching materials. Still others had begun to question, for example, the way in which PowerPoint was being used in lectures and had initiated research so as to critique its use. These endeavours, however, were happening only at the level of the respective individuals, with occasional contributions from others whom they sought out for advice, feedback or the like. There was no leadership context that could allow these endeavours to be seen as related parts of a very important whole—a whole, we would suggest, centred upon the question of what it means to be an academic teacher, i.e., the question of one’s identity in the complex set of circumstances in which we work.

As Kogan (2000) asserts, there are three basic layers to identity:

1. the distinctive individual—the unique history and qualities that the person brings to the community;
2. the embedded individual—how the individual is situated within a community that has its own conceptual structures, histories, traditions, language, practices, etc.; and
3. professional identity—the moral and conceptual frameworks necessary for the fulfilment of roles.

Within the School of Policing Studies, individuals bring very different distinctive, embedded and professional identities to an environment in transition. It was the need to address this question of identities that drew forth a new form of leadership within the School, conceptualised here as an emergent community of practice. Lave and Wenger (1991) developed the term “legitimate peripheral participation” to describe the position of the new apprentice (outsider) in a community of practice. One of the issues here is that practitioner academics and non-practitioner academics alike are legitimate
peripheral participants in each others’ domains, in the context largely of the police culture. Embedded and professional identities are not well-anchored, given that there are no clearly discernible typical trajectories or expert roles, practices and identities.

**Kindling a New Source of Leadership**

In the latter two-thirds of 2006, academics in our School were faced with an extraordinarily high number of students—an increase of approximately 150 per cent, to about 800 students, in one of three annual cohorts. As a result of this, there was also a dramatic increase in staff numbers (in full-time, part-time and casual capacities) to cope with such a sudden change in the teaching requirements of the School; a changing work environment, which included moving from office spaces to open-plan work areas; and the relocation of classroom teaching environments from fixed classrooms to demountables sited at some distance from the main campus buildings. What made this particularly stressful was that these changes had been imposed from outside the College and School-based community, with little staff consultation and at relatively short notice.

The tension thus created came to a head in September, 2006, when a Teaching Development Committee meeting exploded into an impassioned debate. The spark that ignited the flame was a discussion around a CEQ-inspired request that we reconsider how to improve students’ satisfaction with policing courses, supported by a handout, drawn from Stensaker (2006), and provided later in this chapter, which suggested that collegial processes would be the path forward. The debate that ensued focused on the impediments we faced in bringing about (and sustaining) quality in our teaching and learning, when the predominant management focus was on the pragmatic aspects of accommodating a large number of students on the course. While definitely impassioned, the debate was more than mere “venting” of ill feelings or the apportioning of blame to others. Rather, it included suggestions for change—not always well-thought-out suggestions, and not always practical suggestions, but there was a clear constructive call for change superseding the reporting of dissatisfaction. The issues were also raised at a Research Development Committee meeting the following day, which the Head of School attended, participating in the discussions and seeking advice on following up particular suggestions.

In effect, then, what was happening was consistent with Schein’s notion of unfreezing (2004). Drawing on Lewin (1947), Schein provides a model for planned change, that of unfreezing, learning and refreezing (Schein, p. 319). Unfreezing involves creating a motivation to change, based on excessive disequilibrium, when there is enough disconfirming data to cause serious discomfort; anxiety about one’s capacity to attain important goals or adhere to important values; and enough psychological safety to see a possibility of solving the problem and learning
something new. Change, in this instance, was not planned by an outside consultant or a therapist, but our starting point was the fundamental disequilibrium of the situation in which we found ourselves. In particular, issues of quality lay at the heart of the disequilibrium (people wanted to do a good job, but simply could not see a way to do so).

Fulmer’s suggestion that debate and disagreements about an uncertain future are part of the process of change (2000) is also relevant to our experience. It must be remembered that those being asked to change, or initiating change, are experiencing anxiety about their survival and about their learning capacity, and it is the interaction between these two forms of anxiety that creates some complex dynamics (Schein, 2004, p. 329). The fears that are present in learning anxiety include fears of:

- temporary incompetence;
- punishment for incompetence;
- loss of identity, through the sort of person one is being asked to become;
- loss of group membership (being seen as deviant, or being ostracised).

In our situation, loss of identity was a particular concern as individuals felt their inability to make quality of teaching and learning a primary concern was impacting negatively on their (in some cases, emerging) identity as academics. Is one an academic at all if one cannot ensure a high standard of teaching and learning? Happily, fears that the staff plight would be ignored, dismissed, or even punished (seemingly an inevitable response of police leaders and managers) were not borne out, as the Head of School (a practitioner academic) recognised the situation as disequilibrium, and organised a timetabling change in the following trimester to allow all staff to meet for two hours a week to talk about academic issues, as had been recommended at the impassioned committee meetings. These gatherings were initially simply called the “Wednesday Afternoon Sessions”, later renamed “Academic Insight Sessions”, and it is in their character as emergent communities of practice, and through our particular take on leadership, that we see the potential to sustain quality change in learning and teaching.

**Leading and Learning through Change**

It is unrealistic to expect learning (the second stage in Schein’s model) to take place without adequate support, or “space”, for needed changes and experimentation. Central to improvements, according to Ramsden and Martin (1996), is leadership to address discontinuities between rhetoric and
practice—between the limelight and the penumbra. Still, there are many indicators in the literature, and in the description of our situation, that both management and leadership are required—“Good management”, Kotter (1990, p. 101) points out, “controls complexity, effective leadership produces useful change.” The issue is: what forms should these best take? Clearly, the Head of School in this case has a particularly high load to deal with in terms of governance and management, given the many areas of potential tension. The issue then becomes one of how best she, and we (as people with leadership roles in the School), might exert influence in the School to facilitate the changes in teaching and learning that are underway.

The view that leadership should not be seen in terms of a charismatic leader/obedient and loyal follower dichotomy has been argued by theorists such as Dourado and Blackburn (2005), Hirsh and Sheldrake (2002) and Spears (1995). This is particularly the case when there are multiple, conflicting directions, people are expressing their vulnerabilities, and, somehow, directions must be found which improve the quality of what is delivered according to all of the players. The literature also suggests that leadership in higher education must involve dynamic collaboration in experimenting with paths forward: that it is through local conversations that actors construct their unknown futures, not through technical rationality; that more holistic, overall approaches will positively impact learning and teaching quality; that the best way to address any shortfalls in teaching quality is to build on the positive features of academic culture, that is, peer-review, research-based approaches to teaching improvement, and awards/rewards for good teaching; and that academics need to look to the creative power within particular disciplines more than to leaders and managers (Gemmill & Oakley, 2000; Gilbert, 1998; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Ramsden & Martin, 1996; Seldin & Associates, 1990; Trigwell & Ashwin, 2003).

We also needed a model upon which we could draw to guide the structure of the Academic Insight Sessions, one which would allow for everybody’s input, and begin the process of exploring what our different perceptions might mean for us in an unthreatening way. The following table shows three possible models of quality learning and teaching, with the areas on which we aimed to focus highlighted. This table illustrates our focus on collegiality, but also our recognition of the role of formal governance systems and of the wider influences on our situation.
Table 3–1: Approaches to improving the quality of learning and teaching in relation to three organisational ideals
(Adapted from Table 1, in Stensaker 2006, p. 49)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Bureaucratic</th>
<th>Professional</th>
<th>Entrepreneurial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation of quality</td>
<td>Management; administration; regulatory requirements; national policies</td>
<td>Academic freedom and disciplinary standards</td>
<td>Market change and more dynamic environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation processes</td>
<td>Through organisational hierarchy</td>
<td>Different knowledge/expertise structures</td>
<td>Customers and stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation processes</td>
<td>Technocratic, rule/task oriented</td>
<td>Peer review and self-as-expert</td>
<td>Review relevance to customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional effects</td>
<td>Administrative systems, routines, reports, documentation and rules</td>
<td>New teaching and learning initiatives</td>
<td>Student satisfaction surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum change (pedagogies and/or content)</td>
<td>Benchmarking, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Changes in pedagogies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This collegial perspective meant that the design and implementation process had to be ongoing, in what we hoped would be an emerging “community of practice.” Defining the School as a community implied notions of trust, mutual benefit for the members and, hopefully, the preservation of the knowledge of the community as a lasting artefact (Brook & Oliver, 2005; Chavis & McMillan, 1986).

McMillan (1996) argues that, for a community to survive, the members of the community must feel safe in speaking the “truth”, where truth is defined as the personal realities that shape who we are, including our failings. In building a community, the individual members of the community must make an investment in the work of the community for the community to develop and grow and have meaning (Gibson & Manuel, 2003; McMillan, 1996; Mansour-Cole, 2001). McMillan also suggests that this can lead to “a spark and a flame” in the development of a sense of community, and that this flame will never become a fire unless there exists in the community a driving force that can sustain the fire.
The first of the Academic Insight Sessions, in January 2007, involved a discussion about a question which we hoped got to the nub of the problems we faced: “What makes us university academics and not just teachers?” Stacey and Griffin (2006, p. 36) suggest that the richest resource for change is shared meanings about identity, and, given the diversity of the group (as outlined earlier), we saw this as the space in which we might most fruitfully come together. The first session focussed on gathering ideas and establishing common ground. An important view expressed during this time was that many of the practitioner academics saw themselves as occupying some sort of middle-ground between those that they saw as “real academics”, and the police personnel who teach on the recruit course. This added an additional layer of complexity to our previous understanding of our situation, and raised the conceptual puzzle of being an academic staff member in a university school, but not seeing oneself as a “real academic”. More than any other issue discussed, this one symbolised the degree of difficulty that would be involved in developing the Wednesday afternoons into something of which all could feel a part.

Even without the particular contours of our situation, an emergent community of practice does not run itself (McMillan, 1996; Stuckey & Smith, 2004). Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) suggest that there is a need to manage the community, and to provide mechanisms that keep the energy going. Our experience confirms this: in the early days, we (sometimes along with others, including the Head of School) were spending substantial time before each Academic Insight Session discussing how best to build on what had happened the week before, in such a way that everyone was open to emergent leadership and new perspectives and concerns. This shared, conversational and collegial approach was, however, not just critical to the planning of the sessions, but also something we saw as an essential part of the sessions themselves. Veltrop and Harrington (1990) describe a model for transforming organisations from bureaucratic inertia to organisations able to cope with ongoing change. The premise of the model includes that meetings or workshops will be organic (adapt to different and evolving needs); highly leveraged, in that participants often develop and present their own workshops, while still in the early stages of the process; pragmatic, as the workshops are about learning by doing and result in immediately useful products; and developmental, because they provide a framework for developing and testing beliefs and values.

After the first session, we moved onto discussions about the directions of scholarship and research we might pursue. Such a discussion aligns with the assertions of Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002, p. 71) that “a community is driven by the value members get from it, so people need to see how their passion will translate into something useful.” In fact, some members found this process particularly frustrating, with comments often made about introducing more structure, direction and focus to the sessions. The desire was most often expressed from practitioner academics, from which it could be argued that their experience
of training and development in practice had previously only occurred in highly structured settings, and the importance of discussion to the construction of meaning was not recognised. Nonetheless, what emerged from these discussions about what each of us might need to do, was increased understanding of what it means for each of us to be an academic, greater acknowledgement of the similarities and differences in these understandings, and more appreciation of what each of us might be able to offer the others—in other words, our directions were aligning, and leadership in various areas was emerging.

There are already signs that academics are changing how they see themselves so as to better engage with the scholarship of teaching. People are reconceptualising what it is they are able to do as teachers in the university environment, and also improving their colleagues’ teaching practices. One practitioner academic who had been developing the second year curriculum on CD-ROM now has University support, simply because we became aware of his activity: he is proud that his work is being described as “cutting edge” and likely to lead the way in professional education, and that he is being asked to write about this. Prior to this, his efforts were effectively “slipping through the cracks.” Another colleague presented a session on the effective use of PowerPoint, following the circulation of emails discussing research findings on “cognitive load” (Mayer, 2003; Miller, 1956; Sweller, 1988), and colleagues report significant improvements in their use of the medium as a consequence. Several staff have presented papers, or have written articles, about their teaching (Bartkowiak-Théron, Clowry, & Leahy, 2007; Corbo, Crehan & Campbell, 2007; Layton, Nixon, & Lee, 2007), and more are in train. One practitioner academic, who was involved (as a police officer) in police recruit education in a period of problem-based learning, is planning doctoral research into whether, and how, it could be reinstated. Non-practitioner academics, too, make adjustments: research into online learning in police education has been revisited to look at the special benefits of using the online environment for the teaching of material in sensitive areas, such as domestic violence and child sexual assault (Edlington, 2007).

**Where to Next?**

It is only now that we turn to our personal positioning in these developments, as a starting point for considering how this might relate to other areas of higher education. All three of us are in the small group of non-practitioner academics, and we all have formal leadership roles in teaching and/or research (chairing committees, representing the Faculty, etc.). We are not the only leaders by any means, but the experiences we describe in this chapter have been significantly influenced by our discussions, views and input. We have, between us, links to various other schools and departments in this and other universities, and these links have mattered.
Press and Washburn (2000) have argued that collaboration with industry (and, we would argue, with police also) puts at risk “disinterested inquiry” and threatens intellectual freedom. Although we have illustrated the ways in which partnerships can be highly problematic endeavours, our experience implies that the inherent disequilibrium may open up unusual and unprecedented spaces for action, if there are people on site who can intervene. Indeed, in this instance, both normal collegiate structures and recent initiatives to improve the quality of learning and teaching have played a central role in developments. In terms of the former, it is somewhat ironic that university collegiate structures are characterised as complex dinosaurs (Moodie, 1999), impediments to the Federal government’s hoped-for directions, and yet these were the fora which allowed for us to come up with new ways of thinking about ourselves as academics and how best to improve learning and teaching. (Indeed, it is those collegiate structures that allow for professionalisation, as they recognise complexity, the importance of specialisation, core values, self-regulation and respect for others.) Similarly, the pressures from government to increase the quality of learning and teaching, implemented in ways which support our desire to do our jobs well and for the public good, can also bring about improvements and allow for innovation.

The Academic Insight Sessions have provided a platform for communication and risk taking, both of which were identified as being fundamental to the successful development of a community focused on developing professionals in the Campbell and Uys (2007) analysis of an emerging community of educational designers. Emerging shared meanings, as well as an enhanced level of trust amongst staff support the wider network of collegiality across the School. The changes that take place in the Academic Insight Sessions extend beyond the sessions themselves across the School, with changes in, and discussions around, teaching and learning practice. For example, we foresee Academic Insight Sessions exploring the constructive alignment of assessment tasks, and evaluation of student performance, as well as the further development of teaching teams that share common interests. The potential for a divided School, caused by a lack of understanding of each others’ backgrounds, concerns, strengths and limitations, is being broken down. We are still in the process of learning.

According to Schein (2004), refreezing happens when data confirming that the approach is working keeps coming in. In terms of the Academic Insight Sessions, this would be in terms of their institutionalisation, where they would continue despite the departure of any of the current key players or despite huge student intakes, or when the ideas expressed in the meetings are adopted as policy or practice. We are not yet “refrozen”, but have worked together, and in consultation with the Head of School, to “frame” the issues effectively. As Fulmer (2000) suggested, we must continue to test our ideas with each
other as trusted confidants. We realise, too, that we need to be patient. In the first place, there are recurring busy periods (e.g., exams, marking, etc.) that can lead to fluctuations in the numbers of staff attending the sessions, so even the institutionalisation referred to above may be a difficult thing for any or all of us to identify. Secondly, we have made no specific attempt as yet to collect data on everyone’s perceptions of what has happened and is now happening, although this is in its planning stages. There has, however, been a noticeable increase in research activity with some people taking quite significant risks to articulate new ideas to others, including colleagues outside the School.

As mentioned earlier, one of the issues for us was that practitioner academics and non-practitioner academics were legitimate peripheral participants in each others’ domains. All of us had to deal with the other organisation’s beliefs, processes, and leadership and teaching practices. All of us, too, were also “brokers” (Wenger, 1998, pp. 105–109), introducing elements of our own practices and meanings to the members of the “other” community. Our practitioner colleagues did not have a clear-cut position vis-à-vis policing nor academe, as their former colleagues tend to view them as outsiders to practice (they can no longer work as police), and they are not yet meeting their own expectations of themselves as academics. But it was we three who were in the position of “boundary spanners” (Adams, 1976, as cited in Schopler & Galinsky, 1995, p. 5).

“Boundary spanners” typically are distant from their parent organisations, in this case, all other schools and campuses of the University. As such, seen as representing a parent organisation, boundary spanners can have a higher level of autonomy than would otherwise be the case, and a significant level of influence—they can take on, and may be offered, leadership roles. Indeed, Schopler and Galinsky (1995, pp. 8–14) suggest that boundary spanning is a critical leadership function, allowing for representing the group to the environment (the School to other parts of the University); the environment to the group (introducing the issue of academic identity and how this relates to how we teach); influencing the environment (through the style of the Academic Insight Sessions, and the supports provided outside these sessions); and collaborating with key individuals and social systems in the environment (in this instance, negotiating with the Head of School and with other players). Not that we understood this at the time of initiating the Academic Insight Sessions, but it would seem that our positions of “outsiders inside” may be a critical leadership factor.

Another related issue is our credibility within the School: we are not newcomers to the school, but have worked here at the College for between three and eighteen years. Each of us already has worked constructively with different groups of teachers in developing curriculum subjects, resources and research, and our advice is (generally) welcomed and trusted. We have not always felt able to intervene, though. This time, the extreme situation in which the School found itself allowed
for leadership. Perhaps the current pressures on universities to change so many aspects of their operations will allow similar momentum to build up?

This observation raises the more complex issue of whether it ought to be the case that momentum for change should be allowed to build up to an explosive stage before specific individuals feel sufficiently empowered to intervene. Should others—with specific leadership and/or management roles—be able to “see” the need for change building up and take action to deal with that need constructively before any negative impacts occur? It is difficult to develop a priori answers to these questions; the specific contours of a given situation are needed to make fair judgements about what should have been known. What does seem clear, however, is that the various pressures which universities now face—both in general and, arguably, to a greater extent in external partner situations—are forcing those in traditional leadership positions to undertake more management and less direct leadership, thus creating a vacuum which, as we know, nature abhors. Perhaps this changing role for traditional leaders needs acknowledgement so that other leadership positions can be created.

Linked to the issue of the time for which we have each worked in the School is the related issue that each of us has a permanent position in the School, unlike many of our colleagues who are on short-term contracts and those who are employed casually. This itself created a sense of safety (c.f. our earlier comment from McMillan (1996)) – we knew our jobs were not at any risk (or, at least, not at any immediate risk!) were our interventions to prove challenging to others in management positions, who had not been aware of the need for change which was boiling to the surface. As universities rely more on casualisation, it appears probable that the sorts of leadership we were able to demonstrate will become less likely; or that they will be limited to universities (or parts thereof) that have a critical mass of permanent employees.

A final observation stems from the extent to which we needed to rely on each other—to determine appropriate interventions, to determine how best to deal with the frustrations of others, simply to decide what to do for each Academic Insight Session. The weight of these concerns—together with the fact that some colleagues stopped raising issues once they sensed others were taking the initiative in dealing with them—was not light and was more than once an occasion for despair. We find it difficult, therefore, to see how a lone individual might have been able to sustain the sort of response that we are a part of in our School. Of course, this may just say something about our own individual psyches! However, it seems likely that the combined weight of all the pressures described (even in situations without a partnership arrangement) may simply require shared shoulders.
Conclusion

Public sector governance ideas function more like a cult, with “hopelessly idealised futures” and heavy expectations of conformity (Stacey & Griffin, 2006, p. 10), but, as Giddens (1991, p. 53) suggested might be the case in late modernity, the processes that new ideas generate feel more like being on a careering juggernaut than being in a carefully controlled and well-driven motor-car. Maybe our experience of change is typical of universities altogether and the change process itself: Moodie’s (1999) description of the historical realist view of the higher education system suggests that:

[it] is misleading to describe Australian higher education as a system.
It is the result of a series of decisions by different people taken at different times for different reasons, largely ad hoc, and for a variety of motives: idealist, pragmatic and selfish. (p. 35).

We can only conclude that once you have jumped on the juggernaut and are travelling to a relatively uncharted destination, there will be complex interactions between systems (in our case, quasi-military, bureaucratic, governmental, collegial and entrepreneurial), and the habitus, capabilities and goals of individuals. The leadership/follower-ship nexus required in such times is not that of a turn to a saviour upon whom everyone depends, but one of sustained communication and inquiry about the situations being faced, in a heady and risky ride together.

References


Chapter Four:
The Nexus Between Research and Student Learning: Reflecting on International Testing Research and Reflections

Michael Singh and Li-Nan Yao

Abstract
The proposition explored in this chapter is that academic leaders committed to promoting a close connection between research and student learning may benefit from an appreciation of the forces that drive them apart. This argument is based on four interdependent considerations. First, the research literature indicates disconnections between teaching and research, and suggests that the forces pulling them in separate directions are quite powerful. Second, the argument developed in the chapter is situated within a meta-analysis of Australian research into international English language testing and the critical reflections of a test-taker. The third section provides an account of the experiences of a student in China, preparing for and undertaking the International English Language Testing System test (IELTS). Her experiences are located in relation to the four key areas in which research was undertaken by IELTS Australia during the period 1998 to 2007. The final section suggests possibilities for making a stronger connection among the research–teaching–learning nexus in the context of efforts to internationalise universities.

Introduction
In the best research environment researchers are challenged to exchange findings with students; in the best teaching environment students are involved in sharing real research work. The recurring debates about the relationship between research and teaching in universities are affected by concerns about the employment prospects of university graduates. The proposition explored in this chapter is that academic leaders dedicated to encouraging a closer relationship between research and learning have to confront the problem of there being no guaranteed connection between them. Academic leaders who
desire a closer link between the two may benefit from a better understanding of the forces that push them apart. Such knowledge is likely to provide a sense of what academic leaders might reasonably do to establish and sustain university structures that strengthen the links between research and learning.

This argument is developed through the following interrelated sections. First, a review of research literature indicates that the hope for a strong teaching–research nexus faces a number of challenges. The gap in current knowledge points to the need for the further investigation of this nexus. Second, the brief methodology section links the internationalisation of Australian education with a meta-analysis of Australian research into the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and with the reflections of a student undertaking this test in China. Third, evidence is presented of the disjunctions between the key areas in which research into IELTS tests have been undertaken during the period 1998 to 2007, and a Chinese student’s reflections on matters relating to each of these. The brief discussion in the fourth section explores what the disconnections between research and student learning mean for academic leaders seeking to improve their links in universities.

Before proceeding, however, we wish to signal a note of caution. This chapter was written in China. This should suggest some of the limitations on research and scholarship intrinsic to working in a developing nation, especially the difficulties of accessing expensive, international research literature via the Internet owing to its considerable expense. While the substance of this chapter has benefited greatly from the critical feedback of Australian reviewers, some (Australian) readers might feel themselves operating in a parallel world. For a few it may bear little relationship to what their university or they themselves are trying to achieve in students’ learning with respect to research impact and quality teaching. A small number might even react a little against the idea that a student from China would dare to argue with those academics abroad who see international students from Asia as unquestioning, rote learning plagiarists (Grimshaw, 2007; Leask, 2006; Nield, 2004; Wang & Moore, 2007).

While the inherent limitations of space preclude any detailed elaboration of the research literature, nevertheless this chapter draws on primary and secondary evidence from both China and Australia. It does so in the hope of opening up to consideration the possibility that, with the internationalisation of Australian universities, student learning requires further investigation for those interested in bridging the gap between teaching and research. Even so, this chapter only hints at the complex practical issues needing further study, careful thought and informed judgment. This is especially so if we are to develop the argumentative capabilities of Asian students through engaging them with/in research. The next section summarises a range of research literature indicating disconnections between teaching and research owing to challenges across multiple fronts.
Disconnections between Teaching and Research

We begin this literature review by noting that efforts are being made to redress the disconnections between teaching and research. For instance, Freestone and Wood (2006) offer ideas for building the between teaching quality and research productivity. Similarly, Garde-Hansen (2007) reports on the collaborative problem-based learning by staff and students who conducted an undergraduate conference for first year students on how to develop a research culture and to better understand how students can undertake research. Given the globalisation of higher education, Heron, Baker, and McEwen (2006) suggest ways of re-charting university priorities by them having systematic approaches to maximising the synergies between research and teaching that capitalise on students’ prior learning and experiential knowledge. However, in order to better appreciate what academic leaders are up against, let us now consider three important forces that drive university teaching and research apart.

Government policy places increasing pressures on researchers

Teaching and research have their own separate sources of government funding. Generally, funds for teaching are spread equally within designated fields. However, this is not the case with research funding, which is obtained on the basis of competition. In Britain, McNay (1997a, 1997b, 1998) found that this policy and its associated mechanisms reinforced the structural separation of research and teaching. Cargill (2007) ascertained that the policy drivers governing this competition among universities, research centres and researchers is a useful mechanism for producing research. However, the government had not designed its research policies to have any direct impact on teaching, nor to reward efforts to build a teaching–research nexus. Structurally, the division between research and teaching is an unintended consequence of such policy drivers. In Australia, active researchers are now defined as including those who obtain externally funded research projects; successfully complete the supervision of higher degree research students; and disseminate research findings via papers submitted to high quality, refereed journals (Singh, Han, & Harreveld, 2006). As universities work to improve the quality of their teaching and develop their claims on research expertise, these phenomena are in danger of becoming further divorced from each other. Academic leaders are challenged is to prove that teaching/learning and research complement each other, even as government policy drives them apart.

Structural pressures working against linking teaching and research

Structural pressures on universities have accumulated over the decades working against linking teaching and research. For instance, Robertson (2007) reports that, while government policies are undermining the relationship among research, teaching, learning and knowledge, academics are influenced by the way that knowledge is conceived of and structured within their discipline. Together
these play an elemental role in shaping the research–teaching relationship. Likewise, Taylor (2007) found contrasting structural, political and disciplinary factors involved in shaping the relationship between teaching and research in different nations. Further, Halse, Deane, Hobson, and Jones (2007) established that the winners of the competitive, national awards for university teaching in Australia were active researchers, but were unlikely to publish about their teaching or their efforts to improve teaching practice in universities. Pointing to the separation of teaching and research within and between universities, their study raises questions about the contribution of government teaching awards to the wider improvement of university teaching and research. Moreover, Kinchin and Hay (2007) examined the contention that achievement in research is a prerequisite for effective teaching in higher education. They found that the transmission mode of teaching predominates in higher education, reinforcing surface or rote learning strategies. Evidence of authentic research-led, meaning making teaching was scant.

**Lack of structural mechanisms between research and teaching**

The customs and atmosphere of a university also affect the degree to which teaching and research come together. Magnan (2007) reports that while this connection is often said to be important and valuable it is more often presupposed than clarified and institutionalised. While universities said that it is important, the evidence did not indicate that it had a high level of significance. Unfortunately, limited managerial attention was given to making the connection between research and teaching a matter of institutional practice. The research entities within universities typically had no structural mechanisms such as rewards or incentives for engaging undergraduate students in the real research work of research professors. Few universities had any statement in their teaching and learning plans indicating their commitment to strategies for bringing research and teaching together. Fewer still had any particular methods by which this might be achieved. Typically there were few structured links between undergraduate teaching and research centres. Despite this, efforts to overcome the disconnection between teaching and research continue to be made as the following case study indicates.

**A case study**

Case studies of the research–teaching nexus have been undertaken across a number of Australian universities (e.g., Zubrick, Reid, & Rossiter, 2001). In 2004 two Australian universities established a partnership to analyse the teaching–research nexus, and compare their performance internationally (Brew & Weir, 2004). Comparisons between the universities included participants self-rating their achievement in different areas. Based on these self-assessments, proposals for each institution were made. A range of university and faculty level initiatives were then undertaken to investigate and develop the nexus between teaching and research.
While University A favoured the term “teaching–research nexus” and University B preferred “research-led teaching”, both universities were able to identify the nexus in their learning and teaching plans wherever appropriate. The two universities had different approaches for realising this nexus, but both saw research skills as a significant graduate attribute. To that end the mapping of how some faculties sought to improve students’ research skills progressively through the course of their studies was undertaken.

Both universities have a large number of teaching staff who are also active researchers. However, acknowledgment of the teaching/research connection in the performance management of staff needed more work. While their reward systems asked staff for proof of the teaching–research nexus in their work, neither university had demonstrable approaches for doing so in staff recruitment, probation and promotion. Opportunities for the professional development of staff in relation to the teaching–research nexus were available. In their external communications increased reference needed to be made to this issue.

There were both correspondences and variations on the teacher–research nexus at the faculty level. Although both universities claimed that research was part of undergraduate student activities, Sydney had practical methods for advancing and assessing these. Faculties favoured curriculum development being informed by disciplinary and pedagogical research. Both universities had plans for supporting the development of students’ research abilities. Several faculties taught and monitored students’ research capabilities as part of their effort to improve the attributes of graduates.

Faculties in both universities had prepared policies to encourage students and staff to take part in scholarly activities. However, the degree to which undergraduate and postgraduate students contributed was unclear. Both universities encouraged students and staff to discuss the character of their discipline, the research undertaken in their field and what this meant for their studies. University policies were needed to encourage student involvement in such discussions. The two universities had institutionalised some procedures for bringing research and teaching together, including the means for monitoring improvements. The universities had different ways of encouraging and rewarding staff for furthering the teaching–research nexus.

In summary, the research literature suggests that government policy places pressures on researchers that increase the distance between students, research and researchers. Owing to structural pressures teaching and research are at best very loosely united. Further, the lack of structural mechanisms among research and teaching works against closely linking them. The case study of efforts to bring them together reinforces the point that there are no necessary or guaranteed link between teaching and research. Accordingly, it can be concluded that academic leaders have to build the structures to counterbalance the pressures that drive them apart.
At the same time, there is a need for some caution with respect to the literature reviewed here. Despite the widespread belief in a positive relationship between teaching and research, the empirical evidence is lacking (Verburgh, Elen, & Lindblom-Ylanne, 2007). There has been diversity in the populations investigated; the levels of analysis undertaken (individual faculty, department and institutions); the nature of the institutions studied; and the data collection instruments used; however, explication of the way that research is actually integrated into teaching is limited. More importantly for the purposes of this chapter, there are few studies of the relationship between research and student learning. The next section provides a brief methodological account that situates the argument about the nexus between research and student learning within a study of the IELTS.

A note on methodology

Academic leaders committed to closing the connection among teaching, research and learning face the problem of there being no necessary or mechanical relationship among them. Moreover, there is a significant methodological difficulty related to the exploration of the relationship between research and learning as addressed in this chapter. At a time when much attention is given to the internationalisation of Australian universities, the research–teaching nexus seems to be conceived in rather parochial terms by prioritising the link between these within a given university or in comparison with another Australian university (cf. Sen, 2005, pp. 161–190). However, the point of exploring the research–learning nexus in the following evidentiary section is to depart from this seemingly insular view.

Given the internationalisation of university education, we ask what plausible connections might be made among research, teaching and learning across different countries. The following section provides evidence of a student’s learning experiences in China and related research in Australia with respect to the IELTS test. In doing so it points to the absence of any direct evidence of the movement of ideas connecting these places, even though these issues are interrelated. The recurring debates about the presence of international students from Asia in Australia as elsewhere attest to this (Grimshaw, 2007; Leask, 2006; Nield, 2004; Wang & Moore, 2007). Specifically, there does not seem to be any apparent trade in ideas between Australia and China with respect to research, teaching and learning relating to IELTS testing. This may suggest that a research–teaching–learning nexus framed by intellectual ideas from within one university, or even one country, may reference or promote insularity. This is at a time when there is a catalytic connection that the internationalisation of Australian universities suggests is a necessity.
Two sources of evidence have been generated and combined to investigate the research problem addressed in this chapter. First, evidence is drawn from the reflections of a student, namely the second author, undertaking an IELTS test in China. Given her status as an early career researcher in education, it does not seem unreasonable to expect that truly “international research methods” will include and echo some knowledge or experiential insights from China, her homeland. Wright (2003) argues that “people of colour” expect research methods to incorporate and reflect our worldviews, and that the research methods that we use will effectively and happily represent us. As a scholar from Sierra Leone now working in Canada, his autobiographical approach to research serves as an example for the work reported here. His autobiographical approach has inspired the voicing of this student’s perspective on the learning experiences involved in IELTS testing.

This is not unlike the autoethnographic method used by Mayuzumi, Motobayayashi, Nagayama, and Takeuchi (2007) in their account of the way that stereotyping silences Japanese students in Canada and the possibilities that this method presents for them to reclaim their agency as knowledge producers. Thus, methodologically, priming students from Asia with a positive identity by critically analysing unconstructive stereotypes and investigating alternative explanations may subdue threats associated with an ascribed, negative identity. McGlone (2007), for example, found this to be the case with respect to female students. This not only opens up possibilities for introducing concepts from Japan or China as elsewhere into Western research (Miike, 2006), but also creates opportunities for researching ways of enhancing the capabilities and agency of students from Asia to engage in scholarly argumentation. “Argumentation” in this context means creating a sustained proposition or thesis based on producing and communicating new knowledge or re-interpreting existing knowledge.

The second source of evidence is a meta-analysis of research undertaken by IELTS Australia during the period 1998 to 2007 to identify the major axes of focus. IELTS Australia, in association with the British Council, conducted this research to meet their need to ensure that the IELTS test is valid and reliable, has an appropriate impact and is of practical value. Findings from these studies feed into the continuing process of test development and validation. This research is publicly disseminated via research reports published by IELTS Australia, Research Notes, in the Studies in Language Testing series, as well as academic journals. Our meta-analysis of Australian research into IELTS revealed four axes of study, namely the predictive value of IELTS; the listening, reading and writing dimensions of IELTS; the place of IELTS in testing speaking; and contextual issues affecting students who have gained entry to education overseas using IELTS. With this international research collaboration and the internationalisation of English in mind, the next section explores the possible research–learning nexus that they signal.
Exploring the research–learning nexus

Given the internationalisation of Australian universities—and English—the research–learning nexus need not necessarily be about linking the research done within a given university to the teaching done within it. For instance, in some universities in China this may deny students access to important research-based knowledge because it is not available in their particular university. Thus, this section provides insights into the reflections of a student in China preparing for and undertaking an IELTS test, and locates this experience in relation to our meta-analysis of axes for the research undertaken over the past decade by IELTS Australia. The purpose here is not to elaborate on the research findings generated by these studies. Instead, our intention is to relate the four axes in which this research has been undertaken to a Chinese university student’s reflections on what it means to prepare to come to Australia to undertake a higher degree by research. But let us begin with what most concerns the students themselves, namely the score that they achieve on their IELTS test, given that this is a key determinant of their future education abroad.

IELTS test scores

In China, students planning to sit for the IELTS test undertake lessons where they gain test-taking experience, rehearse questions from previous tests and learn about the scoring system (see Table 4–1). After a couple of days’ training they take simulated tests:

After the training in Beijing I prepared for one month to take the test. The test was scheduled from 31st March to 1st April 2007 in Beijing. After the interview I came out of the building and saw two candidates waiting for me. They asked me some questions about the interview. They asked about the topic for Part 2, my room number and the examiner. I scored 6 for listening, writing and speaking, and 6.5 for reading. My overall Band score was 6.

Perhaps, not surprisingly, test-driven approaches to securing students’ international educational opportunities seem to focus attention on the overall score, rather than communicative competence in English.
Table 4–1: How the IELTS test is scored
(Cambridge IELTS 5, 2006, p. 7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band score</th>
<th>Type of user</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Expert user</td>
<td>Has fully operational command of the language: appropriate, accurate and fluent with complete understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Very good user</td>
<td>Has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic and inappropriacies. Misunderstanding may occur in unfamiliar situation. Handles complex detailed argumentation well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Good user</td>
<td>Has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstanding in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Competent user</td>
<td>Has general effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstanding. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Modest user</td>
<td>Has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make mistakes. Should be able to handle basic communication in own field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Limited user</td>
<td>Basic competence is limited to familiar situations. Has frequent problems in understanding and expression. Is not able to use complex language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Extremely limited user</td>
<td>Conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations. Frequent breakdowns in communication occur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Intermittent user</td>
<td>No real communication is possible except for the most basic information using isolated words or short formulate in familiar situation and to meet immediate needs. Has great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Non user</td>
<td>Essentially has no ability to use the language beyond possibly a few isolated words.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In preparing for her second attempt to take the IELTS test, Li-Nan spent the majority of her time to studying English. This included finding out about test items from other students:

I spent much more time on writing practice and did almost all the subtests; 16 to be specific. Then I took IELTS test in Xi’an from the 25th to 26th August 2007. Because my interview was on Sunday morning, on Saturday afternoon I waited outside the building where the test was held. I asked the other candidates what their topics were. I knew that “job” is the most popular topic candidates were being asked to talk about. So I prepared to talk about my future job.

Because of all of this preparation, Li-Nan thought she might do better on the second test than she did last time. However, this proved not to be the case:
My writing and speaking score was just 5.5. Thankfully my listening score was 7, and my reading score was 6.5. However, my overall Band score was still 6. I felt that I had done worse than last time. My IELTS teachers said that the IELTS examiners believe that a large number of the candidates in Mainland China just learn something from some book off by heart, and then they retell it during their speaking test. That is why they said so many candidates in the August and September test cannot get a score at their real level.

There is an unsubstantiated view among both students and their teachers that a concern about rote learning has crept into judgments about students’ test results. Usually those who teach the students how to sit the IELTS test are able to give a reasonable prediction about students’ likely performance.

**Predictive value of IELTS**

The IELTS slogan is “English for international opportunity: The test that sets the standard.” English gives many students from China as elsewhere throughout Asia the opportunity for an international education. To realise their dream of studying at an Australian university, they have to meet the standard as established by the IELTS test. Research has been undertaken in Australia that could give these students and their teachers some insight into the predictive value of IELTS (see Table 4–2).

**Table 4–2: The predictive value of IELTS: Australian research into IELTS (1998–2007)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper 2 Vol. 7 – 2007</th>
<th>Student identity, learning and progression</th>
<th>Affective and academic impact of IELTS</th>
<th>“Successful” candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Papers 3 &amp; 4 Vol. 7 – 2007</td>
<td>Predictor of academic language performance</td>
<td>IELTS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 5 Vol. 4 – 2003</td>
<td>Impact of IELTS</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Preparation for academic study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 1 Vol. 4 – 2003</td>
<td>Impact study of IELTS user groups</td>
<td>Candidates who sit the test for immigration purposes</td>
<td>Candidates who sit the test for secondary education purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 4 Vol. 3 – 2000</td>
<td>Predictive validity</td>
<td>Students’ IELTS score</td>
<td>Students’ subsequent academic performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 3 Vol. 2 – 1999</td>
<td>Comparison of IELTS and TOEFL</td>
<td></td>
<td>Predictors of academic success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 4 Vol. 1 – 1998</td>
<td>The predictive validity of IELTS</td>
<td>University of Tasmania</td>
<td>International students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the papers listed in Table 4–2 provide details of research findings, the table itself highlights four issues; namely, how students and staff perceive IELTS; the impact of IELTS on preparation for academic study overseas; the
relationship between IELTS tests and students’ progress; and a comparison of IELTS and the US-based Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). However, the predictive value of the IELTS test is mediated by where and how students are taught to take the test:

Before the first time I took the IELTS test, I went to the New Oriental (Xin Dong Fang) training centre in Beijing. It is well known for teaching English especially for preparing students to take various English language tests. The New Oriental is famous for conducting TOEFL and IELTS classes. Every teacher who works there has to take the full range of tests each year, so that they can remember the contents of these tests and teach the students the latest information about these tests. Therefore, many Chinese students who want to take IELTS or other tests required for entering universities overseas will go to New Oriental. During the days they spend in Beijing preparing to do the IELTS test, the teachers offer many different ways to improve their English. The New Oriental also offers advice on accessing several useful IELTS Web sites which provide information about how to prepare for the IELTS test. If you register on these Web sites you can download all the materials about IELTS which is relevant to taking the test.

English language tests provide opportunities for international businesses in Australia and China, as elsewhere. The IELTS test sets the standard for teaching (to the test) as well as learning (to pass the test).

**Listening, reading and writing**

Listening, reading and writing are key sections of the IELTS test which students have to pass. The listening test items include a two person dialogue, a monologue and a conversation among at least four people. The reading test items come from a range of printed media, including newspapers, magazines, journals and books. Both the listening and the reading parts of the test include multiple choice questions; short-answers questions; sentence completion tasks; tasks for creating summaries, flow-charts, tables and labelling diagrams; as well as classification and matching tasks. The reading test also includes choosing suitable paragraph headings from a list; the identification of a writer’s views or claims; and the identification of true or false claims. The written test asks candidates to look at graph(s) or data and then to write more than 150 words based on this information. Alternatively, candidates are asked to write an explanation of a process, or to describe an event or object. Candidates also have to write a short essay of more than 250 words expressing their own ideas in order to persuade other people, or to show strategies required to solve problems.
Research undertaken by IELTS Australia in the area of listening, reading and writing has mainly focused on four issues (see Table 4–3 ). First, there is the issue of the interaction between the IELTS test and the candidates. Second, the preparation of the IELTS test and its score has also come under the spotlight of research. Third, the relationship between computer-based and handwritten tests has provided an important focus for research attention. Fourth, the reading and writing of the test have been investigated.

**Speaking**

During the speaking test, the examiner asks candidates several general questions after they briefly introduce themselves. In the speaking test candidates are given a topic on a task card; they have one minute to prepare, making notes if they like, before having to speak for one to two minutes. After that the examiner asks questions about what candidates have said. In the last part of this test, candidates are asked more specific questions based on the second part of the interview.
IELTS Australia has funded a large amount of research into speaking in the areas of gender differences, difficulties in interviews, style, language, rating processes, and reliability (see Table 4–4). The emphasis on researching speaking is likely to relate to concerns about the communicative competence of international students from Asia.

**Contextual issues**

A fourth area which has provided a key focus for Australian research into IELTS is “contextual issues” (see Table 4–5). The major contextual issues that have been researched include educational providers’ perspectives regarding students’ preparation for academic study; how students and staff perceive IELTS in tertiary institutions in different countries; and differences in the learning engagement of academic and general candidates. Other issues include investigations into intensive English language study; background disciplines and IELTS scores; institutions’ uses of and attitudes to IELTS; and the comparison of IELTS with alternative English language tests.
One of the important contextual issues is the attitudes of tertiary educators in Australia towards students from Asia, as they make key decisions about the students’ education trajectories. Gregson and Kell (2007) suggest that some Australian universities see an all encompassing, one-dimensional “Western paradigm” which frames and positions Australian and Asian higher education in terms of a “clash of cultures” (also see Grimshaw, 2007; Leask, 2006; Nield, 2004; Wang & Moore, 2007). This they argue leads to the questionable characterisation of students from Asia as: “…culturally inferior ‘others’ who must be taught how to learn other than by rote and imitation, whose learning style and strategies impede critical thinking” (Gregson & Kell, p. 152).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper 1 Vol. 7 – 2007</th>
<th>Attitudes of tertiary key decision-makers</th>
<th>English language tests</th>
<th>Aotearoa New Zealand</th>
<th>A national provider survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper 1 Vol. 5 – 2003</td>
<td>Selected IELTS preparation materials</td>
<td>Critical analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 2 Vol. 5 – 2003</td>
<td>Malaysian private secondary schools</td>
<td>Comparative study</td>
<td>Market viability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 4 Vol. 5 – 2003</td>
<td>Student and staff perceptions of IELTS</td>
<td>Attitudes of IELTS stakeholders</td>
<td>Australian, UK and Chinese tertiary institutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 1 Vol. 4 – 2003</td>
<td>Impact study of IELTS user groups</td>
<td>Candidates for immigration purposes</td>
<td>Candidates secondary education purposes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 5 Vol. 4 – 2003</td>
<td>Impact of IELTS</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Preparation for academic study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 6 Vol. 4 – 2003</td>
<td>Intensive English language study</td>
<td>Band score gain on IELTS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 5 Vol. 3 – 2000</td>
<td>Monitoring</td>
<td>IELTS examiner training effectiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 2 Vol. 2 – 1999</td>
<td>Background disciplines</td>
<td>IELTS score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 5 Vol. 1 – 1998</td>
<td>Reviewing institutions’ use to IELTS</td>
<td>Reviewing institutions’ attitude to IELTS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 6 Vol. 1 – 1998</td>
<td>Comparative study of IELTS results</td>
<td>Comparative study of ACCESS test results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The presumption that Chinese students are rote learners is contestable (Nield, 2004). Even if students in China learn by rote or imitation, this does not impede their critical thinking; there are much stronger forces that do this work. More than this, there are differences in the learning strategies variously acquired by Chinese students which can be educationally engaged for them to realise their academic potential. Recitation is but one learning strategy, and in China it is seen as a means of demonstrating making progress towards deep understanding and is not an end in itself (Gardner, 1989). In the beginning stages some Chinese students learn by the well-established and monkish habit of recitation. The knowledge gained through this means, provides them with a basis for generating their own knowledge or re-working existing knowledge.

By learning ideas in this way such Chinese students then begin to talk to their peers about what they know with the expectation that doing this will feed innovation in their thinking. For instance, babies learn their “mother tongue” initially by listening to their mothers and imitating what those around them say; gradually they learn to speak fluently and then they become creative. Creativity and innovation are part of the higher level of learning which has a basis in recitation. That some Chinese students learn in this way does not mean that they are stupid, lazy, unable to think critically or lacking in creativity. Recitation is part of the learning process for coming to know, and is only part of a process that aims at understanding.

It would seem that if there is a “Western paradigm” with a peculiarly “Western concept of plagiarism,” it leads to much confusion and misunderstanding among some Westerners about Chinese students’ comfort with paraphrasing and respect for knowledgeable authorities:

Chinese students, for example, are uncomfortable about paraphrasing work. They are taught that directly copying work from a source is a means of respecting the authority and stature of the author. To alter or paraphrase the words is disrespectful. (Gregson & Kell, 2007, p. 153)

There are many misperceptions about students from China (Grimshaw, 2007). For instance, Leask (2006) found that one of these mistaken ideas is that teaching academic integrity involves a clash of educational cultures that must be won by the West, rather than a pedagogical encounter that involves negotiated learning between educational cultures. Further, the claim that Chinese students are not taught to, and cannot paraphrase and summarise the work of learned authorities is questionable:

None of my peers feel uncomfortable about paraphrasing other scholars’ work. I would feel guilty if I just copied their work without acknowledgement. Maybe some students and scholars do plagiarise. However, this does not mean that Chinese intellectuals copy other’s work to show respect to the author. Certainly that is not what we have been taught. In China, we have an old saying, tian xia wen zhang yi da
chao, meaning that ideas from all around the world are just copies of one and another. Here the meaning of the word “copy” is not the same as plagiarise; rather it refers to the many links among ideas that are often expressed through paraphrases. Everyone in the world eats food everyday from the same earth no matter who you are; little concern is shown about the origins of the food when it is time to eat.

Chinese students are taught to quote, paraphrase and summarise the work of others and to demonstrate respect for the sources of this knowledge by duly acknowledging the author. The following statement is an example of what students in China are taught about summarising:

A summary is a brief restatement of the essential thought of a longer composition. It reproduces the theme of the original with as few words as possible … Summary writing is a very good exercise for improving reading comprehension … Summary writing can force [students] to try to understand what they read, for no one can write a summary of any passage unless he [or she] has grasped its meaning … Summary writing is also helpful to composition writing. It trains one to express one’s thought clearly, concisely and effectively … Summary writing has practical uses. The ability to grasp quickly and accurately what is read, or heard, and to reproduce it in a clear and concise way is of great value to people of many professions … The summary should be all in your own words. It must not be a patchwork made up of phrases and sentences quoted from the original passage. (Ding, Wu, Zhong, & Guo, 2005, pp. 262–264)

International students make use of various strategies for trying to understand and adapt to the disciplinary requirements of Australian universities (Arkoudis, 2007). There appears to be little recognition of these. For instance, those who hold to the “Western paradigm” mistakenly believe that students from Asia are: “reticent to ask questions and that too often the questioning of academics is seen as impolite and that asking for help results in a loss of ‘face’ by admitting that the student has not understood” (Gregson & Kell, 2007, p. 156).

Once again this claim is contestable. Research by Wang and Moore (2007) contradicts the assumption that all Chinese students have homogeneous learning strategies. Some students in China may not ask questions that could cause a loss of face to their teachers. No doubt there are students in Australia who make similar judgments when asking questions of academics. Some students may feel too shy to ask questions, while others may fear embarrassing themselves or their teacher in front of their peers. They usually find out the answers by asking a close friend, otherwise:

… most of my classes end with a gaggle of students asking their lecturers questions as they seek to clarify points they have not understood. Other lecturers ask the students to write down their questions and these are
addressed in the following class. The four character chengyu, bu chi xia wen, literally means “do not feel that it is a loss of ‘face’ or a cause for shame to ask questions.” Chinese students are part of a long educational tradition in which asking questions is central to learning.

An online self-instructional program may offer a “solution to the clash of cultures” (Gregson & Kell, 2007, p. 156) if one exists, but it is open to question as to whether it can be of any help in addressing the issues at stake here. Good academics in Australian universities are known to explicitly scaffold their Asian students’ learning of advanced academic English. More than this, they also explicitly teach these students to engage critically with misperceptions and mistaken beliefs in any “Western paradigm” (Miike, 2006). In particular, they teach them how best to use the resources from their own educational cultures to argue with the construction of students from Asia as uncritical, rote learning plagiarists, and so enhance their capabilities as argumentative (Asian) students (cf. Mayuzumi, Motobayayashi, Nagayama, & Takeuchi, 2007).

**Strengthening the Connections between Research and Student Learning**

In so far as universities are failing to meet the needs of undergraduate students in terms of institutionalising the research–learning nexus (and this is not always the case), there may be possibilities for multi-level changes in order to close the distance between the two. There are several possibilities for making a stronger connection between them. In order to deliver a richer scholarly experience for university students, academic leadership is needed to structure the teaching/learning/research relationship that is desired.

If research and learning do have any grounds for a relationship it may benefit from focusing on what they share. A starting point for considering their similarities is that both of them are connected with teaching. This suggests that one way to institutionalise the research–learning nexus is to design courses and research projects where the teaching makes it happen and is rewarded for its happening. Research education might be increasingly introduced into the studies of all university students. This approach to research-driven teaching and learning may provide an underpinning principle of pedagogy that also finds expression in the structures of universities. This means that the university takes as its organisational responsibility the structuring of the union of research, teaching and learning. Table 4–6 summarises possibilities for making a stronger connection among teaching, research and learning, so that all areas of student learning inform and are informed by real world research projects.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University structuring of research–teaching–learning nexus</th>
<th>Faculty teaching and research</th>
<th>Student learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Policy, terminology, and definition                    | Active teacher-researchers share their research findings in their courses. | • Learn from the published research of active teacher-researchers as part of the content of courses;  
• Do an assignment whereby students review three or more examples of an active teacher-researcher’s published research;  
• Interview the active teacher-researcher about her/his research. |
| 2. Strategic planning that links research, teaching and the internationalisation of education | Researching teaching, curriculum development and pedagogies for internationalising education. | Learn about research-based improvements to the quality of the teaching they are receiving, such as critical analyses of misperceptions of students from Asia and efforts to develop their argumentative capabilities. |
| 3. Planning documents                                     | Developing students’ research and inquiry capabilities. | Learn about research processes, including access to state-of-the-art equipment and techniques. |
| 4. Courses and research projects                          | Building a community of scholars using inquiry-based learning experiences. | Studying the CV of an active researcher in the university as a basis for preparing and conducting an interview with that person about his or her work as a researcher. |
| 5. Graduate attributes                                   | Exploring the context of research. | Carry out their own individual or team research into the policies and conditions affecting university research, including that undertaken by higher degree research students. |
| 6. Staffing profile                                       | Accredited research elective. | Contribute to the research projects of active research staff and documenting what they learn about research methods. |
| 7. Performance management                                | Researching a research project. | Work as research assistants on projects being undertaken by active researchers, writing a report about the research project and how it relates to her/his studies, and indicating future research they might undertake. |
| 8. Rewards                                               | Teaching-led research. | undertaking an independent study abroad as part of the requirements for graduation. |
There are substantial benefits for undergraduate students helping research active staff. This requires them to build into their research projects opportunities for students to engage with important, leading edge knowledge production, and to work with researchers who have an intimate interest in what they are investigating. Engaging with active researchers through involvement in their research projects may give students a chance to get to know them as genuine people as well as gaining insights into what they do, when, how and why. This partnership or engagement with a community of researchers is based on a commitment to seeking knowledge and to pursuing truth; it may encourage researchers and students to practise these values even more rigorously. In this way undergraduate students may learn how original knowledge is created. Research centres, programs and projects offer important sites for such teaching and learning. Student participation in such research may be an effective way to teach them the knowledge and skills valued in knowledge producing, innovative transnational relations.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has given an informed and reasoned basis for the argument that academic leaders committed to supporting a beneficial connection between university research and student learning are likely to gain from an understanding of the forces that drive them apart. Knowing that there are no necessary or sure-fire links between them, they might be able to institutionalise and manage university structures that give them some chance of articulation. The review of the research literature indicated that any hope for a strong research–teaching nexus has to be robust enough to address the forces that lead to overlooking evidence about student learning in this context. The forces pulling them in separate directions include government policy pressures on researchers; structural pressures working against linking research, teaching and learning; and the lack of institutional mechanisms within universities for linking the three. A meta-analysis of research into IELTS was situated in relation to the critical reflections of an undergraduate university student, an IELTS test-taker and a prospective Australian higher degree research candidate.

The result of this exercise is to suggest that there seems to be limited trade in ideas between Australia and China with respect to research, teaching and learning relating to IELTS testing. This is questionable given its catalytic connection to the internationalisation of Australian universities, which has been underway for over two decades. We suggest careful consideration of whether a research–teaching–learning nexus framed by intellectual ideas from within one university, or even one country, may promote insularity. To make a stronger connection among research, teaching and learning, efforts
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to internationalise Australian and Chinese universities might usefully be considered. Given the importance of underpinning the international research qualifications of Australian universities, the structuring of the research-teaching-learning nexus as part of efforts to internationalise Australian higher education seems worthy of further consideration. This jointly authored chapter, between an Australian academic and a Chinese undergraduate student represents but one illustration of what might be possible.

References


Section Two: Quality
Introduction

Patrick Alan Danaher

In many respects it is not surprising that half the chapters in this book are located in this section pertaining to quality. On the one hand, quality is plainly an increasing instrument of surveillance and control by government and hence a publicly visible index of the effectiveness of individual universities and the higher education sector as a whole. On the other hand, the processes of engaging and mobilising quality are clearly crucial if the transformative potential of changing university learning and teaching posited in this book is to be attained.

From that perspective, as was noted in the editors’ introduction, quality occupies an ambivalent space, located between a focus on excellence, fitness for purpose, value or worth and a concern for resisting and replacing narrow and technicist understandings of quality that replicate the status quo and its attendant inequities. Like leadership and technology, then, conceptualising, implementing and evaluating quality are contentious activities with significant ethical and political dimensions in relation to contemporary universities.

As was also noted in the editors’ introduction, the several accounts of quality in this section of the book take up in multiple ways the organising question “How can different notions of quality make possible new and more empowering forms of university learning and teaching?” This is no easy task; the contexts in which understandings and practices related to quality are situated are constituted and constrained by historical and current pressures and priorities that require adeptness in navigation and adroitness in negotiation through the networks attached to manifestations of quality in present-day universities. Nevertheless the chapters in this section take up that challenge and provide us with a number of potentially useful markers and strategies.

In Chapter Five, Jeanne McConachie, Karen Smeary, and Jenny Simpson explore elements of quality in the Skills for Tertiary Education Preparatory Studies (STEPS) program at CQUniversity in Australia, specifically in relation to fitness of purpose and ex-STEPS students’ perceptions of the program’s effectiveness at increasing their prospects of success in undergraduate study. The findings indicate the program’s success in both skills development and worldview transformation, providing a strong foundation for subsequent learning journeys. At the same time, continuous improvement is needed to ensure the program’s continuing relevance and hence its quality.
Michael Singh, Hongying Qi, and Jin Hu use Chapter Six to present an innovative approach to interrogating quality in university teaching of English language majors in China preparing Masters research theses: the application of Professor Henry Higgins’ teaching methods as portrayed in the well-known film *My Fair Lady*. The authors distil from selected literature key aspects of quality teaching, including engagement with multiple forms of student diversity, and compare them with Higgins’s pedagogical techniques. They argue that this comparison disrupts some taken for granted assumptions about postgraduate supervision of students using second or further languages, which in turn is important for culturally contextualised understandings of quality teaching.

Chapter Seven, by Loshini Naidoo, takes up the notions of quality communicated in the Australian House of Representatives inquiry report “Top of the Class” about teacher education as a springboard for examining an alternative teacher education practicum at the University of Western Sydney in Australia. The author applies the critical method as a lens for analysing both the report and the practicum; for her, quality is concerned with highlighting and challenging the constituents of sociocultural and economic disadvantage and inequality. She contends that the six key partnerships within the alternative practicum provide evidence of teacher education quality from that perspective, and that they provide one possible way of organising school-university partnerships that build on that quality.

In Chapter Eight, Beverley Moriarty engages with a different aspect of quality in teacher education: first year undergraduate students’ self-efficacy to teach mathematics at school level. The author reports that her intervention of competence classes led to statistically significant increases in the students’ self-efficacy in relation to their reported confidence to teach in six areas of mathematics problem solving. She asserts that quality pertains simultaneously to the design and conduct of the intervention and the associated research, to the students’ actions as beginning teachers and to teacher education faculties’ policies and practices in providing support to their students.

Donna Lee Brien and Jen Webb use Chapter Nine to shift the focus in examining quality from teacher education to creative arts in Australian universities. They demonstrate similar complexities in defining and practising creativity and quality, and a corresponding need to resist conceptualisations that are excessively utilitarian (one consequence of such conceptualisations being the marginalisation of creative arts within the academy). The authors deploy creative writing as a striking example of different approaches to learning and teaching that can generate innovative and resistant forms of knowledge and at the same time satisfy externally imposed markers of quality in those approaches.
Chapter Ten, by Tingjun Cao, transports us from Australia to the People’s Republic of China and the interface linking quality teaching and higher education reform. While showing that a preoccupation with the quality of current universities is both a global and yet a globally divergent phenomenon, the author focuses on several selected challenges and opportunities in changing university learning and teaching in China from the perspective of quality education. From that perspective, those challenges and opportunities also have strong resonances with, as well as important lessons for, universities in Australia and elsewhere.

In Chapter Eleven, Iwona Miliszewska inverts the discussion from changing nationally-based university learning and teaching to quality as it pertains to nationally-based universities teaching students in other countries via transnational education—specifically three programs provided by Australian universities in Hong Kong. The author proposes a multidimensional model for quality transnational education programs and validates it via the three Hong Kong programs, with the transnational students remarkably consistent in their identification of factors crucial to program quality, including appreciation of course requirements and students’ needs for the instructor and learning environment dimension and relevance to jobs and careers for the curriculum and instructional design dimension of the model. For the author, the model communicates program quality through the eyes of learners, with suggested implications for designing, developing and reviewing transnational education.

Michael Singh and Wei Guo use Chapter Twelve to take this focus on learners’ perceptions of transnational education in a different direction: the second author’s experiential learning as a Chinese postgraduate student in an Australian university. The authors explain how the concepts of knowledge detour and zigzag learning act as vivid descriptors of the student’s active engagement with higher degree research study and thereby constitute significant bilingual capabilities. Those capabilities are in turn posited as a useful litmus test for the local internationalisation of Australian universities, based on a new conception of quality in university teaching and a commensurate mobilisation of academic leadership.

Chapter Thirteen, by Jinghe Han and Dacheng Zhao, likewise proposes that academic leadership needs to be deployed through the mobilisation of double knowing as a means of internationalising higher degree research supervision as it relates to students from Asia studying in Australian universities. Like knowledge detour and zigzag learning, double knowing highlights the fluidity of cultural and disciplinary boundaries in international postgraduate education as well as the capabilities of students and supervisors who are able to traverse and transform those boundaries. The authors contend that quality
higher degree research student supervision needs to acknowledge, take up and enhance those capabilities, to the ultimate benefit of international students and Australian universities alike.

Finally in this section, in Chapter Fourteen Michael Singh and Dongqing Fu draw together some threads from the preceding chapters by focusing on the perceived and possible connection between quality Australian university teaching and the capabilities of students from China for scholarly argumentation—a fitting focus given the prominent involvement in writing this book by several members of the “Argumentative Asian Students” Research Cooperative at the University of Western Sydney in Australia. The authors—a Chinese higher degree student in Australia and her supervisor—dispel stereotypes of such students as uncritical, unfocused, plagiarising rote learners and instead use those stereotypes to highlight the students’ capabilities as argumentative and bilingual learners. This approach has broader implications for turning funds of knowledge into educational capital and for enhancing graduates’ attributes for harnessing local, national and global knowledge networks.

In terms of the organising question for this section, then—“How can different notions of quality make possible new and more empowering forms of university learning and teaching?”—the chapters arrayed here enact a rich diversity of such notions. Some of these derive from disciplinary domains, others from cultural and national differences. What they have in common is the demonstration of both the difficulty and the necessity in striving for new forms of learning and teaching in contemporary universities. Only then will quality successfully join leadership and technology in engaging and mobilising the knowledge to be derived from current and potential changes in that learning and teaching.
Chapter Five: 
Students’ Perceptions of a Quality Preparatory Program at an Australian Regional University: Success Through Changing Worldviews

Jeanne McConachie, Karen Seary and Jenny Simpson

Abstract

Recognising the unique demographic attributes of the Central Queensland region and the low participation rates in tertiary education of its citizens, CQUniversity (CQU) in 1986 introduced the Skills for Tertiary Education Preparatory Studies (STEPS) program, which is designed for adult learners returning to study, often after many years’ absence. Within CQU, the definition of ‘quality’ is ‘fitness for purpose’ and STEPS aims to deliver a quality program that gives adult learners the skills for success in tertiary studies. These skills, which balance the academic and the personal, assist students to shed unproductive worldviews that may have hindered past study. This chapter seeks to answer the research question: Do ex-STEPS students perceive that participating in the STEPS program increased their chances of success in undergraduate study, and did they have an advantage over their direct entry counterparts? Three themes are explored: academic skills, transformational learning and lecturers’ teaching. The research reveals that students believed that the STEPS program is a quality program, and that both the development of academic and personal skills and the transformation of restrictive worldviews had increased students’ probability of success in undergraduate study.

Introduction

CQUniversity (CQU) has recognised the unique demographic attributes of the Central Queensland region, where university participation rates are lower than the Australian average. This is recognised by the CQU Strategic Plan 2003–2007, which states that the university has had “to maximize success in outcomes for all its stakeholders through the quality enhancement
of its teaching, learning, research and community engagement” (Central Queensland University, 2001). For 22 years, access to tertiary education for the population of Central Queensland has been facilitated by the Skills for Tertiary Education Preparatory Studies (STEPS) program, which is designed for adult learners returning to study, often after many years’ absence.

Within CQU, the definition of ‘quality’ is ‘fitness for purpose’ and the STEPS program aims to deliver a quality curriculum that reflects both audience and purpose and leads adult learners to develop the skills that they will require for success in tertiary studies. Rather than focusing only on skill development, a holistic, innovative curriculum that balances the academic and the personal and innovative teaching strategies set out to change students’ unproductive worldviews, not only about their worlds but also about themselves as learners.

This chapter uses qualitative data to answer the research question: Do ex-STEPS students perceive that participating in the STEPS program increased their chances of success in undergraduate study, and did they have an advantage over their direct entry counterparts? This question is analysed by proposing that three themes engender the positive perceptions of STEPS graduates: academic skills, transformational learning and lecturers’ teaching. The chapter presents the history of CQU and the STEPS program with the aim of informing readers of the context in which these students study, thus allowing the research findings to be interpreted against this backdrop. The program NVivo was used to code the survey data, which overall reported that students believed that the STEPS program is a quality program as it did deliver very well on fitness for purpose. The development of academic and personal skills and the transformation of restrictive worldviews had increased students’ probability of success in undergraduate study.

CQUndergraduate

CQU is recognised as a young, energetic, innovative and richly diverse Australian university. Although the institution was formally recognised as a university only in 1992, CQU has a distinctive history dating back to 1967 when it was established as the Queensland Institute of Technology, Capricornia. During its early development, the institution was small and regional; in many ways it was an institution at the margins of higher education. However, the vision of both its founders and its continuing staff has been that of an institution that actively brokers change, promotes innovation and seeks to transform marginalisation—for students, for its community and for itself (McConachie, Harreveld, Luck, Nouwens, & Danaher, 2006). This vision is articulated in the CQU Strategic Plan: 2006–2011, where the university’s vision statement includes the following commitment: “Through multiple
pathways we will provide gateways for people with different learning styles to achieve their life aspirations” (Central Queensland University, 2007). Today CQU has developed a complex structure of 13 campuses reflecting its commitment to provide higher education opportunities for students in Central Queensland, Australia and abroad. In 2006, the university recorded a total of 24,102 students. Of this total, 11,587 were domestic students and 12,515 were international students (Doyle, 2006, p. 183), signifying a need to deliver university programs and consequent support initiatives attuned to the diverse needs of students located in various countries, regions and capital cities.

However, CQU has identified certain characteristics unique to the Central Queensland region that other universities in capital cities may not have to address as part of their responsibilities. Statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that people living in more remote areas of Australia have less chance of having tertiary qualifications. In major cities, 21% of people aged 25–64 have a bachelor degree or higher, while in regional areas the proportion is about half that. In regional areas, which include cities like Rockhampton, where CQU’s main campus is located, the proportion is 13%, while in very remote areas, which include parts of western and far north Queensland from which CQU draws students, it drops to 10% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003, p. 2 of 9). Since the Central Queensland region is an area with one of Australia’s lowest university participation rates, there was a need for a program that concentrated not only on academic skills but also on the attributes necessary to deal with personal and social change (McConachie & Simpson, 2003). This program would also need to transform negative attitudes to post-secondary education held by many Central Queenslanders. In response to this need, CQU pioneered what is now a highly successful program, STEPS, which is offered only to Australian residents on Central Queensland campuses and externally.

The STEPS Program

The STEPS program is an innovation premised on the principles of andragogy introduced to give previously educationally disadvantaged adults a second chance at education by preparing them for successful tertiary study at CQU. Originating as a full-time program in Rockhampton in 1986 with an intake of 22 students, the program was aimed at socially disadvantaged groups—Aboriginal and Islander, female, migrant, poor, family dysfunctional or technologically redundant. Since this time, the program has grown to enrol up to 500 students per year across five Central Queensland campuses—Bundaberg, Emerald, Gladstone, Mackay and Rockhampton. Today STEPS is available to people 18 years and older who do not possess a satisfactory tertiary entrance qualification. Eligible participants can take part in either the 12 week
full-time or the 24 week part-time program with varying modes of delivery such as the external mode. Students are chosen biannually for the program based on entrance test results, consideration of educational disadvantages, motivation and a face-to-face interview. A much needed pathway to higher education for mature age and marginalised students, STEPS aims to assist adult learners in developing the academic skills, attitudes and values to enhance the chances of becoming successful undergraduates. A second chance, STEPS allows adult learners to return to institutionalised learning to develop in ways many once thought not possible.

**Academic and personal skills**

Quality in all areas of learning is something for which the STEPS program strives. The STEPS mission statement emphasises its aim as providing a quality curriculum within a supportive learning environment that fosters in adult learners the personal and academic skills for progression to undergraduate study. To aid this progression, the program and textbooks are provided free of charge to all students. Being out of the education system for some time, many of these adults may encounter “skill deficits in a number of key process areas critical to college [university] success” (DeRoma, 2005, p. 20). STEPS aims to empower students to address weaknesses in time management, goal setting, motivation and basic study skills as well as academic skills. However, Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (1998, p. 172) acknowledge that “adults are most ready to learn when the learning meets an immediate life need, and are most motivated when learning fills an internal need.” Consequently, the STEPS team believes that in any worthwhile adult learning program the inner as well as the outer lives of adult learners must be catered for. This is achieved through a student-centred, holistic curriculum that aims to transform unproductive worldviews and emphasises cooperation in an empowering learning environment.

**Transformational Learning**

Transformational learning lies at the heart of the STEPS program. STEPS staff understand the trepidation with which many learners approach both the program and the prospect of tertiary study, and acknowledge that many see themselves as ‘damaged learners’ as a result of past negative life and learning experiences. A vital element of transformational learning is emancipatory learning, which frees learners from restrictive influences, and Cranton (2006) believes that it is the central goal of adult education. Given the typically low university participation rates in the Central Queensland region and the consequent negative perceptions concerning tertiary education, the use of transformational learning in the STEPS program is particularly important.
An innovative and key part of this transformational approach is the mythic structure of the Hero’s Journey. This model for change is based on the work of mythologist Joseph Campbell (1993). In 1949, after having made a study of world hero myths, Campbell published *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. So popular was the book that it has been reprinted many times, and in 1996 his famous stages for change were developed by Christopher Vogler in *The Writer’s Journey*. A powerful model, the stages of the hero’s journey give people a timeless pattern for the conflict and confusion that they themselves may experience as they confront the challenges necessary for growth. As adult learners leave the comfort zone of the known, they cross the first threshold and encounter tests, allies and enemies, often experiencing what Campbell calls Supreme Ordeals before they are able to shed outmoded patterns and transform their worldviews. For many, being made aware that their life changes share the same pattern as well-loved stories, and that they are not alone in the discomfort that such challenges bring, is freeing. Recognising this may allow adult learners to gain a greater self-awareness and insight into both learning and life.

**STEPS Courses**

Transformation in worldviews, both personal and academic, is attempted through a program based around the following four courses, which are continually being reviewed and developed to fit changing times:

**Tertiary Preparation Skills** gives students an understanding of their unique learning preferences and temperament types. In addition, students develop organisational strategies, and the oral presentation and research/information literacy skills necessary for academic studies.

**Language and Learning** aims to help students acquire the reading, thinking and writing skills necessary for academic purposes through a holistic approach by introducing them to whole brain learning strategies and helping them find their own writing voices.

**Computing for Academic Assignment Writing** skills are those necessary for word processing assignments correctly; creating spreadsheets; and developing research skills using the Internet (World Wide Web and Webmail in particular).

**Transition Mathematics 1** is a course in elementary mathematics designed to introduce students to the foundation concepts, rules and methods of basic mathematics, and focuses on formative assessment that facilitates a non-threatening engagement between students and teaching staff.

The following student-centred model (illustrated in Figure 5–1) emphasises the philosophy of transformation evident in the Language and Learning component of the program.
Although the student lies at the centre of STEPS, as Figure 5–1 shows, the importance of interconnectedness is also recognised. Predominant in the STEPS curriculum, connectedness also occurs in classrooms through the development of learning communities. STEPS has always been proud of the quality of pastoral care offered to its students by the lecturing staff. Nevertheless, lecturers also encourage collaborative learning through the belief that a productive team can achieve many more worthwhile outcomes than can individual effort. The strong, positive support of the group can guide the individual to such a degree that, by the end of the program, powerful bonds have been forged that carry over into students’ university studies.

As well as peer support, the personal and academic skills that learners acquire in STEPS can herald successful university study. Saenz, Marcoulides, Junn, and Young (1999, p. 101) state that “the use of effective study habits has been associated with academic integration and university retention, with high achieving students more likely to use effective strategies than [their] low-achieving counterparts”. Therefore it has always been believed that the academic skills, self-awareness and confidence gained as a consequence of the STEPS program positively influence the perception of STEPS students about succeeding in university study. From 2001 to 2006, 67% of students who graduated from the STEPS program went on to enrol in tertiary programs at CQU. STEPS graduates are often highly sought after in the faculties, and some CQU faculty staff report that the retention rate of ex-STEPS students is higher than that of their direct entry counterparts (Doyle, 2006). Furthermore,
the Vice-Chancellor of CQU suggests that many STEPS students tend to out-perform the broader student population once they reach university (Rickard, 2006, p. x) and endorses STEPS as a university ‘flagship’ program. Commitment and a passion to achieve, added to the skills that STEPS students have acquired, make undergraduate success easier to attain.

**STEPS Teaching**

Innovative ways of learning and teaching and lecturer support are also seen as crucial for students who have been marginalised from formal education in the past. It is, therefore, a fundamental aim of STEPS lecturers to recognise the varying learning styles of students and construct classroom environments that cater for these needs. STEPS lecturers are encouraged to be well versed in adult learning principles, and gaining an understanding of both students’ temperament types and learning styles early in the program greatly assists both lecturers and learners in using ways of learning and teaching that will lead often failed learners to success. For example, thinking skills for academic writing are developed through whole brain strategies such as mind mapping and the use of Edward de Bono’s coloured hats (1990). Much of the STEPS philosophy reflects the work of United States academic Parker J. Palmer (1998), who believes that educators have a responsibility to teach in ways that heal and not harm either learners or the world in which we live. Consequently, STEPS lecturers are encouraged to be particularly supportive of students and their sometimes uncomfortable learning journeys. Past CQU professor, John Dekkers, believes that “the STEPS program is not only about giving people knowledge, but [also] getting the right tutor to change their attitudes” (Doyle 2006, p. 25). An important aspect of academic integration is contact with faculty members (Rowser, as cited in Saenz et al., 1999), and face-to-face contact time with lecturers is high for students enrolled internally. These students also have the option of revising their work outside of class time in designated study rooms attended by STEPS lecturers, who also support students by discussing any problems that they may be having with the program. Knowing that they are not alone on their learning journeys is indispensable for uneasy learners.

**Quality of Leadership**

The success that the STEPS program has enjoyed over many years can be attributed in part to the far sighted leadership of CQU’s Vice-Chancellors. Ian Goulter was the Acting Vice-Chancellor in the early 1990s at a time of great growth in the program. He believed in the transforming role of universities and acknowledged that STEPS was a contributing factor to that transformation.
He also championed the program as a place where students could try out tertiary education “in a safe, but challenging, environment” (Doyle, 2006, p.31). His successor, Lauchlan Chipman, Vice-Chancellor of CQU from 1996 to 2001, was another supporter.

I’ve seen a lot of well-intentioned preparation programs but I was very impressed at that early stage with the track record of STEPS. One of the good things about the way it was managed is that the staff were scrupulous about actually finding out if STEPS delivered the results that it was set up to deliver. (Doyle, 2006, p. 45)

Glenice Hancock, Vice-Chancellor of CQU from 2001 to 2004, had been a passionate educator all of her adult life, delivering educational programs in schools and prisons as well as in universities. She saw the role of a regional university such as CQU as “opening educational windows” for the citizens of the region, and willingly admits that “when I first joined CQU and throughout my stay there, STEPS captured my educator’s heart and imagination” (Doyle, 2006, p. 44).

These Vice-Chancellors came at a time of a great paradigm shift in the Australian higher education sector. Thomas Kuhn found in his study of scientific revolutions (1962) that protectors of the old paradigm cannot be convinced with better arguments. It is, therefore, essential to wait until they retire from their positions, thus making way for younger and more open scholars (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2007). Ian Goulter was the Acting Vice-Chancellor at the time of the Australian Federal Government’s championing of more inclusionary university entrance, when the term “massification of higher education” was coined. Many senior academics were sceptical about more open entry and higher education for the masses because they feared a lowering of standards. This was a concept that Senge et al. (2007) discussed when they stated: “What they saw was bounded by what they already knew. They hadn’t developed the ability of seeing with fresh eyes” (p. 28). The authors further stated that “seeing freshly starts with stopping our habitual ways of thinking and perceiving” (p. 29). The growth of the STEPS program was made possible through the championship of leaders who had the fresh eyes to recognise that more flexible entry was going to benefit not only the individual but also the university and society as a whole.

**Surveys**

Retention rates and student feedback through course evaluations have been recorded over many years. At the end of each program, each student is required to complete an evaluation form for each of the four courses. Consistently high student evaluations across all courses have been received since electronic records have been kept. For example, the average rating
across all courses and all five Central Queensland campuses for the years 2001 to 2006 was four out of a possible five. STEPS has also had a relatively high retention rate for all internal programs, with the average for the years 2000 to 2006, again across all campuses, standing at 77.5%.

However, little research has been carried out to examine past students’ perceptions of whether participating in the STEPS program increased their probability of success in their undergraduate studies. Therefore, for this project, students who had successfully completed the STEPS program at CQU were surveyed to investigate what areas of the curriculum they perceived were “useful” and “not useful”. In addition, in the spirit of the continuous improvement of STEPS courses, the students were asked to give feedback on perceived gaps in their skills and attributes when they entered undergraduate studies.

**Data collection**

As a means of collecting the necessary data from past STEPS students, in 2006 a self-administered survey was sent to students via the postal system. This survey attempted to identify the areas of the STEPS program that students felt helped them with their undergraduate study. Of the total sent, 302 were returned for analysis. It is worth mentioning that the database of addresses used to contact STEPS students held information dating as far back as 1986 when the program began; consequently, many of the surveys did not reach the intended STEPS students owing to factors such as change of residential address. A total of 150 non-completed surveys were returned for this very reason. The survey consisted of a pre-formulated written set of questions to which respondents recorded their answers either on a likert scale, for closed questions, or in the space provided, for open ended questions. The themes that students addressed covered academic skills, transformative learning and teaching.

**Survey Results**

The sorting and coding of the data and the development of the themes for this chapter were carried out using NVivo, a qualitative program developed by QSR. The comments from 302 surveys were entered into the database in which the three main themes were identified, including both positive and negative statements from STEPS students.

Recent advances in technology have made qualitative research much easier. Ozkan (2004, p. 590) explains that “computers in the qualitative analysis process may add rigour and prestige to [the] research study, [and] also to the believability and quality of the analysis”. NVivo assists in taking a broad concept with multiple external documents, as in the surveys for this study, and assists the researcher to sort them into manageable themes. NVivo also allows easy sorting with its advanced
searching style, enabling the researcher to run what are known as ‘queries’ in order to find comments made in relation to specific themes. A level of subjectivity must inevitably enter into the coding process as a means of analysing the data. The way in which students answer questions may not exactly match what the researcher is searching for. Therefore a combination of manual sorting and querying through NVivo was used in order to increase the rigour of this research and decrease the likelihood of human error. The results of the three main themes—academic skills, transformational learning and lecturers’ teaching—are developed below.

**Academic skills**

There are several skills deemed necessary to succeed in vocational study that university entrants may not possess. The development of academic skills was seen as a highly advantageous aspect of completing the STEPS program with study, organisational, mathematical, reading, writing, computer and research skills all falling under the banner of “academic skills”. It is stated in STEPS documentation that students who graduate from the STEPS program are expected to demonstrate the ability to read effectively and write precisely and accurately for academic purposes, deal with basic mathematical concepts and methods, develop computer literacy and basic word processing skills, gain confidence in themselves as learners and acquire organisational skills for effective learning. Both positive and negative comments were collected regarding students’ perceptions of the skills that they did or did not adopt during the program.

There was an extremely positive response rate from students regarding academic skills supported by these representative students’ comments:

STEPS really does prepare you for what is to come. Knowing how to construct an essay, use library research tools, time management etc. I could go on and on—I can’t praise STEPS enough.

Language and Learning, library research and referencing, positive thinking (very important), time management, mathematics, computing for academic writing were all covered extensively and appropriately.

Learning how to write assignments, being able to experience the deadlines and pressure of getting assessments in on time, understanding what is required from a uni student and STEPS really prepared me for this.

An increased sense of ability was a common theme recorded by students. For many students, just knowing that they had acquired academic skills meant that they could eliminate unrealistic and negative expectations that they had held in relation to their study. This was demonstrated by one student’s explanation:

The settling in period in the first year—putting into place what I had learnt through STEPS—got me through.
It was also noted that students appreciated the ability to see what was expected of them in an academic environment. This eased the tension of returning to what for most is a daunting and unknown environment. Another student declared that a positive aspect of the STEPS program was:

… being given the skills and knowledge of academic writing, using the computer for assignments and knowing what would be expected of me.

There were, however, some negative comments about the teaching of academic skills within the STEPS program. Most of these related to the need for a more effective computing and mathematics curriculum. Some students felt that the computer course was too extensive.

Your computer course runs too long and there is too much information to absorb. Running more classes for shorter periods would be helpful.

There were also comments concerning the mathematics course.

Personally the maths while very stimulating had little relevance to my studies.

Students’ views of ways to improve the program included comments that the mathematics and computer literacy courses should change the order of some of the topics. Changing order was reinforced by other comments.

The content of TPS [Tertiary Preparation Skills], although valuable, was taught towards the end of the program and would have been more beneficial towards the start.

I think this and the importance of prioritising study, work and social activities should be introduced more towards the start of the program.

**Transformational learning**

As indicated earlier in this chapter, the STEPS program is based around a philosophy of transformational learning as a means of personal growth. Personal growth is an extremely individual and highly subjective term. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, it was assumed that personal growth could apply to any comments referring to a student’s change towards positive thinking and behaviour that proved helpful in the learning journey—for example, the growth of confidence, self-esteem, motivation and self-awareness. The STEPS philosophy of transformation encompasses not only student academic skill levels but also the ways in which students perceive themselves as learners. Many of the students who join STEPS have a preconceived idea of their capacity to learn and even what learning is, and very often these perceptions prove to be erroneous. Therefore a vital aspect of STEPS teaching is to facilitate change in students’ perception of themselves as failed learners.
While many students thought before STEPS that they were not capable of attempting an undergraduate degree, they agreed that the program had given them every chance of succeeding. Through highlighting past negative beliefs and experiences that could deter them from success at university education, STEPS helped students gain confidence and motivation towards study. The following comments demonstrate this theme:

I felt doing STEPS put me on a level footing with other students which is remarkable considering I left school in 1975 having completed year 10.

The STEPS teachers instilled a belief that I wasn’t as academically incompetent as 10 years at school made me think.

For the first time in my life the STEPS lecturers treated me as an equal.

Confidence is critical for many students whose self-esteem has been damaged by previous attempts at study. Many positive comments were made in relation to the fact that doing STEPS had increased students’ confidence for tertiary study.

STEPS gave me the confidence to continue further study. It prepared me for the work load and [gave me] an insight into what to expect.

The confidence the STEPS program gave me to believe I was capable of further study was a real advantage.

I had insight into what information to look for, how to set out an assignment, and gained referencing skills and more confidence in my own capability.

A large proportion of STEPS students rely heavily on support both academically and personally as a part of this transformational stage of their academic career. Through this support, STEPS proved highly beneficial in allowing students to obtain the self-esteem that they needed to harness skills that they thought were beyond them.

… the wonderful encouragement, support and the opportunity it has given me.

There were, however, some instances where students commented that they were not fully prepared for their undergraduate experience. Although few in number, there were some comments that reported that STEPS did not accurately portray what undergraduate study was really like. One student in particular made a comment that s/he would like:

… more actual academic work and less ‘feel good’. More emphasis on coping with stress[.] I see a lot of my fellow students suffering depression.
One comment was also made about the difference in support as there was … no ‘assistance’ from lecturers.

Once they began their undergraduate studies, students realised that not all areas of academic development could be covered as part of the STEPS program. Personal improvement areas such as motivation and self-esteem can sometimes prove difficult to instil in students. For example, some students felt that “being self-disciplined” and “maintaining motivation” were quite difficult to sustain after leaving the STEPS environment. Although some of these areas were covered in the STEPS program, it was still perceived by some students as an issue of concern. This is due to the fact that students cannot completely understand what is involved in undergraduate study until they are immersed in it. For example:

… time management was identified during the STEPS course [sic] but it is difficult to understand until you actually begin your degree.

Because the level of support and access to lecturing staff was so different in the faculties to the STEPS environment, it was difficult to be prepared for this.

**Lecturers’ teaching**

Any quality enabling program demands quality teaching, and from the ex-students’ responses this is what, for the most part, STEPS has consistently delivered over many years.

STEPS is a well thought out program academically and emotionally. Overall a program taught exceptionally well.

Positive and supportive teachers are commended on keeping students positive and encouraged to further their studies.

Love you all! I felt you went that little bit further and taught—not just lectured.

Your love of your job was inspiring and motivating.

Countless adult learners have faced difficult life situations prior to their return to study, and many comments showed how greatly the life-affirming aspects of STEPS were appreciated.

You didn’t have much to work with and stubborn at times I could be but thanks to you all. You changed my life and I’m so grateful.

Thank you for caring, pushing, helping and making learning relevant—a whole approach that not only taught me ‘academics’ but about aspects of life.

I wouldn’t be the person I am today without your support and belief in me.
When comments given by STEPS graduates were analysed, it was easy to see the positive outcomes that such influential teachers had spawned. There was no shortage of comments relating to how much the support of lecturers had meant to them. Such comments include:

STEPS lecturers did and still support me in every sense of the word, and instilled confidence in me. I don’t hum and ha over assignments. I am more aggressive at accessing help.

Thank you. Your support, effort, dedication have changed more lives than you all realise.

Although there were very few negative comments made in relation to the curriculum and teaching quality in STEPS, it is worth mentioning that one student felt differently.

Difficulties tended to lie in some of the set reading texts (some seem off in another sphere, difficult reading). Also, lecturing styles—how well they communicated the content at hand and how they marked.

Consistency of lecturer in relation to what they say and what or how they actually expect or do. Seems they change the rules and get away with it.

Nevertheless, the STEPS lecturers receive great praise from most responders, as can be seen in comments such as the following:

Words to express my gratitude are not yet obtainable. The care shown, the knowledge shared and the skills passed on were like concrete foundations on which I could build. Without STEPS teachers’ efforts I would still be gardening.

From the teaching that the STEPS lecturers provide comes a sense of reciprocal respect between teaching staff and the students. This is illustrated by the following comment from a university lecturer:

Whenever I got a STEPS student in my classes, they would stand out in a way—just for their awareness of what they had to do and their understanding of how university worked. The students also show great respect for the lecturers.

In view of such positive statements about the quality of teaching and support from STEPS lecturers, it is unfortunate for the organisation that some students have stated that the level of support that they experienced in STEPS was not always replicated in their undergraduate experience, sometimes making studying difficult once they left the STEPS program. Some of the students’ comments concerning this issue included:

… the lack of finding assistance/guidance when it is most needed. Phone calls/messages go unanswered, appointments made & no-one there etc. It was always there whilst doing the STEPS course [sic].
Subjects were offered externally—lack of support from tutors responsible for those subjects made it difficult to cope.

Leaving their comfort zones and turning to the unknown world of academic learning for most adult learners takes courage. These learners on a quest to change their lives have shown that their success was due in part to teachers who understood the wisdom of being the Guide on the Side, and a program that recognised their humanness. One student concluded her survey comments with the following words:

I still think back to STEPS as one of the most enjoyable and satisfying courses I have done.

But perhaps this comment said it best:

Thanks for giving us hope.

Other Statistical Evidence

It is important to mention comments not specifically relating to the three themes identified above that are still relevant to the perception of STEPS students and the research question. Table 5–1 below points out four interesting findings:

- A total of 42.5% of the total number of participants who responded to the question that required their age on entering STEPS (280) indicated that they were between the ages of 31 and 40. This percentage points out that a large proportion of STEPS students are many years older than school leaving age.

- One survey question investigated whether STEPS students went on to enrol in further study after completing the STEPS program. A total of 280 participants responded to this question, with 245 or 87.5% answering that they did continue their studies. This statistic suggests that the STEPS program is widely recognised as a program that adequately prepares students to embark on tertiary education and that university faculties are willing to accept STEPS students into their programs. It also indicates that STEPS students perceive that they are capable of studying at this level and are motivated to pursue further study.

- The above finding is further supported by the fact that 65% of STEPS students felt that they had an academic advantage compared to other direct entry students. This finding links to the perception that the STEPS program increases their probability of success in undergraduate study.
Finally, to understand the aspects of the program that STEPS students valued the most, responses were coded into nine curriculum components. The results of this coding are illustrated in Table 5–1. There was a total of 401 comments made in relation to these areas, with the top four areas being academic writing skills (19.2%), assignment preparation (16.2%), referencing (14.7%) and computers (13.9%). Figure 5–2 diagrammatically represents these proportions. There were more comments made than the total surveys returned. This is because some participants made multiple comments relating to an area of the curriculum. The proportions shown in Figure 5–2 indicate that groups of students valued different elements of the STEPS program and that these components holistically were relevant in assisting with undergraduate study.

Table 5–1: Selected statistics relating to the STEPS course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Responses Given</th>
<th>Total Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aged between 31 and 40</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who went onto further study</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEPS students who felt that they had an academic advantage compared to other direct entry students</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>65.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most valued aspects of STEPS program:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Writing Skills</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment Preparation</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Skills</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of Vocational Expectations</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5–2: Depiction of students’ most valued aspects of STEPS

Conclusion

The Vice-Chancellors of CQU have been justified in placing their confidence in STEPS and proclaiming the program as a ‘flagship’ in educational innovation. Data from students demonstrate that, through the STEPS program, the university is addressing its mission “to maximise success in outcomes for all its stakeholders through quality education.” This is an important outcome because many of these students reported that success came only after they were prepared to change their worldviews about not only rightful access to higher education but also their own ability to learn. Over 80% of the respondents to the survey described earlier reported that they gained the confidence to enrol in undergraduate studies. Students perceived that their increased academic skills and their personal growth through transformational learning were achieved, not only through the curriculum but also from both the teaching and the support of the lecturers. However, even though the numbers were minimal, there were comments from students that demonstrate that there is room for improvement, particularly in mathematics and computing. The majority expressed their appreciation to CQU for offering this innovative community program, and asserted that their participation in the program was the foundation for their success not only in undergraduate study in university but also, for many, in life itself.

Continuous improvement has been an important element in the ongoing success of the program. Over the years, in order to meet the needs of the changing student base, STEPS lecturers have changed the curriculum, updated text books and addressed other improvements suggested by past students. The
recent review of the strategic plan is evidence that the university recognises that it must continue to revise not only its mission statement but also the purpose of the STEPS program in order for curriculums to remain relevant to students and be recognised still as fit for purpose. The research in this chapter shows that the majority of students found that the program met their needs; therefore CQU can justify its contention that STEPS is a program of high quality.

More broadly, this largely successful outcome speaks from beyond one program in one university to all contemporary universities engaging with a complex mix of concerns and drivers. Educational innovation and learner transformation might be stated goals in mission statements, but they are very difficult to achieve in practice. That STEPS has done so over the past 22 years reflects the resilience of the students, the professionalism of the teaching staff, and the vision and support of the leaders of CQU. This outcome augurs well for learning and teaching at CQU and for generational empowerment in the Central Queensland community.

References


Chapter Six: 
Film as a Vehicle for Researching Problems Relevant to Students’ Future Careers: Evidence Driven Research and Quality University Teaching

Michael Singh, Hongying Qi and Jin Hu

Abstract
This chapter examines the proposition that popular films may be used as primary evidence for developing an understanding of quality university teaching for students interested in a teaching career. Four interrelated elements are woven into the exploration of this suggestion. A meta-analysis of the research literature by Zammit, Sinclair, Cole, and Singh (2007) is used to define “quality teaching.” The review then focuses on the relationship between student diversity and quality teaching. The research focus for this study was refined during the course of the research process itself. Thus, a short explanation of the project’s natural history is provided. An analysis of Professor Higgins’s teaching methods, as depicted in the film My Fair Lady is presented. The analysis of his methods highlights his use of teaching aids, error correction, scaffolding student learning, teaching spoken English, reinforcement training and rote learning. This depiction of Professor Higgin’s teaching methods is then used as a vehicle to discuss what may be regarded as quality university teaching.

Introduction
Two challenges face English language majors and their supervisors in China in preparing Masters theses. These are learning to collect and analyse primary evidence, and linking their research project to their planned career trajectory. This chapter explores the possibilities for working towards these interrelated goals. This is done with due regard for two important considerations. First, the feasibility of any evidence driven research thesis must take into account the accessibility of the primary evidence and secondary research literature available to students undertaking their Masters projects, in this instance in
north-east China. This issue arises in a context where many Masters theses are constructed as literature reviews. Students also need to be taught about research processes involved in the gathering and analysis of first-hand evidence. Second, Masters graduates in English are finding it increasingly difficult to gain employment in their preferred career as university lecturers.

There are several interrelated reasons for this career challenge. China is reducing the number of compulsory credits in college English required by all university students because of the proficiency that many are able to achieve and the need for more primary English teachers. This is the focus of current reform efforts. Theses that do not explicitly orient them to their future employment trajectory, but are preoccupied with decontextualised, linguistic abstractions are increasingly being questioned in the context of mounting labour market competition. These developments pose challenges to those lecturers responsible for supervising Masters students especially in terms of explicitly teaching the skills and knowledge required to marry these two goals. Thus, this chapter explores the use of film as one source of primary evidence for researching an issue relevant to Masters students’ future careers as lecturers, namely an investigation into quality university teaching.

What counts as “quality university teaching” varies amongst different stakeholders, across different sites and through time. Even so this issue is of particular interest to Masters students wishing to pursue a career in this field. What, for example, might be said about the attributes of quality teaching of a professor who, owing to political, economic, social, cultural and institutional changes in society, insisted that Masters students use standardised “Voice of America” English rather than one of its other (standardised) dialects? Quality university teaching might be operationally defined as teaching that produces improvements in students’ learning outcomes. What then, are we to make of the quality of teaching of a professor who recognised students’ linguistic differences and successfully eradicated one of these by having them achieve advanced proficiency in standardised, ‘cut-glass BBC’ English?

Another approach to defining quality university teaching is that it involves professional practices that demonstrate the expert knowledge of a particular field. In that case how might we judge the quality of teaching of a professor who does not necessarily teach Masters students the knowledge and skills required for engaging in rigorous research processes? He or she does not integrate this knowledge with their career aspirations. He or she does not make any constructive connections between this knowledge and students’ prior learning. What if the professor’s expectation for whatever students learnt was very high? Then again, quality university teaching might be defined as requiring a deep understanding of the underlying principles of teaching; accumulated experience in evidence driven research practices; a familiarity with recent
advances in knowledge of research methods and postgraduate supervisory pedagogies; and capabilities in the best available research techniques and methods for teaching Masters research students. Following this line of thinking, what assessment might be made about the quality of teaching of a professor who was enthusiastic, creative, committed and passionate about teaching and research? Even so, the professor does not use pedagogies to motivate, engage and commit Masters students to learning about a range of research processes. He or she does not use methods of research supervision that enhance students’ strategies for meta-cognitive learning and does not productively collaborate with them as early career researchers.

Typically such assessments of quality university teaching are made in confidential reports supplied by external reviewers of international standing to university promotions panels. Asking such questions of actual flesh-and-blood professors is, of course, regarded as a provocation and is likely to cause offence. It would do little to advance any appreciation of what quality university teaching might involve or how it might be better realised. Getting some distance, in space and time, from real professors is possible using some of the many feature films that deal with university teaching. Thus, this chapter investigates the possibilities for using as primary evidence representations of teaching made in popular films as a means of developing an understanding and appreciation of quality university teaching. This issue is pertinent to graduates planning a career in this field.

This proposition is explored through four interrelated concerns. First, the development of this argument is informed by a review of the research literature on quality teaching. The focus is specifically on what the presence of linguistic diversity among students means for teaching. Second, a brief methodological note indicates how the research focus for this study was refined through the course of the project’s history. Third, based on analysis of the film My Fair Lady key features of Professor Higgins’ teaching method are presented. These findings are used as a basis for discussing what may or may not be regarded as quality teaching. My Fair Lady and the play on which it is based, George Bernard Shaw’s Pygmalion, have long been successful as popular entertainment. Here Higgins’s teaching methods provide a useful vehicle for considering the place of teaching aids, error correction, scaffolding, the teaching of public speaking, reinforcement training, and rote learning in the light of current considerations of quality teaching.

Conceptualising Quality University Teaching

To develop an understanding of quality university teaching, a short review of the secondary evidence available in the research literature is provided here. This may give Masters students intent on working in this field some insights into what is expected. Quality teaching may be defined through its impact on student outcomes, or through the teachers’ acquisition of professional attributes
The research literature identifies a range of contexts, professional practices and, teacher attributes associated with quality teaching that impact, positively or negatively, on students’ learning outcomes (Ayres, Sawyer, & Dinham, 2004; Singh, 1992). Quality teaching can have an impact on students’ cognitive, affective and behavioural outcomes. The impact of poor teaching on students over time is not only measurable but also debilitating and cumulative. For instance, a study by Aduwa-Ogiegbaen and Iyamu (2006) revealed that in Nigeria the infrequent use of modern instructional technologies and of a variety of teaching techniques was affected by the harshness of the learning environment. It was rowdy, congested and noisy.

Importantly, however, it has been found that quality teaching does not involve applying a predetermined set of methods in the hope that successful learning will automatically be guaranteed to follow (Darling-Hammond & Young, 2002). Rather, quality teaching is contextualised and dynamic. It involves giving serious attention to, and making decisions about, an array of interacting factors that ultimately influence students and their learning outcomes (Thrupp, 1998). The research is clear on this point. The decisions that teachers make about their contexts, and the actions that they take, can bring improvements to the learning outcomes and capabilities of their students (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005; Kennedy, 2006). This chapter explores the possibilities of using evidence of the impact of teaching on students’ learning, as represented in popular film, as a means of developing insights into contemporary views on quality university teaching.

The research literature indicates that the operationalisation of quality teaching involves a dynamic interplay among the three interrelated domains of contexts, practices and attributes. The socio-economic and cultural-political contexts play powerful roles in shaping the structures, opportunities and dynamics of quality teaching (Blackmore, 2004; Law, 2003). It is difficult to understand fully the challenges of improving students’ learning outcomes without taking into account the intersections of these dynamics forces (see for example Greenwald, Hedges, & Laine, 1996; Johnson & Landman, 2000). Table 6–1 below provides a conceptualisation and an operational definition of quality teaching based on a meta-analysis undertaken by Zammit, Sinclair, Cole, and Singh (2007). They conceptualised quality teaching in terms of:

1. the dynamic contexts in which teachers work and which influence policy and practice;
2. the professional practices of teaching that impact organisation, pedagogies, effectiveness and student learning outcomes; and
3. the capabilities and attributes of teachers that contribute to effective practice.
Table 6–1: A conceptualisation and operational definition of quality teaching
(Adapted from Zammit, Sinclair, Cole, & Singh, 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual attributes of quality teaching</th>
<th>Operational features of quality teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teaching context</td>
<td>shaped by a complex and interacting array of societal, systemic and academic factors that include socio-economic changes, reforms to the education system and changing expectations of educational institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing expectations, changing times</td>
<td>changes in the social, technical, political, economic and cultural contexts of education influence, but do not decisively determine the quality of teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse student communities</td>
<td>The increasingly diverse range of students (often as the result of government policy) adds to the complexities of quality teaching, yet can have a positive impact on the achievement of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning environment and management</td>
<td>Quality teaching is influenced by the physical and managerial features of the learning environment, and where institutions have an educative or managerial focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ professionalism</td>
<td>Quality teaching is contextualised and flexible, and involves employing a range of meta-cognitive teaching/learning strategies that fit student needs and the demands of educational goals, topics and methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of content</td>
<td>Quality teaching involves using content which is of high intellectual quality, integrated across a variety of knowledge disciplines, connected to students’ prior knowledge and relevant to their work/life trajectories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control over curriculum and its design</td>
<td>Quality teaching occurs when the whole-of-program has a focus on learning and teaching with high expectations of all students, rather than on administrative or managerial imperatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and practice of quality pedagogies</td>
<td>Quality teaching motivates, engages and commits students to learning, as well as enhances their strategies for learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching attributes and capabilities</td>
<td>Quality teachers are enthusiastic, creative, committed and passionate about their work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal attributes and capabilities</td>
<td>Good communication is a key attribute of quality teaching, being needed to assist students to understand new ideas and to achieve to the best of their abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational attributes and capabilities</td>
<td>Quality teaching is evident in the opportunities that teachers have to develop and show leadership, bringing benefits to student outcomes in terms of skills, morale, retention and engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional attributes and capabilities</td>
<td>Fully qualified and certified teachers have a positive impact on student leaning, whereas uncertified teachers have a detrimental impact on their learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To narrow the parameters for this study the focus now turns to a consideration of student diversity and its relationship with quality teaching. Quicke (2000) reports that a limitation on the efforts to improve the effectiveness of formal education has been a lack of appreciation of students’ cultural diversity. The linguistic diversity of students adds to the complexities of quality teaching (Bishop, 2003). Typically, changes in the demographics of student population are due to changing government policies (O’Brien & Schillaci, 2002). Such policy changes include efforts to retain and increase the participation of young people in learning; shifts in labour immigration; moves to address youth unemployment, and provision for special needs students. Based on an extensive meta-analysis of research on student achievement, as well as analysis of United States policies in 50 states and student achievement scores in reading and mathematics, Darling-Hammond (2000) found that student characteristics such as poverty, World English Speaking background and ethnicity were negatively correlated with student learning outcomes. However, quality teaching was shown to mediate the extent of influence of these demographic characteristics.

Research by Hill and Russell (1999) shows that students’ cultural/linguistic backgrounds interact significantly with teaching practices to affect their learning outcomes. Differences in ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds affect students’ learning (Han & Singh, 2007). Liu (1998) found evidence of strong ethnocentrism in teaching in the Western English-speaking countries, especially evident in the neglect of the educational needs of students from other countries. Teaching strategies that enhance students’ scholastic achievement tend to be open to, and engage their ethnicity and home language (Hargreaves, 2000). Alton-Lee (2003) reports that quality teaching is responsive to student diversity; it makes a positive impact on both low and high achievers. Quality teaching has been found to involve the use of content which is of high intellectual quality, integrated from a variety of knowledge disciplines, connected to students’ prior knowledge and relevant to their work/life trajectories (Hayes, Mills, Christie, & Lingard, 2005). The research indicates that rigour and relevance in the selection of curriculum content influence and are influenced by quality teaching. There is a positive relationship between content with these characteristics and enhanced student learning outcomes (Hu, 2005; Rowan, Camburn, & Correnti, 2004).

Quality teaching employs content that recognises differences amongst students and is responsive to their diversity (Fouts, 2003). This involves having knowledge of the students’ characteristics and making teaching responsive to these. Diverse sources of knowledge from different educational cultures are recognised and brought into play as part of deliberate attempts to increase the educational participation of students from different linguistic backgrounds (Singh & Han, 2006). The educational relevance of this knowledge was
made explicit to students, just as the cultural practices of their educational institutions were also explicitly taught. Ways of taking and making meaning of the students’ funds of knowledge and the educational culture in which they were now studying were made evident (Chapman, Weidman, Cohen, & Mercer, 2005). These culturally appropriate content choices involved quality teaching practices that respected and affirmed the students’ access to funds of knowledge from a range of educational cultures, and so optimised educational opportunities for them (Alton-Lee, 2003). Students’ prior experiential knowledge was also recognised and built upon with new information that was linked to their experiential knowledge. Having considered the secondary evidence from the research literature, we now turn to the process that we used for generating primary evidence.

Refining the Research Process

Our idea was to examine the representations of university teaching to be found in films. These were to be taken as a source of primary evidence for developing an understanding of quality university teaching. However, this idea was not just conjured up in the researchers’ minds. The research question did not exist out there somewhere in the world waiting for the researchers to find it. Producing this research problem was not easy. It involved “coming face to face with something strange and new, looking afresh at the familiar, making a connection between things and ideas that were previously apart” (Clark, 2003, p. 28). The production of this problem statement benefited from mindful creation and refinement over time. It came as a result of engaging with the research literature and advice from other researchers who took the issue seriously enough to provide substantial, thoughtful and critical feedback. By distilling ideas from these various sources, it was possible to clarify further the focus of the research reported here. The creation of this research problem was much less a matter of discovery or uncovering of a researchable question. It was more of an iterative process of active writing, purposeful reading, open-ended discussions and re-focusing. During the course of this study four different possibilities presented themselves as a potential research focus. As part of the research process it was necessary to consider each of these in order to refine the purpose for the project reported here, the issue being that methodologically these different foci would take the study reported in this chapter in different directions.

One reason for studying quality teaching through films is to explore the historical context informing each film’s depiction of education and its underlying philosophy. Of course, this implies that the term “popular culture” does not refer only to contemporary popular culture, but also that popular culture itself has a history (Holbrook, 1993). The film My Fair Lady is more
than 40 years old, having been released in 1964. This film provides vicarious insights into what British society was once (imagined to be) like, who British people once were, what they liked and how they behaved towards each one another across gender, class and linguistic lines. This Hollywood representation of British society was derived from the play, *Pygmalion*, written by George Bernard Shaw (see the teaching resources at teachit.co.uk, 1999-2008). The play itself is based on a much older Greek legend that explores the desire to create and to be created (Levine, 2001). Glenzer (2005) has studied this movie for its representations of the way that education was perceived in a previous generation. For this reason, this chapter does not provide an examination of the philosophy behind conceptualisations of quality teaching of a past era, as represented in this film.

Second, films may be used as a catalyst for discussing the attributes of the quality of professional teaching practices. Studying the film *My Fair Lady* could offer a basis for considering what quality teaching meant for the selection of knowledge, curriculum control and pedagogy in the late 19th century, the time that this film portrays, or the mid 1960s when it was produced. By exploring the quality of teaching given expression by Professor Higgins in this film, Masters research students and their supervisors have a basis for debating the ways in which the social, technical, political, economic and cultural contexts of education influence professional teaching practices. This particular use of film is open to further investigation.

Third, this study could have set out to demonstrate how to use films in quality teaching. Xian and Sun (2007) found that students prefer to study English language videos because these helped them to understand better local conditions and customs in foreign countries while also improving their listening ability. In addition, such films may be used instructionally to motivate research students’ interests and imagination in investigating depictions of teaching methods and the socio-economic and cultural conditions affecting them. Here the focus shifts from studying the teaching methods in films to Masters research students and their supervisors using film as primary research evidence. This pedagogical use of films for the purposes of research education requires further investigation.

Fourth, this chapter suggests that, because of the historical and personal distance that they can offer from real professors, films such as *My Fair Lady* may help inform the contemporary debates about quality university teaching and ways of improving it. Such representations of education as made in popular films have the potential for offering insights into understanding and appreciating quality teaching in ways that are pertinent to Masters students’ planning careers in this field. While *My Fair Lady* is a very old film, it is of course now being recirculated in a digitally enhanced version on video
discs. Pragmatically, researchers in China do not have ready access to the range of English language films available in countries such as Australia. This is now less so since China’s entry into the World Trade Organization and the curtailment of ‘pirated’ products. *My Fair Lady* was the only video that met the research focus of our project available for purchase from video retailers and street hawkers in Changchun in 2006. Further, the story at the heart of this old movie finds expression in a range of similar movies, some that preceded it and many that have since followed it (see Table 6–2 below). As such, these movies give expression to seemingly popular concerns about social, cultural and linguistic deprivation in society and the important role of education in mitigating or mediating these inequities. Thus, this chapter reports the results of an analysis of Higgins’ professional practices in the light of current conceptions of quality university teaching.

**Table 6–2: Films sharing a similar focus: Education’s role in mitigating or mediating deprivation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Release date</th>
<th>Main character</th>
<th>Educational make-over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Geraldine</em></td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>girl lacks social graces</td>
<td>sent to charm school, and upon graduation she is a poised fashionable lady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Pygmalion</em></td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>upper class phonetics professor encounters lower class guttersnipe</td>
<td>passes her off as a duchess by subjecting her to intensely repetitive phonetics lessons in an effort to transform her Cockney dialect into standardised English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Funny Face</em></td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>owlish bookstore clerk</td>
<td>transformed into the fashion world’s hottest model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>My Fair Lady</em></td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>dishevelled cockney flower girl—“deliciously low, horribly dirty”—meets a misogynistic linguistic expert</td>
<td>elocution lessons transform her into a ‘proper’ lady by teaching her standardised English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Educating Rita</em></td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>working class hairdresser</td>
<td>she blooms intellectually under tutelage and gains self-confidence, self-respect and intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Born Yesterday</em></td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>brash, embarrassingly vulgar mistress and ex-chorus girl</td>
<td>educated as to her responsibilities as a loyal, honest American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Princess Diaries</em></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>a teenage klutz has a social outcast for a friend</td>
<td>the awkward teen tutored in royal behaviour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This focus on developing in Masters students in China the skills and knowledge required for evidence driven research that addresses issues relevant to their future careers is especially significant given that most of those majoring in English are young women, many from rural areas. Taking such a focus for their Masters research project and thesis could represent a significant educational contribution to enhancing the capability and thus the agency of these women to pursue goals that they have reason to value and progress (Sen, 2005). In turn, their realisation of these goals opens up the possibility of interrelated social and economic changes owing to the unwillingness of educated women to be shackled by inequality. While education broadens their intellectual horizons, their Masters theses can extend and deepen the visions that they have for future employment; give them access to knowledge useful for securing their well-being; and increase their freedom to exercise high stakes decisions (Sen, p. 245). Because the analytical reach of the concept of agency depends on its interpretation, Sen (pp. 239–240) stretches it beyond control over decisions to freedom to think and question without restraint or ignorance. Women’s reasoned agency—their autonomy, empowerment and right to be heard—gains force from their capability to make a living wage and their extra-familial role in the economy, as well as their education and property rights. These factors in combination with constructive information and knowledge producing capabilities enhance women’s deliberative agency, and thus their power for economic independence and social emancipation within the family and other societal institutions. From the perspective of economic freedom, women’s informed and critical agency, including their capability for redressing the sufferings, deprivation and ill-being of themselves and other women is powerfully affected by such variables as their ability to earn an independent income, to find employment outside the home, to have ownership rights and to have literacy and be educated participants in decisions within and outside the family. Working outside the home and earning an independent income tend to have a clear impact on enhancing the social standing of a woman in the household and society. Her contribution to the property of the family is then more visible, and she also has more voice, because of being less dependent on others. Further, outside employment often has useful ‘educational’ effects, in terms of exposure to the world outside the household, making her agency more effective. Similarly women’s education strengthens women’s agency and also tends to make it more informed and skilled. The ownership of property can also make women more powerful in family decisions (Sen, 1999, pp. 191–192; also see Sen, 2005, p. 238).

To generate the primary evidence presented in the next section, the film *My Fair Lady* was viewed and actively listened to many times. The data were collected first, by carefully studying and observing the film and second, by making evidentiary notes. The focus was Higgins’ teaching methods and why he needed to
teach Eliza standardised “cut glass, London” English. Eliza was a native speaker of the language. When the film was viewed, a triple entry system of note making was used. Notes were written down in three columns: dialogue; contextual details; and researchers’ comments. In other word, this tri-level record of film notes consisted of direct quotations from the dialogues in the film; descriptions of scenes depicting the process of teaching, and the researchers’ own reflective comments.

Quality Teaching Methods and the Improvement of Students’ Capabilities

The representations of teaching in My Fair Lady provide primary evidence for gaining insights into quality university teaching, something that is of value to the employment prospects of graduates intent on engaging in this line of work. The data analysis presented in this section identifies six key elements in Higgins’ teaching method. These are the use of teaching aids, error correction, scaffolding, teaching speaking, reinforcement training and rote learning. The analysis of this primary evidence then provides the basis, in the following section, for discussing Higgins’ teaching methods in terms of what may or may not be currently regarded as quality university teaching.

Teaching aids

Various types of instructional tools were used to help Higgins teaching and Eliza’s learning. Generally, they are depicted as being helpful in this instance of English language education. First, the tools seem to satisfy the need for self-learning by making student-centred learning a reality. For example, Higgins leaves Eliza in a language laboratory. She sits before a machine with a cable that runs from her mouth to an apparatus that draws a graph on a sheet of paper; it shows the result of her pronunciation. In this way, Eliza can know whether her pronunciation is correct or not. She knows to try her best to correct it when her pronunciation is wrong, although she cannot fully correct it all by herself. However, the machine helps her to increase her capacity for self-learning. Meanwhile, Higgins plays the role of inspector when using this teaching/learning machine.

Second, tools were used to enhance Eliza’s efficiency in language learning. Apparently, they helped her to develop her learning potential to a substantial extent. When Higgins instructed Eliza in the pronunciation of the letter “h”, he used a phonetics apparatus. He lit a burner, plugged a tube into the bottom of it and turned on a rotating drum with mirrored sides. When the student pronounced “h” correctly, the flame flickered; when the student dropped the “h”, the flame was still. Eliza practised “har, har, har, har…” using this instrument. Finally, she was able to say, correctly, “In Hartford, Hereford and Hampshire, hurricanes hardly ever happen.”
Third, Higgins inserted marbles into Eliza’s mouth while instructing her to say, “With blackest moss the flower pots were thickly crusted, one and all.” Eliza practiced this sentence repeatedly with the marbles in her mouth—a somewhat dangerous procedure should she have swallowed any. At last, she succeeded in pronouncing the sentence correctly. The burner, tubes, marbles and other apparatus are presented as providing useful instructional aids for English language learning and teaching. To the degree that Higgins’ teaching is successful it cannot be separated from the use of these teaching aids.

**Error correction**

Error correction is a method for teaching which is adopted by Higgins to teach Eliza standardised English pronunciation. The following is an example cited from the film:

Eliza:  a, e, i, o, u  
Higgins:  “a”, “e”, “i”, “o”, “u”

In this example, Eliza pronounced the letter “a” in a non-standardised way, saying [ai], instead of [ei], and also said the letter “i” as [a], instead of [ai]. In order to have her use standardised pronunciation, Higgins repeated it accordingly, to help her eliminate her “Cockney English”. This method may not be suitable in terms of current communicative pedagogy. Because in these contemporary times communication is a key objective, as long as what the speakers said is understandable the two parties can reach their goals.

**Scaffolding learning**

In terms of Eliza’s different phases of learning, Higgins scaffolds her learning by building from easy tasks to more difficult ones. At the beginning, when Eliza cannot pronounce a letter in the standardised manner, Higgins initially instructs her in an easier task. For instance, there was the following dialogue between them when Eliza first learns the standardised pronunciation for the letter “h”.

Higgins: Oh, no, no, no …  
Eliza: Shall I do it over?  
Higgins: No, please. Start from the very beginning. Just do this: go, “har, har, har, har”.  
Eliza: Har, har, har, har.
Here Higgins coaches Eliza in a rule appropriate for students who are just starting to learn standardised English. Eliza wanted to say the long sentence when she was just beginning to learn to pronounce [h], whereas Higgins provided a scaffold by asking her to pronounce just one sound by having her say “har, har, har, har” instead of saying the complete sentence. For a beginner it was appropriate for Eliza to learn in this step-by-step or scaffolded approach. With considerable practice, Eliza became adroit at pronouncing this single sound.

Higgins then began to tutor her in the standardised English pronunciation of a whole sentence. He instructed her to say, “With green grass the flower pots were thickly crusted, one and all.” It was hard for Eliza to say this sentence in standardised English, for she was used to saying the single sound and was not accustomed to speaking such sentences. But Higgins persisted in teaching her, even though it was difficult for Eliza, since she was a beginner in learning standardised English. This can be seen from the following dialogue between Pickering and Higgins:

Pickering: Higgins, perhaps that poem [the sentence above] is too difficult for the girl. Why don’t you try something simpler, like the owl and the pussycat?

Higgins: Pickering, I can’t hear a word the girl is saying.

That is to say, Higgins insisted on his method of teaching difficult examples instead of sticking with simple ones, for he believed that simplicity is suitable for beginners who are just learning English. Raising the level of expectation for beginning learners is necessary, because it gradually squeezes them into relatively higher levels of English language proficiency. Teachers’ increasing levels of expectation for learners can help them to step into a higher level of learning, to learn more difficult points so as to practise their abilities in language learning. At a different and higher stage of learning, the experienced and knowledgeable teacher adapts the easiness and difficulty of the content to be learnt in different ways.

Higgins seems to understand Eliza’s present learning situation. For example, he observes Eliza on the street and writes what she said in Cockney English and then he records and analyses her ‘incorrect’ pronunciation on a phonograph. In this way, Higgins can find the ‘flaws’ in her pronunciation and establish the main differences between standardised English and her dialect. By using this contrastive analytical procedure, Higgins adopted concrete methods to decrease the negative forms of her own speech. Second, Higgins imitates or models the standardised pronunciation of vowels, consonants, words and sentences to let her know the behaviour that has to be and can be learned through the process of teaching. All of this Higgins carries out in the process of teaching in concrete and detailed steps.
Speaking with rhythm

Rhythm plays an important role in language learning, being integral to speaking. Higgins focused on rhythm when teaching Eliza standardised pronunciation. This is demonstrated in the following listening/speaking dialogue:

Eliza: How kind of you to let me come.

Higgins: No, no. "kind of you", "kind of you", “kind—”, “how kind of you to let me come.”

Rhythm is reflected in and expressed by stress. Eliza misplaced the stress in the sentence so lost its rhythm. Hence Higgins instructed her to say it with the correct stress and thus the correct rhythm. He said, “How kind of you to let me come”, correcting the misplaced stress in “kind of you”. In this way, Eliza learnt to master the rhythm and so speak in standardised English, like this “How /kind of you /to let me /come.” In order to get Eliza to speak standardised English with rhythm, Higgins asked her to say the words “cup” and “of” repeatedly. The idea was to enable her feel the rhythm of the language to aid her language learning.

In addition, Higgins used tongue twisters to instruct Eliza in the rhythm of language. As we have seen he had Eliza say, “The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain”, and “In Hartford, Hereford and Hampshire, hurricanes hardly ever happen”. These two sentences were taught by Higgins because of their strong rhythmic properties, as well as the related sound in the various words. In this way, Eliza developed a good command of rhythm which facilitated her learning of standardised English. Since all languages are rhythmic, learning to speak English cannot be separated from learning its rhythm. This focus on rhythm proved effective in developing Eliza’s proficiency in speaking.

Reinforcement training

Reinforcement training refers to doing much practice in a limited time. It is especially suitable for language learning and teaching. This can accelerate with the frequency of spontaneous language use, but evidence of this spontaneity was absent from Eliza’s experience. Getting students to perform language well in a short time helps them become technically proficient. Higgins instructed Eliza by using a substantial amount of reinforcement training. This is evident in the dialogue between Mrs Pearce and Higgins:

Mrs. Pearce: You simply cannot go on working the girl this way: making her say her alphabet over and over, from sun up to sun down, even during meals.

Higgins: When she does it properly, of course. Is that all, Mrs. Pearce?
Mrs. Pearce, the servant, sympathised with Eliza, who had to practise the pronunciation of the alphabet many times. The maid wanted Higgins to give Eliza a break. However, he refused. He would not let Eliza rest until she could speak the alphabet in the required form. So Higgins had Eliza practise again, again and again in order that she could speak standardised English. This is further illustrated in the following dialogue:

Eliza: That’s what I said: a, e, i, o, u. That’s what I’ve been saying for three days and I won’t say ‘em no more.

Pickering: I know it’s difficult, Miss Doolittle, but try to understand.

Higgins: It’s no use explaining, Pickering. As a military man you ought to know that drilling is what she needs. Now you leave her alone or she’ll be turning to you for sympathy.

Higgins instructed Eliza to practise the vowels of the alphabet many times, although she was tired from doing so. He believed that drilling and not explaining is essential for learning standardised English. Eliza had to learn to speak and behave like a lady. This meant learning to express herself in standardised English and upper class etiquette. She learnt to pronounce the alphabet, words and sentences in the way of Received Pronunciation, using ‘correct’ grammar and coherent language structures. In addition, Eliza had to learn to act with lady-like manners—for example, to use social communicative skills. Eliza had the inborn ability for language learning as well as being motivated towards learning standardised English in order to be a lady. Her desire for these outcomes arose through her self-observation, self-judgment and self-reaction. Higgins took her to a society ball. This experience provided a stimulus to help her recall what she had been taught and to make her to think again about the gentlewomen she had seen in various formal situations.

**Rote learning**

Language is a tool for communication. Higgins adhered to the principle of making learning serve a practical purpose. Once Eliza had learned to say, “The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain” and other drilling patterns, Higgins excitedly said to Pickering, “I think the time has come to try her out. Let’s test her in public and see how she fares.” Higgins geared Eliza’s learning to practical uses. He wanted to know how Eliza used the knowledge and skills that she had acquired in particular social contexts. Hence, he took Eliza to the races where he said to his mother, Mrs. Higgins:

I taught her how to speak properly. She has strict instructions as to her behaviour. She’s to keep to two subjects: the weather and everybody’s health; “fine day”, and “how do you do”, and not just let herself go on things in general. Help her along, darling, you’ll be quite safe.
In order to get Mrs. Higgins to aid Eliza to practise her spoken English, Higgins prescribed two topics for his mother to talk about with Eliza. Specifically, he told his mother that she should talk only about the weather and health. In this way Eliza was expected to practise what she had learned. Higgins’ mother helped Eliza practise her newly acquired language skills and social behaviour in the social environment of a horse racing track. The following dialogue occurred between Eliza and Mrs. Higgins:

Mrs. Higgins: My dear Miss Doolittle.

Eliza: How kind of you to let me come. How do you do?

Mrs. Higgins: How do you do?

Mrs. Higgins helped Eliza practise her spoken English by greeting her with the dialogue that Eliza had learnt, albeit without any apparent generative capacity. Eliza proved that she had learnt standardised English well enough to engage in this concrete activity:

Mrs. Higgins: Will it rain, do you think?

Eliza: The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain. But in Hartford, Hereford and Hampshire, hurricanes hardly ever happen.

Through these dialogues, Eliza used the language skills that she had learnt to communicate with another person. In this way, Higgins provided Eliza with another opportunity to learn to use appropriately his prescribed dialect of English. Meanwhile, this helped Eliza to cultivate her language and social competence and so increased her interest in and enthusiasm for learning the language. That learning serves practice proved effective in developing her speaking skills. To learn it effectively requires practice in a range of social contexts. But what can we say about the quality of this teaching?

**Debating quality university teaching**

The primary evidence analysed in the previous section was drawn from an examination of the representation of a professor’s teaching as represented in *My Fair Lady*. Six key elements of Higgins’ teaching method were identified, namely the use of teaching aids, error correction, scaffolding, teaching public speaking, reinforcement training, and rote learning (see Table 6–3). These data now provide a basis for developing an understanding and appreciation of current views about quality university teaching so as to inform better Masters graduates expecting to work in this field. This discussion is framed in terms of the two challenges facing English language majors and their supervisors in China in preparing Masters theses: first the learning and teaching required to collect and analyse primary evidence and second the need for supervisors
to work with their Masters students to link their research project to their projected career trajectories. It is not evident in *My Fair Lady* that positive student–teacher interactions, interdependence or collaboration are important to Higgins. There is little sense of a shared ownership of the teaching/learning space, mutual respect, tolerance and understanding.

Table 6–3: Quality university teaching: Points for debate from *My Fair Lady*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes of quality teaching</th>
<th>Professor Higgins</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teaching context</td>
<td>Higgins’ teaching of standardised English shaped by social class pressures against Cockney dialect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing expectations, changing times</td>
<td>political, economic, social, cultural and institutional changes in wider society informed Higgins’ desire for teaching standardised English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse student communities</td>
<td>Higgins recognised that Eliza’s dialect differed from the standardised version and sought to eradicate the former and promote her proficiency in the latter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning environment and management</td>
<td>Higgins’ teaching of English and Eliza’s outcomes were influenced by the physical and management features of the learning environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ professional practices</td>
<td><em>teaching practices are contextualised and flexible</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of content</td>
<td>Higgins does not necessarily use content (knowledge) which is of high intellectual quality, or integrate a variety of knowledge disciplines and neither is it connected to Eliza’s prior knowledge of selling flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control over curriculum and its design</td>
<td>Higgins does indicate that language learning is more likely to occur when the focus is on learning and teaching with high expectations of students, rather than on administrative or managerial imperatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and practice of quality pedagogies</td>
<td>Higgins does not use pedagogies to motivate, engage and commit Eliza to learning, nor does he use methods that necessarily enhance her strategies for language and cultural learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching attributes</td>
<td><em>Teaching capabilities necessary for pursuing valuable goals</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal attributes and capabilities</td>
<td>Higgins is enthusiastic, creative, committed and passionate about his work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational attributes and capabilities</td>
<td>Higgins does not collaborate with others in terms of securing moral support or sharing the workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional attributes and capabilities</td>
<td>Higgins is qualified in linguistics but not an accredited teacher, which may explain his negative effects on Eliza’s language learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What counts as quality university teaching when it comes to the supervision of Masters students undertaking a research project that leads to the presentation of a thesis? In this instance, quality postgraduate supervision may be operationally defined as teaching (or supervisory pedagogies) that produce improvements in students’ knowledge of evidence driven research processes and that generate a thesis pertinent to their anticipated career prospects. An interrelated element of quality teaching holds that the professional practice of lecturers involves developing expert knowledge of postgraduate supervisory pedagogies, evidence-based research and ways to link Masters research projects with their students’ career interests. This sees supervisors to developing a deep understanding of the principles and processes of evidence driven research; accumulating experience in professional research practices; developing familiarity with recent advances in knowledge of research methods and postgraduate supervisory pedagogies; and mastering relevant supervisory techniques and research procedures. Of equal importance, it also means developing an understanding of the place of education in contributing to the agency of young women. A Masters research project or thesis that is oriented to enhancing their capability to make a living wage, to engage in extra-familial roles in the economy or to acquire property rights may make a small, but nonetheless useful, contribution to their autonomy, empowerment and right to be heard (Sen, 2005, pp. 220–250). The combination of these factors make it important for supervisors to provide specific, frequent, positive and corrective feedback to students on their work (especially on each succeeding draft of a Masters thesis). Higgins seems to have been less inclined to do so.

The supervision of Masters students majoring in English in China operates in an era of social, technical, economic and cultural change. Specifically, the diminished employment opportunities for these graduates to gain employment in their preferred fields of work now warrant changes in how these students prepare their Masters theses. This also means changing how these students are now supervised. In particular, this calls for transformations in the knowledge and skills that their supervisors exhibit; the roles that they undertake as supervisors, and the ways in which they engage in postgraduate supervisory pedagogies (OECD, 2005). Supervisors prepare their Masters students for their future employment through the actions that they take in supervising their research projects and the direct help that they provide in the preparation of their theses. In this context of change, supervisors develop Masters students’ research skills, knowledge and understandings, and provide the groundwork for their work/life trajectories. However, student control and self-regulation were not encouraged by Higgins. Eliza had little responsibility for her learning. She was given little opportunity to express herself and to take legitimate risks in her learning. It is open to debate as to whether Higgins promoted Eliza’s generative use of “London English”.

Quality teaching engages Masters students in a range of meta-learning strategies to enhance their active involvement in learning through research and thesis writing. These strategies include explicit teaching methods; cooperative teaching/learning/research; probing and using students’ ideas and questions; scaffolding material; asking higher order questions; and making the purpose of learning and its links to future employment overt (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Fouts, 2003). Higgins did not seriously engage Eliza in a range of meta-learning strategies to enhance her active involvement in the teaching/learning/research process. However, securing and sustaining Eliza’s engagement and motivation to learn standardised English required Higgins to use a range of teaching/learning strategies rather than a single, rigid approach. Higgins used a variety of pedagogies that emphasised Eliza’s involvement with and application of linguistic knowledge. Whether Higgins would vary the pedagogies used according to the needs of his students is an open question.

The knowledge held by Masters students, their learning/earning trajectories, the content of research methods and postgraduate supervisory pedagogies are not static. These change with time. Quality teaching depends on the ongoing development of lecturers’ knowledge about subject content, teaching, learning, students, education policies and labour markets (Day, 2000). Professional learning that accommodates the needs of lecturers and acknowledges their passions can also enhance their knowledge and skills. Self-aware, reflective practice undertaken in the context of feedback, collaboration and discussion among colleagues is beneficial to professional learning and improving teaching practices (Quicke, 2000). Workshops have limited impact when participants are not given adequate time to grasp the ideas thoroughly, debate the initiatives and experiment through implementation (Law, 2003). Productive methods for the professional development of postgraduate supervisors include the mentoring and coaching that comes through co-supervision. Higgins does not rate highly with regard to regularly engaging in professional conversations about his teaching, research or research ethics.

**Conclusion**

This chapter provides some support for the contention that the representations of teaching made in films can provide primary evidence that is useful for encouraging thoughtful and tactful debates about quality university teaching. However, the feasibility of any evidence driven research project and associated thesis must take into account the prospects for accessing relevant primary evidence and secondary research literature. This can be a challenge in a developing nation such as China. Access to both of these resources is not as easy as it in Australian universities. Even so, while many Masters theses by English majors have been constructed as literature reviews, it is possible
for supervisors to teach their research students (mostly young women) about the research processes involved in the collection and analysis of first-hand evidence.

In addition, this chapter has suggested the importance of linking, and ways to link, the research projects and theses produced by Masters students to their planned career trajectories. It is acknowledged that Masters graduates with English majors face difficulties in gaining employment as university lecturers, the field for which they have typically been prepared. The project reported here was explicitly oriented to the student’s future employment trajectory as a university lecturer, taking as its focus an investigation into quality university teaching, and thus the student being better prepared to seek such employment. But it is likely that there is a need for a consideration of a broader range of fields in which the students’ English language skills might be employed. Such consideration might begin with the place of English in enhancing the success of China’s development of innovations across the range of sectors where it faces challenges. Masters theses that do not have such an employment orientation, and that prefer to dwell on decontextualised linguistic abstractions are questionable given changes in the graduate labour market and the demands that China has for advanced knowledge available in English. These changes also pose challenges for the professional learning of supervisors of Masters students research projects and theses. They may benefit from productive programs whereby they can learn to teach explicitly these evidence driven research skills, to develop knowledge of collaborative postgraduate supervisory pedagogies and to use strategies for marrying these with considerations of students’ career aspirations. By way of illustrations, this chapter has explored the use of film as one source of primary evidence for researching an issue relevant to Masters students’ future careers as lecturers, namely an investigation into quality university teaching.

Further research in now needed into the possibilities for accessing and using films and other sources of primary evidence for developing an understanding and appreciation of jobs which are pertinent to Masters students’ career aspirations. That such projects explore their intersection with China’s social, economic and environmental challenges could be especially beneficial. It might also be interesting to investigate the responses of university research ethics committees to a proposal to conduct a research experiment modelled on that represented in the film *My Fair Lady*, and so develop Masters students’ knowledge of changes in this field. Career-minded Masters research students might use films such as *Educating Rita*, *Dangerous Minds* and *Freedom Writers* to investigate quality teaching in terms of their depiction of teaching methods and how these are influenced by the social, technical, political, economic and cultural contexts of society. Likewise, there is a need for research into the professional learning of lecturers to enhance their
skills in conducting evidence driven research, their knowledge of advanced postgraduate supervisory pedagogies and strategies for articulating students’ thesis research with their career aspirations.

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References


Chapter Seven:
Critical Theory, Teacher Quality and the Alternative Practicum

Loshini Naidoo

Abstract
Teacher education has been subject to growing critique in recent times, especially with the rapidly shifting higher education policies that require quality teachers for complex classrooms. This chapter focuses on the alternative practicum projects offered by the School of Education, University of Western Sydney, Australia, which speak to community and political concerns about teacher quality. The small-scale practicum not only attends to the university-based measures of quality but also supports innovative dialogue with government-based reports like the Australian House of Representatives “Top of the Class” inquiry for better quality teacher education. Given the current goals of educational equity and higher order thinking, the alternative practicum firstly allows for the understanding of the teaching act as one that creates an empowering and enlightened classroom for our children and secondly allows for the extension of the practicum experience to the school and broader community to understand the full scope of a teacher’s role. The chapter discusses quality in the alternative practicum within the framework of critical theory, since the latter can accommodate action on the part of the educator to promote critical thoughtfulness about teaching, to resist ineffective schooling practices and to nurture the intellectual and professional growth of teacher candidates.

Introduction
This chapter uses the critical method of inquiry to critique the Australian House of Representatives “Top of the Class” document and its focus on teacher quality. The critical method is appropriate because it is a theoretical endeavour with critical intent at the level of practice. As a goal it seeks to focus on the alternative practicum projects offered by the Master of Teaching (Secondary) degree in the School of Education, University of Western Sydney (UWS),
Australia, which speak to community and political concerns about teacher quality. The Master of Teaching is a recognised pre-service qualification for secondary teachers and is an end-on to an appropriate Bachelor’s degree. The alternative practicum not only attends to the university-based measures of quality but also supports innovative dialogue with government based reports like the House of Representatives “Top of the Class” report which was expected to examine the “scope, suitability, organisation, resourcing and delivery of teacher training courses in Australia’s public and private universities and to examine the preparedness of graduates to meet the current and future demands of teaching in Australia’s schools” (House of Representatives, 2007, p. xi).

Many committees, prior to the “Top of the Class” inquiry, in the last 25 years have examined teacher education and most reflected on the need for teacher education to keep pace with the changes in schooling and in society. However, prior committees failed in that recommendations were either not implemented by the government or were simply not the right answer to problems identified. The “Top of the Class” inquiry, however, is different in that the committee is determined to provide directions for strengthening teacher education on longstanding issues like the fragmented and compartmentalised approach to teacher education; the lack of a sound research evidence base; the lack of strong and authentic partnerships with major stakeholders in education and a lack of vision in that teaching is not viewed as a career long profession. While other committees agreed that these were the issues with teacher education, their reform was never implemented. In the “Top of the Class” report, the committee hoped to make a positive contribution to teacher education by taking the lead and addressing the above-mentioned issues in the area of teacher education.

The alternative practicum program at UWS provides a unique community service learning experience and demonstrates strong partnerships with stakeholders thereby giving pre-service teachers a range of different perspectives on school students and educational issues in Sydney’s greater western region. Greater Western Sydney is an area of both diversity and resilience. Variations between one part of the region and another are important indicators of deprivation. Lack of housing amenity, households without access to a car, high unemployment rates (particularly for males) and poor English proficiency, are greater problems in some areas of Western Sydney than others. Parts of Greater Western Sydney have tended to house those citizens least able to exercise choice in terms of their jobs, homes and personal consumption. It is evident that Greater Western Sydney and the UWS have a unique set of communities with higher proportions of relative social disadvantage and ultimately lower access to resources.
The alternative practicum is a mandatory unit within the Master of Teaching (Secondary) program entailing 60 hours of community service in educational contexts that differ significantly from usual curriculum-oriented classroom practice. Whilst the classroom-based pre-service teacher practicum is designed to inculcate pre-service teachers into the norms of the profession, the alternative practicum sets out to broaden and deepen students’ understandings of educational issues by exploring how learning takes place in a variety of settings, modes and conditions and by engaging pre-service teachers in critical sustained reflection on their emerging practice. The alternative practicum invites pre-service teachers to view schooling from the point of view of students who are disenfranchised or disadvantaged and provide opportunities to design rewarding educational experiences underpinned by principles of social justice and educational equity.

Education should be fundamentally concerned with the notion of human transformation and is worth the name only if it forms people capable of taking part in their own transformation (e.g., Apple, 2006; Apple & Beane, 2007; Ball, 2003; Giugni, McAdam, & Tilly, 1999). For many of the pre-service teachers, the experience of the alternative practicum will be transformative as it is intended to instil in pre-service teachers an appreciation for the community’s strengths, resources, perceived needs and expectations through service-oriented experiences. Pre-service teachers also develop an awareness of the importance and value of combining academic learning with identified issues related to education in the community and they develop an appreciation for the relationship between personal and professional growth in developing leadership skills. The alternative practicum emphasises reciprocal learning where traditional definitions of “school”, “teacher” and “learner” are intentionally blurred.

Before the alternative practicum is discussed in greater detail, it is important to attempt a definition of teacher quality. What is teacher quality? Is quality of learning and teaching achieved by establishing standards for what teachers should know and be able to do, and recognising those teachers who demonstrate mastery of those standards? It remains an open question as to whether this certification should be treated as a signal of teacher quality, or if the process should be viewed as one that builds the human capital of teachers. While Darling-Hammond (2000) equated teacher quality with qualifications, a growing body of research shows that the quality of the teacher in the classroom is the most important schooling factor predicting student outcomes (e.g., Goldhaber, 2002; Goldhaber, Brewer, & Anderson, 1999; Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 1999).

While researchers (e.g., Hart, & Teeter 2002; Reichardt, 2001) tend to agree that teacher quality is an important determining factor in influencing student outcomes, there is little consensus about the relationship between specific
teacher credentials (e.g., experience and degree level) and characteristics (e.g., age, race, and ethnicity) and teacher effectiveness. For example, the teacher attributes commonly used for certification, recruitment, screening and selection of teachers (i.e., certification status, degree, and experience levels) are not strongly correlated with student learning gains (Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000). In other words, teachers clearly matter, but teacher quality is not strongly related to observed teacher credentials. Without necessarily getting into the debate, it is believed that one cannot define teacher quality separately from student learning. If students leave school able to solve problems, able to make decisions and able to analyse their environments critically, then quality teaching has occurred. Consequently, it may be necessary to assess what teachers are actually doing in the classroom, not simply check their credentials, in order to evaluate teacher quality.

To do this, we need to engage in a discussion of critical theory as a method of critique. Critical theory (see Agger, 1979; Connerton, 1980; Hughes, 1975, Jay, 1973; Kellner, 1989) is a paradigm that transcends the implicit absolutism of positivism and the implicit relativism of interpretivism. As a procedural rather than a substantive inquiry, critical theory sets out a meta-level procedure of rational valuing—the method of critique. As a form of social praxis, the “Top of the Class” document and the alternative practicum do have transformative potential and the potential too at the theoretical level to recognise the importance of consensual, discursive forms of communication. The importance, however, lies in its practical application. While the “Top of the Class” document and the professional practicum may serve Australian society in an educative way, it is equally important that this also implies an increase in collective learning at the practical level.

**The Critical Method**

The transformative method of critical theory assumes that human beings are capable of acting rationally and are able to be self-reflective and self-determining. The task of enquiry, therefore, would be to illuminate the assumptions and premises of social life that are subject to transformation and those propositions which are not. Hamilton (1978, p. 19) argues that critical inquiry produces an educational theory that aims to reduce the apparent complexity of human experience and finally operates through the translation of private knowledge into public discourse.

The body of knowledge that emerges from a critical social science therefore will help facilitate in universities and higher institutions in Australia transformative change that is based on quality and engaged and engaging leadership. With such knowledge, higher education institutions like universities will be able to reconstruct and dignify the learning and teaching experiences of the university community and it would be possible then for those who
are traditionally voiceless—for example, Indigenous students, the disabled, migrants and refugees, women, students of colour, gay and lesbian students and students from low socio-economic backgrounds—to acquire learning and teaching that will allow them to examine critically the role that society has played in their own self-formation. Critical theory hence represents a genuine unity of theory and revolutionary praxis where knowledge is seen in a societal and historical development perspective that highlights its repressive or transformatory potentials.

Theory and practice were brought together in that the Diversity, Social Justice and Schooling course in the Master of Teaching degree allowed pre-service teachers to reinterpret their perceptions and practices in relation to a general theory of society which recognises the structured and historical roots of social and cultural reproduction and resistance. This enabled them to understand how culturally constructed and value-laden our understandings and practices can be. By working with youth in schools, pre-service teachers in the alternative practicum were able to subject their individual and shared understandings to critical review. The alternative practicum is a collective strategic action designed to challenge and transform those conditions which are creating false consciousness or the alienation of particular groups of pre-service teachers and learners.

As a methodology, critical theory has three levels of criticism: internal, external and quasi-transcendental. These three levels of critique focus analysis on the examination of claims at the phenomenal level (internal), analysing the change in people’s inter-subjective and historical concepts (external) and the consideration of the possibility of a critically reflexive understanding of learning and teaching (quasi-transcendental). The third and final level of critique means calling into question notions of agency, effectiveness and social determination that enables us to outline the contours and the advantages of a more reflexive stance on the discourse of teaching and that proposes an alternative avenue for future practice. The critical method of critique also has positive and negative moments. The negative moments are revealed through the internal and external criticism of the “Top of the Class” document and the positive moment is highlighted as possibilities for the future, patterns of discourse within the teacher education research community that are based on teacher quality.

Essentially the application of critical theory would imply the cultivation of a community of educators and learners to disseminate information, to assess the concerns of all participants in the quality planning process and to anticipate opportunities for transformation. Critical theory therefore also becomes a policy theory since it contains within it not only the means of rationally choosing between alternatives but also a vision of the future—a
state of affairs where increased learning levels are facilitated for individual knowers as members of a society. It is hoped that this chapter by focusing on critical theory as a methodology will be able to shed light on the present “Top of the Class” document and together with the alternative practicums offered by the School of Education at UWS, to assess its value as an avenue for change and transformation in learning and teaching at Australian universities.

Critical Aspects of the House of Representatives “Top of the Class” Document for Teacher Education

In the “Top of the Class” document there are 12 recommendations which have been identified as five issues by Skilbeck (2007, p. 34). They are: (1) shaping a high quality national system; (2) shaping responsibilities on a model for partnership among teachers, academics and the community; (3) sustaining career-long learning and high quality performance; (4) building the research knowledge base; (5) funding. It is believed that “providing high quality teacher education … is a fundamental step in providing for quality schooling.” (House of Representatives, 2007, p. xxv). A critique of the 12 recommendations specifically will not be attempted in this chapter as it goes beyond the scope and aim of the chapter. However, the chapter will provide a critique of some of the recommendations to focus analyses on the critical method of external and internal criticism.

The above mentioned issues (Skilbeck, 2007, p. 34) are indicative of an emphasis on the development of human potential, the relationship between quality and teacher education and the role of teacher education institutions in bringing about transformation. However, what the document fails to address is the content of teacher education, what is taught and learnt and the education of teacher educators (Skilbeck, p. 34). The document also emphasises on a micro level amongst other issues teacher registration and course accreditation; teacher attrition rates; teacher education course length; course location and course structures; the nature and length of professional experience; the nature and strength of partnerships among stakeholders; and the backgrounds and characteristics of students and teacher educators.

What this new emphasis shows is the importance of discourse if quality is to be achieved. Foucault (1984, 1986) is of the belief that discourses as a condition of communication are inseparable from notions of power, control and struggle. Such a view would hold that policy is unable to make good its promise to promote quality until the question of knowledge production is addressed. While the new discourse in the “Top of the Class” document is defining the field of teacher education, professionalising the field of practice by creating experts and expertise and institutionalising the field of practice by creating coordinating and
controlling structures in pre-service teacher education for example, this is not enough. The new avenues of educational discourse must be seen as structuring of new forms of cooperation and consent.

A strategic recommendation of the “Top of the Class” document is the integration of teacher education in a national system. This is based on the fact that the “current distribution of responsibilities in teacher education results in a fragmented and compartmentalised approach to teacher education” (House of Representatives, 2007, p. 2). This unified approach is a step forward in attaining teacher quality in education and an attempt to redress the under-preparedness of pre-service teachers and it is likely to promote “great flexibility, innovation and diversity” (House of Representatives, p. 20). On the side of caution, such a national policy has the potential to further undermine further learning traditions and cultures in the generating of knowledge and its implementation. Australia’s vast geography and entrenched state-based curriculums could make a national system highly impractical.

It can be said that the focus in the “Top of the Class” document is on the technical rather than the critical issues since the emphasis is on developing specific sets of knowledge and skills with no account being taken of structural influences such as class, gender or race which are powerful influences constraining or enabling learners at all stages of schooling. One of the central themes of the “Top of the Class” document is the link between teacher education and career incentives to retain high performing teachers, better management between teacher education enrolments and areas of need. What this illustrates is that, instead of appropriating a critical impulse, this aspect of the policy document is about appropriating a technological impulse. This represents the negative moment of critique in the “Top of the Class” document.

The technicist view of knowledge would be, according to Habermas (1973), strategic action (oriented to success) compared to communicative action (oriented to understandings). The strategic action compared to the communicative action largely ignores social and cultural understandings and corresponds to the emphasis on assessments, attrition rates, social praxis and the like that focuses on matching interest, expectations and skills required to meet the needs of the market economy. With communicative action comes the importance of the constitution of self and identities without losing sight of the fact that our identities are still constituted through social hierarchy and cultural differentiation.

The problem in the technological view of knowledge is that knowledge is not defined in personal or individual terms, but as a problem of the efficient use of human resources by selecting and channelling people into places where the economy needs them most. This includes a view of rational process as culturally neutral, language as a conduit and learning as individually centred
By contrast, the communicative interest in education recognises the importance of the cultural and social context of schooling and education. Schools are supposed to be regarded as sites for learning and investigation as opposed to the acquisition of specific skills (standards). A truly critical view would go beyond the acquisition of technicist knowledge to seek a way forward to a more open and equitable arrangement through the increased participation of excluded groups, such as students and teachers in the policy-making, practice-determining process. Teacher education programs need to be prepared to educate pre-service teachers who can “deconstruct the larger forces around them” with the “tools to connect local and global tendencies, to think strategically about ways of interpreting neoliberalism and neoconservatism” (Apple, 2001, p. 195).

A truly critical intent of the document is the focus on the quality of teachers particularly, in classroom practices. This is demonstrated by the following excerpts from the House of Representatives document: “the impact of teacher education on, for example: teacher performance in schools; student learning outcomes; and various aspects of school and community functions” (2007, p. 6); “the development of tools and processes for evaluating the quality of graduates’ teaching in real school settings” (p. 7). It is also assumed in the same document that the imbalances can be cured by appropriate funding to teacher education institutions and by an increase in resources. It is a fallacy to assume that transformation and change can occur solely by increased resources and funding. Teachers need to be prepared to give students in classrooms a quality education and this requires that the focus be not only on pre-service teachers and pre-service education but also on those in the service itself. A major concern at the moment is that many teachers have a limited understanding of broader social and educational issues (Hartshorne, 1992, p. 253).

There needs to be a shift in emphasis from syllabus and curricula alone to a focus on curriculum change, in the “what” and the “how” of young people’s learning. Teachers will need to question existing content, method and techniques of teaching. This would involve an understanding of not only curriculum issues but also decisions about future curriculum directions. The past neglect of traditionally voiceless students, in particular, would place tremendous pressures on teachers, and the function of pre-service programs would be to provide effective opportunities for pre-service teachers to develop effective strategies for disadvantaged students. This means that what are needed are teachers with the mental resources and confidence to be able to reflect on the dynamics of their classrooms and to exercise judgements in their practice. Critical reflection is really about emphasising one’s own agency so that one assumes responsibility for one’s own actions and ability to explore alternatives.
In relation to schools and classrooms, this could mean dialogue among students, parents and teachers whose experiences and attitudes would shape education policy. The skills to be taught to students would revolve around issues of how to learn as opposed to what to learn. However, issues of power and ideology could dominate education if the philosophy on which the new structure for teacher education is based is not in broad agreement with the major stakeholders (teacher, learner, parent and community). There is a danger in seeking an educational answer to a problem that has social, economic and political as well as educational dimensions. In transformation of the system of teacher education in an effort to obtain quality, the real difficulty lies in achieving the kind of comprehensive change envisioned by the recommendations outlined in the policy document. Such goals represent a challenge which has a broad and visionary dimension—a political and cultural value system which the present educators and education systems must strive to put into place. For this to be truly successful, more research is needed on what is actually happening in classrooms. New curriculum content has a part to play in the search for quality and relevance, but new content could still be taught by old methods. For example, old teaching habits are hard to change, and there may be reluctance on the part of veteran teachers to adopt new instructional methods.

The policy to “diversify the teaching workforce so that it reflects more closely the diversity of the Australian population” (House of Representatives, 2007, p. 35) is laudable but has certain implications. As school populations become more diverse “in part due to migration and the geopolitical realities of shifting national boundaries, the need for educationalists to better understand and work with difference productively becomes increasingly critical’ (Allard & Santoro, 2006, p. 115). It is significant that Australian students are linguistically and culturally diverse, with 25% of all students having a Language Background Other Than English (LBOTE) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002). However, the census extrapolations of Haberman (1989, 1991) connote that by 2010 95% of K-12 classroom teachers will be Caucasian, middle-class females with limited cross-cultural interaction. By contrast, the student population will become increasingly diverse, bringing to classrooms divergent racial, ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic experiences. (Brown, 2004, p. 325). Allard and Santoro (2006) also found that:

... the majority of teacher education students at many Australian universities have attended middle class, Anglo-Australian schools for their primary and secondary education. This means that opportunities to engage with others from different cultural, linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds are fairly restricted ... [I]n their practicum, teacher education students often – but not always, are placed in schools not very different from their personal schooling experiences. (p. 116)
To be critical requires that practice is understood and improved as a preliminary to creating more transformatory practices and requires opportunities for reflection on the part of all those involved in the learning process. As teacher educators, Allard and Santoro (2004) suggest that “part of our role is to offer experiences to our students that enable them to understand and examine their own positionings within and through current discourses” (p. 14). Seeking to disrupt notions of self by stepping outside the centre and trying to see life from the margins may serve as “a starting point for developing understanding and insights into taken-for-granted beliefs about culture and class” (Allard & Santoro, p. 14) and for challenging deficit thinking. But at the same time we must “work with difference in classrooms in ways that acknowledge cultural and class values and beliefs without essentialising identities or stereotyping groups” (p. 14).

This approach will be clearly demonstrated in the next section which deals with the alternative practicum introduced by the School of Education at UWS. The approach to practicum is critical in that all involved are engaged in open and symmetrical forms of communication. The alternative practicum also reinforces the statement made by Villegas and Lucas (2002) that to:

… move successfully beyond the fragmented and cursory treatment of diversity that currently prevails, teacher educators must first articulate a vision of teaching and learning within the diverse society we have become. They must then use that vision to systematically guide the infusion of multicultural issues throughout the teacher education curriculum. This infusion process requires that teacher educators critically examine the curriculum and revise it as needed to make issues of diversity central rather than peripheral. (p. 21)

**The Alternative Practicum and the School of Education, University of Western Sydney**

From the previous sections it was revealed that the House of Representatives “Top of the Class” document does have transformatory potential and potential too at the theoretical level to recognise the importance of consensual, discursive forms of communication. The importance, however, lies in its practical application. To improve the quality of teachers and teacher education institutions implies at a practical level an increase in collective learning levels (teachers, students and the community). The third and final level of critique, transcendental, is attempted in this section where alternative possibilities are given and a process of transcendence suggested by discourse institutionalised among participants.

In surveys drawn to the committee’s attention in the “Top of the Class” document, pre-service teachers consistently rate practicum as the most useful part of teacher education courses (House of Representatives, 2007, p. 67). The document also outlines briefly a number of innovative programs of other universities in
Australia where strong partnerships with other major stakeholders are an important feature of the practicum experience. The alternative practicum at UWS is equally distinctive and there is a clear indication of shared responsibility with benefits to teachers, students, schools, parents and the wider community. The alternative practicum also emphasises reflective practice—reflection facilitates the connection between practice and theory and fosters critical self-reflection. This links to critical theory in that it gives pre-service teachers an opportunity to develop “a critical awareness” perspective thereby not only penetrating “false consciousness” but also diminishing the power of legitimating forces for the status quo and hence providing teacher quality. This kind of practicum has the potential for contributing substantially to individual and national development.

The School of Education has brokered six key partnerships within the alternative practicum program. Eyers (House of Representatives, 2007, p. 74) identified a high quality practicum as one that is designed and implemented within a partnership involving teacher education institutions, schools, school systems and relevant professional bodies. In the alternative practicum at UWS these are: Learning Choices Next Generation, in partnership with Dusseldorp Skills Forum (DSF); Plan-it-Youth, in partnership with the New South Wales Department of Education and Training (DET); Refugee Action Support, in partnership with the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation and the NSW DET; Overseas Professional Experience, in partnership with Cook Islands Ministry of Education and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation Regional Education Centre in Science and Mathematics in Penang, Malaysia; Beyond the Line, in partnership with NSW DET; and Maximising Potential, in partnership with Future Achievements Australia. The projects brokered with these partners give the pre-service teacher a perspective on students which they would not normally have if their preparation involved only traditional classroom teaching (School of Education, 2007). This is also consistent with what Eyers (House of Representatives, p. 74) identified as a quality practicum: one that provides diverse experiences in a range of school contexts and with a variety of students.

The partnership established with the DSF enables pre-service teachers to work voluntarily with “students at risk” in innovative and non-traditional projects throughout urban and rural New South Wales. Through a Web-based interface managed by DSF, pre-service teachers make contact with programs and are supported through a process of project negotiation and development to meet the expressed needs and interests of the students in those programs (School of Education, 2007). These Learning Choices: Next Generation projects enable pre-service teachers to see students and schools “through a different lens”, and it is the transformative potential of such projects that makes them powerful for both pre-service teachers and the disenfranchised students with whom they work (Gannon & Roots, 2006).
In **Plan-it-Youth**, is a state-funded youth program (overseen by NSW DET) that recruits and trains community volunteers, links them with high school students who are seeking mentoring and supports the mentors through weekly de-briefing sessions. In this partnership, pre-service teachers complete the accredited mentor training program provided through Technical and Further Education (TAFE). They are then matched with students who are grappling with academic, social or personal problems, and are often considering leaving school (Vickers, Harris, & McCarthy, 2004).

The **Refugee Action Support** program is an approach to the literacy and social development of refugee high school students based on small group tutoring by UWS pre-service teachers in after-school homework centres. Intensive training on cultural orientation and literacy development is conducted by the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation to enable UWS pre-service teachers to work with refugee students who have previously been enrolled in Intensive English Centres. The partnership with the NSW DET, The Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation and the UWS has allowed the three members to utilise its contacts, resources and expertise to draft a flexible learning project within formal schooling. In addition, UWS employs a Sudanese Community Liaison Officer to establish and sustain effective liaison with the high school students’ families.

**Overseas Professional Experience** grows out of a history of the UWS School of Education conducting Overseas Professional Experience Programs for teacher training students in such countries as the Cook Islands, Malaysia, China, and Fiji. There are currently two overseas professional experience tours to Rarotonga, the Cook Islands and Penang, Malaysia. The tours have been designed to meet both the professional learning needs of UWS pre-service teachers and local communities. The 2007 professional experience tour to the Cook Islands offered primary schools intensive physical education and dance programs. In 2006 UWS pre-service teachers built worm farms in schools as an instrument for waste management. For secondary schools in 2007, UWS mathematics pre-service teachers conducted a program at the three secondary colleges and the Teachers College on the use of graphics calculators in teaching mathematics. Undertaking practicum overseas offers pre-service teachers the opportunity to teach in schools outside Australia and to experience other cultures (School of Education, 2007).

In **Beyond the Line**, DET organises rural/regional education experiences by taking pre-service teachers from a range of universities to gain first hand experience teaching and living in a rural community. While major rural centres in New South Wales appear to be well catered for, the lack of teachers for permanent or casual positions and the limited length of time that teachers stay in isolated rural schools raise concerns for school student outcomes. This has ramifications for the futures of these students, their parents and the stakeholders in their local communities.
Solidarity with the community, an ability to adapt to multiple roles and extensive personal interaction skills are valued in this context (Gregson, Waters, & Gruppetta, 2006) and the program introduces city-based trainee teachers to rural contexts which they might not otherwise encounter.

Maximising Potential supports young people in acquiring skills and knowledge for personal leadership. The mentoring/coaching program has been fostered by the partnership of the UWS Office of Regional Development, the School of Education, the School of Biomedical and Health Sciences and Future Achievements Australia. The project connects young people in leadership, wellbeing and service enterprises. The program also draws on leaders within the community, business, industry, schools and TAFE to work as ‘one-on-one’ coaches with young people. With new knowledge and understanding the participants are encouraged to action their leadership by designing and implementing a leadership service project.

Additionally, the UWS alternative practicum attempts to address quality and beginning teacher attrition rates in schools that are difficult to staff by its “classmates” program. “The attrition rate in the early years of teaching also raises questions about the effectiveness of teacher education programs” (House of Representatives, 2007, p. 7). The classmates program aims to understand the intersections between formal pre-service teacher education and individual and institutional constructions of the teacher, the connection among habitus, capital and the school–teacher cultural fit, and the discourses circulating in relation to hard-to-staff and ‘regular’ schools. Central to this exploration is the question of to what extent the modes of teacher preparation that are effective for ‘average’ middle class high schools are also effective for hard-to-staff schools in socially disadvantaged areas.

Classmates pre-service teachers are linked closely to a host school during their studies undertake an extended practicum and participate in selected DET in-services and events. Professional networking and the development of key support structures are features of the initiative aimed at building community, enhancing preparation and increasing retention. Such preparation enables pre-service teachers to take up the subjective positions of teachers prior to their employment in those positions, potentially reducing the anxiety and culture shock experienced by pre-service teachers, while simultaneously developing the resilience and understandings needed to meet the needs of students in these schools. The program is significant because it provides critical information about the induction needs of pre-service teachers and could influence teacher placement, reduce beginning and early career teacher resignations and articulate variations on the needs of teachers and students in diverse contexts.

In general, the alternative practicum offers a distinctive component within its teacher education program and places a high value on the partnerships that contribute to the impact of the course on student outcomes. The partnerships
provide a model for community service-based learning and position both the university pre-service teachers and their school-aged students in turn differently from classroom-based practicum. The technical model of focusing on skill development and mastering lesson plans and classroom management should be, and continues to be an important component, but it is not sufficient preparation for pre-service teachers. Schulz (2005, p. 148) sees a need for a change towards “a practicum experience that provides teacher candidates with opportunities for inquiry, for trying and testing new ideas within collaborative relationships, and for talking about teaching and learning in new ways.” Instead of emphasising the demonstration of instructional skills learned in methods courses, Zeichner (1999) suggests that the practicum should be a time for growth and learning, where pre-service teachers come to understand the broader implications of being a teacher and to appreciate the ultimate aim of teaching: to help students learn. The alternative practicum at UWS has captured what Eyers (House of Representatives, 2007, p. 74) further identified as a high quality practicum, which is one that “integrates theoretical knowledge and professional practice across the three domains of a teacher education program; ‘content’ knowledge gained through a liberal education, professional knowledge, pedagogical skills and insights.”

The following snapshots of pre-service teachers’ experiences in the Refugee Action Support project offer insights to educators, policy-makers and community groups and demonstrates that the alternative practicum is flexible, encourages innovation and involves ongoing evaluation and response (Eyers, as cited in House of Representatives, 2007, p. 74). An evaluation of the Refugee Action Support Project was conducted in 2007 following funding by a UWS/Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation partnership grant. 37 UWS pre-service teachers from a range of secondary method backgrounds volunteered as tutors in the Refugee Action Support initiative. Of these tutors, 31 volunteered to participate in group interviews which were conducted prior to and after their participation in the homework centres. The UWS tutors’ experiences with the refugee students were overwhelmingly positive. Moreover, there was an awareness of the discrimination faced by those who are ‘Othered’ or ‘different’ in some way and a desire to work with these marginalised individuals and groups to create a more equitable society.

Several interviewees articulated how they felt not only that it would be interesting and personally rewarding to work with refugee students but also that they expected to become future teachers of such students in mainstream classes (Ferfolja, 2007, p. 11). Importantly, there was recognition that refugee students may have particular needs that require targeted support. These reasons and perceptions were expressed in comments like:
I thought [Refugee Action Support] might give me experience in terms of how to handle refugee issues. (Ferfolja, 2007, p. 12)

I do have an interest in refugee stuff and so I’m pleased to have ended up in [Refugee Action Support] to get a broader perspective on refugee issues and what it’s like to teach kids who’ve come from a refugee background. (Ferfolja, 2007, p. 12)

I was doing something else that was for another assignment, and it was on the UN Web site, and it was looking at everything that was going on in Sudan and I was stunned by the whole conflict over there. When I saw this I thought what’s it going to be like for those kids coming to Australia, what’s going to be in their memories of where they’ve come from?…How do you, as a teacher, deal with that emotional baggage, help them to then start learning again? (Ferfolja, 2007, p. 12)

Another common reason for undertaking Refugee Action Support was for the community good and making a positive contribution to society.

I think it’s an interesting social justice exercise, becoming involved with people in the community who might be disadvantaged in terms of education and so on, so that’s really why I did it. Because I thought it might be a good thing to do for people in the community who don’t have access to the sorts of things that I do (Ferfolja, 2007, p. 13)

I think if you’re going into the profession of teaching, unless you’re in it for the holidays, I think there must be an innate part of you that is wanting to help people anyway, because otherwise, you wouldn’t turn up 40 weeks a year and put up with what a lot of teachers put up with if you didn’t want to help people. (Ferfolja, 2007, p. 13)

For the refugee students, tutors provided support in terms of cultural awareness and literacy mediation. Additionally, the tutors recognised that to mediate this cultural literacy required articulation and active intervention by teachers. Drawing on refugee students’ experiences and on their cultural capital promoted a successful learning context: not only did it motivate refugee students but also past experiences and cultural capital provided them with the opportunity to adapt and shape their knowledge to the demands of the formal curriculum. So even though a formal evaluation was conducted about only one strand of the alternative practicum, anecdotal evidence from the other strands in the alternative practicum also shows that it encouraged pre-service teachers and learners to tell their stories, reflect on their perceptions and understandings in terms of their validity and uncover, explore and resolve repressed feelings. Such consciousness-raising allowed for assumptions of neutrality and equality to be questioned in educational provision by recognising historical and political antecedents to contemporary practices.
The pre-service teachers became more aware of inner power relations and how to address these in productive ways. There was a consideration of ‘big picture’ issues which relate to socially critical scenarios and social futures.

Householder (1992) believes that these alternative practicum programs are imperative to the future of teacher education, as traditional methods are failing to meet the demands of both learners and society. He believes that these demands stem from the exponential growth of a society that now requires more rapid changes than evolutionary methods have traditionally provided. He continues to propose that program leaders in secondary and higher education need to make rapid changes and extensive modifications to existing traditional programs in response to these changes if there is to be a future in teacher education.

**Conclusion**

It is evident from critical inquiry via the discussion above of the alternative practicum program at the School of Education at UWS that the program acknowledges the dynamic quality of teacher education institutions and their programs by translating private knowledge into public discourse. To generalise, it has rendered a public account of a present program in a form that can be tested for further action and inquiry. This stance implies, for example, that the teacher education system needs to be studied in totality—not in isolation but in relation to other structural forces in society so that its issues would be viewed as necessary to enable people to develop a more adequate sense of how to penetrate institutional structures and to inform practical actions.

Cochran-Smith (1991, p. 109) suggests that a promising way to learn about teaching is one that is based on inquiry within a school–university relationship that has collaborative resonance. She defines this approach thus: “Appropriating a term used to describe the intensity among echoing sounds, I refer to the school–university relationship as collaborative resonance or intensification based on the co-labour of learning communities.” Partnerships that conform to the ideals of collaborative resonance create opportunities for the school and the university to become actively engaged in professional renewal efforts through critical inquiry. In programs that conform to the ideals of collaborative resonance, teachers and teacher educators are committed to collaboration and reform in their own classrooms, schools and communities.

School–university partnerships work jointly with teacher candidates in ways that move novice teachers beyond a focus on gaining immediate proficiency in skills towards assuming the larger role of teachers as knowers, thinkers and researchers. Britzman, Dippo, Searle, and Pitt (1997, p. 20) suggest, that a great deal of the work of teacher education should be to
“produce [and] debate multiple perspectives on events, practices, and effects, to move toward creative dialogue on practices.” It would be:

… knowledge that would illuminate how the marginalised could develop a discourse free from the distortions of their own cultural inheritance … [I]t would be a form of knowledge that instructed the marginalised and the diverse how to appropriate the most progressive dimensions of their own cultural histories as well as how to restructure and appropriate the most radical aspects of bourgeois culture. Finally, such knowledge would have to provide motivational connection to action itself; it would have to link a radical decoding of history to a vision of the future that not only exploded the reifications of the existing society but also reached into those … longing for a new society and new forms of social relations. (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985, p. 35)

The recommendations for achieving teacher quality referred to in the “Top of the Class” document imply that a substantial number of resources would have to be available for pre-service teachers. The cost factor may also be an important factor in deciding whether the provisions as set out in the document are achievable for teacher quality and teacher education. There is also the assumption that the integration and equality of teacher education programs can be achieved through a process of national accreditation. Policy intervention seldom defines classroom practice and this is at times irrespective of the levels of resources available. It is important to remember that no matter how valuable the “Top of the Class” document may be to improving the quality of pre-service teachers, policy is always about establishing one set of goals rather than another so it is always about declaring and justifying preferences. The social and historical structure of policy-making will invariably involve conflict because setting goals and the means to achieve them will usually involve addressing the needs of some people at the expense of others. So while the “Top of the Class” encourages an open and accountable process for policy development, the present recommendations as set out in the document require a massive sustained national effort for it to succeed in achieving teacher quality in education.

References


Abstract

This chapter reports the results of one stage in the Mathematics for Initial Teacher Education Students (MITES) project, whose purpose is to investigate the effects on self-efficacy of interventions intended to raise competence levels in mathematics of teacher education students. The eventual aim of the project is to break the cycle that currently has a negative effect on achievement at school level, by preparing teachers who are more competent and confident at problem solving and teaching problem solving in mathematics.

The study used a repeated measures design to test levels of self-efficacy in mathematics pre- and post-intervention among first year teacher education students, who are required in their course to demonstrate a minimum of 80 per cent competence. The intervention (competence classes) led to statistically significant increases in self-efficacy levels in terms of students’ confidence to perform and teach across six areas of mathematics problem solving by the end of the period in which students proceeded from not competent to competent.

The findings have implications for conceptualising quality changes to university learning and teaching that have the potential to lead to increases in competence and self-efficacy, with regard to mathematical problem solving and mathematics teaching among initial teacher education students.

Introduction

In a study involving 238 initial teacher education students undertaking a six-week practicum in primary schools, Brady and Bowd (2005) reached the disturbing conclusion that teachers who lack confidence in teaching mathematics often attribute their anxieties to their lack of knowledge and
negative experiences with the subject, and have the potential to pass on their attitudes and feelings to their own students. Brady and Bowd (2005, p. 46) noted that, “If this cycle is to be broken, then further research and changes into the nature of mathematics education at a variety of levels of instruction need to be made.”

The Mathematics for Initial Teacher Education Students (MITES) project responds in part to this call for further research. The aim of the current stage of the MITES project is to examine whether the quality of an intervention, intended to increase competence in mathematics among initial teacher education students, is such that it also raises their levels of self-efficacy in terms of their projected confidence to solve mathematical problems and to teach problem solving in mathematics. Consistent with Brady and Bowd’s (2005) thinking, it is hypothesised that there is a high correlation between feeling confident to teach mathematics and confidence in one’s own abilities in mathematics.

The key research question for this stage of the MITES project is: What is the effect of mathematics competence classes on initial teacher education students’ levels of self-efficacy with regard to solving mathematical problems and teaching others to solve problems in mathematics?

To address this question, it is first necessary to describe the theoretical framework around self-efficacy, drawing predominantly on Albert Bandura’s seminal works. In his 1977 article, “Self-efficacy: Towards a unifying theory of behavioral change”, Bandura introduced the idea of self-efficacy as a theoretical concept, complete with all the empirical rigour that would allow its closer examination in subsequent research (Maddux & Gosselin, 2005). Bandura’s (1986) book Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory, and his earlier article, despite their publication more than two and three decades ago, have remained the major reference points for defining and measuring the construct of self-efficacy across a range of contexts. Bandura’s (1986) theory of self-efficacy is defined in terms of the degree of confidence that people have in their abilities to perform successfully in specified areas in the future.

Also important in understanding and evaluating research into self-efficacy is the work of other prominent researchers and theorists such as Frank Pajares and M. David Miller (1994), whose investigations into the reasons why several studies have produced evidence that appears to contradict established theory, are a constant reminder to researchers, even now, of the importance of heeding Bandura’s (1986) three cautions concerning the measurement of self-efficacy. These cautions relate to the degree of specificity in scales used to measure self-efficacy, the extent of the correspondence among self-efficacy scales and measurement of achievement of the tasks to which they relate, and proximity in time between the administration of these separate measures.
When described later in this chapter in the section on the measurement of self-efficacy, these cautions may appear intuitively logical but when applied to a repeated measures design, failure to adhere to them has been shown by Pajares and Miller (1994) to produce self-efficacy scales with low predictive power and results that are not dependable.

While this chapter focuses on a particular research question and foregrounds a stage of an ongoing study, there are broader implications for changing university learning and teaching. Further considerations and qualifications around the results of the study, its limitations and its current and future stages, for example, demonstrate an ongoing commitment to interrogating and enhancing learning and teaching in higher education in order to provide quality interventions that promote self-efficacy in mathematics among initial teacher education students.

**Theoretical Framework**

Scales to measure self-efficacy have been developed in a wide range of disciplines that include psychology, sociology, medicine and educational psychology. The common denominator with these disparate scales is that they ask people to predict how well they will be able to perform in the specified area in the future.

A key element of Bandura’s (1986) theory of self-efficacy, which is part of his broader socio-cognitive theory, has been the identification of four main sources of information on which students base their judgements about how well they think that they will perform in the future. These sources relate to how well students believe that they have performed or achieved in the past, watching other students perform (and making comparative judgements about their own abilities based on these vicarious experiences), verbal feedback and assurances, and their emotional states.

The first of these sources, performance attainments and what students think of these, however, is the most influential, pointing to the importance of students experiencing success and believing that they have been successful. This assessment of one’s past performance, which is not necessarily commensurate with actual achievement or ability, is a central tenet of Bandura’s (1986) theory of self-efficacy. Students who believe that they have performed well in the past are more likely to believe that they will be successful in their future endeavours in that area. When students then witness other students succeeding with similar tasks, their confidence in their past performance, supported by assurances that they have received from their teachers and others, contributes to their belief that they, just like their peers, can succeed. Students’ emotional states also moderate and are moderated by their beliefs in their abilities.
Another key element in Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy relates to the accuracy of self-efficacy judgements. Bandura (1986) maintained that slightly over-optimistic levels of self-efficacy are desirable, especially if they lead to greater effort, motivation and persistence to achieve something that otherwise might be regarded as just out of reach. Gross over-estimations of one’s abilities to achieve in particular areas, however, can be counterproductive, with the resulting failure leading to a loss of confidence and a lowering of self-efficacy. Marked under-estimations, which were first reported by Moriarty, Douglas, Punch, and Hattie (1995) as being associated with competitive learning environments for many students, occur when the perceived level of past performance is much lower than the actual achievement, often resulting in a loss of motivation, reduced effort and lack of persistence. As Pajares and Schunk (2001, p. 240) reiterated:

... How people behave can often be better predicted by the beliefs they hold about their capabilities ... than by what they are actually capable of accomplishing, for these self-perceptions help determine what individuals will do with the knowledge and skills they have.

Classroom environments and interventions that positively or adversely affect students’ levels of self-efficacy therefore are crucial because they may be the antecedents to a whole range of behaviours whose consequences directly impact on subsequent achievement.

A third key element in Bandura’s (1986) theory of self-efficacy relates to attributions of failure. It can be helpful to have high self-efficacy in the event of failure, because high self-efficacy is more likely to be equated with a perception that the failure resulted from poor effort or inadequate strategies rather than from lack of ability. The value of reflecting on effort or strategies, and making adjustments accordingly, may be all that is required to get back on track following a disappointing performance. For people whose levels of self-efficacy are low, however, lack of ability is more likely to be seen as the reason for the failure and this is more difficult to address.

Self-efficacy theory has been shown to be logical and sustainable and to have a direct effect on achievement (Swackhamer, Koellner, Basile, & Kimbrough, 2007). The implications of self-efficacy theory for teaching are, therefore, extensive and complex and have led more recently to research into self-efficacy levels of initial teacher education students in science (Palmer, 2006), mathematics (Swars, 2005) and mathematics and science (Utley, Bryant, & Moseley, 2005). At another level, interaction effects and the possible mediating role of self-efficacy paint a complex picture that indicates the necessity for continued research efforts, and the provision of quality interventions that lead to higher levels of achievement and associated levels of self-efficacy.
The Measurement of Self-efficacy

Bandura’s (1986) theory of self-efficacy underpins the extensive body of research in the area across a wide range of domains, and has resulted in a proliferation of scales to measure the construct (Maddux & Gosselin, 2005). Pajares (1996), in a landmark review of self-efficacy beliefs in academic settings in the Review of Educational Research, found that studies reported a low correspondence between self-efficacy and performance. Closer examination of these studies by Pajares and earlier by Pajares and Miller (1994), revealed that each was associated with one or more violations of Bandura’s cautions. These violations were the definition and measurement of self-efficacy in global rather than specific terms; the low correspondence between the global measurements of self-efficacy and the particularity of the criterial tasks that were later to be performed; and the passage of time that elapsed between the measurement of self-efficacy and the task to which it related. The evidence from these studies was found to be unreliable and failed to add to what is known about self-efficacy theory.

It should be noted that most studies found a strong correspondence between self-efficacy and performance, and that what Pajares and Miller (1994) did was to investigate the several studies that produced contradictory evidence. If these studies had survived Pajares and Miller’s scrutiny, then further research would need to test those potential qualifications of Bandura’s theory, but this was found not to be appropriate.

Pajares and Miller’s (1994) review (as well as Pajares & Miller, 1995 and Pajares, 1996), particularly in terms of mathematics, therefore echoed Bandura’s (1986) cautions about the most appropriate ways to measure self-efficacy. By definition, attention to specificity removes the problems associated with global measurements of self-efficacy, which are too general to be reliable indicators of confidence to perform very specific tasks, and has the potential to the increase degree of congruence between the measurement of self-efficacy and the particular types of task to which it relates. Bandura referred to this congruence as correspondence with the criterial task. Close proximity in timing between measuring self-efficacy and performance or testing of the criterial task is also important because it helps to control for the appearance of other variables that might also impact performance. The predictive power of the self-efficacy scale is higher therefore when Bandura’s guidelines for the measurement of self-efficacy are followed.

In 1989, when the testing of self-efficacy was in its infancy, Hackett and Betz (1989) noted that prior research had not provided definitive conclusions to questions around self-efficacy and mathematics achievement. Based on their analysis of the research literature that the testing of self-efficacy in mathematics was likely to be worthwhile, the stated purpose of their 1989
study was to commence examination of the connection between mathematics self-efficacy and performance at the specific level. The self-efficacy scales that they developed or incorporated into their research are well known in this field of research and are often quoted or used as reference points for the development of other scales.

Two of the scales that Hackett and Betz (1989) administered to 153 female and 109 male psychology students at a large United States university were the Mathematics Self-Efficacy Scale (MSES), developed by Betz and Hackett in 1983, and the performance sub-scale of the Mathematics Confidence Scale, developed by Dowling in 1978. The latter consists of 18 items to test mathematics performance. These items are parallel versions of the 18 items in the Mathematics Tasks subscale of the MSES, which asks participants to rate on a ten-point scale their confidence in solving mathematics problems that they were shown but not asked to solve.

Several points about these scales and procedures are worthy of mention. Showing examples to students of problems that they will later be asked to solve addresses in a particular way Bandura’s (1986) criterion of specificity. It seems logical that this procedure would assist students to make reliable judgements, particularly if the number of items on the scale (each with an example attached) is limited, as in the Hackett and Betz (1989) study. If, however, it is necessary to include a much greater number of similar items, covering either a broader range of areas or a greater number of specific items within areas, then the length of the test, particularly with the inclusion of examples for all items, is likely to become time-consuming in its administration. An alternative is not to include the examples of mathematics problems for students to view, but to increase the number of items in line with the number of mathematical concepts of interest. By controlling for other variables, the increased length of the self-efficacy scales is likely to improve reliabilities, but caution then needs to be taken with the sample size, which needs to increase commensurately in order for reliabilities to be assessed.

In the present study, the development of the mathematics self-efficacy scales began with identifying the specific areas in mathematics in which first year initial teacher education students were expected to reach competency. The areas were identified as concepts, number, measurement, fractions, space, and chance and data, as these areas reflect the syllabus content that is taught in schools, and which initial teacher education students need to master and learn how to teach. A self-efficacy scale consisting of six items asking students to indicate their degrees of confidence in solving mathematical problems in these areas, and six corresponding items asking students to indicate degrees of confidence in teaching others to solve mathematical problems could have been constructed. This would have resulted in some degree of specificity and
correspondence with the criterial task, but not as much as if each of these items became a scale that contained a number of more specific items within these categories.

To reach this higher level of specificity and correspondence, items that represented very precisely what the competency test would cover within each of these categories were constructed. This meant, for example, that eight items were constructed for the confidence to solve problems involving number scale, and eight items for its corresponding scale asking students to indicate their degree of confidence in teaching problem solving involving number. The eight items for each of these scales were: subtraction; multiplication; addition; expanding numbers; factors; exponents (powers); roots (for example, square roots); and roots (for example, cube roots). The same procedure was followed for the development of the other scales and their items. The final scales consisted of between four and ten items, corresponding with the test items. The intention in this study is not to explore how the results can be generalised to other domains of study, which was a focus for Lent and Hackett’s (1987) and Multon, Brown, and Lent’s (1991), oft quoted studies. The main concern in the MITES study was that the level of specificity in the self-efficacy scales matched the items to be tested in the course.

The importance of developing reliable scales of self-efficacy also lies in the potential of their predictive power, as indicated by Pajares and Miller (1994), who used path analysis to test Bandura’s hypothesis about the predictive and mediational role of self-efficacy as applied to the study of mathematics. Pajares and Miller found that self-efficacy was more predictive than other variables of mathematics performance. They agreed with earlier researchers (such as Dweck and Leggett) that perceptions of ability tend to be formed early in life, and noted that these perceptions have a propensity to persist when interventions are not put into place. It was also concluded that interventions implemented to address self-efficacy are often needed and are effective but the paucity of research that explores these interventions was also noted. Of particular interest to the current study was the conclusion that research needs to examine the effects of interventions on later levels of self-efficacy. This conclusion, coupled with the importance not only of establishing connections between self-efficacy and performance but also of examining how self-efficacy levels can be modified (Hackett & Betz, 1989), again points to the imperative of developing reliable self-efficacy scales that are consistent with theory, as well as the use of repeated measures designs that allow the quality of interventions to be assessed.

Pajares and Miller (1994), in pointing to the importance of following Bandura’s (1986) three main cautions about the testing of self-efficacy, also summarised the status of research in the area. They noted not just that Bandura’s
cautions were frequently violated but also that they were rarely followed. The consequences included the development and use of poor measures of self-efficacy, leading to results that were unable to be interpreted because of confounding relationships. The messages and implications for research are clear: advancing knowledge in the area of self-efficacy and problem solving in mathematics depends on taking full regard of established theory in both the development and the administration of measures of the construct.

The Study of Self-efficacy and Mathematics among Initial Teacher Education Students: Applying Bandura’s Cautions

The 2006 stage of the MITES study was conducted across four campuses of a regional Australian university. It involved 81 participants with both the pre- and post-administrations of the self-efficacy scales to first year initial teacher education students. Based on the results of earlier stages of the MITES research (Moriarty & Sanders, 1996), initial teacher education students in the early childhood and primary strands of a teaching degree at that university have for some time been required to demonstrate a minimum of 80 per cent competence in mathematics problem solving, based on the content of the mathematics curriculum and pedagogy course that they complete in the first year of their degree.

This stage of the study used a repeated measures design. Students who agreed to participate in the research completed self-efficacy scales early in the term, immediately prior to sitting for the mathematics competence test. Those students who demonstrated competence on that test were not required to do anything further in terms of competence, while those who scored below 80 per cent, which typically is most students, were given the opportunity to attend weekly competence classes before completing a parallel competence test later in the term. Those students who participated in the MITES research again completed the self-efficacy scales immediately prior to sitting the parallel re-test of competence. In each administration of the self-efficacy scales, care was taken to conform with Bandura’s (1986) cautions relating to specificity in measuring self-efficacy, high correspondence with the criterial task (in this case, the competence test) and testing for self-efficacy, followed immediately by testing for competence. As a final set of items at the end of the second administration of the self-efficacy scales, participating students were asked to indicate how often they attended competency classes—that is, once or twice, quite a few times or on a regular basis.

Two self-efficacy sets of scales were included in each administration. One set related to students’ confidence in solving mathematical problems in each of the areas of concepts, number, measurement, fractions, space, and
chance and data. Each of these scales, which contained from four to ten items matching the areas tested for competence, had a matching scale relating to confidence in teaching problem solving. The following is an example of one of the scales for problem solving:

1a. Please indicate below how confident you would be in solving problems involving the following maths concepts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complementary angles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Obtuse angle</td>
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<td>Isosceles triangle</td>
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<td>Parallelogram</td>
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<td>Perpendicular</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hectare</td>
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<td>Function</td>
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<td>Variable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Algebra</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 8–1: Example scale for problem solving**

For the parallel scale related to teaching problem solving, the only change was the wording in the stem of the item.

Prior to the calculation of the correlations between each variable for self-efficacy in relation to students’ own problem solving and their self-efficacy in relation to teaching problem solving, scatter plots were obtained to test assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity. There is a linear relationship between each variable pair (relating to concept, numbers, measurement, fraction, space, and chance and data), such that, as students’ levels of self-efficacy in terms of their own problem solving increases in each of these areas, so does their self-efficacy in terms of teaching problem solving in these same areas. In each case, the assumption of homoscedasticity is also met, because the variability among the scores relating to confidence in teaching mathematical problem solving within each area remains relatively constant from one score on self-efficacy in problem solving to the next, for each of the six areas separately.

As hypothesised, the two sets of scales given as pre-tests are highly positively correlated (ranging from $r = 0.786$ for confidence to solve mathematical problems and confidence to teach problem solving involving
concepts, to $r = 0.891$ for solving problems and teaching problem solving involving space) and all are statistically significant ($p < .001$). These relationships do not imply causality but indicate that scores covary, such that as students’ levels of self-efficacy for solving mathematical problems increase, so does self-efficacy for teaching problem solving in the same mathematical areas.

The reliabilities for the scales are very high, ranging from 0.93 to 0.98. Factor analyses were not conducted, because the scales were constructed in such a way that there was confidence that each scale formed a factor based on knowledge of the mathematics syllabus and that each scale was testing a different factor—that is, for example, fractions or chance and data.

The reliabilities for this stage of the study should be treated with caution, however. The sample size should have been larger given the total number of items across all scales. A later stage of the study should ensure that this limitation is overcome. The scales used in 2006 are extended and refined versions of the scales developed and used in earlier stages of the study, for which the sample size was large enough to test the psychometric properties of the scales, including the reliabilities, which ranged between 0.88 and 0.97. The longer scales were required for the 2006 stage of the study to match changes in the curriculum in the intervening period.

**Results**

Repeated measures designs have two advantages identified by Ho (2006): they accommodate relatively small sample sizes, which was a consideration in this study, and between-subject differences are removed from the experimental error. The problem of violation of the assumption of independence was accounted for by applying general linear modelling for repeated measures, thus making it possible to account for the dependence created by repeated measures while testing for differences in measures on the dependent variables across subjects.

Highly significant results were found uniformly across all multivariate tests involving the six within subjects variables of concepts, number, measurement, fractions, space, and chance and data for both confidence to solve problems and confidence to teach problem solving in these areas of mathematics. The tests for Within Subjects Contrasts involving interaction effects between the dependent variables and the independent variable of competence classes was, in every case, not significant, indicating that significant differences found between the result on each pre-test of self-efficacy and the corresponding result on the post-test occurred irrespective of whether attendance at competence classes occurred just once or twice, quite a few times or on a regular basis, as
reported by the study participants. As the outcome is the same across all tests, the detailed statistical analysis for just one of those tests, confidence to solve mathematical problems involving knowledge of concepts, is reported here.

The multivariate test involving the Within Subjects Variable of confidence to solve mathematical problems relating to concepts, yielded highly significant results for all four multivariate tests (Pillai’s, Wilks’, Hotelling’s and Roy’s), $F (1, 34) = 16.82, p<.001$. The Estimated Marginal Means table indicated that, on average, subjects obtained higher scores on the post-test ($M=4.36$) than on the pre-test ($M=3.23$).

The tests of Within Subjects Contrasts present the contrasts obtained for the variable confidence to solve mathematical problems involving concepts in the pre-test ($M=3.23$) and in the post-test ($M=4.36$) and are statistically significant, $F (1, 34) = 16.82, p<.001$.

The tests of Within Subjects Contrasts for the conf*CompClass interaction are not significant, $F (2, 34) = .36, p>.05$, indicating that the significant increase in levels of confidence pre- to post-test occurred regardless of the regularity of attendance at the competence classes. The post hoc Scheffe comparison confirms this analysis.

The estimated marginal means for the three patterns of attendance (once or twice, quite a few times and on a regular basis) across the two tests shown on the profile plot also show that subjects’ performances increased with the intervention of competency classes, and that this occurred independently across the three patterns of attendance.

**Discussion**

The statistically significant increases in levels of self-efficacy of the first year initial teacher education students, from pre- to post-intervention, occurred across all six areas of problem solving for both confidence in solving mathematics problems and confidence to teach problem solving in mathematics. As hypothesised, high positive correlations between confidence to solve problems and to teach problem solving within each of the six areas were found when the self-efficacy scales were administered as pre-tests. These correlations, together with the significant increases in self-efficacy in all areas during the period in which competency classes were offered, provide support for this type of intervention.

The finding that the increases in levels of self-efficacy and competence occurred regardless of the frequency with which students attended the competence classes requires discussion. After they completed the pre-test of competence and received their results, students knew how well they had preformed in each of the six areas. Most students did not reach competency
overall and therefore were required to sit a parallel test of competence later in the term. During the intervening period students were able to access up to 10 hours of instruction in competence classes at their campus. Students could choose to attend only those classes that covered the areas in which they needed help, thus using their time judiciously. It is outside the scope of this stage of the study to be able to conclude that students did, in the main, take this approach but it is plausible to suggest that this may have been the case. Regular attendance at competence classes would be most beneficial for students who needed to improve in all or most areas, while students who almost demonstrated competence on the first test would need very little help, perhaps in just one or a few areas. When students know from their pre-test results which competence classes would be most beneficial for them to attend, they can be empowered to concentrate their efforts where they are most needed. This approach adds another dimension to our understanding of quality learning and teaching in higher education.

Quality interventions that emphasise personal mastery and increase students’ confidence levels in the area in which they are working, are likely to be successful, according to Pajares and Schunk (2001), because self-efficacy is largely determined by levels of mastery. In this stage of the MITES project, self-efficacy increased significantly over the period in which students proceeded from not competent to competent.

Conclusions and Implications for Research and Practice

The results of this stage of the MITES study should be viewed with certain cautions and within the larger context of the MITES project, which is ongoing. If the ultimate aim of the MITES research is to break the cycle that currently leads to poorer achievement at school level by employing quality interventions to prepare teachers who are more confident and competent at problem solving and teaching problem solving in mathematics, then the current stage of the research partly addresses or explores a few areas within this broader aim. It appears, for example, that the self-efficacy scales, which are extensions and refinements of the scales used in earlier stages of the MITES project, are adequate. Their development and psychometric properties are reported elsewhere (Moriarty, 2007), but it is anticipated that the 2007 stage of the data collection would involve a sample large enough to satisfy the minimum requirements for determining reliabilities, a necessary condition given the increased lengths of the scales in the current stage of the project. This is important, despite the fact that the additional items are of the same type as those used in the original scales, for which high reliabilities were established (Moriarty & Sanders, 1996). It is also important to note that the
current and former versions of the scales tested specific levels of self-efficacy and matched this with the areas covered in the competence tests. These points, together with the immediacy with which the competence tests followed the administration of the self-efficacy scales, provides confidence in the process by addressing the three cautions posed by Bandura (1986).

Students complete another mathematics curriculum and pedagogy course in the first part of their final year of the degree before undertaking a ten-week, full-time, in school experience. The next stage in the MITES study will examine self-efficacy levels using the same scales following completion of the second mathematics curriculum and pedagogy course, and prior to the ten-week block experience in schools (which is inclusive of a six-week internship) and again at the conclusion of the internship. This stage of the project will therefore commence investigations of the extent to which the extended experience in schools at the end of the degree affects levels of self-efficacy in students’ own abilities to solve mathematical problems, and their confidence in teaching problem solving in mathematics to children. As later stages of the research unfold, the experiences of initial teacher education students can be followed into their early years of teaching.

It is recognised that initial teacher education students can access a variety of means in order to increase their competence in mathematics problem solving, apart from competence classes and school experiences. The emphasis in this chapter has been to focus on competence classes. Even the competence classes will need to be explored further, because very little attention has been given in this stage of the study to their operational definition. Strong recommendations as recently as 2005 (Brady & Bowd) reiterated the importance of relating the teaching of mathematics to authentic contexts, to involve students in project work that uses mathematics, and of strategies to include providing demonstrations and using games. One of the aims of Brady and Bowd’s research was to gather data on initial teacher education students’ levels of confidence in teaching mathematics during extended in-school experiences. They found that students’ confidence to teach mathematics was negatively correlated with mathematics anxiety. Perhaps more importantly, they discovered that initial teacher education students were often spending time during their extended school experiences in re-learning concepts that they had learned and forgotten many years previously, but not encountered while at university. The MITES project clearly places the emphasis on investigating the quality of interventions intended to address mastery and confidence levels early in the degree, and prior to students’ first extended experiences in schools.
Finally, despite the limitations of this stage of the MITES research, the results indicate significant changes in initial teacher education students’ levels of self-efficacy with regard to both their confidence to solve problems involving mathematics and their confidence to teach others to solve mathematics problems. Regardless of levels of attendance at competence classes offered to help students reach mastery and improve their mastery, the quality of this intervention appears to be such that these classes should continue to be offered early in the degree to help students regain or claim mastery over mathematical concepts that they will need for later practical experiences in their degree. Further stages in the research need to proceed towards outcomes at the school level. The directions taken in the MITES project to date, however, demonstrate ongoing interrogation of strategies that have been put in place for the purpose of enhancing learning and teaching in initial teacher education programs in higher education.

References


Chapter Nine:
Envisioning Change: Quality and Creative Arts in Australian Universities

Donna Lee Brien and Jen Webb

Abstract

One of the recent growth areas in universities is the creative arts, now taught from undergraduate to doctoral level in institutions across Australia and globally. Its relative youth as a discipline means we can track the changes in its form, mode and identity over its university life.

In this chapter we focus on the arts as a microcosm of the tertiary education sector’s investment in creativity. Creativity is, of course, not just about artistic vision, but is central to success in a wide range of endeavours. Higher education is one of the key potential generators of creative skills but, although most universities list creativity as a graduate attribute, the sector remains largely unexamined with regard to how, and how well, it develops and enhances the creativity of its graduates.

Recently a number of criticisms—from the public, the media and formal audit bodies such as the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA)—have been levelled at universities, and at their creative arts programs. We have been challenged to show that we do in fact adequately prepare our students for their futures after graduation. How we respond to such challenges will affect the sustainability and growth of the university sector. Analyses of creative programs—their recent past and their likely future—can provide insights into the issues of quality and creativity: how it is measured and evaluated, how students can be more effectively trained and for what we are training them.

We outline the shape and health of these Australian university programs and, drawing on research we have undertaken locally and internationally, posit some mechanisms for a changed and refined approach, across the university sector, in the future.
Introduction: Creative Art in Australian Universities

One of the recent growth areas in Australian universities is found in the creative arts, a sector including visual art, craft, design, creative writing, the performing arts, film and television production, and music. These disciplines are taught from undergraduate to doctoral level in higher education institutions across the country. In 2000, some four per cent of all university course enrolments were in the various creative disciplines (Australia Council for the Arts, 2003, p. 5), and the numbers of programs offering training in these fields has grown rapidly since the 1970s. This rise in both programs and students mirrors a broader growth in creative arts programs offered at tertiary education level in the United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand and Europe. Nor is this changing pattern of higher education a purely Western phenomenon; across the Pacific, universities have established schools and centres for creative practice. There are emergent programs in creative writing and visual art in Hong Kong universities; and across Asia, various art practices have a home in tertiary institutions.

This move has initiated some significant changes in the structure and focus of teaching and in thinking about what creativity means in the university context, whether and how it can be taught, and what is required of leadership in the creative disciplines.1 But while it seems comparatively new in the Australian context, there is in fact a long history shared by the fields of artistic and scholastic practice, a history that dates, in Europe, from the earliest stages of university organisation, prior to the specialisation of disciplines and the consequent separation of art, science and philosophy. In medieval times, research carried out in monasteries (the proto-universities) was often expressed in the form of works of visual or performance art: illuminated manuscripts, paintings and musical performances, for instance (Webber, 1994, p. 17). Artists continued to have a home in universities over the centuries that followed, a tradition maintained in Australian higher education institutions. In the mid-19th century the official discourse around Australian universities was marked by an attempt to balance the often competing imperatives of instilling in the elite those “moral” and liberal values that would afford them the distinction deemed appropriate to their social position and training graduates for commerce and the professions—so badly needed then in Australia. It seems likely that the decision of the universities of both Melbourne and Adelaide to fund Chairs of Music in the 1880s2 was an outcome of the former imperative, while the University of Sydney’s decision at the same period to award law and medical degrees was an

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1 In this chapter, where we write “art” or “creative practice”, we include the various disciplines: instrumental music and singing, composition and conducting, painting and drawing, sculpture and printmaking, dance and choreography, poetry and fiction, travel and memoir writing … and so on.
2 Reported by Dennis Strand (1998, p. 14)
outcome of the latter. It is important to note, though, that there is little evidence that early Australian universities took seriously the idea that creative practice, or creativity more broadly, might contribute to knowledge as an academic discipline. In the United States of America, by comparison, creative writing was taught at Harvard University from the mid-1880s, not as a vocational approach to education, but “for the sake of cultivation” (Myers, 1996, p. 47)—that is, obeying the moral imperative attached to higher education.

In Australia, apart from the support offered to music, creative practice was not considered an authorised scholarly practice with its own language, epistemology, pedagogy and research paradigms. Creative products were certainly considered valid objects of study, and an educated person would certainly manifest taste and distinction, but creative practice lacked the legitimating frameworks that would establish it as a discipline in its own right. English literature and art history were therefore acknowledged as valid fields of intellectual enquiry, while creative writing and visual art were considered craft-based skills better learned through practical, studio-based or apprenticeship systems. Where creative practice was incorporated into university programs, it was treated as decoration, as offering a “civilising influence” (Gibson, 2001, p. 36) or, in a reminder of the medieval approach, as a way of expressing knowledge generated through other scholarly means. And certainly it was a poor cousin compared with the liberal arts or sciences, left out of the mainstream curriculum. For the most part, creative art forms were taught in extra-university institutions such as the conservatoria of music, art schools, Technical and Further Education colleges or teacher training institutions. In the 1950s, the National Institute of Dramatic Arts (NIDA) was established in Sydney to train performing artists, and in the 1970s a number of Colleges of Advanced Education (CAEs) developed art training courses, building craft-oriented knowledge, pedagogies and scholarship in such areas as visual art, creative writing and performance art.

It was not until the Australian Unified National System brought the CAEs into the university network that the changing identity of the creative arts took hold, and they found a home in the academy. In the 20 years since the Dawkins reforms, along with other changes such as a greater professionalism and managerialism in universities, the creative arts have burgeoned. Overall enrolments in creative arts-related courses in Australia have increased rapidly: by 39 per cent overall between 1994 and 2000 (Australia Council for the Arts, 2003, p. 12). This change was the spur to others, associated for instance with the development of pedagogies relevant to the creative arts, and with increasing interest in creativity as an academic value.

3 The University of Sydney established its medical school in 1883, and the Faculty of Law in 1890 (Barff, 1902 as cited by North, 2005, p. 42); and both Sydney and Melbourne established Chairs in Literature in the 1880s.
Creative Changes

The changing status of higher education in Australia brought about by the move to a national system, and the transplanting of creative courses into universities, suggest a need for attention to be paid to the changed identity of the creative arts in those institutions. Despite the increased presence of creative arts in universities, there is little evidence of a broadly based change in how such courses are perceived within the academy. Creative arts courses are popular among students, and enjoy high and sustained demand for places, but are frequently viewed, in the academy as less “serious” or intellectual than the more established discipline areas. Studio-based visual art and music are often sequestered in spaces outside the main business of the campus. Production courses such as creative writing, film and theatre tend to be regarded in humanities departments as “cash cows”, but not as “real” areas of study: an opportunity for students to be self-indulgent, and to engage in self-expression rather than critical analysis. In short, the creative arts are still, in many instances, viewed as being focused on the technical/craft domain rather than being genuine areas of scholarship, and as avocational rather than professional.

But alongside this backhanded acceptance of creative programs, the term and concept of creativity have been taken up enthusiastically by university administrators, government and industry. This, we suspect, is associated with the more general interest in the economic value of creativity asserted by writers such as Richard Florida (2002). Governments and university administrators are not alone in their interest in the concept: “creativity” is used with enthusiasm in areas such as psychoanalysis, science, business and economics, and information and communication technology. Policy researchers point out the importance of creative thinking and creative products in organising society, and in building national culture and cultural identity. Educational researchers pay attention to creativity and the arts as a way of establishing better mechanisms for teaching children and preparing them for contemporary society. The term is also central to research discourse: the Australian Research Council, for instance, names as one of its four Designated National Research Priorities, “research with a focus on developing and fostering human talent, societal and cultural values favourable to creativity and innovation, and structures and processes for encouraging and managing innovation” (Australian Research Council, 2007).

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4 Both students and staff in several universities have told us, for instance, that theatre performance and creative writing are ‘bludge’ courses, a break from the ‘real’ world of analytical essays or convoluted theories in ‘real’ disciplines like literary or communication studies. This (pejorative) perspective has emerged in studies at undergraduate, postgraduate and supervisory levels.

5 The books on creativity by Florida, an economist and urban studies theorist, are widely read; see, for instance, The Rise of the Creative Class (2002), Cities and the Creative Class (2005), and The Flight of the Creative Class (2005). His interest in creativity is largely as a means for economic development, rather than aesthetic—or self-expression, research or critique.
What such policy documents and research reports mean by creativity is, however, rarely defined. Like terms such as “excellence”, “quality” and “creativity” are often used in an unqualified or commonsense manner. In general, though, we can sum up its meaning as conveying one of the following—that creativity is: “impossible to define in words”; “what artists do”; “more innovative ways to generate economic production”; “the ability to see the world differently”; and “the ability to combine familiar ideas in unfamiliar ways.” Few of the widespread definitions gesture towards the aesthetic logic of creativity; it is rare also to find a reliance, in contemporary official parlance or indeed in art discourse, on the old Romantic view of creativity as divine inspiration or individual genius. But parallel notions such as “novelty”, “innovation”, “better ways of doing things” and “high level thinking” are certainly current.

For the purposes of this discussion, we characterise creativity in two ways. The first is the definition in widespread use in the field of creative production, which takes account of the thinking and material processes that result in works of art (see for example Carter, 2004). The other, which is in more widespread use across society and its various fields, is creativity as an attribute of thinking and acting based on skills of perception, conceptual thinking and self-reflexivity. It is, in Margaret Boden’s terms, “the ability to come up with ideas or artefacts that are new, surprising and valuable” (2004, p. 1), whether this comes from making novel associations, exploring a field of practice or conceptual space, or transforming that field or space. Such a definition includes the application of creative capacity and expert (or technical) knowledge, along with the ability to focus on an idea and develop its innovative potential.

All these ways of thinking are useful approaches to the concept of creativity; all have valence; and all recognise that creativity is not just about artistic vision. It is not a special gift, but an aspect of human intelligence all people possess in varying degrees. In other words, creativity is intimately invested in all intellectual practices, and is—or should be—deeply invested in the academic field. This is a very useful point from which the creative arts disciplines can make claims to their right to a place in the university. Generally speaking, though, these disciplines have not taken leadership in this area. Instead, the right to define what creativity means has been claimed by governmental and policy discourses, which reduce creativity to the sort of position taken by Florida (2002): that the point of creativity is utilitarian, and its value lies in its capacity to generate innovation and success in socio-economic endeavours. This is very evident in documents produced by the Australian government. For instance, the 1994 Creative nation policy—which was according to David Throsby “an exceptionally forward-looking document,
Changing University Learning and Teaching

...was ostensibly directed at the field of art, but was in fact based on the nexus between creativity and economic growth.

The reduction of creativity to economic outcomes is not a good move for arts practice, which famously is concerned with *l’art pour l’art* rather than with cash. Nor is it a good move for art as creative industry, given the fact that arts practice rarely follows a precise and methodical—business-like—trajectory. This is evident in the pedagogical approaches to the field: compared with most other academic disciplines, the teaching of art works according to the principle of backward design. When teaching, say, history or literature, the university takes a group of students who know very little and introduces them to a field where a great deal is known. Facts, arguments, methodologies and discourses are well established and widely verified. Students come to know the known in the process of their training, and to produce work that fits the established paradigms—that adds to disciplinary knowledge but, in the process, confirms the logic of the field.

With creative practice, however, a different approach is employed. Though the field is well researched and the facts of particular movements, practices and practitioners established, each student is a new and unknown quality. And it is the students themselves, with their particular tendencies, interests and tastes—in Bourdieu’s terms, their habitus—as well as their physical capacities, that determine what work they will make. Creative arts are not alone in this: Michael Polanyi writes, for instance, that research scientists are able to practise their “art” because their whole body, using “the trained delicacy of eye, ear and touch”, is put to work to test scientific knowledge against observed events (Polayni & Prosch, 1975, p. 31). Doctors and scientists rely on their eyes (and ears, and senses of smell and touch) at least as much as on conscious reason, much as many artists do.

The usual approach in the creative arts is to teach “backward”, as it were, sending students off to make work before providing lectures in theory, historical context or techne. As Wiggins and McTighe write, “One starts with the end—the desired results (goals or standards)—and then derives the curriculum from the evidence of learning (performances) called for by the standard and the teaching needed to equip students to perform” (2001, p. 8). In this process, the students themselves find out what it is they do not know and therefore what they want and need to know. They move from the known (their sense of self, their understanding of the field) to the unknown (their own way of seeing, their own sense of value, their own competition for a place in the field) and forward again into new knowledge/s.

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6 Techne, usually translated as craft or art, is the method involved in making an object, or attaining a goal. It is also a mode of knowing, one that has a practical, rather than a philosophical, engagement with knowledge.
But while such an educational process provides a rich environment for artistic training and production, it is not readily integrated into the managerial frameworks that now drive university organisation, and nor does it serve the economic face of creativity. This means that while those of us working within creative programs can produce data that demonstrates our contribution to the university (student load, community engagement, research outputs), because of the perceived “messiness” of our teaching (and research) practice this does not necessarily place us in a strong position when it comes to arguing how such programs might serve a university’s strategic and operational plans, how they can position a university to compete for students and for cultural capital, how they might deliver educational and research outcomes, and how they can prepare students for the professional world in which they will find their careers. We remain, in other words, the poor cousin. In 1998 Dennis Strand noted that:

The creative arts are at the forefront of universities’ community service activities, although there is often not proper recognition of the financial cost to the creative arts schools of presenting these activities, nor are there formal mechanisms for acknowledging the contribution of academic staff to them. (1998, p. xiv)

We suggest that the situation has not changed considerably since then.

The New Creative Academy

Although the increased attention paid to creativity provides academics in the creative art fields with a point of entrée, creative art forms are still, for the most part, in the same sort of position they occupied in medieval institutions, where art served to decorate “real” scholarship rather than being seen as a mode of scholarship in itself. This is particularly evident in the research field where the formal reporting of creative research outputs—the J categories—had a very short life.7 Not until 2006 and preparations for the former Research Quality Framework8—and in response to active lobbying—did the government agree to include creative works again in

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7 Under the Higher Education Research Data Collection (HERDC) that partly determines individual universities’ government funding, the categories of research outputs carry weightings that establish their value. Category J, ‘other creative works’, allowed outputs such as fictional prose, performances, and exhibitions of visual arts to be reported as the products of research in 1994 and 1995. While this was a significant point in the history of art/academic relations because it indicated recognition by the research/education gatekeepers, the weightings were regarded by the art sector as arbitrary and insufficient; and besides, the recognition was short-lived: in 1996 Category J was eliminated from HERDC.

8 The Research Quality Framework, was designed to assess the quality and impact of public research undertaken in Australia. Following the change of Australian government in late 2007, its implementation was halted and, at the time of writing, a new approach to research evaluation is being developed.
the evaluation of research effort. Meanwhile, academics and university managers generally welcome undergraduate students into creative programs, but creative arts postgraduates and academics regularly complain that they feel marginalised within universities, and have been told by colleagues that they are not “real” academics, and are not doing “real” research (see North, 2005; Sved, 2005). The creative arts might therefore be embedded in universities, but they are not well integrated. This is not necessarily a problem, except insofar as university management and colleagues in the other humanities disciplines often find it difficult to articulate what we do in the creative arts, and how we evaluate and measure what we do. And this is potentially a significant problem, in a period marked by increasing student numbers, and the increasing pattern of tying university funding not to the (traditional) idealist or utilitarian views of higher education but instead to the hard economic rationalist mechanisms of performance measurement and evaluation.

A second approach for academics working in creative disciplines is to eschew the temptation to complain about lack of respect and understanding, and refuse to crow about our student numbers, and instead to find a way to balance the imperatives of heteronomous management and autonomous art. In this, creative arts academics have come slowly, it seems, to a recognition of the need to change their performance from being primarily “artists” to being also pedagogical experts and administrative and teaching leaders. The Strand Report (Strand, 1998) was a seminal publication on the presence and impact of creative practice within mainstream universities but since then, and despite the many “how to teach [writing/painting/music/performance]” books, there has been little research into, or analysis of, the teaching of creative practice as an intellectual, scholarly and aesthetic field of practice.

Nor have the learning and teaching centres in universities, which aim to support academic staff in their endeavours, contributed particularly well to clarifying how a creative arts practice is taught or learned. Most research into pedagogy fails to look far beyond the dominant paradigms or to understand the back-to-front nature of creative teaching and the combined technical/aesthetic demands of assessment. Nor is there much serious, or useful, research into what it means to teach creativity; or whether creativity can, in fact, be taught. Answers to this question remain largely individual and anecdotal despite the fact that most Australian universities list “creativity” among the generic skills gained by their graduates. The University of Canberra, for instance, is “committed to graduating creative professionals

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9 Our research indicates that this is particularly an issue for creative writing and theatre production; this negative attitude is found in media stories about creative writing courses; reported informally to the authors; and recorded in public spaces: See for instance the Barbelith Underground blog (2006) at http://www.barbelith.com/topic/23806
who are capable of developing innovative solutions to problems facing society” (University of Canberra, 2002); the University of New England claims to graduate students who are “capable of applying logical, critical and creative thinking to a range of problems” (University of New England, 2006); and QUT “aims to develop graduates who are able to demonstrate … critical, creative and analytical thinking, and effective problem-solving” (Queensland University of Technology, 2005).

In none of these statements does “creative” equate to “art”; and nor should it, necessarily. “Creative” is a descriptor for a very wide range of human endeavour, and is fundamental to cognitive function. Our concern is that “creative” is now as, or more, likely to equate to “efficient”. The slipperiness of meaning, where creativity equals both art and efficiency, is perhaps behind some of the problems faced by the creative arts in the academy. Those in the creative disciplines do not own the meaning or use of the term but, because it is integral to our name and identity, our practice is coloured by the meanings the term takes in various contexts and the expectations that are established—without any reference to the logic of arts practice— which academics teaching the creative disciplines are expected to meet. Without clarity of meaning, and without the capacity to delimit the use and meaning of the term, it is not possible to establish a useful vocabulary to engage in teaching and teaching leadership in the creative disciplines. When we market our programs as training students in creativity, for instance, are we understood to be using the term in its business sense—describing ways of enhancing the economic status of universities and the vocational futures of graduates? Or are we understood to be taking the Enlightenment notion of artistic production, and using the term to describe how we teach students to make the beautiful and the sublime—along with all the related epistemological, ontological and axiological issues? Perhaps many of us attempt to achieve both outcomes: financial and aesthetic, professional and expressive. We suggest that both meanings of creativity are important. But if this is so the differences between these meanings should not be occluded. It is thus the responsibility of leaders in university creative arts programs to provide both clarity and direction for the benefit of university management, students and public understandings of our work and our functions.

Whether those in the creative disciplines find ways to take leadership and manage the expression of our practice (teaching, research and arts practice) probably has very little effect on students’ experience of these courses. After all, however, we name or define creativity, students in creative arts programs will learn something of the history of the field, a group of techniques, an understanding of how to operate as a practitioner and the capacity for critical reflection on their own work. But lack of clarity about what we do, how we do it and how we evaluate outcomes becomes a problem when it leads to
the appearance of a failure to achieve goals. For instance, if completion of a creative degree is marketed—or implicitly understood—as the gateway to a career as an artist, and most graduates from a program are not, a decade later, successfully practicing artists, then the program can be seen as having failed to deliver its promise. If graduates have become practicing artists, but are making a living by such means as teaching, driving taxis or working in the public service or the hospitality industry, the degree can again be seen as having failed to deliver professional (that is, economic) outcomes. If instead universities are transparent about the fact that a small percentage of graduates from creative programs will go on to practise as artists, and that only a tiny percentage of any practicing artists can earn a viable living from their practice (Throsby & Hollister, 2003), we will be in a better—a more realistic—position to establish what counts as success in creative arts education. Success will certainly include the quality of graduates’ professional outputs but it may also include evidence of creative thinking, of ethical practice, of critical skills—the graduate attributes claimed by all Australian universities.

Of course, there is not a one size fits all approach to the teaching of creative arts or the logic behind that teaching. Some programs focus on training their students to produce work likely to find a commercial outlet; others focus on training their students to work as experimental artists more concerned with innovation than with provisioning current markets; while yet others focus on the philosophical or cognitive aspects of creative practice. Providing that students know the logic within which they are being trained, and are exposed to a range of possibilities and perspectives, perhaps the overarching thrust of the program is not particularly important. This is, of course, providing that students are trained in how to learn, how to research, how to experience and how to “play” with their particular form and/or genre of art. They must also learn how to analyse the field of practice for which they are being prepared, and be provided with a range of options for practice, research and dissemination, and the skills to deal critically, reflectively, practically and creatively with those possibilities.

Our concern for change in both the teaching and the leadership of creative arts programs is not therefore specifically with the logic of individual courses but with the need to be explicit about the drivers that shape them and analytical about the shape of this area of the field of higher education. What all such courses do, we suggest, is contribute to field specific knowledge. This means that creative art students become better consumers of creative products and better equipped to work in a range of creative arts related occupations than graduates trained only in, say, arts administration, business and management
or communication theory.\textsuperscript{10} These courses also deliver broader graduate attributes, including creativity, communication skills, the capacity for lifelong learning and contribution to the community. If we take seriously the responsibility to produce graduates with these capacities, and establish valid performance indicators to be applied to the programs to establish the terms on which they should be evaluated, then it may be that the actual value of creative programs can be better articulated and demonstrated.

The next step is therefore to find a way to agree on those performance indicators and evaluative mechanisms. There are few if any accrediting bodies in the creative field and—despite the encouragement of the formal, and mandated, AUQA processes\textsuperscript{11}—no regularised process of benchmarking among universities. This means, as a corollary, that there is a tendency among creative arts academics to shape courses based on how they themselves were taught or on their individual interests and tastes. This does not mean that many programs are not extremely well organised, or that individual academics do not arrange benchmarking, engage in national and international research into best practice or put on record the foundations of, and approaches to, teaching in a particular art form. But in the absence of a formal quality assurance process that allows close and critical evaluation of how, what and why we teach, and with what outcomes, creative arts programs, and the disciplines within them, are liable to remain disparate and idiosyncratic.

Case Study: Creative Writing

The discipline of creative writing provides a useful case study, as Australian university writing courses are a major site where creativity as a practice, a way of thinking and an intellectual field is being taught and researched. Creative writing has also long been important to Australians and to our governments. Reading and writing are valued practices, as evidenced in Australia’s formal program of compulsory literacy and funding of public libraries since the 19th century, and as demonstrated by a number of research reports that show that reading is an enormously popular pursuit (AC Neilsen, 10 Graduates from theatre courses rarely find their careers in the theatre, but many are active audience members, on theatre boards or active in community theatre or work as managers, critics or arts event coordinators. Similarly, visual artists may work in museums or become collectors or dealers; writers may find work as editors, journalists or public servants; and so on, for the other creative disciplines. The point is not that few graduates go on to work precisely in their field of training (and this is not unusual; after all, few graduates from history become professional historians) but that they draw on their training in creative practice to establish themselves as professionals in allied or other fields.

11 AUQA, formally established by the Australian Government’s Ministerial Council on Education, Training and Youth Affairs in March 2000, is an independent, not-for-profit national agency which aims to promote, audit and report upon quality assurance in Australian higher education (Australian Universities Quality Agency, 2007).
In 1998–1999, the total household spending by Australians on books was $1,155 million (Australia Council for the Arts, 2003, p. 30), and even those who do not read value the fact that there is a body of Australian stories in prose, poetry, film and television. Australian governments have traditionally supported creative writing, and continue to do so: from the institution of the Commonwealth Literary Fund (1908) and the Australia Council for the Arts (mid-1970s), to various initiatives offered up to the present, the Commonwealth Government has promoted literary culture. Its mechanisms include the regulation and protection of the publishing sector through legislation and policy that covers copyright, censorship, libraries and tariffs, inter alia. In the financial year 2000–2001 the Federal Government spent $22 million on the category “literature and the print media” (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003, p. 12).

There are other good reasons for this investment: despite the low income earning potential of individual writers, as reported by Throsby and Hollister (2003), publishing contributed nearly $14,500 million to the value of Australian production in 1999-2000, an increase of some $2 million on the 1996-97 figures (Australia Council for the Arts, 2003, p. 34). Australian book publishers sold 126 million books in the financial year 1999–2000, a 13 per cent increase over sales in 1997–1998 (Australia Council for the Arts 2003, p. 23). Government reports show that in 2002-2003 the arts sector as a whole contributed $12.3 billion to gross domestic product and employed well over 800,000 people (300,000 as full-time workers). The government’s involvement in the arts is therefore not just an act of benevolence: it includes the management of a sector that contributes to the national purse, to representations of what it means to be Australian and to the innovation economy.

Building on the above mentioned United States tradition of offering creative writing as a field of tertiary level study, but substantially different in its theoretical underpinnings and approach, the past decade has seen a rapid and unprecedented increase in the numbers of students studying creative writing in Australian higher education institutions. Although creative writing has been taught in these institutions since the early 1970s, it is in this past decade that courses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels have been developed across the university sector (Dawson, 2005). From the period when creative writing was represented by a few units offered in Arts degrees, the discipline has grown to the stage where full courses in writing are offered across Australian institutions, and it is now an internationally recognised discipline.

Many commentators have noted that the creative writing discipline is in a period of significant growth, both in Australia (Dawson, 2005) and internationally. Marjorie Perloff, for instance, has pointed out that the number
of creative writing Bachelors and Masters degrees in the United States of America has quadrupled in the past 20 years (2006, p. 3). But impressions of Australian student numbers are anecdotal. There are no good data to indicate exactly how many students are enrolled in Australian creative writing courses and/or units because these figures are usually incorporated into the number of students enrolled in Arts, Communication or other degrees. However, some 35 Australian universities currently teach creative writing, and over 20 offer doctoral level degrees in the discipline (Australian Association Writing Programs, 2005). Creative writing is also included in undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in units and courses that are not named as such, such as Bachelor degrees in Fine Arts, double degrees (with Journalism, Cultural Studies, English/Literary Studies and Law), general Arts degrees with a writing major, Honours and coursework postgraduate qualifications, and various research degrees, including Masters of Creative Writing, Masters of Fine Arts (Writing), Doctorates in Creative Arts and Doctorates in Philosophy.

Australian creative writing programs are obviously popular, as the growth from a mere scattering of offerings in the 1970s to an established discipline in the 2000s demonstrates. More anecdotal evidence suggests that they are also successful, with universities now able to boast nationally and internationally recognised writers among their writing graduates. A survey of novels by first time authors published in Australia in the last decade reveals numerous links to Australia’s higher education creative writing programs (for recent evidence, see Australian Association of Writing Programs, 2007). Moreover, creative writing course graduates are winning and/or making the shortlists for many of Australia’s most prestigious literary awards. Such publishing success is not, though, the necessary goal of students who enrol in creative writing courses, as Tony Birch, a lecturer in writing at the University of Melbourne, explained. Talking to interviewer Ramona Koval about why his students take his writing courses, Birch said:

You’ll get those who are doing, I suppose, science or sometimes even degrees in medicine who will clearly say that they are looking for something as a creative outlet. And others who, really, already after one semester are a bit jaded by what they’ll call the ‘academic essay’, and I think they’re looking for creative writing to give them some relief and probably see it as an easier option. (2005)

With this range of reasons for doing such courses, it is difficult to justify the notion that all graduates will expect to be successful writers or even that they should be capable of writing the Great Australian Novel or the new award winning manuscript. Yet this is a criticism often sheeted home to creative writing programs. Contemporaneous with the enormous increase in the numbers of students studying creative writing in universities around the world, and the number of courses and the range of levels at which it is taught,
has been a plethora of misinformation, criticism and complaint. Critics of creative writing programs in Australia, Britain and (to a lesser extent) the United States of America have made highly negative assertions about the function, role and value of university training for creative writers. The main complaints offered are that universities do not train their students to produce publishable work, or fit them for careers: that is, the programs satisfy neither the aesthetic nor the economic aspects of creativity. These criticisms come from publishers and from the community of professional writers in Australia and overseas: Peter Pierce (2003), Helen Garner (as cited in Moran, 2003), Frank Moorhouse (2004) and others have emerged in print to complain about the bastardisation of their art form by universities, which are “flooding the country” with inadequate or uncommitted writers. A recent representative criticism by Robert Morrison (2006) posits that creative writing courses are “infesting the business of publishing” and producing an “unsolicited deluge” of “trash.”

Nor is all this criticism coming from outside creative writing programs: a number of postgraduate degree candidates, as well as academics in the field, have expressed doubts about the value of such courses in preparing graduates for either the writer’s life or the academy (see for example Ritter, 2001, p. 210). Many of these commentators insist that the best training for writers is to “get out in the real world.” Those who study in tertiary institutions are often considered to be stifling their talent, vision and voice or to be taking an “easy road” to writing. This is despite the fact that many internationally recognised writers such as British Poet Laureate Andrew Motion, novelist Tracey Chevalier (*Girl with a Pearl Earring*) and Booker Prize winners Ian McEwan and Kazuo Ishiguro, are graduates of creative writing programs; and despite the fact that many writing students do not see themselves as the future published authors of Australia.

More than a decade ago, McKenzie Wark summarised what has become an enduring ambivalence to teaching the creative arts in universities: “Some critics seem to think that the connection with universities will be the death of good writing. Others think it’s the cure” (1994, p. 34). Without good data, nationally agreed performance indicators and a resourced quality assurance system, it is difficult to say whether the connection between writing and universities is the death of or the cure for good writing. It is also not possible to determine what counts as best practice in teaching creative writing without these data and indicators or without a well established benchmark from which to begin the progress of evaluation. This is not to say that the matter has not had a great deal of attention. For the past decade, and principally through the Australian Association of Writing Programs’ annual conference and its internationally recognised peer-refereed journal TEXT, teachers and postgraduate students of creative writing in Australian universities have
discussed and debated issues of course content (Webb, 2000), consistency (Costello, 2005), generic attributes (Brien, 2006a; Brien & Neilsen, 2001), supervisory and examination practices (Dibble & von Loon, 2004) and standards (Krauth, 2001), and the employability of graduates from the discipline (Brien, 2005). These discussions have focused on defining the nature of the discipline and its aims, exploring its potential and its outcomes (Edmonds, 2004; Webb, 1997), and addressing central questions such as “Can writing/creativity be taught?” (Brophy, 1998, 2003), “What is the nature of research in creative arts such as writing?” (Kroll, 2002; North, 2005; Webb, 2004) and “How can we best service the professional aspirations of our postgraduate students?” (Brien, 2005; Kroll & Brien, 2006). This has been, without doubt, a stimulating and productive period for those within the discipline. However, it is now necessary for the discipline to look to formal quality assurance processes to bring this significant but disparate work together.

Some Conclusions

While a discipline should not necessary react to every criticism directed to it, the creative arts disciplines have become highly visible components of higher education and, although relatively low cost areas of study, do absorb public and other resources and therefore have a responsibility to produce graduates with skills of value to the nation and its economy, as well as of use in graduates’ future lives. In 2002, in relation to creative writing, Jeri Kroll (then President of the Australian Association of Writing Programs) noted:

The disastrous state of affairs as far as accreditation of creative writing is concerned will only be exacerbated as technology encourages innovation and interdisciplinary work and collaboration increases. If we do not take control of the situation we will continue to find our efforts disregarded. We cannot simply insist, however, that we are the experts and we know best. (2002)

Despite this call, and later ones within the discipline (Brien, 2006b), there has been no national audit of programs and no formal benchmarking with international equivalents to determine the quality of local courses and their content, academic standards and student outcomes. Nor has there been any systematic evaluation of the relationship among students’ inclination to engage creatively, the training they receive, and the transferability and sustainability of creative and other skills/attributes into their post-university lives and career destinations.

Now a change is in the wind, for creative writing and other creative arts disciplines. Until recently, Australian creative arts programs have had little more than anecdotal evidence or local studies to offer the many external and internal
quality assurance processes that all programs are beginning to face. This is, we suggest, not so much a failure of leadership as, on the one hand, a lack of recognition among many academics in creative practice of what is at stake in the new managerialism and, on the other hand, the failure of universities to collect systematic data about creative arts programs. But the combined effect of the AUQA process, the (now delayed) preparations for the former national Research Quality Framework survey that was to have been undertaken for the first time in 2008\textsuperscript{12} and internal course group reviews have forced academics from the arts to take more seriously their role as administrative as well as creative leaders of programs and practice. The programs are beginning to collect data about student numbers, student experience, teaching methodologies, research practice and measures of quality and impact.

We believe that a stringent auditing and benchmarking process, one based on rigorous discussion about what creative art programs claim to offer and what they should offer, is a vital starting point for positive changes in the teaching of creative disciplines. Such a process ensure that Australian creative arts programs continue to contribute the most and the best they can to the national “pool” of creative capital; it would also provide a quality assurance process likely to generate rich data in the disciplines to answer queries and criticisms still being levelled at them. Developing the terms of reference for this audit process would necessitate the identification and mapping of key and essential disciplinary skills, attributes and knowledges taught, including: generic skills; entry requirements and pathways; degree content, structure and outputs; and supervision and examination requirements and guidelines. Benchmarking against international equivalents will facilitate the development of national standards; and assist in the development of best practice documentation to be utilised within the discipline and across the higher education sector with other creative arts disciplines. Importantly, it will help provide the foundations for an ongoing conversation between the creative arts and the universities more generally—a conversation between peers and not between the elite and the “poor cousins”. For instance, such a process could illuminate the connections between the teaching and practice of the creative arts and the sciences, another highly creative set of disciplines within the academy. The development of clear pedagogical guidelines for the “back to front” teaching employed in most creative arts could be transplanted between the creative arts and medicine or botanical sciences, other disciplines where students are imbued with knowledges that depend on their own bodies and tendencies, not just on discipline-authorised discourses. Thus, creating a greater appreciation of what happens in creative arts programs, and a better articulated expression

\textsuperscript{12} Importantly, creative arts academics did not simply acquiesce to the government’s determination about the shape and focus of the Research Quality Framework. Instead, they collated information and arguments, and presented a unified face to the government process, resulting in numerous changes to the Preferred Model.
of the strengths of creative arts pedagogies, which could enrich both sides of
the academic field for the benefit of both staff and students.

Finally, we affirm the quality of leadership offered by creative arts academics
in a period of significant and rapid change in Australian universities. This has
not been without cost. An important price paid has been the loss of a “pure” and
autonomous attitude towards creative practice, which has been so important
to artists over the past few centuries. But a gain has been a more substantial
ground from which to face university and government management, and a
growing body of data susceptible to the sorts of analysis that will point to more
changes, and a more rigorous future. An old joke in university circles holds
that the battles in the academy are so fierce because the stakes are so low. The
past three decades have certainly been a time of some fairly savage battles,
but we would like to suggest that the stakes have been comparatively high.
Mobilising both leadership for, and approaches to, teaching creative disciplines,
and engaging with the challenges of change, remains at the heart of what we do
as creative practitioners, teachers, scholars and researchers in the creative arts.

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Chapter Ten: Quality University Teaching, Quality Education and Higher Education Reform in the People’s Republic of China

Tingjun Cao

Abstract

Quality university learning and teaching is an important theme in educational circles, academia and government agencies as well as international organisations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). It is also a hotly debated topic within the community as the decline of quality university teaching has commanded great attention to, and raised strong concerns about, the quality of higher education. This chapter seeks to introduce quality (-oriented) education as a novel educational concept and idea that has been implemented in almost every university on mainland China on the basis of broadly probing its substance, implication, contents and some related aspects such as course design, teaching approach, administration and campus culture construction. This chapter attempts to elaborate the necessity to carry out higher educational reform and to implement quality education in universities in China through contrast and analysis of some special cases. The chapter demonstrates some changes in tertiary education, the trends of its development in terms of the author’s personal integration and data drawn from the practice of China’s higher educational reform and quality education implementation. The chapter concludes with the hope that it has provided some reference and experience for universities of the world to promote their sound and harmonious development in order to cultivate and provide more academically trained people for society.

Introduction

As a base for producing knowledge, doing academic research, inheriting and passing on the tenets of culture and civilisation, and cultivating and providing talents (higher qualified students for society), universities play a significant role in economic construction and social development in any state.
of the world. University education has become more and more important for economic prosperity, social development, personal careers and world citizenship. Sun Tzu (2000) said: “The art of war is of vital importance to the State.” It is a matter of life and death, a road either to safety or to ruin. Hence it is a subject of inquiry which can on no account be neglected (孙子曰: 兵者, 国之大事,死生之地，存亡之道，不可不察也). Likewise, quality learning and teaching in this era of globalisation are of vital significance to the destiny, construction and future development of a university with a wide range of fields bringing more young students and academic scholars from around the world to study and work in it. How to improve university teaching quality has become a hotly debated topic. This chapter probes and elaborates quality teaching and quality or quality-oriented education based upon the People’s Republic of China context. It illustrates and analyses some problems or issues in tertiary education in China. The chapter presents and explores some of the fields of tertiary education reform and changes in China. The chapter attests that universities should locate themselves and find their advantages in order to enhance their national and international reputations, participate in international competition, and cultivate and provide more excellent specialists, experts and scholars for both their own nations and the world through university quality education. It is the responsibility of universities to make a greater contribution to human society just as Princeton University motto says: “In the nation’s service and in the service of all the nations.”

Quality Teaching and Quality (-Oriented) Education

1. Quality teaching

There has not been a clear and exact definition of quality teaching as a universal criterion or standard accepted by all universities around the world at the moment. However, teaching quality in the context of educational decline and the age of the knowledge and information economy is a matter of extreme concern to international organisations such as UNESCO and most people all over the world. But the focus and respect of consideration are different among different people and different nations. Just as Chen Wei 陈威 (2004, n. p.) mentions:

Statesmen and businessmen consider how to re/gain economic competitiveness for their nation. Teachers and educationalists consider mostly about class management, disciplines and rules for students to follow, logic courses and the shortage of educational funds. Students’ parents worry much about the personal opportunity and individual future for their kids in the increasingly complex world of professional changes.
In America, people worry that there are too many courses for students to select freely and too many cultures and personal needs in class that students would not get enough basic knowledge and skills at school. In Japan, people worry about the youngsters’ ability to adapt themselves to the future world. Young people are required to get ready in concept, language and lifestyle for the new role in the future. Then, however, people worry whether it will maintain the Japanese essential traditions for schools which are keen on the future world.

UNESCO has shown solicitude for quality teaching and learning about universities around the world and “quality” is the very word which has appeared in almost all its documents ever since [the] 1980s.

Chen Yafang (2006, p. 115) adds:

In 1989 [the] Beijing 21 Century International Conference put forward that the future people should hold “three passports”: science (学术), profession (职业) and quality (素质).

In 1993, [the] Educational Committee toward 21st Century (EU) put forward that students should learn how to organise, to do things, to cooperate and to develop. …

Then what is quality teaching or teaching quality and how to define or view it? Zhu Zhiting (n.d.) lists the following:

- Astin, a famous United States scholar, argues that the purpose of teaching quality is to promote talent development.
- A research program based on an investigation throughout Britain shows the quality of higher education as distinctive, applicable, valuable and creative.
- Professor Chen Yukun (2001) argues that teaching quality is the degree to which the educational system meets social needs. Teaching quality should be evaluated or judged by the degree to which it has met the needs of social and individual development.
- It is interpreted in the Education Dictionary (教育大辞典) (Jiaoyu, 1990) that quality of teaching is an evaluation to high or low levels and good or bad effects and results of education. The judging criterion is the aim of education and the training purpose of various schools.

2. Quality (-oriented) education

Quality-oriented education or quality education (素质教育) was coined by Chinese scholars in the late 1980s while seeing students’ quality of learning sliding downwards and their capability declining because of university expanding enrolments. It is considered as a concept rather than a teaching mode in the reform of tertiary education in China drawing on the experience
of “liberal education”, “general education”, and “professional education” (Chen Yafang, 2006). It is different from, but difficult to be bound by quality teaching and general education. Quality university teaching is often defined by its impact on students’ learning or through the skills, knowledge, qualifications and professional development of teachers themselves. It is an evaluation of the purpose of a university and its students’ achievements, while quality education aims to cultivate integral capabilities of students and mould able people. Zhang Zhengyi (2007) argues that quality education should be embodied in the design of every kind of educational system and reflected in all aspects of university education relating to educational contents, methods and approaches.

As mentioned above, quality (-oriented) education can be defined as being guided by advanced ideas so as to produce excellent qualitative and most efficient teaching results, cultivate students’ abilities and shape able people who can meet the needs of social and individual harmonious development through adopting and applying rigorous and systematic curricula, enacting appropriate teaching methods and nurturing campus culture, including various kinds of activities. The key elements of quality that need to be enhanced during university education are (Qu Zhengu, et al., 2006, p. 256):

- physical quality: fit bodies and good health including self-development, sound functioning and the ability to prevent diseases through proper exercise and training in terms of strength, endurance, speed, flexibility, pliability and harmony;
- psychological quality: sound mentality and personality/character including cognitive quality (intellectual factors: to develop potential intelligence foster and focus attention, correct memory, acute thinking/quick mind, powerful imagination and rich in creation) and individual quality (non-intellectual factor: to strengthen psychological ability suitable to the society, ability of social communication and ability of self-control); and
- social and cultural qualities involving:
  - political quality: establish correct political stand, viewpoint and belief;
  - quality of thought: study, analyse and solve problems or issues with dialectical and historical material viewpoint and method; establish contemporary consciousness of information, time, benefit, competition and collaboration/cooperation;
  - moral quality: understand social and moral standards, and requirements and cultivate good moral behaviour, including basic social moral accomplishments, collective mentality, traditional virtues and sense of responsibility;
• appreciative/aesthetic quality: learn and accumulate knowledge of the beautiful; establish aesthetic viewpoint; foster aesthetic feeling/affection, imagination, appreciation and creation;
• scientific quality: understand the basic knowledge of general nature, society and thinking; foster scientific character and correct thinking method; have and gain the basic quality of accepting novel knowledge in independent study; establish scientific attitude; and
• work/labour quality: follow labour discipline; improve sense of, and attitude to, labour; achieve skills of working and self-service; cultivate good habit of labour; master fundamental tenets of basic and large-scale production and general productive skills.

It is clear that quality education involves many aspects such as quality of thought and morality, cultural and scientific quality, physical quality, psychological quality, creative spirit and practical ability etc. Many scholars (Li Qingzhang, 2006, p. 4; Zhang Zhengyi, 2007, p. 18) argue that cultural quality makes the essential foundation and infrastructure; physical and psychological quality makes the guarantee; quality of thought and morality makes orientation; and creative spirit and practical ability constitutes a focal point in quality education. Chen Yafang (2006, p. 117) argues that a person’s quality (character or diathesis) is a multi-dimensional, cubic and dynamic structure. Each structure of quality consists of many components of different kinds, different levels, different natures and different contents. They interrelate, interplay, inter-promote and interact in the process of their shape and development.

Hutchins points out that the purpose of university education is not to train the workforce but to cultivate personhood and education of character (as cited in Yin Xiaoping, 2006, p. 103). In recent years, four practical tendencies of university quality under discussion in UNESCO are: learning to know; learning to do; learning to live together and learning to be. Li Hongbin and Kang Wenmei (2006, p. 90) identify the former two as the paradigm of “working for genuine knowledge” (致真知) and the latter two as the paradigm of “working for intuitive knowledge” (致良知). They point out that individuals as well as society should have multi-dimensions and multi-aspects but the cultural spirit initiated in the developed industrial world and the educational idea are of one-dimension and one-orientation according to Marcuse. It has produced enormous wealth with advanced science and technology while it has accelerated the enslavement of people with a new technical control form in such a society. It has deviated from the educational purpose of assigning
priority to “putting the human fundamental (humanism), human all-round development.” The large number of goods produced and consumed has held sway over the whole mind and body of people. Thus, humanity has been distorted, thinking has been weakened and a sound spiritual world has been utterly alienated in such an educational system. Most students graduated from such universities may be only one-dimensionally developed.

**University course design under quality education**

It is important to cultivate students to be people (individuals) with philosophic theory, delight and quality through restructuring teaching plans and adding more qualified courses, holding high level courses of lectures. Universities should get reasonable courses designed for students with balance in terms of science and arts. University curriculum design should embody the characteristics of diversity, practice and composition. Lu Shizhen (2004, n. p.) argues that university courses should be designed properly and reasonably, and equal stress should be paid to both science and liberal arts in order to meet students’ different backgrounds (language, culture, ethnicity and class), interests and needs. Some Chinese educationalists (Chen Yi, 1999, n. p.) believe that “general education” is a breach of quality education. They argue that general education curricula involve basic knowledge (Sun Zhongyu, 2003, n. p.) and suggest that universities in China should follow Harvard University’s example in designing and providing three categories of courses—specialised courses, elective courses and core courses designed for undergraduates. The three types of courses complement and supplement one another. The core course lays a broad foundation for students and the elective course develops students’ interests and knowledge on the basis of core and specialised courses (Zhang Fengjuan, 2005, n. p.). Features of effective curriculum design and implementation associated with quality university teaching include:

- coherence, interconnectivity and relevance of content and approach;
- social and cultural inclusivity and links to real life;
- task design;
- meta-language shared across courses;
- alignment to specific goals;
- appropriate time allocated to learning specific skills; and
- academic collaboration.

**Qualified university teachers and appropriate teaching methods**

Quality education shapes students’ social, moral, physical, psychological, cultural and academic development. Teacher quality is shaped by and shapes a complex and interacting array of societal, systemic and scholastic factors
including social, cultural and economic changes. Chen Yi (1999, n. p.) argues that it integrates and complements each other for students to enhance their quality, master the skills and cultivate their capability and for teachers to raise their own qualities and cultural accomplishment. Quality education impacts students’ cognitive affective and behavioural outcomes, with respect to natural things, cultural issues and national identity. Poor teaching can have a debilitating and cumulative effect on students, society and the future of a nation. Quality teaching involves the use of content which is high in intellectual quality; integrates a variety of knowledge disciplines; connects to students’ prior knowledge and is relevant to students’ life trajectories. Culturally and linguistically appropriate content choices respect and affirm students’ cultural identities, and use educational opportunities for their upward mobility. University teaching quality is contextualised and flexible. It involves the employment of a range of meta-cognitive learning and teaching strategies that fit the needs of students of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Important aspects of assessment include corrective feedback and positive reinforcement.

Pedagogies that motivate, engage and commit students to learning, as well as enhancing students’ strategies for learning are important. Karl Popper (1986, p. 318) argues that science starts with questions. It is most important for teachers to be good at cultivating students’ spirit and ability so as to question, conjecture, think critically, solve problems and make decisions. Eliot argues that what teachers do is to make explanations or interpretations rather than impose their own viewpoints on students. He believes that a student cannot only firmly and thoroughly learn the course for his or her future profession but must also read cursorily other main subjects in wide and broad fields (Zhang Fengjuan, 2005, n. p.). Flexibility, creativity and adaptability in using a range of knowledge producing pedagogies and resources that take into account different student needs and expectations have a positive influence on their learning.

A knowledge-rich profession can use these skills to create and facilitate responsive, creative and effective learning processes which make a difference. Pedagogical knowledge and skills must be continually updated to take account of new research and discipline-specific teaching methods. In a fast-changing world, teaching quality means fostering adaptable, lifelong and life-wide active learning directed at improving student learning. Quality education involves enthusiasm, creativity, commitment and passion. Both internal and external motivations affect learning and teaching, and thus students’ performance. Good communication is a key feature of quality education as it is needed to assist students to understand new ideas and to achieve to the best of their ability.
University administration and leadership

Quality education occurs when there is a whole of institution focus on learning and teaching with high expectations for all students, rather than on administrative, managerial or marketing imperatives. Quality education involves various forms of leadership. Opportunities to develop and show leadership bring benefits to academics, their work units and student learning outcomes. These include skill development, enhanced morale, improved retention, organisational improvement and student engagement in learning. University leaders and administrators should endeavour to increase their efforts to optimise and make good use of current resources, reinforce the construction of disciplines and teaching staff, enhance teaching quality and build up a world-class or A-class university. Chen Xuefei (People’s Daily, 2007) argues that the top-grade education will shape top-grade students; top-grade students will build up a top-grade nation. Modern world history has seen that a nation lagging behind in education and lack of people of ability lags behind in its social, cultural and economic construction.

Construction of cultural atmosphere on the campus

It is an important to establish a sound atmosphere of campus culture for carrying on university quality education. First, conduct and hold as many as possible talks, workshops, seminars and conferences on cultural quality in order to help students enhance their cultural understanding; second, develop and organise all kinds of highly interesting and colourful group activities, including scholastic, artistic, recreational and physical ones, for students to participate in and get nurtured; third, reinforce the construction of human and natural landscape on campus so that students can enlighten their thinking, mould their temperament, raise their spirit and heighten their scientific and cultural quality while living and studying in such beautiful scenery and environment; and finally strengthen to build up a good school spirit, enforce school discipline, and develop and carry forward a rigorous scientific approach, critical thinking and realistic style of study (Li Qingzhang, 2006, p. 6).

University Quality Education and the Development of Human Society: Im/possible Changes

1. Quality education and the aim/purpose of higher education

Universities should establish and locate their own educational purposes or aims. More than one thousand years ago, Han Yu (768–824 the Tang Dynasty) argued 《师说》 that what teachers do is to propagate doctrines, give the skills of business and dispel doubts (“师者，所以传道．授业，解惑也”). Jaspers (1965, p. 53) pointed out that a university is a vocational school, a cultural centre and
a research institute. The function of a university is doing scientific research, and passing on knowledge as well as education and culture. Early in the 1950s, after the foundation of the new China, its educational policy was clarified as being designed to “enable everyone who receives an education to develop morally, intellectually and physically and become a worker with both socialist consciousness and culture” (Mao, 1977, p. 385). Now under the guidance of the “3-face policy”—“Education should face the modernisation, face the world and face the future” (Deng, 2004, p. 108), many universities are trying to elaborate their own educational ideas and purposes with their own specific characteristics and distinguishing features. For instance, Nanjing University of Technology sets forth its aim as being to: cultivate people/individuals (立人), which can be explained as developing students to have a large body of knowledge and the ability to solve practical problems and foster them to be individuals with high rationality, noble temperament and interest, sound character and rich emotion; build up knowledge (立学), which can be explained as creating liberal academic circumstances and conditions for students to become learned, knowledgeable and courageous leaders/guiders for societal culture; found professions (立业), which can be explained as constructing the university as a social centre of culture, science and technology, and providing products in a timely and efficiently manner and creating wealth/goods for society (Science Research, n. d.). Some universities expound that their education should aim at the target: “all for students, for all students and for students’ all.”

It is self-evident that an essential aim of universities is to cultivate ability of students in order to serve the national economic construction and meet the needs of societal, cultural, scientific and technological development and their individual future careers and upward mobility, although it is a somewhat different from university to university. The talents of graduates have, to date, been defined differently by different societies and nations in different historical times. In this contemporary globalisation period, with its emphasis on the knowledge and information economy, the main characteristics of talented graduates are increasingly similar. These include:

- mastering knowledge in a special field of study or specialised subject and professional skills;
- the ability to handle many things and resolve problems personally; bring forth new and practical ideas;
- interest in learning and change, converting “passive study” into “joyful study”, the foundation of lifelong education;
- critical, rational and logical thinking;
- doing rigorous, academic research in certain field/s;
- collaboration and team work;
- sound physical and psychological development;
- international vision and a global sensitivity;
• a noble moral or ethical disposition;
• expression of a rich imagination and eloquence;
• risk taking spirit to create inventions; and
• devoting oneself to serve the nation and humankind, etc.

It is apparent, as seen above, that both quality education and the aim/purpose of tertiary education can be implemented without coming into conflict.

2. Quality education and social development

University quality education is an essential way to foster, build and shape students to be useful and valuable people. Quality education respects personal choices, and supports and helps the development of self-interests and individuality. Students taught with quality education are the hope of their nation in these very new times. They can be patriots but not narrow nationalists. They can inherit and pass on the cream of their national language, culture and civilisation, as well as the achievements of other nations so as to serve and contribute to human society. According to Marxist theory, all the social wealth including languages and cultures has been created through social labour. Deng Xiaoping (2004, p. 275) argues that “science and technology constitute the primary productive force.” Human history has seen that able people have greatly speeded up the development of civilisation and the progress of human society with their learnt knowledge. It is well known that Shakespeare among others made great contributions to the spread of English from its marginal stages as a language of the marketplace. Confucius and other intellectuals preserved the literature of China and founded the basis of Chinese culture. So much depends on the young generation via quality university education to make contribution to the harmonious development and progress of our society.

3. Quality education and bilingual/foreign language teaching in China

Languages and cultures have the functions of interaction and compensation since there may be both strengths and weaknesses in the culture of any nation. One strategic response is to reject the dross and assimilate that which is useful or beautiful whenever it is confronted and so to improve the national culture or language. Chen Yukun (2001, n. p.) argues that those who have profound professional knowledge in certain fields and the ability to make good expression bilingually are welcomed by all circles in society. Institutions of higher learning in China have carried out foreign languages learning and teaching since the late 1970s. English is very popular and some other world languages are also taught as a second language. Thus almost all college students are bilingual or multilingual, although many of them cannot communicate freely and fluently in their second language at the moment. There is no doubt that students’ acquisition
of a foreign language will not only facilitate their later communication with the outside world and benefit students themselves in their working practice but also enrich and sublimate the Chinese language.

In the autonomous regions of minorities, the bilingual teaching method has been adopted since 1977 and has been recognised as a great achievement (Dai Qingxia and Dong Yan, 2001). Until 1997 there were 92 institutions for higher learning located in autonomous regions such as Inner Mongolia, Tibet, Ningxia, Xinjiang and Guangxi (Database of minorities, n. d.). While there are 13 minority institutions for higher learning mainly enrolling minority students, there are preparatory courses for minority students to study in 280 universities (Zhou Ji, 2005). Now 6 million students accept schooling or training with 29 minority languages, Mandarin Chinese as bilingual and a foreign language as trilingual (Dai Qingxia and Dong Yan). 55 minorities have their own undergraduates and minority masters and doctoral students reached 5000 in 2007 (Zhou Ji). There were 4755 staff members teaching in minority universities before 1997 and the number of minority experts, academics and famous scientists has kept growing rapidly (Database of minorities). They have made a great contribution in presenting their histories, cultures and living customs, and elaborating important effects/actions in digging up and developing the experience and knowledge of their nations. China’s successful experience has shown that bilingual and multilingual teaching is an efficient way not only to solve the problem of language death and culture loss for minorities and small nations but also to derive nourishment from others for students in university education and to serve their own nation well later. So second language acquisition is one of the most important components of courses in university quality education.

4. Problems and embarrassment—Chinese tertiary education confronts

Since 1978, China’s higher education has achieved considerable progress. Universities and colleges in China have cultivated and provided a large number of able people for its social and economic construction but it has not stepped out of the sorry plight and shade of traditional test-driven education. Shu Dingfang (2006, p. 22) argues that deficiencies of presentation, practice and production in the traditional teaching mode are that they are teacher-centred, test-oriented, insufficient in relation to input and misleading in learning methods. Another problem is irrational curriculum design and content deficiency in textbooks. According to Sina (Net) (n. d., n. p.), in a translation examination held in Shanghai, the participants were regarded as very good at English but their Chinese was so poor that some of them misunderstood famous Chinese sayings, proverbs and idioms in the examination paper. They made ridiculous mistakes. For example, they
mistranslated “富贵不能淫 (“fugui buneng yin” which means “riches and honors cannot make him dissipate”《孟子·滕文公下》)” into English as “Be rich, but not sexy”; “人之初，性本善 (“ren zhi chu, xing ben shan”, which means “human beings are born virtuous or people are born good”《三字经》)” as “Since the beginning of human beings, sex is always good”; and “血肉长城 (“xuerou changcheng”, which means “the great wall built with our blood and flesh”《国歌》)” as “the long wall of blood and meat”. They made themselves a laughing stock. Many people heatedly talked about this matter on the Net for quite some while. Cooling down, we cannot help wondering how many people really know how to put these idioms into correct English given that they fail to understand their meaning in their native language. It is a tragedy for them to try every effort to study a foreign language while neglecting their own.

The passive traditional education such as ‘bookworms’ studying mechanically cannot foster talents fitting the contemporary social needs. They may have got very high marks at school but they cannot contribute much to the development of the national culture and economics and may cause bad and harmful influence on both the institutions and the society for lack of sound psychological minds. Some students are short of the lofty ideal, lack spiritual ballast and are degenerate in nature; some have become an “economic animal”, a “slave of technics” and even an “intellectual robber” (Chen Yafang, 2006, p. 115; Li Qingzhang, 2006, p. 5). They have shown clear examples such as, when a Doctor of Philosophy scholar went begging in Nanjing (HBWXC, 2005, n. p.), when a Chinese immigrant with double Doctor of Philosophy degrees killed himself by jumping from a bridge in Toronto (Qzweb, 2006, n. p.), and the murder case of Ma Jiajue (Wiki, n. d.), who killed four of his roommates in Yunan University, China, according to ABC News (2007). There is no doubt that an unhealthy psychological factor is one of the most important reasons, although there might be some other factors to come into play in the above cases. These examples indicate, from the negative side, that quality of a sound psychological mind should be, together with quality of thought, morality, culture, arts and physics, a significant content of schooling, especially tertiary education.

China’s higher education reform and its trend

In the late 1990s, China started a reform in the whole of its educational institutions, administration, management, curriculum contents, strategies and methodology, pedagogy, methods and approaches. There is no doubt that such university reform requires a systematic approach. It will not achieve the desired results for the reform in any single field. Sun Zhongyu (2003, n. p.) argues that it is necessary to handle correctly the following eight relations in order to build a solid foundation for students’ lifelong study:
• part and whole;
• microcosm and macrocosm;
• inheriting and creating;
• major/specialised field/subject and non-major/non-specialised field/subject;
• foundation and non-foundation;
• theory and practice;
• knowledge, ability and quality; and
• individuality/personality and generality.

Song Qiurong (2001, n. p.) advocates the building of the following five spirits in students:
1. spirit of bravely exploring and creation/innovation/spirit of being bold in exploring and bringing new ideas/blazing new trails;
2. spirit of loneliness and devotion/contribution;
3. spirit of self-thinking and surmounting/overstepping fashions/fads:
4. spirit of seeking and upholding/holding firmly to truth; and
5. spirit of scepticism and critique.

It also aims to cultivate the following five capabilities in students with the ability to:
• think logically, involving analysing and integrating, comparing and categorising, inducing and deducing, and abstract and specific thinking;
• think in terms of images involving association and imagination;
• engage in empirical thinking involving observing/surveying and testing/verifying;
• engage in theoretical/ideological thinking, involving raising and solving questions/problems;
• to verify and express/issues/matters clearly.

China’s university education is transforming traditional education to contemporary quality university teaching. The transforming aspects and contents are illustrated in Table 10–1.
Table 10–1: University education reform in China

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Tradition (before)</th>
<th>Change/Transform (now)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aim of education</td>
<td>Pass exams/test-oriented (test driven teaching and learning)</td>
<td>Improve students’ quality/ability/capability for lifelong learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students range</td>
<td>Elite education</td>
<td>Popular style education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction of disciplines</td>
<td>Separation of science and technology from arts; separation of theory from practice</td>
<td>Intersect arts and science and technology; combine/integrate basic knowledge, basic theory and basic skills/techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbooks</td>
<td>Unified teaching material</td>
<td>More books and materials full of essential content, integrate effective knowledge for choices; multimedia materials/data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational of teaching</td>
<td>Teacher-centred</td>
<td>Student-centred/student-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching model</td>
<td>Traditional classroom teaching model</td>
<td>General education; quality education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method/approach</td>
<td>Classroom imbuing/imparting</td>
<td>Communicating between student and teacher; questioning; discussing; cooperative learning and practising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching medium/condition</td>
<td>Chalk, chalkboard, simple and crude teaching equipment</td>
<td>Multi-medium technology, information technology (computer assisted instruction, PowerPoint) and computer-aided teaching equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning circumstance and atmosphere</td>
<td>Classroom teaching</td>
<td>Classroom teaching combined with social practice and influence of cultural circumstances and learning/academic atmosphere on school campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum design</td>
<td>Strictly regulated major courses</td>
<td>Specified courses/subjects select courses; practical courses; credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study motivation and attitude</td>
<td>Passive and composed/forced study</td>
<td>Personal interests, free choice, individual development and active/autonomous learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristic cultivation</td>
<td>Collective-oriented and restricted personality</td>
<td>Individual-respected, personal development, taught according to different people’s need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching idea</td>
<td>Standardised and unified teaching</td>
<td>Poly-faceted and individualised teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of teachers</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>Facilitator of learning; instructor and source of expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment/evaluation</td>
<td>Single-way, teacher-referee/judge, student learning evaluation</td>
<td>Double-ways, evaluate both teaching and learning, experts/professor inspector</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now most universities in China have started adopting measures to implement quality education so as to achieve good results in educational reform and to cultivate more complete people able to adapt to the global economy and serve both internal economic and cultural construction and worldwide sustainable development. We expect that China’s higher education reform will obtain its anticipated results and offer successful experiences for universities of other nations and make a big contribution to the sustainable development of world economies and the maintenance of cultural civilisation as well as the language diversity of humankind.

Conclusion

Quality education has been extensively implemented in almost all universities in China since 2003 and rapid progress has been achieved. China’s colleges and universities have cultivated and provided a large number of able people for its social, cultural and economic construction. But under the influence of traditional teaching approaches and some Western one-dimensional teaching modes, China’s higher education is still on the horns of a dilemma. There isthe potential that some students trained in such universities have become degenerate; lack spiritual ballast, and have turned into “economic animals”, “slaves of technics” and even “intellectual robbers.”

With the enrolments increasingly expanding, the popularity of higher education has never been greater in China. Under these circumstances it is important and urgent for universities to carry out reform in order to meet the new and fierce international competition. At present, universities are actively implementing quality education and engaging in a complete reform, filtering into various aspects such as curriculum systems, course design, modes and approaches, campus culture, and teaching staff and administration. They try to cultivate students’ “five spirits” and “five abilities”, and aim at cultivating and providing appropriate, integrated and able people to meet the needs of social, cultural and economic construction and development.

It is self-evident that what has appeared in China’s educational practice reflects the deficiencies and defects hidden or shown up in Western universities with one-dimensional teaching mode. For instances:

1. The case of Seung Hui Cho (ABC News, 2007) has shown the result that sound psychological education has been neglected for long in higher education:

2. Hackers are one of the side-products of information tech-science; and

3. The phenomena of “cramming before exams” and plagiarism are reflections of utilitarianism in commodity economy and private ownership.
Fortunately, the higher education reform being carried out currently in China will im/possibly help universities in the world to counteract the plight of the one-dimensional mode. Quality education, as a novel concept implemented in China may or may not set an example for world universities to get rid of defects and drawbacks in traditional higher education. Anyhow, we hope that higher educational practice in China will bridge the gap between higher educational aims and cultivation plans on the one hand and the real needs of social and individual development on the other.

Acknowledgements

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Chapter Eleven:
Delivering Quality Transnational Education: What Does the Student Experience Tell Us?

Iwona Miliszewska

Abstract

In recent years, a particular stream of distance education called transnational education has become widespread. This chapter discusses the need for an holistic approach to transnational education as a way of ensuring the high quality and effectiveness of transnational programs. The approach, based on the experience of mixed mode transnational courses, takes into consideration a broad transnational education context and its various dimensions, including: student characteristics and practices; instructor characteristics and practices; curriculum and instruction design; interaction; evaluation and assessment; technological characteristics; and program management and organisational support. This selection of dimensions, together with their attributes, forms a proposed model for quality transnational education programs. The chapter discusses the rationale for the multidimensional model, describes its development process and presents the results of its initial validation against three transnational programs currently offered by Australian universities in Hong Kong. The programs were evaluated in terms of the importance of the various dimensions of program quality as perceived by the participating students. The results of the validation seem to support the premise that technology represents only one dimension of the transnational education context, and that other dimensions also contribute to program quality. The results also show that the transnational students, irrespective of the evaluated program, agree on the factors that they consider most important to program quality. The chapter concludes by discussing the potential application of the multidimensional model in reviewing existing and planning new transnational education programs.
**Introduction**

In recent years, a particular stream of offshore distance education called “transnational education” has become widespread. Transnational education describes that type of education “in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based” (van der Vende, 2003).

Regarded as an alternative to mainstream university education, transnational education has attained a level of legitimacy and has grown into a higher education industry of its own. According to Jones (2002), the global demand for transnational higher education grew by 26 per cent between 1985 and 1992; it included 1.42 million higher education students globally in 1998, of whom Australia had an 8 per cent market share (Wyatt, 2001); and it is estimated that the demand for transnational higher education in Asian countries (excluding China) will reach nearly 500,000 students by 2020 (Global Alliance for Transnational Education, 2000). This presents both a challenge and an opportunity especially for Australian universities, which are among the key transnational providers in the Asian region—in Semester 1 2007 there were an estimated 61,500 transnational students in Australian universities, of whom approximately 11,600 were studying off-campus (distance/online), and an estimated 49,900 students were studying at offshore campuses (IDP Education Australia, 2007).

The number of Australian universities involved in the provision of transnational education, as well as the extent of their involvement has expanded considerably in recent years. Leask (2004) refers to this expansion as a transition from cottage industry to core business:

> Transnational education has grown rapidly from a ‘cottage industry’ (a few programs run for a few students by a few universities in a few locations) to ‘core business’ (an integral and important part of the program profiles of many Australian universities) (Leask, 2004, p. 144).

Coupled with this expansion of the transnational education “core business” has been an increase in the number of tertiary institutions in Australia that have started operating in transnational environments over recent years; each of the 38 universities in Australia provides transnational education programs (Harman, 2004).

In addition, there has been a shift in the motivation of providing education for overseas students. The emphasis has moved from educational aid and the promotion of international understanding (whereby selected students from developing countries were provided with opportunities to acquire skills and knowledge) to educational trade, with an emphasis on expanding access and
on packaging and marketing higher education outside Australia (Leask, 2004; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2003). Marginson (2004, p. 4) attributes this transition, from aid to trade, to the reduction of public funding for universities and to the change of policies governing Australian higher education. De Vita and Case further argue that transnational education in particular is a consequence of the marketisation of higher education and “the competitive rush for international students and their money” (De Vita & Case, 2003, p. 384). This view is also supported by Feast and Bretag who, commenting on the increasing financial motivation of transnational education programs, concluded: “Distasteful as it may be to the many educators working in transnational settings who are committed to genuine cross-cultural exchange, transnational education is a multi-million dollar ‘business’, motivated as much by profits as by teaching and learning objectives” (Feast & Bretag, 2005, p. 64).

Education seems to be in a constant state of evolution, and transnational education is no exception it is particularly responsive to changes in technology. Educational technologies (such as the Internet and the World Wide Web, satellite and compressed video and cell phones) have matured sufficiently to enable the development of new teaching strategies; they have also removed many of the communication barriers associated with transnational education and facilitated its rapid growth (Molenda & Harris, 2001).

Technology not only offers opportunities for educational innovation but it also provides the means for the efficient delivery of education in a cost effective manner. The drive for profit can conflict with the desire for quality. Although many universities view online learning as an economic alternative to face-to-face teaching (Davis & Meares, 2001), online learning cannot be regarded as a suitable alternative in transnational settings (Emil, 2001). Fully online provision of transnational programs raises many concerns regarding the learning experience, particularly about the extent of feedback and guidance that can be provided to students (Knipe, 2002). Debowski (2003) agrees that fully online provision of transnational programs is generally perceived to be less effective than options including a face-to-face component. She emphasises the strong recognition of the value of (Australian) academics meeting and interacting with their offshore student population; such regular teaching input by these academics significantly enriches the transnational program (Debowski, 2003).

Interest in educational innovation, pedagogical concerns and the desire to improve social equality and to serve individual learners are other factors of importance in a transnational education environment. A concern shared by researchers and educators is that greater emphasis in research should be placed on the quality and effectiveness of transnational education programs, rather than on hardware, software and bandwidth (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2006).
Competition for students in the transnational education arena is becoming intense; for Australia, one of the main providers of transnational education in South East Asia, satisfying the needs of highest demand disciplines in the region—computing and business—is of vital importance. With the growing number of transnational education offerings, students will be able to choose more widely, and will increasingly demand high quality programs. According to Moore and Kearsley (2005), this power of consumer choice will encourage universities to acknowledge and respond to student needs; it will also increase pressure on universities increasingly to consider the quality and effectiveness of their educational offerings in terms of their value to students. As Chapman and Pyvis concluded: “If universities are to attain a ‘goodness of fit’ between the needs of their offshore students and the resources of the university, student expectations about quality need to be taken into consideration” (Chapman & Pyvis, 2006, p. 236).

This tension, between the expectations of students and the offerings of the university, underpins this chapter. While acknowledging that notions of quality in transnational education programs cannot help but be problematic, if only because of the variety of stakeholders involved in the enterprise, the chapter contends that it is nonetheless important to examine the particular attributes that are identified in the literature as fundamental to the quality of such programs. It proposes a conceptual model for such programs based on these attributes, and seeks to evaluate this model against the perspectives and expectations of students enrolled in three transnational programs.

**Quality in Transnational Education**

The research literature indicates that the primary measure of the quality of an educational program is its ability to meet the needs of learners. A program is perceived to be of high quality, if it fulfils the needs of its participants to such an extent that they would be happy to enrol in another similarly designed program (Merisotis & Phipps, 1999). The needs of the learners represent individually and socially defined goals that can be achieved in a variety of ways, and relate to a number of learning outcomes. Although the ultimate objective of a program is to enable the learners to achieve their goals, the assessment of its quality invariably involves the evaluation of factors at two levels of operation: the individual level and the system level. At the individual level, the learning experiences, the practical relevance of acquired skills and satisfaction with the learning experiences are evaluated. At the system level, the evaluation includes the functional, managerial and instructional aspects (Chute, Thompson, & Hancock, 1999).
Students perceive a program to be of high quality if they feel that the content of the program is relevant to their aims and aspirations, they have an opportunity to network with other students, they feel part of the class and connected to teachers, they have opportunities for participation, they receive support when needed, they experience few technical problems and they feel comfortable with the technology (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, & Zvacek, 2000). Teachers perceive a program to be of high quality if students are motivated, complete assessment tasks, participate in discussion, use the technology to communicate and pass examinations and also if very few students drop out from the program. Teachers also perceive the program to be of high quality if the content meets the students’ needs, and if the institution provides financial, personnel and technical support (Kember, Ma, & McKaught, 2006).

From an educational perspective, a high quality program would feature the following characteristics, among others: encourage and maximise contacts between students and teachers; develop relationships and promote collaboration among students; incorporate active learning; give rich and rapid feedback to students; stress time-on-task; set high standards for students’ performance; respect individual differences; and allow students opportunities for learning that acknowledge those differences (Kember, Ma, & McKaught, 2006; McLoughlin, Oliver, & Wood, 1999).

A Model for Quality: Dimensions and Attributes

While the design of high quality transnational education programs necessitates understanding the factors that influence the learning process, approaches to course design tend to focus on the instructional and technological aspects of teaching strategies. These approaches make the basic assumption that the use of new technologies or methods of instruction alone will result in good learning, and fail to consider the factors that influence learners’ response to instruction (Merisotis & Phipps, 1999).

The quality of education programs can be measured by the programs’ outcomes. Whereas research into the learning outcomes of students in distance education has found that they are very similar to those within the traditional classroom (Gunawardena & McIsaac, 2005), the main focus of this research has been on student achievement and student satisfaction. These outcomes, however, determine ‘if’ a program was successful, but do not determine ‘why’ it was successful. Merisotis and Phipps (1999) state that:

... much of the research is to ascertain how technology affects student learning and student satisfaction[,] many of the results seem to indicate that technology is not nearly as important as other factors, such as learning tasks, learner characteristics, student motivation, and the instructor. (p. 8)
Moreover, in view of the strong growth of transnational programs in Australian universities, there is increasing interest in the experiences of students participating in the transnational programs. According to the argument developed by Chapman and Pyvis (2005, p. 40), no one is in a better position to comment on these experiences than students themselves: “they are the ultimate ‘insiders and experts’ yet, the voice of the student is conspicuously missing from research literature.”

In consideration of this need, the research study reported in this chapter examined the issue of the quality of transnational programs from the student perspective. The study comprised three stages: firstly, it involved an extensive survey of the literature to identify attributes that may determine the quality of transnational education programs in general, and transnational computing programs in particular; secondly, it partitioned these attributes into dimensions to develop a conceptual model for high quality transnational programs; and thirdly, it applied this multidimensional model to selected programs in order to evaluate the model in terms of student perspectives (Miliszewska, 2006).

The examination of the various facets of the distance education context, including driving forces, delivery models and effectiveness, led to the identification of attributes that were most likely to impact program quality. These attributes, regarded as relevant to the quality of transnational education programs in general, and transnational computing programs in particular, were subsequently grouped into broader categories or dimensions. These dimensions (as presented in Table 11–1), together with their attributes, formed a proposed model for quality transnational education programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 11–1: Dimensions of transnational computing education programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) student characteristics and practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) instructor characteristics and practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) curriculum and instruction design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) evaluation and assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) technological characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) program management and organisational support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This multidimensional model was then applied to selected transnational computing programs in order to assess the effectiveness of the programs with respect to these dimensions, and determine if some of the individual aspects of the dimensions were more important to students than others.
Evaluation

Three transnational computing programs, offered in Hong Kong by Australian universities in cooperation with Hong Kong partners, were selected for evaluation. Program 1, Bachelor of Business (Computer Systems Support) degree—BBCS, is offered by Australian university, University A, together with a Hong Kong partner institution, Partner X. The program commenced in 1997, and has produced over 200 graduates to date. Program 2, Bachelor of Computer Science degree—BCO, is also offered by University A, but with a different Hong Kong partner, Partner Y. This program has operated since 1992, and has graduated over 2,500 students. The third program, Program 3, Bachelor of Information Technology degree—BIT, has been offered by a different university, University B, in cooperation with the same Hong Kong partner as Program 2 (Partner Y). Program 3 commenced in 1999, and has graduated over 500 students to date.

All the programs operate in part-time mode for students who have previous approved post-secondary qualifications. Students are normally in full-time employment, and usually study six subjects per year—two subjects per term. Lecturers from Australia are responsible for the design of curriculum, detailed teaching plans, and continuous and final assessment, as well as the face-to-face delivery of 25 percent of the program. Part-time local lecturers, associated with the partner institutions, teach the remaining part of the program. The programs rely on the Internet for communication—e.g., subject Web sites, bulletin boards, and email. Students meet lecturers and fellow students through face-to-face sessions, and benefit from Web-based support between sessions.

The purpose of this investigation was to determine which attributes of the dimensions identified in the multidimensional model were perceived by students as most important to the quality of the program. Data were collected through a survey administered to approximately 300 students in the selected programs in 2003; the survey included both quantitative and qualitative components. Students were asked during one of their lectures by a non-lecturer to complete the questionnaire, which was handed to them with a plain return envelope; a cover sheet including information about the survey was provided as part of the questionnaire. The students were asked either to complete the questionnaire during the lecture or take it away and return it later to a drop-in box provided in a convenient location; the survey took approximately 20 minutes to complete and participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous as detailed in the requisite ethics approval obtained for the study. 259 completed surveys were returned (a response rate of 86 per cent), with the following breakdown of completed survey numbers across the programs:
Critical Quality Attributes

Students rated various attributes of the transnational programs with respect to their influence on program quality. Accordingly, in each dimension, students ranked only the top three of at least seven given attributes that they considered most important to the quality of the program, where first indicated “most important”, second “important” and third “somewhat important”; students left the remaining attributes in the dimension without a rank, thus considering them less important. The rankings were then reverse weighted to determine the overall importance of each aspect within a dimension. The following dimensions were rated: Student; University Instructor and Learning Environment; Hong Kong Instructor and Learning Environment; University Instructor—Technology and Organisation; Hong Kong Instructor—Technology and Organisation; Curriculum and Instruction Design, Interaction, Evaluation and Assessment, Technology, and Course Management and Organisational Support. In each of the programs, three attributes ranked most highly in each dimension were used for comparative analysis among the programs. Table 11–2 presents a summary of this analysis; in each dimension, only attributes ranked among the highest three by at least two programs are listed.
Table 11–2: Students’ perceptions of critical quality attributes
(Only attributes selected as most important by students in at least two programs are listed.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Is motivated and self-disciplined.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has positive attitude towards technology-based learning.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Instructor and Learning Environment</td>
<td>Understands program requirements, students’ characteristics and needs.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uses effective communication skills.</td>
<td>2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourages communication among students and between students and instructors.</td>
<td>2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong Instructor and Learning Environment</td>
<td>Understands program requirements, students’ characteristics and needs.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uses effective communication skills.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourages communication among students and between students and instructors.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Instructor—Technology and Organisation</td>
<td>Is well prepared and organised.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provides well designed syllabus and presentation outlines.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has experience with technology-based programs.</td>
<td>2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong Instructor—Technology and Organisation</td>
<td>Is well prepared and organised.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has experience with technology-based programs.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provides well designed syllabus and presentation outlines.</td>
<td>2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum and Instruction Design</td>
<td>Is relevant to job/career.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Program objectives and learning outcomes are clearly communicated.</td>
<td>2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relates the new material to previous student knowledge.</td>
<td>1, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integrates all program elements into a well-paced package.</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Timely feedback on assignments and projects.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of interactive instructional strategies.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategies that encourage communication among students and between students and instructors.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation and Assessment</td>
<td>Methods of assessment match learning objectives.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment of the relevance of program content in practice.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment of students’ attitudes and levels of satisfaction.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Is helpful and easy to use.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is available and reliable.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current products are used.</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Management and Organisational Support</td>
<td>Timely preparation of program materials.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institution ensures high quality of the program.</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student support services are provided.</td>
<td>2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Procedures exist to respond quickly to student complaints.</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While there were differences in the ordering of the three most important attributes in each dimension among the evaluated programs, there was a considerable overlap of the attributes nominated as most important. In each of the dimensions, students in all three programs selected at least one common attribute as important. The degree of overlap was greater in several dimensions, with the highest consensus noted for the dimensions Hong Kong Instructor and Learning Environment, Interaction, and Evaluation and Assessment; in those dimensions, students in all three programs selected the same three aspects as most important.

Students in all programs nominated the same critical attributes for the two dimensions pertaining to Instructor and Learning Environment (University instructor and Hong Kong instructor alike): appreciation of course requirements and students’ needs; effective communication skills; and encouragement of communication among students and between students and instructors. These instructor characteristics were perceived as the most influential of the effectiveness of the program with respect to all instructors, regardless of their affiliation and location. Similarly, students in all three programs regarded preparedness and organisation, experience with technology-based programs, and the provision of a well-designed syllabus as critical aspects of the two Instructor and Technology and Organisation dimensions—again, there was no distinction between University and Hong Kong instructors in terms of students’ perceptions of important attributes.

In the Curriculum and Instruction Design dimension, students in all three programs declared the relevance to job and career as the characteristic of greatest influence on the quality of transnational computing programs. This high ranking is also supported by literature related to mature students (Miller & Stewart, 1999). The importance of the practical application of the programs was further confirmed by the high ranking of the “relevance of program content in practice” in the Evaluation and Assessment dimension.

One attribute was singled out by students in all three programs as most important in the Technology dimension: “is helpful and easy to use.” The availability and reliability of technology, as well as the application of current products were also considered important.

**Quality of the Current Programs**

In addition to evaluating students’ perceptions of critical quality attributes of transnational programs in general, students’ views of the quality of the current programs were also recorded. Students indicated if they considered the current programs to be of good quality, if they would participate in this type of program (that is, mixed mode transnational) in the future and if they would prefer the program to be offered fully online. A summary of results is presented in Table 11–3.
The majority of students in Program 1 and Program 2 regarded their programs as being of good quality. Program structure and flexibility, and relevance to job/career were named as determining factors. However, short program duration (on average 18 months) leading to a formal qualification, competitive fees (cheaper than those charged at local universities and the Open University of Hong Kong) and generous exemptions for prior learning (credit for higher diplomas for example) defined program quality for most students. The positive assessment of the quality of current programs did not correspond to the students’ willingness to participate in a similar type of program (that is, transnational) in the future, with more than half of the students in Program 2 deciding against doing so. Students cited disappointment with the poor service offered by the Hong Kong partner institution and the poor teaching skills of Hong Kong instructors as a reason for not trusting similar types of programs in the future. Students in Program 3 were most critical about the quality of the program—more than half of them found it to lack quality; likewise, more than half of them did not wish to participate in this type of program in the future. Bad administrative service, poor feedback and support, and emphasis on self-study reduced the program’s quality and consequently, discouraged the students from considering this type of program in the future.

Regardless of their assessment of the quality of the current programs, students did not support the fully online provision of the programs. The lack of support was pronounced and ranged from total rejection of fully online programs by students in Program 1 to a marginal support of 9 per cent to 13 per cent in Program 2 and Program 3 respectively. Students repeatedly stated the importance of face-to-face communication as the most important reason for preferring the current program model. According to the respondents, face-to-face communication was preferred as it offered instant feedback, afforded easier communication with fellow students and instructors, was better for resolving study problems and gave better motivation to study. Some students were of the view that learning in front of the computer only was too “cold” and too difficult, while others were of the opinion that Hong

### Table 11–3: Perceived quality of current programs—percentage of students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Program 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Program 2</th>
<th></th>
<th>Program 3</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the current program of high quality?</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you participate in this type of program in the future?</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you prefer the program to be offered fully online?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kong people had traditional attitudes towards education and therefore face-to-face communication was more suitable for Hong Kong students. Respondents did, however, acknowledge the usefulness of the Internet as a means for the provision of course material and communication with instructors and fellow students.

**Discussion**

The perspectives of the students who participated in this research study offer an interesting reflection on their notions of quality. The majority of students defined program quality in terms of short program duration leading to a formal qualification, competitive fees and generous exemptions for prior learning. Proponents of transactional education as a multi-million dollar business, with expectations of large profits, would be well advised to contemplate the future implications of such a notion of quality. In addition, students declared the relevance to job and career as the characteristic of greatest influence on their judgment of the quality of transnational computing programs, underpinning the need to tailor programs to specific student populations and thus militating against the economic rationalist notion of the ‘one size fits all’ approach to program development.

Perhaps an unexpected result is that the students see information technology as necessary, but supplementary, to the educational process. Students in all programs considered it as most important that technology “is helpful and easy to use”, and that the application of current products was important. But for most, other factors were more important, with some expressing the view that learning in front of the computer only was too “cold” and too difficult. This view clearly runs counter to those expressed by some university management and others that see technology as the means to provide course materials in terms of cost effective educational courseware.

What was most interesting was the degree of consensus among the students of all programs with respect to those dimensions, and to the corresponding attributes that were associated with teaching, learning and assessment. Students expected the instructors, irrespective of whether they were local or from the home institution, to be well-prepared and organised, have prior experience with technology-based programs, be appreciative of course requirements and students’ needs, possess effective communication skills and encourage communication among students, and between students and instructors. In other words, the consensus was about the expectation that the transactional education environment be a genuine educational environment, and that those matters that are important to all students, as students, were seen by the university offering the transnational program as of paramount importance. The students undertaking these programs clearly expected them to be good quality programs.
Many students were happy with the quality of the programs that they undertook, although one program fared rather badly in this respect. Regardless of their assessment of the quality of the current programs, students did not support fully online provision of the programs. Students repeatedly stated the importance of face-to-face communication as the most important reason for preferring the current program model. Face-to-face communication was preferred as it offered instant feedback, afforded easier communication with fellow students and instructors, was better for resolving study problems and provided better motivation to study. New technologies exist that attempt to overcome these objections, but it may well be that for some Asian students these new technologies are inappropriate. The issue may be socio-economic and cultural rather than technological, as indicated by Ballow (2006). Further research is needed in this area.

Despite approving of the quality of current programs, students expressed unwillingness to participate in a similar type of program (that is, mixed mode transnational) in the future. The major reason for this reluctance was the failure of the facilities provided by the programs to measure up to the expectations of the students in terms of a genuine educational institution.

**Conclusion**

The proposed model for quality transnational programs was developed with the notion in mind that, as the ultimate clients of an education program, students should participate in defining what constitutes its quality. The model offers an insight into learners’ perspectives of their educational experience, by providing a detailed account of the wide range of factors that might have influence on those perspectives. Given the information contained herein, it is evident that to improve and sustain transnational programs in the future, it is essential for universities to gain an understanding of the learners’ perspective: an understanding that transcends attendance records and academic achievements. Failure to embrace the challenges posed by the consideration of student perspectives portends a failure to launch and maintain successful transnational education initiatives. The allure of large profits generated by the fusion of education and technology may well prove to be illusory. Management, technologists, course developers, academic staff and others who have hitched their star to the transnational education bandwagon eschew the perspective of students at their peril.

In terms of assisting in the design, development and review of transnational programs, the proposed model could be pertinent to staff involved in those programs, as well as to university administrators. For staff, it could provide a platform for reflection on what is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ with a program, and which practices are effective or non-effective. Understanding how the
learning experience discourages or frustrates learners might enable staff to consider and implement constructive changes. For instance, the perceived importance of timely feedback on assignments identifies one aspect of the programs evaluated in this study that might call for attention; did students regard timely feedback as important because it was lacking? A further exploration of any associations between students’ satisfaction with various aspects of transnational programs and their perceptions of the importance of those aspects to program effectiveness would be required to determine a link between those two factors. For university administrators, the model could provide assistance in reviewing the quality and consistency of their transnational offerings; it could also help to ensure that all transnational education programs offered by a university are delivering a sound education consistent and compliant with well-defined standards.

Research on the quality and effectiveness of transnational education faces the dilemma that the educational context is not homogeneous, as it involves different types of educational providers, students and partner institutions across many countries, and it includes a variety of program delivery models. In addition, the educational context is constantly evolving owing to the introduction of new technologies and, resulting from it, the introduction of new ways of learning and teaching. The findings reported in this chapter provide support for investigating the quality of transnational programs in that, irrespective of how the educational context may change in the future, the fundamental factors that impact learning and success have been identified by ‘insiders and experts’: the transnational students themselves.

References


Chapter Twelve:  
**Centring Students’ Bilingual Capabilities in Quality University Teaching: Bringing “Knowledge Detours” and “Zigzag Learning” in from the Margins**

Michael Singh and Wei Guo

**Abstract**

As a result of the internationalisation of education, Australian universities increasingly recruit students from diverse cultural and language backgrounds. This raises the question of whether academic leaders are giving adequate attention to their bilingual capabilities in the debate over quality university teaching. This chapter draws on a Chinese student’s experiential learning to explore the place of bilingual capabilities as an attribute of quality teaching in the context of the internationalisation of Australian university education. Specifically, it develops the concepts of “knowledge detour” and “zigzag learning” to name the learning that occurs as the student makes use of, and extends, his bilingual capabilities. The ideas of “knowledge tangents, shuttles and layering” are also introduced in the chapter. The case for changing the conception of quality of university teaching is contextualised in relation to the internationalising of Australian higher education locally.

**Introduction**

The presence of international students from Asia undertaking higher degrees by research in Australia raises many challenges for academic leadership and the quality of university teaching. In contrast to prevailing constructions of the Asian learner, this chapter does not frame them as a problem, either linguistically or culturally. There is ample literature that already canvasses these issues (Adams, 2004; Major, 2005; Skyrme, 2007). Instead, the focus is on the initial challenge that Australian supervisors and international higher degrees research (HDR) students face in working
collaboratively to draw on each other’s knowledge and knowledge networks. What this means for carving out new directions for quality university teaching is the key problem.

This then opens the way to generate novel concepts that academic leaders might mobilise in deliberations about what this means for the internationalisation of education here in Australia. The evidentiary section of this chapter presents an account of the learning experiences of one HDR student. This material opens up for further exploration the question of what quality teaching might mean if its focus moved beyond concerns about how international students from Asia can survive in an advanced English speaking environment. By contributing to the conceptualisation of innovative teaching/learning strategies, this chapter offers new perspectives for academic leaders working to internationalise the quality of Australian university teaching. To begin, however, it is important to consider the use of languages in providing access to knowledge produced by another educational culture. This will help in better appreciating the ideas of “knowledge detour” and “zigzag learning” developed later in the chapter.

**Knowing through Tangents, Shuttles and Layering**

Teachers and researchers from the Majority (or Third) World feel uncomfortable with the mistaken impression to be found in Anglo-American countries that the only worthwhile knowledge that exists in the Majority World does so because it has been imported from the Minority (or First) World. This denies scholars such as Appadurai (1996), Chow (1998), and Wright (2003) an authoritative place from which to speak. Their knowledge is relegated to a marginalised position. Importantly, in the research undertaken by these scholars they do not make the mistake of trying to articulate just the knowledge they have gained from the Minority World; nor do they lay claim to an exclusively Indian, Chinese or African knowledge. Instead, they work to tease out already existing but unnamed knowledge from the Majority World in dialogue with Minority World knowledge. For instance, Wright (1998) articulates a conversation between central African knowledge and Minority World knowledge in full expectation that non-Africans will engage such knowledge.

This chapter attempts to move consideration of international students’ bilingual capabilities from the margin to the centre of deliberations about academic leadership and quality university teaching in Australia. In doing so, we seek to extend efforts to interrupt the construction and perpetuation of views of quality university teaching that render the uses of multiple languages irrelevant. While language is central to our analysis, neither linguistic nor cultural differences (as mediated by languages) are our primary concern. We are interested in the possibilities of using languages to access other knowledge
and knowledge networks for learning and teaching. In pointing to these other sources of knowledge in this chapter, we develop insights into ways of enhancing students’ bilingual capabilities. We call these teaching practices and learning strategies “knowledge detours” and “zigzag learning.” But first, let us introduce the idea of knowing through tangents, shuttles and layering.

**Knowledge tangents**

Ever more Chinese students are buying into the international higher education marketplace. Their linguistically grounded expectations and communicative needs complicate the complexity of their encounters with the globalising forces of Australian higher education. Hodge and Louie (1998, p. 6) observe, “China has left the museums of the West and taken to the market place. Global trade has made China part of everyday life and culture in the West.” This provides opportunities for monolingual Australian supervisors and their Chinese HDR students to learn collaboratively about the relative differences and similarities between their native English and *Putonghua*. However, their bilingual capabilities appear to be tangential to their prospects as transnational researchers–knowledge workers. International students from China come from a country that has more than one language. It has many languages including Tibetan and Mongolian. *Putonghua* is the language of the Han majority:

> Even in the Han language, the spoken form has hundreds of different varieties … the official language, ‘Mandarin’ or *putonghua*, serves to integrate the nation … Even *putonghua*, the standard language, is spoken in different ways in different parts of mainland China … *Putonghua*, Mandarin, the standard language … is in practice a second language for many Chinese even within the People’s Republic of China (PRC). (Hodge & Louie, 1998, pp. 9, 13)

Throughout the 20th century there were major reforms to *Putonghua*, China’s standardised, spoken language. Chinese students must learn and understand at least one thousand words before they enter primary schools. Here “words” actually mean the characters *(han zi)* in the Chinese writing system. A Chinese student has to learn each single Chinese character first and then put different characters together so as to make sentences. The more Chinese characters the students can recognise the easier it is for their studies. Since the 1950s much attention has been devoted to simplifying the language’s written form or *(han zi)*. However, possibilities for mitigating mass illiteracy have been of tangential interest to some. Modifications to the *(han zi)* have not always been as successful as desired:

> The two main justification used to resist reforms are that the traditional script represents the “Chineseness” of Chinese, and that it is efficient in representing the difficult spoken language … [The ancient characters do] effectively transmit a cohesive ideology of “Chineseness,” but it does so at a huge cost in practical efficiency. (Hodge & Louie, 1998, p. 14)
Throughout its history China has oscillated between policies of openness and protectionism (Waley-Cohen, 1999). The recent round of open-door policies initiated by Deng Xiaoping’s Government in the late 1970s increased possibilities for Chinese students to access higher education in the Minority World. These policies continue to have major effects on the knowledge and politics of China’s financially troubled universities. Power relations within overseas universities have been affected by “the new flood of political, economic and educational emigrants from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong and the receptive West that has welcomed them” (Hodge & Louie, 1998, p. 16). If quality teaching and academic leadership are about power within universities, then it is useful to consider how receptive and welcoming universities in the Minority World are to the linguistic capabilities of the flood of international students from China. Despite being integral to their learning and beneficial to their future work/life trajectories, for the most part, these are positioned as only tangentially related to the quality of university teaching.

Knowledge shuttling

International students’ proficiency in foreign languages has had to adapt to the contemporary processes of globalisation, especially the recent developments in information and communication technologies. When borrowing words from other languages to name these new technologies, Chinese people pay particular attention to their semantic function. Following Rafael (2003), we characterise this back-and-forth movement between languages as “knowledge shuttling.” For example, because the English word “beeper” sounds like “BP” the name for paging machines is translated as “xunhuji”. “Xun” means “find”, “hu” means “call” and “ji” means “machine”. Thus, the back-translation for “xunhuji”, the Chinese word for pager, is a machine that can be used for finding and calling someone. Therefore a “xunhuji” is a small portable machine that receives signals or message indicating that someone wants you to phone them. “Xunhuji” were very popular in the 1990s, but have since been replaced by mobile phones (“shouji”, which means “hand-machine”).

Consider for a moment another example of this knowledge shuttling. “E-mail” is translated as “dianziyoujian” which means electronic (dianzi) mail (youjian). Here there is a very clear one-to-one relationship between the meaning of the English and the Chinese words. However, another translation for “e-mail” is “yimeier”. This word represents a translation of the sound (phonetics) of “e-mail”, but has nothing to do with the meaning. The sound of “yimeier” is preferred over “dianziyoujian” because it resonates closely with “e-mail”. As Rafael (2003) suggests, this shuttling between sounds and meanings allows Chinese people to name new technology, if not decisively control the incursion of globalising English.
The three constituent han zi in the word “yi-mei-er” give it a distinctive Chinese meaning. “Yi” means “he” or “she”, and “mei” means “sister”. Thus, because e-mail is fast and cheap, the term “yimeier” has the added meaning of being a form of communication technology widely used by young men and women. Likewise “modem” is translated as “mao” which means “cat”. As we all know, a modem is used on the Internet whose speed is affected by numerous factors that mean that it is not necessarily stable. It is called “mao” because of the similarity in sound as well as the fact that a cat can run fast. In this way we might characterise this engagement with new knowledge through the Chinese language owing to globalisation, as knowledge shuttling.

Knowledge layering

Let us now consider the layers of knowledge that bilingual students are capable of engaging. Following Mehrez (2007), it can be argued that bilingual students embody linguistic (and cultural) layers of knowledge as a result of having to use two (or more) languages. For instance, articles are probably the most difficult English grammar for Chinese students to learn, but they are perhaps the simplest words in English. This is because Putonghua “has no article like the English the, but uses this and these instead. Chinese people learning English find mastering this a difficulty” (Chang & Chang, 2001, p. 43). What is an article? The Chinese translation for the word “article” is “guanci”, which means “crown” or “hat”. Whose hat? The nouns’ hat, so called because articles are always put in front of the nouns. Not surprisingly, Chinese students can feel confused when they are using articles.

Knowledge layering has less to do with any equivalence between languages, and more to do with the negotiation of the spaces between the languages and what is known (Mehrez, 2007). Gendered pronouns offer another instance of this knowledge layering. Chinese people use different radicals to show the gender of words. When reading the written form of the language they can tell the different gender of words by recognising the different han zi. In speaking Chinese, it is possible to point out or ask the gender of the person or animal mentioned. One word that a student of Putonghua learns “is ta, translated as he, she, it, him, or her. There is a different written character for male, female and neuter forms, but spoken Chinese makes no such distinction as to gender” (Chang & Chang, 2001, p. 43). Not surprisingly, the use of gendered pronouns in English is difficult for Chinese students to master, even though they are aware of, and can distinguish, the differences.

Another layer of knowledge for speakers of English and Chinese concerns the differences in the use of the plurals and the singular. In Chinese there is no difference between countable and uncountable nouns. Putonghua does not have plural forms of nouns but uses numbers to quantify whatever is being discussed:
Two other grammatical features of Western languages not found in Chinese are plural nouns and verb tenses. Ren (man) does not change whether it means one man or a hundred men. Chinese nouns are usually preceded by a classifier which makes the number clear. (Chang & Chang, 2001, p. 44)

Likewise in Putonghua words have no tenses to indicate time. Instead, particular words are used to specify time. Thus, there is no need to transfer tenses onto verbs to point out the time but only to connect actions:

In Chinese grammar, it is not so important to know when an action occurred. Instead, the Chinese [people] concentrate on a change in status or the completion of an action. The particle le (pronounced tonelessly) in a sentence indicates change or completion. It is called functive because, like the, it never stands on its own, and has to be used in conjunction with other words. (Chang & Chang, 2001, p. 45)

Before the beginning of the 19th century, there was no simple approach to help non-Chinese speakers learn the Chinese language in an efficient way. It was then that scholars in China “realised that their country’s survival depended on compromising aesthetic and intellectual standards in order to adopt more efficient Western ways” (Chang & Chang, 2001, p. 31). Two centuries later it might now be asked whether academic leaders in universities in the Minority World realise that they might have equally important reasons for making similar changes. What might they do to centre international students’ bilingual capabilities as integral to quality learning and teaching? No doubt some would disallow concerns about knowledge tangents, shuttling and layering as irrelevant to engaging in quality university teaching. They would see no reason to mobilise academic leadership around these shadowy elements of international education. Detailed discussions about language issues, and students’ bilingual capabilities in particular, would be pruned from debates about the possibilities for changing university learning and teaching. Using languages to access other knowledge and knowledge networks would be kept in the margins.

However, it is our contention that the forgoing account of knowledge tangents, shuttling and layering provides reason enough for exploring possibilities for centring students’ bilingual capabilities in quality university teaching. This means bringing their bilingual learning practices in from the margins. The next section provides a description of the reading, meaning-making and speech-making practices of one bilingual student. This offers a way to conceptualise what this might mean for quality learning and teaching in Australian universities, as well as opening up possibilities for further large-scale research.
Reading, Meaning-making and Speech-making Practices

This section uses an auto-ethnographic approach to explore the reading, meaning-making and speech-making practices of a HDR student from China (Holt, 2003; Spry, 2001). In speaking about one student’s experiences, the second named author of this chapter, we do not want to claim it to be a source of absolute authority with respect to the translations that are provided. Further, this account cannot be taken as an authentic representation of other Chinese students or international students more generally. The work reported at this time affords a basis for future investigations in this regard. The description provided here serves as a case study for explaining how one particular student is using his bilingual capabilities in his doctoral studies. Together we are working to conceptualise what this might mean to name his experiences as “knowledge detours” and “zigzag learning”. We are searching for a language to bring them in from the margins to the centre them in the debates about quality learning and teaching in Australian universities.

Learning to read twice

How are bilingual capabilities employed in reading scholarly articles written in English? Basically, this involves the student in selectively annotating each page as it is read with words written in han zi. In China, teachers suggest that in order for students to study English well, that when they meet new words they should first guess their meanings according to the context. If the students can find explanations for the meaning of words from their context, then they do not have to search for the meanings or pronunciations of the words in their English–Chinese dictionaries. However, if the students still cannot understand the meanings of the words, they are then encouraged to find the meanings in their dictionaries.

There are some complexities involved in developing the bilingual proficiency now required for the world’s multilingual knowledge economy.
Table 12–1: Using two languages to multiply the meanings of keywords

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Pin Yin</th>
<th>Hàn zi</th>
<th>Meaning of the characters</th>
<th>Back translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compatible</td>
<td>Jian rong</td>
<td>兼容</td>
<td>Jian = both</td>
<td>Can be used for multi functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rong = contain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Ding xing</td>
<td>定性</td>
<td>Ding= to set</td>
<td>Set for characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Xing=nature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credence</td>
<td>Xin ren</td>
<td>信任</td>
<td>Xin= to believe</td>
<td>Believe and trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ren= responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underpinnings</td>
<td>Zhi zhu</td>
<td>支柱</td>
<td>Zhi= to support</td>
<td>Pillar or backbone which can support a building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Zhu= pillar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homogeneity</td>
<td>Tong zhi</td>
<td>同质</td>
<td>Tong= same</td>
<td>Have the same character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Zhi= nature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorm</td>
<td>Tou nao feng bao</td>
<td>头脑风暴</td>
<td>Tounao=brain</td>
<td>Storm in brain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fengbao= storm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group</td>
<td>Jiao dian tuan ti</td>
<td>焦点团体</td>
<td>Jiaodian= focus</td>
<td>Some group focus on something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tuanti=group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution</td>
<td>Gui yin</td>
<td>归因</td>
<td>Gui= attribute to</td>
<td>Reasons for something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yin= reason</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Node</td>
<td>Jie dian</td>
<td>节点</td>
<td>Jie=point</td>
<td>Point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dian=point</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Bian liang</td>
<td>变量</td>
<td>Bian=to change</td>
<td>Something can be changed during a process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Liang= to measure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12–1 suggests a useful process for recognising and learning new words when a student who is proficient in Chinese cannot understand their English meanings. By establishing what the words mean in Chinese using an English–Chinese dictionary, the student can better understand most of these new English words. Generally this process, which makes an advantage of the student’s Chinese linguistic proficiency, helps him (in this instance, the student is male) solve the problem of establishing meanings for new English words.

Take the word “qualitative”, for example. In Chinese “ding” means “set or decide” and “xing” means “nature or character”. This helps in understanding “dingxing” as meaning how to decide the nature (quality) of something or
The Chinese language has many synonyms that express the same meaning. Likewise consider for a moment the word “credence” (xìn rén). The Chinese meaning of “credence” can be deduced by knowing that “xìn” (trust) and “rèn” (trust) share the same meaning. In Putonghua they are put together in accordance with the standard formation of words for ease of pronunciation.

However, there are some words that cannot be so readily understood even when the student finds the literal Chinese meanings in a dictionary. On translating “brain storm” into Chinese, one’s immediate reaction is to ask, “What is a storm in the brain?” This suggests that the word is a metaphor. It means that a group of people generate many ideas (like rain in a storm) and then select a few really useful pieces of information. From a Chinese perspective it is also possible to understand this word as an idea that makes people crazy, or projects about which they are enthusiastic.

Consider the term “focus group”, which refers to a particular research method. Its Chinese translation is easily connected with a famous Chinese television program, Topics in Focus which aims to report the truth. This literal Chinese interpretation of “focus group” is nonsense for a beginning researcher who is not familiar with this method. This creates great mental pressure on the student as he searches for its hidden meaning. Reading a range of literature in both Chinese and English can help to develop an understanding of “focus groups”. They are a special kind of open-ended, interactive discussions among a group of people which are recorded and analysed. In some circumstances, the literal translations of keywords troubled this student, undermined his self-confidence and left him without any idea of their meanings.

**Multiplying synonyms**

Inevitably, every HDR student meets some new words that they do not recognise when reading the advanced English to be found in academic literature. How to understand these new words and then transfer them into their writing can present a major issue for them. Table 12–2 shows one strategy for learning synonyms in this context. To achieve a satisfactory solution, this process involves four stages that have a zigzag pattern. For this student English grammar is less a problem than the struggle to write in English using the variety of words needed to avoid monotonous repetition. From the perspective of deploying the advantages that his bilingual proficiency provides, Table 12–2 shows how Chinese is used as a beneficial supplement to advance a student’s knowledge of English and Chinese, and most importantly to progress his doctoral studies.
Table 12–2: Working with English and Chinese to multiply synonyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Chinese translation</th>
<th>Chinese synonym</th>
<th>Back translation from Chinese synonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stagnation</td>
<td>Tingzi (stop)</td>
<td>Bujingqi (not prosperous)</td>
<td>Depression or recession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generosity</td>
<td>Kangkai (unselfish)</td>
<td>Bujunide (not constrained)</td>
<td>Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linkage</td>
<td>Lianhe (put something together)</td>
<td>Jiehe (to integrate)</td>
<td>Combine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>Zhaomu (collect)</td>
<td>Buchong (add news in)</td>
<td>Supplement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disruption</td>
<td>Fenlie (split)</td>
<td>Gegai (separate into two pieces)</td>
<td>Divide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strenuous</td>
<td>Jiqi (extreme)</td>
<td>Feichang (great)</td>
<td>Great effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascendence</td>
<td>Quanshi (sovereignty)</td>
<td>Quanli (power)</td>
<td>Superiority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal</td>
<td>Caizheng (financial affair)</td>
<td>Jijinde (fund)</td>
<td>Monetary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juxtaposition</td>
<td>Bingle (side by side)</td>
<td>Bingpai (different row at the same level)</td>
<td>Abreast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The specific strategy involved in this learning method begins with identifying a Chinese synonym for the English word. Then a Chinese synonym is identified for the initial Chinese word that was chosen. The third stage is to find an English definition for that Chinese synonym. By working through these three stages this student is able to understand the meaning of the English concept as well as its Chinese synonyms. The important last step in this strategy of moving back-and-forth between the two languages is to test if the English definition appears similar in meaning to the original English word.

**Learning to speak, being taught to speak**

It is important for this Chinese HDR student to practise making oral presentations in English as it is in Chinese. Developing the advanced speaking and communication skills demonstrated by native English speakers, who are usually very good at talking, can be a challenge. He found it amazing that his supervisor can speak for an hour or more without repetition when discussing his research project and thesis; and that he made so much time available to help him with his project. This Chinese student was trained to act in response to a prompt and to be prudent in speaking because, as the saying goes, “people
may dig their grave with their teeth.” Ironically, loquacious people tend to be looked down upon by some Chinese people, because it does not accord with their traditional moral standard. It is recognised that speaking skills play an extraordinary role in careers in the local/global economy, the transnational labour market and research.

If the student’s oral presentations are not successful, this is likely to have negative consequences, especially in defending his thesis proposal and future employment prospects. There are three important elements of his learning to speak. First, it is important to consider the audience and what he might best say to enable them to understand and accept the argument and findings being presented. Despite the effort, if he is unable to arouse the audience’s interest the presentation is likely to be a waste of time for both speaker and listeners. Second, the student’s self-confidence as a (public) speaker is likely to be beaten if the audience shows signs of being perplexed or otherwise puzzled. Third, failure in making a high stakes presentation, signified by uninterested unrest among the audience, means that people will leave having judged the speaker to be inferior in many respects. This includes ignoring the speaker’s argument and focusing on the speaker’s mispronunciation.

The confirmation of candidature is a very important part in the Doctor of Philosophy process. It demands that research students demonstrate in writing and through a spoken presentation the soundness of their doctoral projects by using scholarly language. It was a challenge for this Chinese HDR student who was a relative novice at making public oral presentations to explain and justify his proposed research project in 20 minutes. He had to do this in fluent English. The student could understand his proposal quite well. He found it difficult to remember all the key points in proposals necessary to provide a public accounting of what he proposed. One strategy used by this student was to translate his English language proposal into Putonghua in order to understand it better. This helped him to remember all the critical points during his oral defence. Doing a public presentation in English in Australia was not an easy task for this Chinese HDR student. This was despite him being a university teacher for several years. There was a heavy burden on this Chinese HDR student as he prepared to have his research proposal, his written English and his spoken English accepted by his peers. They would judge and critique his research and his presentation. The greater the impression he wanted to demonstrate, the less that he found he was able to say.

There were four useful steps involved in his understanding of and preparing for this oral presentation. First, he translated the English version of his speaker’s notes into Chinese to develop familiarity with the materials as soon as possible. Second, he practised the speech in Chinese to enhance his self-confidence. Third, he translated the Chinese version back into English
and practised making oral presentations in English. Fourth, he modified the English version to ensure that it was in the formal, scholarly English expected and accepted by researchers. By working through these four stages it was possible to improve his oral presentations in English and Chinese.

The preceding description of the linguistic tactics used by one Chinese HDR student provides a basis for further research into centring students’ bilingual capabilities in efforts to change universities’ definitions of quality teaching. This calls for academic leadership in bringing “knowledge detours” and “zigzag learning” in from the margins.

**Knowledge Detours and Zigzag Learning: Engaging in Quality University Teaching and Mobilising Academic Leadership**

It has to be acknowledged that the cultural politics of Australian higher education might prefer to dismiss considerations of students’ bilingual capabilities as irrelevant to changing university learning and teaching. There could be a preference for pruning detailed deliberations about language issues from concerns about engaging in quality teaching and mobilising academic leadership. Nevertheless, the internationalisation of education involves the possibilities and challenges of creating a transnational community of scholars (Singh & Shrestha, in press/2009). Efforts to legitimise this view struggles within the academy against perspectives that favour paying for admittance or dealing with learning deficiencies to gain admittance. It is against such established views that one has to argue for the legitimacy of defining quality university teaching as engaging with other languages and other knowledge.

The internationalisation of education provides academic leaders with the opportunity to make spaces for students’ bilingual capabilities and their capacity to access other knowledge in their constructions of quality learning and teaching in universities. This could enrich research and intellectual conversations within Australian universities. It could provide a means of moving beyond the evaluation and commentary on the English language proficiency of international students by opening up new possibilities for interventions in, or engagement with, the local/global flows of knowledge (Appadurai, 1996). This speaks to a conception of quality teaching and academic leadership that expresses a new “internationalist localism” that contributes to transnational dialogues that include knowledge from the margins (Wright, 1998). The concepts of “knowledge detours” and “zigzag learning” provide academic leaders with a way of naming and defining quality learning and teaching in local, internationally oriented universities.
Knowledge detours

What are knowledge detours? A detour is created when there is a blockage, usually in a roadway. People have to take an alternative path around this obstruction in order to reach their goal. The idea of a knowledge detour refers to the way in which bilingual students are able to recognise an impediment to their learning or research, such as the challenges posed by advanced academic English, and to draw upon their first language in order to negotiate their way around the obstacle. A knowledge detour represents attempts by bilingual HDR students to use their layers of knowledge to mediate or otherwise mitigate problems that they face in doing research and becoming a transnational researcher. Such a detour may lead the students to a place where they want to be, even though they may encounter further problems while taking the detour. For instance, the difficulties of learning advanced academic Chinese and English may create a feeling of diffidence in the students even as they try to avoid the blockages confronting them. Without appropriate recognition and acknowledgement, the knowledge detour itself may cause the students to lose their self-confidence, decrease their enthusiasm for learning and even increase linguistic inaccuracies.

Zigzag learning

The concept “zigzag learning” recognises that bilingual students have at least two funds of knowledge to draw upon, or to shuttle between, in their studies. They benefit from being literate in two languages by being able to see the object of their studies from differing perspectives. It also means that learning occurs in the two languages, thereby enhancing the substance and quality of what the HDR student comes to know. Thus, zigzag learning is integral to enhancing the bilingual proficiency of university students who as graduates will become transnational knowledge workers.

Zigzag learning is a process that can be likened to climbing a mountain, in so far as it acknowledges that going straight up may not be the fastest or the most efficient way of scaling it. At one level zigzag learning provides a strategy that could enable HDR students from China (and perhaps elsewhere) to carry on in a predominantly English-only academic environment. This learning strategy engages Chinese and English language and knowledge in enhancing the student’s research capabilities. The student translates words from English into Chinese, then translates them back, and then follows this with a discussion of what has been understood with peers and supervisors. There is a need to judge whether the initial translation was correct. The “back translation” provides an important basis for judging whether the whole process has led to the correct words (lexicon), the correct part of speech (grammar) and the enhancement of the student’s knowledge.
Conclusion

As universities in the Minority World have gone global, a little-discussed hierarchy has emerged, with English-only teaching asserting its authority as the world’s international language, rendering students’ bilingual capabilities distinctly marginal. The positioning of international students from China is such that they are not firmly located in the centre but rather shuttling between their first and second languages. These students can find that the price of their transnational mobility is the marginalisation of knowledge that they can access through their first language. The denial of the relevance of international students’ bilingual capabilities points to the limits and limitations of taken for granted assumptions about quality university teaching.

This chapter suggests that presumptions about the centrality of Minority World knowledge in defining quality teaching might be questioned by academic leaders using post-colonial, post-communist reconceptions of the world. The research by Mehrez (2007), Rafael (2003), and Wright (2003) serves as an example and inspiration for critiquing the internationalisation of quality teaching in universities for the failure to represent and include other knowledge. This chapter has gone further by indicating how academic leaders might mobilise the concepts of knowledge detours and zigzag learning to engage in deliberations about quality teaching in Australian universities. The pedagogical concepts of knowledge detour and zigzag learning acknowledge international students from China as being situated in the intellectual life of at least two different knowledge networks. Quality university teaching invites cross-cultural collaboration that moves towards mutual understanding.

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References


Chapter Thirteen:
Mobilising “Double Knowing”: Pedagogical Leadership for Internationalising Higher Education

Jinghe Han and Dacheng Zhao

Abstract

This chapter examines the suggestion that in the internationalising of the Australian higher education field the supervision of higher degree research (HDR) students from Asia is a matter of quality teaching and academic leadership. Four main considerations are presented in the course of developing this argument. First, based on a review of the research literature on quality (Western) supervision of international HDR students from Asia, supervision is defined as both a leadership and a pedagogical practice. Second, an autobiographical approach is used to explore this proposition. Specifically, an international HDR student documents her experiences of doctoral supervision in an Australia university. The concept of “double knowing” (Singh with Shrestha, in press/2008) is used to focus on engaging quality HDR supervisory pedagogies and mobilising academic leadership. Third, evidence is drawn from reflections about research supervisory pedagogies for improving students’ advanced English language proficiency, and building their prior knowledge into their theses. Further, evidence concerning the design of students’ work/life trajectories focuses on guiding students to work on significant and innovative research problems widening their academic circle and preparing them to enter the transnational labour market. The fourth section explores what quality supervisory leadership and pedagogy mean for addressing the challenges of internationalising universities.

Introduction

An important feature of contemporary globalisation is the flow of people, especially the mobility of knowledge workers invited and incited by governments to participate in the transnational labour market (Han, 2004). A significant element of this has been the increasing number of the international higher degree research
(HDR) students enrolling in universities in English speaking countries including Australia, Britain, Canada and the United States of America. Many of these students are from Asia, and especially from China. Because research is closely linked with the (multilingual) knowledge economy, the quality of research education is a major concern for both government and universities. There has been an increasing focus on quality teaching and leadership in research education (Singh & Li, 2004). With the increasing numbers of international HDR students, much more research work needs to be done to establish what quality supervision means in relation to emerging conceptualisations of international education (Adrian-Taylor, Noels, & Tischler, 2007; Pearson & Brew, 2002). Likewise, there is extensive literature on the difficulties that international students from Asia encounter or pose while they are studying in the English speaking countries (Durkin, 2005; Huang, 2006; Kenway & Bullen, 2003; Trice, 2003). However, a noticeable absence is the lack of international HDR students themselves giving voice to their experiences of learning to produce research-based knowledge and becoming researchers. To help fill this gap, this chapter reports on the reflections of an international HDR student who undertook her doctoral education in Australia.

This chapter investigates the proposition that HDR supervision is a matter of both quality teaching and academic leadership, as these are necessary for internationalising Australian higher education. This argument is informed by a review of the research literature, which indicates that issues of concern include how research education enhances students’ English language proficiency how to mediate or otherwise mitigate conflict with their supervisors owing to differing educational cultures and the need to scaffold the development of their knowledge of research processes.

This argument is grounded in three related considerations. First, a brief methodological note situates the argument developed in this chapter within an autobiographical approach, in this instance a recent Doctor of Philosophy graduate’s reflections on her experiences of supervision (Han, 2006). Here the concept of “double knowing” (Singh with Shrestha, in press/2008) is introduced as providing both a focus for engaging quality HDR supervisory pedagogies and a vehicle for mobilising the academic leadership required to make changes that give expression to the desire for internationalising universities. Second, two key features of supervision explored in this chapter relate to mentoring the student to the timely and successful completion of a really useful thesis, while also negotiating the design of her future work/life trajectory. It is suggested that quality supervision involves the many tasks required to scaffold students’ capabilities for producing a conceptually innovative and nationally significant theses, as well as scaffolding their entrées into the transnational labour market as early career researchers. The third section explores what quality supervisory leadership and pedagogy means, in the context of efforts to conceptualise the internationalisation of both education and research processes. Now we examine the research literature related to the supervision of international students, in particular Chinese background HDR students.
Quality (Western) Supervision for International Research Students

Here supervision of international HDR students is defined as involving practices of leadership and pedagogy, both of which are necessary for internationalising research and education. This section includes consideration of the literature on international students’ motivations for doing research studies; their positive and negative research training experiences; the underlying causes of these experiences; the relationship between international HDR students and their Western supervisors; and strategies for improving the quality of their research supervision.

Supervision as leadership practice

A range of individual features of leadership practice have been canvassed by different schools of theorising about this concept. For instance, Kemmis (2006, p. 3) argues that beyond the individual leader who is a “practitioner, practice is also socially-, discursively-, culturally- and historically-formed.” In terms of the academic leadership that is inherent in HDR supervision this means that cultural-linguistic phenomena; knowledge networks and material-economic conditions are constituents of this practice. Thus, supervisory leadership might be expressed in policy arguments within the academy concerning the structuring academic texts in English and other languages such as Zhong Wen, colloquially known as “Chinese” (Adrian-Taylor, Noels, & Tischler, 2007; Durkin, 2005; Huang, 2006). There are two important reasons that Kemmis (2005, p. 397) offers for advancing this argument. The first is that understanding and changing leadership practices require work outside the heads of practitioners as well as inside them. The second reason is that research on leadership practice has frequently proceeded with impoverished views of practice as an object of study. Understanding leadership practice in a more multi-dimensional way also means that it must be studied using multi-disciplinary, multi-method approaches.

One way of understanding practices such as the academic leadership that adheres to HDR supervision is that they are guided by intentions or meanings. The participants involved in supervisory practice—the students, the academics and their managers—may have different intentions from one another. Jerry and Pat (2005) and Huang (2006), for instance, found that there exists a diverse range of motivations that students have for doing research higher degrees. These include desires to build theory, deepen insights into practice in some areas, enhance personal experience and meet a challenge, as well as other extrinsic factors. In understanding the situation in which they find themselves, the different participants draw on different cultural and discursive resources—different knowledge communities—for making meaning.
The education system of a country is intimately linked with its national culture. Academic culture shock is experienced by most international HDR students from Asia when they begin to study abroad (Brown, 2004; Huang, 2006). For instance, Durkin (2005) and McClure (2005) found that the HDR students from China misunderstood what was meant by scholarly critical evaluation. By contrast, Jones (2005) found that, despite cultural and linguistic differences, international students’ conceptualisation of critical thinking was similar to that of their local counterparts. Thus, these students and their supervisors encounter each other not just as people, but also as the bearers of roles. As academic leaders, supervisors have different values and norms attached to their role, given that their interactions within the academy have different meanings and significance (Kemmis, 2006, p. 11). Their practices as academic leaders see them take up their students’ concerns within different parts of the material-economy of universities, in order to explore and advocate innovative functions, actions and relations. Guifoyle (2006), for example, reported that as academic leaders supervisors can address their students’ feeling of isolation and propose structural interventions to make them feel part of rather than separate from those around them.

We can draw a contrast between the supervisors’ and the HDR students’ perspectives on the practice of research education. The students are not merely objects on which supervisors operate. The students, as people-in-themselves, are co-participants in the joint exercise of producing research theses and forming themselves as early career researchers. They are just some of the players in the game of practice, which their supervisors as academic leaders must engage and mobilise (Kemmis, 2006, p. 5). To a greater or lesser degree, HDR students as the clients of supervisory practices are knowledgeable about the relevant practices although their supervisors may know more about the political economy governing the funding of the research education in which they are participating. Engaging in research education involves HDR students in aligning their activities with the words, actions and teacher-student relationship created by their supervisor and university. For example, Durkin’s (2005) in-depth case studies found that HDR students from Asian countries, such as China, lacked confidence and skills in Western-style research methodology. Not surprisingly, supervisors who provide academic leadership within the academy advocate the re-alignment of the institutions presuppositions about the practices of research education to connect with such students.

**Supervision as pedagogical practice**

In the West, it is assumed that supervisors should develop HDR students as independent learners and they expect their students to be “always/already” autonomous scholars from the beginning of their candidature (Manathunga
Mobilising “Double Knowing” (Jinghe Han and Dacheng Zhao) 241

& Goozee, 2007). However, from the perspective of international HDR students Western supervisory pedagogy can be chaotic and without structure (Huang, 2006). Students from Asian cultures favour more structured, directed supervisory practices where the supervisors talk and the students listen. The typical ‘matey’ relationship found in Australian models, stands in opposition to cultural norms for making the power relations explicit, which therefore make it easier to demonstrate the respect governing teacher-student relations in Asia.

Adrian-Taylor, Noels, and Tischler (2007) found that conflicts exist in the relationship between international HDR students and their Western supervisors. After surveying 55 international HDR students and 55 supervisors they found that the sources of these conflicts were unclear expectations; poor support for developing proficiency in advanced academic English; and lack of information, time and feedback. Likewise Holmes (2005) and Durkin (2005) reported that the international HDR students whom they studied were reluctant or hesitant about making oral presentations and speaking at research seminars, owing to limitations in supervisory pedagogies. Similarly, McClure (2005) interviewed 10 Chinese international HDR students on their experiences and relationship with their supervisors. Their expectations regarding supervision were largely unfulfilled, owing to problems in the supervisory relationship, especially irregular supervisory meetings. The next section indicates the method used to generate the evidence reported in this chapter and the reasons for its choices.

Methodological note

Using an autobiographical approach an international HDR student documents her experience of doctoral supervision in an Australian university. There are two reasons for using this method. First autobiography is a long established form of self-study that speaks to the needs of both the knowledge producer and the consumers of the research (Mills, 1959). Second, because one’s troubles cannot be solved as merely personal matters, autobiography provides a means of framing them as public issues with a social history (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). However, the use of autobiography does not mean that the argument made here has a weight that is above and beyond question. Further, the description provided here is not meant to read as an authentic or representative instance of the research education as experienced by other Chinese HDR students in Australia, let alone other students from Asia. This autobiographical report presents a case study that clarifies how one individual came to prefer and advocate supervisory pedagogies and leadership that foreground double knowing.

Through written reflections on this international HDR student’s experiences of supervision the following sections identify factors that offer insights into the attributes of quality supervision. We include but go beyond Green and Lee’s (1999, p. 208) definition of HDR supervision as a pedagogy of advanced
tertiary teaching education. We see HDR supervision as expressly involving both a pedagogical dimension and academic leadership. This definition interrupts that all too familiar division constructed among teaching, research and leadership. It foregrounds the act of engaging in the formation of an early career researcher through the teaching process; the process of mobilising the production of a research thesis in and through systematic study and the work of leading the academy to make changes commensurate with the need to internationalise Australian higher education.

A notable absence in the research on HDR supervision is the student’s experience and perspective (Green & Lee, 1999, p. 208). This chapter draws on evidence generated by one international HDR student during the three years when her Doctorate of Philosophy was undertaken, and in the 12 months immediately following its completion. Before she started her doctoral studies in education in Australia, this student had obtained her Bachelor and Master degrees in linguistics in China, where she subsequently taught English as a foreign language in a university for nine years. During this time she undertook research projects investigating English language teaching and the reform of higher education in China. Some evidence in this chapter has been taken from the thesis itself, wherein selections from the student’s project diary were recorded (Han, 2006). Further evidence about the quality of the supervision that she experienced was collected via written reflections produced through e-mail communications with the co-author. In addition to generating the literature review, the co-author stimulated written reflections of his colleague’s experiences of her HDR supervisory practice. This procedure of engaging in written dialogue over the Internet means that the evidentiary extracts have a formal quality to them, rather than what might be normally associated with evidence generated through face-to-face interviews. Before this evidence is examined, the next section offers a conceptual framework for considering how quality supervision of international HDR students might be better understood in terms of a pedagogical and leadership practice that promotes “double knowing.”

**Double knowing as a conceptual framing for quality supervision**

International students from China are situated in the intellectual life of at least two societies. Here we use Singh’s concept of “double knowing” (Singh with Shrestha, in press/2008) to recognise and name this feature of their learning strategies. These students are understood as existing in nodes with connections into differing knowledge networks or communities of practice. “Double knowing” refers to the ways in which the knowledge that these students draw on from different educational cultures is intertwined and understood through, and in relation to each other. By oscillating among multiple sources of knowledge, the students may overturn or transgress one source of knowledge using the other. Links are
added to their interlocking chains of knowledge through their international education. Naming this learning strategy as “double knowing” acknowledges these students’ critical, collaborative, reciprocal interactions around multiple sources of knowledge.

In terms of supervisory pedagogy, the strategy of “double knowing” provides a scaffold that enables international HDR students to relate what they are learning to the knowledge that they gained in their home country, and the knowledge that they can now access in their first language. The degree of educational capital that these students can accumulate is based on the efforts of academic leaders. Specifically, this sees internationally-minded supervisors working to close the gap among the recognition of their bilingual capabilities, the knowledge networks that they can access using these competencies and the knowledge that they can acquire or produce using these intellectual resources. Where validated by academic leaders this strategy of double knowing might be useful in challenging the blind-spots in Australian constructions of quality HDR supervision and the internationalisation of its higher education.

Having international HDR students search for evidence or concepts through the knowledge available in their first, as well as their second language might be used by academic leaders to inform deliberations that take university teaching beyond a parochial, nation-centred approach to research and education. In this sense, the collective agency of international HDR students and their supervisors carries with it the potential for conceiving of quality university teaching as structuring their admission to a transnational community of scholars, based on combining different sources of knowledge and knowledge networks. In this regard, internationalising research practice involves changing supervisory pedagogies so that they explicitly connect with the cognitive linguistics that students deploy and the validation of their claims to double sources for knowing. The next section provides an account of the written reflections of a Chinese HDR student on the quality of the supervision that she received during her doctoral studies.

**Reflections on Research Supervisory Pedagogies**

This section addresses key academic concerns that this Chinese student had while being educated as an early career researcher, and explores key features of quality supervisory pedagogies and leadership. The underlying premise is captured in the following statement:

> The difficulty of managing the PhD supervisory relationship is a well-known one. The intensity with which this relationship can be played out reveals that much more is involved than a simple transference of knowledge from one individual to another. On the contrary, each individual is revealed to have complex investments in this relationship (Owler, as cited in Green, 2005, p. 154).
The Doctor of Philosophy supervisory relationship is a teaching/learning exercise as much as a matter of academic leadership. It involves the transmission and production of knowledge, the formation of an early career researcher and the leadership required to make the best possible conditions for doing both.

**Improving advanced English language proficiency**

A good supervisor of international HDR students from China uses appropriate strategies to help them improve their proficiency in advanced academic English language. In this instance, the student’s supervisor provided two important forms of feedback to enable her to develop higher order language skills. Error correction and positive reinforcement (praise) were essential for her successful learning:

He never said things like “This is not a grammatical sentence” or “This preposition is wrong.” This is what the other students told me they had experienced. He corrected my grammatical and lexical errors on the hardcopy I submitted, while protecting my ideas, encouraging me to develop them further. He scribbled on the hard copies of my many drafts, returned them to me and asked me to make changes on the computer. He also asked me to take note of his detailed feedback regarding the corrections he had made, to check to ensure I agreed with and understood the reasons for changes, and to seek clarification where I did not.

The student’s supervisor was very careful in nurturing her developing ideas. To do so he corrected her language mistakes. This reduced her worries about her lexical or grammatical errors and encouraged the development of her conceptual thinking. She made the changes on the computer and doing this engaged her actively in learning the correct lexical and grammatical forms that were required. As a result of her regularly doing such reflective self-corrections, her writing gradually improved. Adrian-Taylor, Noels, and Tischler (2007) argue that language is a major factor contributing to the conflict between international HDR students from Asia and their Western supervisors. However, this student’s supervisor employed different strategies. For instance, he used seminars, conferences and guest lectures as opportunities for her to rehearse and practise public speaking skills:

My supervisor caught as many opportunities as possible and “forced” me to make presentations seminars and conferences. I was reluctant but had to go because I couldn’t negotiate any reasons for absenting myself with him at this point. The first time I talked in front of an Australian academic audience was horrible. I couldn’t sleep well the night before the presentation, and could only read what I prepared on my paper. The second time I felt better. After many times of making such presentations, I have overcome my worries. Seminar and conference talks are no longer a cause for stress.
As an (international) HDR student for whom English is a foreign language, the student needed to have the courage to overcome negative thinking and to be strongly encouraged to talk in front of native English speaking academics. Durkin (2005) and Holmes (2005) found that Chinese HDR students are reluctant about making oral presentations because they feel it culturally inappropriate to offer their opinion to the public. With ‘pushing’ from her supervisor, the student did many practice sessions and public presentations, and finally gained confidence. It would seem that Vygotsky’s (1978, p. 86) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) provided her supervisor with a useful strategy for scaffolding her learning. He recognised and mediated:

... the distance between the actual development level (of the learner) as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.

In relation to research education, the major significance of ZPD is that it suggests the upper and lower limits, or the “zone”, within which new learning occurs (Hammond & Gibbon, 2001). Through effective scaffolding her principal supervisor was able to extend the upper limit of the student’s ZPD by providing high support and high challenges. This made it possible for her to reach beyond what she imagined to be the limits of her capabilities. A related strategy that her supervisor used was to encourage her to participate in everyday conversations to improve her English speaking and listening skills:

Quite a few Chinese friends of mine told me the feelings of isolation they had during their PhD studies. They felt as though they could only socialise with other Chinese people in Australia. I was extremely lucky that my experience was different. Many times I was pulled out of my office to join morning tea with academics and administration staff by not only my supervisor but all the colleagues in my office block. At the beginning I was quiet and felt awkward in the tea room because I couldn’t understand their Australian English. Moreover, much of the times they talked about things for which I did not have the “background” knowledge. Gradually, however, I was improving. In addition academic colleagues took me out for sightseeing. I was often invited to their homes for parties. I was so grateful for being given so many opportunities to socialise with native speakers of Australian English.

To help her to learn Australian English, the student’s supervisor encouraged her to access as many opportunities for informal conversations as possible. This proved to be an efficient way for her to acquire skills in listening to and speaking Australian English. She quickly learned Australian colloquialisms through this channel. Guifoyle (2006) reports that students of culturally different backgrounds tend to feel isolated and lonely during their research studies; therefore access to supportive networks provided by their
supervisors is significant. Quality supervision is not limited to the formalities of a research project, but engages with students’ socio-cultural processes, making advantages of safe, informal learning environments.

**Building students’ prior education knowledge into their theses**

A good supervisor of (international) HDR students knows the importance of recognising and engaging their knowledge, and how to acknowledge their knowledge networks as part of their HDR studies. At the very least this means building on their prior educational knowledge to give it expression in their thesis. This is preferable to positioning them as ignorant or deficient in various ways. It is true that before coming to Australia the student had some rather naive conversations with friends and colleagues:

Many of my friends and colleagues who were lecturers in English knew I was coming to Australia to do a PhD. They asked me, “What are you going to do?” My answer was always given in English and was always the same, “Do research.” Their reaction to this answer was usually a puzzled “Oh?” Thankfully for both of us, no more questions were asked about this “research”. They knew as little about what “research” meant (in the Australian education culture) as I did. I worked out its particular Australian meaning after I arrived. The *research* I undertook for my PhD was a ‘research project’ which is termed *ke yan* in Chinese, meaning formal ‘scientific’ research. In contrast, the popular meaning of *research* in Chinese teaching material is *yan jiu* or *diao cha*, which means ‘informal’ study or relatively insignificant investigation (Han, 2006, p. 303).

For the student and her colleagues in China, initially the English word “research” did not carry the same burden of meaning found in Australia. It must be emphasised that this was not because they had no research experience, or because they lacked understanding of research. In China this student had participated in research projects, published journal articles and undertaken research for a Masters thesis. The problem over the meaning of “research” arose because of the mismatch involved in translating this word between English and *Zhong Wen*. More specifically, it was because of different understandings about research across these different communities of practice. A good supervisor of a student such as this is sensitive to these matters, and works to clarify whether the problem is an issue of translation or (lack of) knowledge. Students can be expected to have some pertinent knowledge in their own language and to be able to access further knowledge using the Internet. Quality supervision sees them being encouraged and supported in integrating this knowledge into their theses:

Inside I was a drum and it was all quite dark, still *meng zai gu li*. I did not ask my supervisor what “research” really meant in Australia. I was shy, quiet and felt embarrassed to let people know that I had such little worldly understanding. Two months after I arrived in Australia
I found that *ke yan* means *research* and *research* means *ke yan*. This problem was not because I am an especially stupid or ignorant person. However, this seems to be the common assumption made about World English Speakers by some people who claim “native” ownership or authority over the language (Han, 2006, p. 302).

The issue of knowing what Australian educational scholars meant by research was one of translation not knowledge, something that a quality supervisor can appreciate. In this context, because of shyness as much as the embarrassment of showing one’s “ignorance” by asking for an explanation of “research,” the student kept her silence. She struggled with the concept “research” for over two months, slowly working it out herself. Of course, with the introduction of the former Research Quality Framework in Australia during the course of her studies the meaning of “research” is changing (Singh, Han, & Harreveld, 2006).

“Literature” was another key concept that presented a challenge:

When translated into Chinese, I knew “literature” meant *wen xue*, that is writings that are valued as works of art, especially fiction, drama and poetry. This sense of literature contrasted markedly with the technical books and journals I read for the “literature” review. However, I have since learned that the term used in the Chinese language to refer to this type of research literature is *wen xian* or writings on a particular subject (Han, 2006, p. 302).

Grappling with the literature review was a “dark period” during the student’s research project. It was partly due to the confusion derived from the tensions involved in the translation of so many words. “Research” and “literature” were but two of these. A key difficulty that she experienced was a problem of register, difficulties perhaps compounded by her keen awareness of English linguistics, which she had studied to Masters level. She knew the English and *Zhong Wen* terms at the level of linguistic units, but the inevitable limits of the register in the relevant academic discourse were complicated by the debates in English about what these terms mean. Manathunga and Goozee (2007) found that Western supervisors tend to expect all HDR students to be independent learners—that is, students who are already autonomous scholars from the beginning of their candidature. This is unlikely to be the case for international students; it is doubtful whether it is true for local students. Quality supervision requires awareness of how these translation issues constrain the autonomy of international HDR students, rather than assuming that they know the relevant English concepts and appreciate the contestation surrounding these constructs. Consider for a moment the following example:

When I just started this study, I was asked by my principal supervisor to translate a research proposal about life-long learning from Chinese into English. I couldn’t do it because there were so many scholarly concepts for which I knew that there must be specific scholarly
counterparts in English. At that stage I was not sure what they were. I put that proposal aside, and did not touch it for two months. During these two months, I started drafting the literature review chapter for my thesis; I read and wrote about research methods, and started to draft my own research proposal. One day I picked up the proposal again. Suddenly, I found the concepts in the two languages were perfectly matched through both-ways translation (Han, 2006, p. 304).

The student’s understanding of research concepts was acquired through developing her research proposal in English, and then tested by having to translate a research proposal. She knew and understood these concepts in *Zhong Wen*, but only after she acquired these research concepts in English was she able to match them at the level of sophistication required of a doctoral scholar. Quality supervision means being aware of this feature of international HDR students’ learning so they can be helped to develop their understanding of research concepts through the knowledge they have in their first language. However, building on their prior education in their homeland and integrating this knowledge into their research studies involve much more than that:

My bilingual knowledge made me more sensitive to language, culture, research methodology and research theories in Australia. My previous knowledge of research was different from what I learned in doing my PhD. For example, in China I did not have to make an ethics application before collecting data; often I did not collect primary data at all. This difference made me think. It helped me to better appreciate the research methods used in Australia. Some language expressions in Chinese are different from those in English. When I translated Chinese ideas into English, I find *sic* these bring *sic* a distinctive and interesting perspective to my research. My supervisor and colleagues encouraged me to use Chinese style of expressions in English, including the use of Chinese idioms or *Chéngyǔ* (Han, 2006, p. 305).

International HDR students from China have access to a different language, culture and research knowledge, though there are also some similarities. Quality supervision gives expression to the realisation that these students, just like their supervisors, are themselves bearers of culture, educational cultures in particular. Their languages themselves are both knowledge and the means for accessing or producing knowledge. The above example shows how linguistic, cultural and educational differences may make a distinctive contribution to knowledge.

The student’s supervisor encouraged her to engage with, build on and develop what she knew rather than denying this. He knew that her study would be enhanced by being able to make a space for inter-communal dialogue. Consider the use of *Chéngyǔ* in her thesis as an example. *Chéngyǔ* are special word groups or distinctive phrases, whose value in Chinese educational culture has been established through accepted usage over the generations. Many
of them are derived from classical stories. Their meanings are not readily apparent, and so this ambiguity requires an educated person to interpret them. The student’s supervisor encouraged her to use this unique and pleasurable feature of the Chinese language and culture in her thesis:

My principal supervisor encouraged me to use Chinese Chéngyuǔ in my thesis writing. This was because he observed that when my English thinking was stuck, I used Chinese idioms to express my thoughts. I chose the idiom which would best describe the situation as I really had no other words to use in expressing what I wanted to say. Mostly the English translations are inevitably poor simulacra of the original Chinese ideas. Therefore, I used Chinese Chéngyuǔ (idioms and proverbs) throughout the evidentiary chapters of the thesis (Han, 2006, p. 304).

Knowing the necessity for and the significance of building on the student’s knowledge, this supervisor invited the student to represent her Chinese knowledge in her thesis, to give voice to her heritage, identity and most importantly her knowledge. Understanding the cultural traits of Chinese idioms may help people better understand cross-cultural communication issues. More importantly, the Chéngyuǔ were used to reinforce her argument with respect to the knowledge and knowledge networks that World English Speaking student teachers, of whom she is one, might bring to the teaching profession, and how they might do so (Han & Singh, 2007a, 2007b). Quality supervision that is directed at internationalising (research) education recognises and validates knowledge in other languages, cultures and systems of education as having something to offer Australian education.

Designing Students’ Work/life Trajectory

Quality HDR supervision gives expression to the classical aspiration for linking teaching, research and leadership through focusing on international students’ learning and their capabilities for accessing knowledge. In terms of academic leadership it means engaging in the critical analysis of contextual issues, such as the press to ignore bilingualism in preference for English-only pedagogies and working to change university research education by internationalising it. Pedagogically, it involves immersing the students in meaningful research practices, and scaffolding their learning of research skills. However, quality HDR supervision is not only about producing a thesis within the allotted timeframe but also about designing the students’ future work/life trajectories by forming early career researchers. As Green (2005, p. 153) argues, “doctoral education is as much about identity formation as it is about knowledge production.” Reflections relating to this aspect of supervisory pedagogies are addressed in this section in terms of the following perspective:
Supervision must be reconceptualised as comprising much more than the stereotypical image of an isolated dyadic relationship between a supervising academic, the ‘supervisor’, and a doctoral candidate, the ‘supervisee’. Rather, supervision is better conceived ecosocially, as a total environment within which postgraduate research activity (‘study’) is realised (Green, 2005, p. 153).

**Guiding students to work on significant and innovative research problems**

When beginning a higher degree by research, students have the difficult problem of topic selection. Some international HDR students from China choose their topic based on their personal interest and what they know best. Not surprisingly, they tend to undertake comparative studies of education in Australia and China. While this is no doubt worthwhile, it is not always clear how it best positions them for employment in the transnational labour market. Other students can choose a worthwhile topic by opting to work on projects directly related to one of those being undertaken by their supervisor. This student opted for the latter:

One of my friends was doing a PhD on “Belly Buttons” when I started mine. At the time I thought that was creative and interesting research. I even admired this person for having such initiative. I felt ashamed that I had no idea about what my research topic could be. However, I have now found that I benefited from my original ignorance about research and my initial difficulty I had in choosing a topic. Because I had no idea of what to do, my supervisor asked whether I would like to work on a project investigating an educational issue of importance in the Australian context, which would allow me to gain some insights into international issues as well. I said: “Yes”. This proved to be an excellent decision.

Quality supervision involves guiding international HDR students in the direction of a worthwhile research project, especially one that can also help them realise their career aspirations. This student’s supervisor identified a researchable opportunity, which she investigated for her thesis, and it proved to be an even more important issue by the time that she finished it. She now sees some considerable benefits from taking up her supervisor’s invitation to work on a project in which he was engaged. Her thesis examiners said that it was a challenging and well-timed study, a point reinforced by the report of the Australian House of Representatives (2007) into teacher education (see also Han & Singh, 2007b). For instance, one of the examiners commented:

This is a most important and timely study. It is a thesis that tackles an issue of growing importance in universities around Australia, and in fields far beyond its immediate area of interest, teacher education. In this way it makes an original contribution to its field, and alerts the tertiary sector more generally to some of the implications of
globalisation and trans-national student (and staff) mobility that are all too easily glossed over in the shine of fee-paying possibilities and market expansion. In particular, this thesis asks what teacher education is doing in a global context and it finds us wanting. This is a challenging study, and its contribution is significant.

HDR student supervision is “the (re)production of an intelligible academic identity—a certain kind of (licensed) personage” (Green & Lee, 1999, p. 219). For internationally-minded supervisors this involves the formation of early career researchers who have the inventiveness and ability to operate in a multilingual knowledge society.

**Widening HDR students’ academic circles**

With the quality supervision that this student received during her doctoral program, she was able to develop productive knowledge networks that have helped her academic career. Throughout her Doctor of Philosophy studies this student was deliberately given opportunities to meet academics in education faculties from throughout Australia and overseas:

I was so happy that I was introduced by my supervisor to his research colleagues throughout Australian universities, for example the editors of journals. My supervisor worked with me to write research articles for journals or book chapters when my research topic suited the theme; he also provided an opportunity for me to be a guest editor of a special issue of a journal. I contributed to two important conferences of the associations for teacher education and educational research. It was at these conferences that I met and established my Australian academic networks. Some academics in education attended my presentations and started to get to know me. These included my current boss and an editor of another journal.

These opportunities opened the door for this student to become an Australian academic, something that is as important as it is challenging for international HDR students. First, as foreigners they do not have the advantages of being part of, or know how to access established knowledge networks. Second, as HDR students or early career researchers they have less of a track record to ‘sell’, relative to the mature researchers in established academic networks. Without their supervisor’s support, it is hard for them to access these opportunities for creating their own academic networks. Without such opportunities they might have to forgo their aspirations for an academic career even if they have obtained a research degree. Quality supervision involves extending the circle of scholars involved in one’s mentoring to other experts in the area. It involves leading and including HDR students into the field via established networks. Further, it involves providing opportunities for international HDR students to practise becoming (Australian) academics by moving in its academic circles, becoming part of its distinctive research and teaching culture.
Preparation for entering the transnational labour market: Wrapping up a good product for sale

During the last stage of doing her Doctorate of Philosophy, the student’s supervisor worked on wrapping her up for ‘sale’ in the transnational labour market:

I still remember my first horrible job interview two months after I arrived in Australia. It was for a part-time research assistant job. My “nervous” oral English became even worse in front of the interview panel. The interview proved to be very embarrassing. Back to 1991 when I applied for a lecturer’s job in Changchun (China) after I completed my Master Degree, it was so simple. The interview panel was composed of two people. They had a quick look at my one-page CV and my certificate, and after answering a few simple questions, I was told I had the job. Based on what I and my supervisor learned from my first job interview in Australia, he started to help me build up my CV via jointly-authored publications, conference presentations and providing guest-lecturing opportunities. He also taught me how to write an Australian style CV, and how to address job specifications in my application.

The student’s first job interview in Australia exposed some issues about the cultural differences in the construction of employment opportunities in Australia and China. Being able to anticipate what questions might be asked in an interview, and knowing various ways in which these might be answered were skills that she had to learn. Developing her familiarity with the rituals involved in Australian job interviews was important, as these were more complicated than the apparently easier and simpler process that she had experienced in China. During the course of her Doctorate of Philosophy, her principal supervisor worked with her to develop her knowledge about preparing a detailed curriculum vitae, writing a job application and engaging in a job interview. For this student this was a highly valued part of her supervision which produced two important products, namely a contribution to knowledge via the thesis and a contribution to the transnational labour market via an early career researcher. All good products need to be wrapped up properly before being sent to the market. Quality supervision is about “producing products that are good and look good.”

Training in the skills needed for making job applications and participating in face-to-face and telephone interviews helped:

I applied [for] two lecturing positions in Australia teaching mainstream English language education and was short listed for both. I went through three interviews for these two jobs. The third interview had eight people on the panel and was done over the telephone. It was the longest of the interviews and took about one hour. I prepared well
and I didn’t feel at all nervous. I could sense they were interested in what I had to say. All the questions they asked were based on the job specifications. As my supervisor told me there was no right or wrong answer to their questions I just had to demonstrate that I had an informed and reasoned view to offer. The result was I was given two job offers after these interviews, and the difficult task of choosing between them.

Once upon a time this person was an “international HDR student;” today she is on another journey of becoming an Australian academic, teacher educator and independent educational researcher. She gained her knowledge of the workings of Australian universities, and teacher education in particular, through the three years of intensive study that it took to complete her doctoral thesis. The job interview via the telephone presented a challenge for this speaker of English as a foreign language. However, she was successful in all three interviews. Obviously she had gained some interview skills owing to her supervisor’s training. She was clear what questions the panel would ask; and what sort of answers would be expected. She was clear that it was most important for her to show her distinctive ideas about the topics raised by each question. However, she then realised that an even bigger challenge was awaiting:

Perhaps this is the first time for someone from mainland China who has learnt English as a foreign language to be offered two jobs to teach native English speaking student-teachers how to teach [English] literacy to native speaking school students.

It is hoped that the quality of written English in this chapter reflects an Australian doctoral graduate from China whose English is good enough to get an academic position teaching native English speaking student-teachers how to teach English literacy to native English speaking school students. Initially, this doctoral graduate doubted her own capabilities in this regard. When she started teaching classes full of Anglo-phone students, who spoke perfect Australian English, she was surprised to discover that in China she had learnt the meta-knowledge about this language that these students lacked. Perhaps the central paradox here is that native English speakers continue to be so dismissive of speakers of World Englishes. The smallest mistakes that World English speakers make in English expression are carefully scrutinised, and used by some native speakers to dismiss the appropriateness of their employment to teach about the social practices of the English language. Such a stance differs from what is required in the quality supervision of international HDR students. This work is not just about producing a thesis within the requisite time scale; it is also a process of producing early career researchers, and this extends to preparing them for careers in the transnational labour market.
Quality Supervisory Leadership and Pedagogy: The Challenges of Internationalising Universities

This section presents some reflections on and an interpretation of the experiences of the supervisory pedagogy discussed above, focusing on the issues and concerns about desirable and possible changes to university teaching. To do so we link the review of the literature and what has been written about these experiences to develop a brief discussion that identifies the main elements in quality HDR supervision, which enabled this student’s transformation into an early career researcher. We take this to be an example itself of desirable change toward quality university teaching, in particular supervisory pedagogy.

According to current research in the field, the presence of international HDR research students from Asia is marked in different ways. One approach favours looking at international students in terms of the money that can be made from their enrolment in Australian universities, usually framed as an expression of neo-liberal economic politics (Sidhu, 2004). A second perspective positions them as deficient as learners. They are said to lack reading and speaking skills in advanced English, and to lack appropriate learning strategies (Adams, 2004; Major, 2005; Skyrme, 2007). HDR students from China in particular are said to have “very limited citational context”, to do research within “smaller citational frames” and take research problems as simply addressing “infidelities of the implementation of government determined policy” (Lingard, 2006, p. 296). However, few articles point to inadequacies in pedagogy as limiting international HDR students learning experiences (Scheyvens, Wild, & Overton, 2003). The case study presented in this chapter shows that with the appropriate supervisory pedagogies much of the fault-finding about this particular international HDR student has been opened to challenge.

In this case study, the supervisor employed pedagogies in working with this Chinese HDR student that included the exploration of the knowledge and the knowledge networks that she had and/or with which she engaged while undertaking her doctoral studies in Australia. He assumed that this HDR student had significant prior knowledge and access to funds of knowledge via transnational networks, which would be useful in her research education. He took “double knowing” as integral to his supervisory pedagogy and academic leadership, recognising that the student is situated in the intellectual life of multilingual knowledge networks. The educational capital that this student accumulated was based on supervisory efforts to close the gap between the recognition of her bilingual capabilities and the double funds knowledge that she could access. In this double knowing matrix, her knowledge of the English language and Australian research culture was intermingled with, and understood through and in relation to her knowledge of the Chinese language and China’s research culture.
Possibilities for change in university teaching, raised by a “double knowing” pedagogy, concern the responsibility that World Englishes impose on Anglo-phone academics to learn to recognise when they themselves are not communicating. This calls for acknowledgement of their misperceptions, as well as actively listening to international students speaking World Englishes. These are part of them acquiring the multicultural skills for becoming capable players in the internationalisation of research education, as much as the transnational labour market and multilingual knowledge economies. Postgraduate pedagogies have to be structured to enable Anglo-phone HDR supervisors to learn to listen actively to speakers of World Englishes, and learn to communicate with them, rather than for or about them.

Quality supervision means introducing international HDR students to the Western norms of academia; providing both corrective and positive feedback on their research skills; giving detailed editorial advice on the structuring of their writing; and providing support for developing proficiency in advanced academic English. Quality supervision involves being aware of cultural differences in academic expectations. Supervisors with the experience of teaching Chinese HDR students willingly share the teaching and leadership strategies, which they have found to be effective. It is also interesting to hear how Chinese students themselves perceive their learning and teaching experience, through feedback sessions on research findings similar to these (Adrian-Taylor, Noels, & Tischler, 2007; Durkin, 2005).

In this era, when reforms to university learning and teaching are imposed by governments using quasi-market-driven forces, it is necessary to consider the variety of ways in which HDR supervisors, historically and today continue to improve the quality of their pedagogies and leadership. This is because bureaucratic policy solutions to the difficulties of supervisory pedagogies and leadership are important, but are not important enough for making productive changes. Indeed, they may aggravate the problems associated with postgraduate research education (Green & Lee, 1999). Following Kemmis (2006), it can be argued that the cultural, social and economic conditions of the university exist prior to the arrival of both HDR students and their supervisors, and frame their working relationship. To change what is meant and intended by the practice of HDR supervision requires more than changing just what the supervisors themselves think or do, or how they relate to their students. It also requires changes in the language and discourse that they use—for example, understanding supervision as a form of teaching and leadership that involves “double knowing.” Further, it may also require changes in the relationships between supervisors and their HDR students, in particular seeing international students as being able to access multiple funds of worthwhile knowledge, rather than merely having deficits in their English language proficiency. Of course, these cultural, social and material factors extend through the many layers of universities into government policies and programs framing the academic leadership of supervisors.
Changing University Learning and Teaching

The findings presented above provide concrete ideas about what is involved in quality HDR supervision. However, there are limits to the possibilities that HDR supervisors, as academic leaders, have for making changes in universities that would extend such supervisory pedagogies widely. The physical, cultural and professional isolation of supervisors makes the possibilities for them to participate in making sustainable change in universities a challenge in itself. Supervisors are faced with various organisational barriers when it comes to providing the academic leadership necessary to effect wider changes in their universities, not the least of which is their limited access to and insights into the organisations decision-making and structures for policy production (Green & Lee, 1999). They are also faced with limitations on their time for establishing networks with such sources of organisational power across diverse contexts. This, however, does not stop them attempting to provide such leadership by seeking to make changes in sites beyond their lecture halls, seminar rooms and online forums. They engage in change-oriented actions at different levels of the university and across multiple sites concerned with university education, especially through peers in other universities and professional associations. The work that they do in enhancing the agency of their HDR students can also be important in this regard. This can be especially useful where university management lays claim to having a greater stake and interest in the needs of HDR students than do their supervisors.

It makes sense that quality supervisors focus primarily on helping their HDR students to complete theses that are suitable for submission for examination. This includes issues that affect students’ capabilities for doing so, and their work/life trajectories. However, quality supervisors understand that their role as academic leaders means engaging the larger policy context in which they and their students work. They effect change by extending their efforts to improve their own supervisory capabilities outwards through university connections, professional organisations and international collaboration. For bilingual HDR students they encourage the use of their first language and find ways to legitimise its presence in their theses, thereby lifting a major cultural and linguistic barrier that otherwise positions such students as inherently deficient.

Conclusion

This chapter provides the basis for arguing that in internationalising Australian higher education, the HDR supervision of students from Asia is a matter of quality teaching and academic leadership. This chapter has provided a survey of relevant research literature, framing this discussion of supervisions in terms of pedagogy and leadership. The autobiographical approach used in this chapter allowed the exploration of an international HDR student’s experiences of her doctoral supervision in an Australian university. The concept of “double knowing” is useful for engaging quality HDR supervisory pedagogies and
mobilising academic leadership. The findings presented here describe the way in which quality teaching, in this instance HDR supervisory pedagogy, provides a range of experiences necessary for students to become transnational researchers, scholars and academics as well as producers of really useful knowledge. This story of the experience of high quality HDR supervision contributes to understanding what it means to internationalise Australian universities, principally by focusing on its pedagogical and leadership dimensions.

The ideas provided in this chapter may help Australian supervisors to understand the internationalisation of higher education as involving challenges to presumptions about English-only pedagogies and the privileging of monolingualism. Changes in university teaching might benefit from linking the knowledge that international HDR students have, or can access, via their bilingual networks to concerns about their formation as transnational researchers able to address the complex, multifaceted and situated attributes of knowledge production. Academic leadership is needed for researching initiatives designed to improve international HDR students’ achievement, by engaging their knowledge as a way of improving it. Increased attention from academic leaders to the study of international HDR students’ funds of knowledge could have important implications for the reconceptualisation of supervisory pedagogies and changing university learning and teaching.

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References


Chapter Fourteen:
“Are We Uncritical, Unfocused, Plagiarising Rote Learners?” Forming and Informing Argumentative Chinese Students Through Quality University Teaching

Michael Singh and Dongqing Fu

Abstract

This chapter explores the proposition that a concern for quality university teaching in Australia opens the space for forming and informing the capabilities of students from China for scholarly argumentation. The literature debating stereotypes of “the Chinese learner” and students from elsewhere in Asia might be dismissed as false or incorrect. Instead, this literature is read as enabling pedagogical moves away from a focus on their deficits to enhancing their argumentative capabilities and agency. Cooperative research between a Chinese higher degree research (HDR) student and her Australian supervisor has been used to generate the evidence presented in the chapter. Potentially this approach to the positioning of Chinese students as uncritical, unfocused, plagiarising rote learners enables this extension and deepening their capabilities for scholarly argumentation and using multiple languages. The evidence shows that stereotypes of Asian students can enable the development of critical, focused writing with due acknowledgement of sources. Enhancing Chinese HDR students’ argumentative and bilingual capabilities challenges what it means to internationalise Australian university education.

Introduction

The production of theses by higher degree research (HDR) students tends to foreground their substantive content with regard to a designated research problem. The focus then is on the cognitive change involved in producing knowledge and an early career researcher. Typically this involves neglecting any ‘background’ political economic notations or eliminating information about the cultural ‘context’ that made such research possible. This could give added meaning to the thesis for
readers (Collins, 2006; Diangelo, 2006). That the contextual entanglements of the research are relegated to a marginal role is of particular concern for international HDR students. This raises the question of what it means to internationalise university teaching. In particular, what does it mean for that important form of teaching involved in supervising international HDR students from Asia? This chapter explores the idea that the quality of teaching can benefit from engaging both supervisors and HDR students in questioning the context in which they are working together. This approach assumes that research and research education serve multiple functions. New knowledge is produced. Early career researchers are formed and informed. The internationalisation of Australia’s research education is integral to enhancing Australia/China relations.

This chapter extends transnational student mobility into pedagogical possibilities for challenging quality university teaching to engage and mobilise argumentative Chinese students. It has been incited by the debates over negative representations of Chinese learners. These issues have not been directly addressed by policy reforms directed at the internationalisation of university teaching, especially research education. There appear to be limited opportunities for Chinese HDR students to explore the potential of these stereotypes for enabling their transformation into transnational researchers. This could interrupt the production of nation-centred researchers. In this chapter, the transnational student presence is used to consider possibilities for improving the quality of university teaching. The focus is on the context where the ideal of linking research and teaching is most clearly realised, namely HDR supervision. It suggests that through quality university teaching argumentative Chinese HDR students may learn to make productive uses of imaginings of them as uncritical, unfocused, rote learning plagiarists. This has implications for internationalising teaching, especially internationalising HDR supervision.

**Debating “the Chinese Learner”**

In this section we review a selection of the research contributions made to the debates over representations of students from Asia as plagiarists, uncritical thinkers or rote learners. This section briefly canvases accounts of the immorality of copying and stealing others’ work, the value of memorisation, learning through repetition, critical thinking and teaching expectations. This opens the space for reconceptualising quality university teaching, in part, as forming and informing argumentative Chinese (HDR) students.

**The immorality of copying and stealing others’ work**

In China, plagiarism is criticised. It is not a legitimate tradition among Chinese academics. Textbooks in Chinese universities contain chapters devoted to the issue of educational values that rule out academic dishonesty (Zhao &
Li, 1999, p. 264). It is a misunderstanding to assume that Chinese students are inherently plagiarists. They are taught that it is wrong to do so. Their teachers encourage them to make quotations from texts with due acknowledgement (Clark & Gieve, 2006). There are mechanisms to penalise and punish misbehaviour. This includes penalties for plagiarism, cheating, the fabrication of data, the aiding and abetting of dishonesty, and the falsification of records.

The value of learning through recitation

In the United Kingdom, Edwards, Ran, and Li (2007) found that university teachers are uncertain about the written English of Chinese postgraduate students. However, they are willing to find solutions to this problem. Students in China are taught to memorise some exemplary texts so that they can use them as models for writing their own articles by imitating their structure or style. This is not the only teaching method used in China. Moreover, it is not intended to encourage students to summarise or paraphrase other people’s intellectual work without due acknowledgement (Le Ha, 2006; Sowden, 2005). Pedagogically, a purpose for such memorisation is to develop students’ appreciation of good writing. Familiarity “with effective rhetorical styles and useful writing techniques [means that] the learner can use them in his/her own writing in the future” (Liu, 2005, p. 237).

Learning by means of recitation is claimed to be a problem that exists in many Asian countries. It is said to harm innovation throughout the continent (Chan, 1999). Some teachers in China believe that if used properly, the monkish practice of learning through recitation is a step on students’ journeys to a deeper understanding of knowledge (Marton, Wen, & Wong, 2005). Memorisation through recitation has “always been a highly valued learning strategy in the Far East [because] such a learning strategy can lead to high levels of understanding if applied appropriately” (Liu, 2005, p. 235). This may contribute to Chinese students being thought of negatively: “the predominant perception of Asian students by Australian and expatriate teachers, as one of rote learners characterized by memorisation and lack of insight and understanding” (Cooper, 2004, p. 289). While Chinese students may be skilled in learning through recitation, this is not the only teaching method used, nor does it restrict their capabilities for learning. For students from China “rote-learning per se is not a good indicator of surface rather than deep learning” (Egege & Kutieleh, 2004, p. 76).

Learning through repetition

Through repetitive study, students may deepen their knowledge. Repetition increases students understanding of what they have studied (Cooper, 2004). There are differences between repetitive and rote learning. Repetitive learning emphasises the deep understanding of knowledge. Students’ increase their familiarity with the requisite knowledge and improve their potential for
creativity (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Learning through repetition involves memorisation with understanding. This leads students to achieve higher academic performance. While surface approaches to education are connected with “mechanical rote learning, memorisation through repetition can be used to deepen and develop understanding and help achieve good academic performance” (Cooper, 2004, p. 306).

Repetition provides a means for making sure that students can better understand what is being studied (Biggs, 1996). Rote learning is just a mechanical way of studying. The students do not even know what they are learning. Just like a chicken raised in a cage, they eat only because their master feeds them. They do not know why they have to eat so much. They do not realise that when they become fat they will be killed by the master for his diner. After studying for a long time, rote learners gain little from this mechanical procedure, not even chicken fat. Repetition is one way in which students learn. Creativity comes with deep learning. Repetitive learning has a key role in “skill development [which] comes first, followed by meaning and interpretation, with repetition being used as the tool for creating meaning” (Biggs, p. 57). Learning through repetition is an important part of the effort that students put into their studies.

Critical thinking

Chinese students may not necessarily participate in class discussions in Australia. This is not because they do not have the critical thinking skills which are basic to research and study. One problem is that English is not the primary means of communication in China. Initially, it is hard for them to understand English very well. This limits the possibilities that they have for bringing any critical thinking to bear in their studies. For instance, a reason for Japanese students’ reserve in scholarly conversations in Australia is their “lack of [English] language proficiency and resources, not critical thinking skills” (Liu, 2005, p. 239). The lack of adequate linguistic resources, including weaknesses in writing skills, is one reason why Chinese students in Australia may have problems in critical thinking.

Chinese learners are taught to respect their parents and teachers. As a matter of respect, they do not directly challenge these people in public. This is not to say that they do not question their ideas: “Chinese learners have been brought up to respect [the] wisdom, knowledge and expertise of parents, teachers and trainers. They have been socialised to respect highly those who provide the knowledge and to avoid challenging those in authority” (Chan, 1999, p. 298).

But critical thinking in higher education is rarely about challenging these authorities. The focus is on questioning ideas and arguing about claims to truth. There are challenges of thinking critically in a new, if not alien environment. This is not only due to issues with the English language or the need to show respect.
Chinese students know their social history and what it means to challenge the power of authorities. They value developing criticisms of foreign practices. These provide indirect, discrete meta-commentaries on similar issues in their homeland.

**Teaching expectations**

Chinese HDR students’ studies in Australia are complicated by differences in expectations governing teaching/learning strategies, student participation, peer collaboration, independence and the structuring of learning. Adrian-Taylor and Noels (2007) report that conflict between international students and their supervisors is significant. Struggles over differences in student/teacher expectations are a central source of conflict. Arkoudis and Tran (2007) found that international students from Asia have to develop strategies for adapting to the disciplinary imperatives of their course. Research by Clark and Gieve (2006) challenges the deficit model of “the Chinese learner.” This model characterises them as passive, lacking critical thinking and reliant on memorisation strategies that result in surface learning and an unwillingness to participate in discussions. However, seeing Chinese students as uncritical, rote learners may signal a problem over differences in the interpretations of the learning strategies that they use. It may be less about deficiencies in their capability for learning: “Even when the problems are identified as stemming from different learning styles and attitudes, these are seen as a reflection of different learning capacities” (Egege & Kutieleh, 2004, p. 76).

Differences in educational cultures are problems requiring explicit negotiations and agreements among academics, institutions and their overseas students. Bitchener and Basturkmen (2006) found that postgraduate students who speak English as a second language experience difficulties in their thesis writing. This is due in part to the lack of a negotiated understanding between them and their supervisors about the nature of the writing required. Their supervisors lack an appreciation of the causes of students’ problems. More sophisticated understandings suggest that ensuring that overseas students are explicitly taught about key aspects of the Australian educational culture is important (Stephens, 1997). The better informed that they are about the Australian educational culture, the more at ease they feel “about operating within it, and did not feel that their own values or cultural practices were compromised” (Egege & Kutieleh, 2004, p. 81). This concern for the students’ cultural values and practices may be warranted, but not necessarily put above and beyond critical analysis. However, in terms of quality university teaching, our interest is in exploring ways to make it legitimate for Chinese HDR students to make their own sources of knowledge and intellectual heritage more explicit. In other words, the issue that concerns us is the possible knowledge that these students might bring to bear in their own education, and in doing so help in the internationalisation of Australian education.
Notes on Research Method

Methodologically, this study begins with the assumption that transparency and being systematic play important roles in the development and understanding of efforts to research quality university teaching (Meyrick, 2006). The research approach used to generate the evidence presented in this chapter involves two key elements. The first concerns the use of the bilingual capabilities of a Chinese HDR student. In part, this project adopted an auto-ethnographic approach. However, it must be acknowledged that self-knowledge is not without its challenges. This is especially so given the complexities that fragment, fracture and disunite any one person’s life (Gannon, 2006). Even so, this approach finds parallels in the work of Koo (2007). She undertook a study of two Chinese Malay students attending university in Malaysia. Their acquisition and use of their multiple languages in their studies were investigated. These students were found to use a combination of English, Bhasa Melayu and one or more Chinese languages (such as Hokkien and Mandarin) as part of their learning strategies. For example, one student studied literature in English; kept a handwritten diary in order to maintain her calligraphic skills, and used Mandarin for her “think-aloud” strategy. The other student undertook academic writing in Bhasa Melayu; read in English, and often engaged in group discussions in one of three languages.

There was a second element of the research approach used to generate the evidence presented in this chapter. This focused on the argumentative tradition present in the Chinese intellectual heritage of the second author of this chapter. For this purpose methodological insights were drawn from Sen’s (2005) account of India’s argumentative legacy. India’s dialogic tradition has been largely ignored in the West. The preference has been for characterisations of it as a land of uncritical and unquestioning practices, said to be under-written by subservience to religious beliefs. The reason for this, he argues, has been a predilection for demonstrating the strength of India’s unreasoning culture, in contrast to the West’s claims on rationalism. Such contrasts between Eastern and Western intellectual cultures pay little attention to much of India’s intellectual past or present. In the process large amounts of India’s intellectual heritage has been suppressed. This provides a miniaturised or downsized understanding of India’s intellectual capabilities. These misconceptions have not only affected their imaginings of India but also impacted Indians’ self-understandings.

Sen (2005) demonstrates the argumentative propensity present in Indian intellectual culture. He offers evidence of scholars asking difficult questions about ethics and raising serious doubts about truth claims. The roots and resilience of scepticism and dialectics in India are explored. The heterodoxy present in its intellectual heritage is shown to be extensive. This includes the rules for conducting debates. Together these are seen as important to public
reasoning. This gives voice to issues and common people whose interests otherwise might be overlooked in the face of rampant elitism. Significantly, Sen (2005, pp. 161–190) examines the close and extensive intellectual relations that India and China have long had. His central argument is to reject the European/Western claim to being the exclusive source of analysis, reasoning and critique. The evidence presented in the following section has been selected to open up to exploration the nature, reach and contemporary relevance of scholarly argumentation in China. It offers a preliminary exploration and characterisation of the key concept, the “argumentative Chinese student.”

Forming and Informing Argumentative Chinese Students

Chinese learners are sometimes represented as uncritical thinkers, unfocused writers and plagiarists who engage in rote learning (Clark & Gieve, 2006; Collins, 2006; Diangelo, 2006; Le Ha, 2006; Liu, 2005; Marton, Wen, & Wong, 2005; Sowden, 2005). This section takes these pejorative claims as a basis for forming and informing the capabilities of a Chinese HDR student for scholarly argumentation. Without these clichés it is possible that these ideas about argumentative Chinese students would not have come into being in this way.

Critical thinker

Chinese students are taught to be尊师重道 from their kindergarten or primary school days. This means that they are taught to respect their teacher and everything that their teachers tell them, including principles from classical knowledge. Students learn to respect all educators including their parents and those persons who have a higher position than themselves, no matter whether they are in the family, school or society. From this education, Chinese students learn to follow what their teachers tell them. Some may not think issues over for themselves. Some may study in a mechanical or less creative way. Some may be good followers, but seldom good leaders. Some may not show self-confidence even if they do possess much knowledge. Chinese educators are beginning to realise the weakness of this educational system (Le Ha, 2006; Liu, 2005; Marton, Wen, & Wong, 2005). They are trying to solve this problem through educational reforms aimed at increasing creativity and innovativeness from primary school upwards.

Some foreign educators might think that Chinese students are uncritical thinkers. One reason for this may be the differences in the meaning of this educational concept between the East and the West:

When I came to Australia, I found teachers always put creativity in first place and then skills; every thought of the student is encouraged even if it is immature. This kind of education can develop strong self-confidence. The more confident the student, the more they may
develop the ability for critical thinking. One problem, however, is that
they may sometimes hold a fallacious idea and refuse to test whether
it is correct or not. Certainly, they insist on those who question them
having enough evidence to prove they are wrong. (Fu)

For students who are studying science or engineering, it may be easier for
their teachers to correct their problems. This is because much of their research
is based on statistical calculations. This is not so for students who study the
arts. It is difficult to establish an absolutely wrong or right conclusion through
their research. They may favour an incorrect idea for a long time, until they
find problems with it themselves. As Sen (2005) demonstrates, it is important
to engage HDR students from Asia in exploring the tradition of critical
thinking within their home countries. This is in preference to neglecting this
or assuming that such an intellectual heritage is absent. However, even turning
a concern into a critique is a problem as the following example illustrates. In
China foreign teachers typically give their students English names:

Mine was April. My foreign teacher had no idea of my surname which
is Fu. He explained that the English name he assigned me referred to
the beginning of spring. It would show that I was an energetic girl. But
April is a terrible name for me, because my family name is Fu. Being
called “April Fu” is just horrendous. (Fu)

The point of this discussion of Anglicised names is to illustrate the potential that
Chinese students have for engaging in critical thinking. It also suggests possible
constraints on their doing so. This naming custom, of foreigners imposing English
names on Chinese students, may reflect a gap in educational cultures. More than
likely, however, it is an exercise in power. It is an expression of the power to
constrain the use of languages other than English and to access the intellectual
heritage available through other languages. Names have cultural connotations. A
name in one country may be really good, but in another culture it may have a
different, if not questionable meaning. Traditionally, in China people use one’s
family name first, then one’s given name: “If I read my name in this sequence,
it is ‘Fu April’ which sounds reasonable.” But because of the Australian naming
practice that reverses this order “April Fu” is an embarrassment given its English
connotations. Consider for a moment another problem. In Australia, people seldom
use a person’s given name and surname together unless s/he is a stranger. Chinese
people usually put a person’s surname and given names together. That is unless
they are a good friend of that person, then they might only use one’s given name.

There are various explanations as to why foreign teachers prefer to assign
English names to their students in China. English speakers have difficulty
pronouncing Chinese names, in part because some sounds do not exist in
the English language. Even Chinese Pinyin may not help foreign teachers
to deal with their problems in this regard. This is especially so for those
who mistakenly think of this roman script as expressing English rather than
Chinese sounds. Apparently, for some their unwillingness to learn to read *Pinyin* or pronounce Chinese names is sufficient justification for them to adopt this questionable practice. It is also difficult for foreign teachers to learn to pronounce every student’s name correctly, especially when s/he might be dealing with 100 or more students. Even if they use the students’ Chinese names for a whole semester they might not be able to distinguish one student’s name from another. The effort of trying to do so is well rewarded. But there is urgency about teaching which requires teachers to have a name they can quickly remember and associate with a given student. This provides the pretext for using English names. It may be that they feel that every Chinese face looks alike. On first glance, foreigners all look the same to Chinese people.

Take the following Chinese name for example. In *Pinyin* the name Dong Qing is two words or characters (han zi). Every foreigner can pronounce the first word correctly as “Dong” [dong]. The second word foreigners pronounce according to English phonetics. They tend to pronounce it as “kwing”. In Chinese “Qing” is more appropriately pronounced as “ching.” Thus, the “q” in Chinese does not exactly correspond with the English for this letter. Few foreigners seem to be able to pronounce “Dong Qing” correctly, even after they have been instructed several times about how to do so. At first when foreigners say “Dongqwing” the person concerned does not know who is being called. She is not familiar with this new sounding name. It is not spite, just a misunderstanding. This discussion of Anglicised names illustrates a potent criticism that Chinese students make of their experiences of international education. It does so by alerting us to the cultural forces that constrain the possibilities for them making such critical thoughts public.

**Focused writing**

Some students from China may use different writing conventions from those used by students from Australia. Of course, some use quite similar styles of writing. In China, as in Australia not all students are taught the same ways of writing. For instance, the writing conventions that they learn may depend on whether they are schooled in the sciences or arts. Science students learn writing conventions—which become taken for granted habits—that are similar to those learnt by Australian students studying in the same field. Their writing has the structure of a scientific report and every paragraph begins with a topic sentence. Their teachers suggest that they give a clear research statement at the beginning of their essays. They learn to refer to this key theme several times throughout the essay, in order to give it coherence and focus. The teachers also emphasise the importance of the content. They suggest that students do not sacrifice content for rhythm or the use of beautiful sentence patterns. By contrast, arts students in China learn a different convention for writing, one more appropriate for producing literature. For someone who was an arts student for more than 10 years, it is easy to explain the models of writing that such students learn:
We learnt to write personal letters or essays in a way that emphasised writing beautiful sentence patterns and using striking sounding words. We learnt not to go directly to the main point of writing the letter, because our teacher always told us it is rude to ask questions so directly. In a personal letter or essay, the first one or two paragraphs usually have no specific topic but are full of pleasantries used to greet someone. In terms of getting to the point this can be seen as an inefficient way of writing; in terms of getting someone to do something for you, then such pleasantries are necessary. (Fu)

For essay or assignment writing, arts students use a template that differs from science students. The imposition of an arts template on writing that requires a science template can make the writing seem unfocused. There is always a certain topic for writing, and sometimes the outline of the essay is also given. The students need to write about the given topic according to the prescribed outline so as to complete the essay within a certain time requirement and/or word length. Chinese students begin studying how to write essays in middle school:

My teachers told us as students that an essay should contain five paragraphs. The first is the introductory paragraph which should give a topic sentence to ensure the reader is clear about your writing purpose. The next three paragraphs provide explanations. In each of these paragraphs I was told to write down a good reason to support my topic and give examples for it. A topic sentence is necessary for each of these paragraphs. It should appear at the beginning or the end of each paragraph. We were also told that it is better avoid the repeated use of the same word in a sentence, or the same sentence pattern throughout the paragraph. The last paragraph is the conclusion of our essay. We were taught to repeat the topic sentence of each paragraph by paraphrasing them as a basis for restating our argument. It could be that all students will have similar essays when they write the same topic, so the teachers always suggest that students use parallelism in sentences. Just like this sentence pattern: ‘The new century has raised high hopes in our hearts, inspiring us to devote more talent and wisdom to the building of a better home’. We were also encouraged to use old sayings, such as ‘No man is an island’ (John Donne). If you can use these kinds of sentence patterns and the sayings at the beginning or the end of your essay you can get the extra marks! Because this means that students get more marks using these techniques so we all learnt many such wise sayings. (Fu)

When high school students begin learning how to write an essay in English they use the same routine as they have learnt for writing Chinese essays. They continue to do this when they enter universities overseas. However, this is not to accept Kaplan’s (1966) claim that there are inherent, unbridgeable differences between Chinese and Australian approaches to essay writing. Our intention is to point to the range of writing conventions that students from China learn as much as their capacity for unlearning and learning anew (Kirkpatrick, 1997; Kubota & Lehner, 2004).
In Chinese universities, most students are required to pass the College English Test Band 4 (CET-4) and the College English Test Band 6 (CET-6) examinations before they graduate. English majors have a different testing regimen. One of the important parts of this test is writing. Students are required to write on a given topic within 30 minutes using at least 120 words. So the bestselling textbooks which provide guidance to students for CET-4 and CET-6 writing contain examples to teach them English writing. Among the famous textbooks are *Wang Changxi’s CET-4 Essay Writing 12 Sentences Models* (Wang, 2007a) and *Wang Changxi’s CET-6 Essay Writing 12 Sentences Models* (Wang, 2007b). These textbooks provide models for every aspect of CET-4 and CET-6 writing. Here is an example from *Wang Changxi’s CET-6 Essay Writing 12 Sentences Models*:

Topic: ________

1. Different people have different views on __________. 2. Some people prefer, _______. 3. Others tend to, _______. 4. As to me, I agree with/to _______.

5. Of course, _______. 6. For example, _______. 7. But, _______. 8. The following reasons can account for my preference _______.

9. The main reason is _______. 10. A good example to illustrate is _______. 11. For another, _______. 12. From the foregoing, ___ (Wang, 2007b, p. 124)

**Figure 14–1 Comparison choice model one**

Take the writing test for CET-6 of June 2002 as an example. The topic of that test was *Is a test of spoken English necessary?* Using the model given above, students could write a short essay like this:

A test of spoken English will be included as an optional component of the College English Test (CET). Different people have different views on it. Some prefer to have such a test. Others tend to decline any kind of test of spoken English. As for me, I agree with the first statement. Of course, a test of spoken English is very difficult to handle and the test time is not long enough to fully display participants’ ability to speak in English. For example, if a candidate draws a topic which he or she is not familiar with, it’s hard to show his or her command of spoken English. But without such a test some people may not have the motivation to practise spoken English. The following reasons can account for my preference. The main reason is that such a test enhances college students’ awareness of the importance of spoken English. A good example to illustrate this is that several years ago, college students only stressed reading and writing skills, ignoring the building up of their listening and speaking abilities. For another reason, a certificate of such a test will make job-hunting easier. From the foregoing, I think a test of spoken English is of necessity. (Fu)
Thousands of students follow this model for learning English essay writing. It is reasonable to suppose that this is a reason why so many of their essays appearing similar. They learn to use a similar routine process for essay writing in order to enhance their chances of passing the all-important CET examinations. No matter whether the test is in China or is a test such as IELTS, students learn to write essays in a similar way. With such test driven, textbook based instruction they may become technically proficient writers. However, they still have much to learn about the creativity required for essay writing. But the point is they are taught essay writing skills.

**Writing informed essays using in-text citations**

Every Chinese student, including those in primary school knows the old Chinese saying 天下文章一大抄，看你会抄不会抄. It means that ideas from all over the world are quite similar, so while you should use other people’s ideas you should use them with skill. The latter point is the key to this saying. If students learn to mix other people’s ideas with their own this means that they are learning to become good writers. If you just copy, then you are a plagiarist. In Chinese, 抄 has two meanings one of which is plagiarism. The other meaning suggests that in paraphrasing the work of others and adding your own thoughts all that you produce becomes part of your own learning. Paraphrasing and summarising are not plagiarism; students in China are taught to provide in-text citations for such work. As in Australia, students are required to use in-text citations to demonstrate that their understandings are informed and to show that they can develop a reasoned argument.

Chinese students are taught to avoid plagiarism by using in-text citations (see for example Ding, Wu, Zhong, & Guo, 2005). Some students may only provide a list of references at the end of their paper only for the works that they have read. The reasons for this are complicated:

I have read the ideas of other authors but I hold similar ideas to him/her, why I have to include his/her name, it will reduce the significance of my research. Only really famous authorities are quoted exactly and citations provided because everyone knows that it is not your work. This is a sign of respect for authority. (Fu)

In writing papers, textbooks such as that by Ding, Wu, Zhong, and Guo, (2005) are used to make Chinese students conscious of the need to use in-text citations and references in accordance with well-established academic conventions. No doubt more needs to be done to teach them to include an in-text citation after each paraphrase, summary or direct quotation; how this relates to the list of references at the end of their essays; and what these means by way of demonstrating an informed and reasoned argument. Why care about references and citations?
When I arrived in Australia to begin my PhD studies, one thing I had to do was learn how to improve my use of references and in-text citations. At the beginning, it seemed a fussy, tedious chore. However, after several months of learning how to do this more conscientiously and thoroughly I have found some advantages in this procedure for documenting sources. For example, it is really convenient when I want to find other ideas or quotations from the same book or paper. If I had followed my previous habit of ignoring the secondary sources from which I garnered my ideas it would have been impossible to find the book I still needed again after a long time. Because I had no record of them at all I would not know where to track down relevant materials.

Chinese students are not born plagiarists. It is not that Chinese students cannot learn to use citations and references according to academic conventions. They are explicitly taught to do so. This teaching has to be reinforced. Teachers who know how to use these customs for demonstrating academic integrity correctly teach their students to use them appropriately.

**Learning through repetition**

Compared with the stereotyped ‘rote learner’, Chinese students are much more like ‘repetitive learners’. Repetition seems to be a good way of learning rather than ‘rote’. This is because rote is a way of learning without thinking about the meaning of what is being learned. By contrast, repetition requires engagement with the material to be learnt. Understanding that the knowledge is part of this learning strategy. Repetition is a useful way of studying to ensure the knowledge is readily available in one’s mind. While beyond the scope of this chapter, learning through repetition fits with a social constructivist framework which values iteration across different contexts as a means of acquiring and/or producing knowledge.

Learning though repetition is an important strategy in quality teaching. By learning through repetition, students also learn how to create meaning. Confucianism promotes repetition as a worthwhile approach to learning. Kongzi said, *温故知新*, which means that students gain new insights through reviewing the knowledge that they have learnt. Typically, teachers in China suggest to students that they should repeatedly read their textbooks several times to gain deeper knowledge. The same applies to writing. It is the drafting and redrafting, the writing and re-writing of chapters for a doctoral thesis which enhance a student’s learning. Another saying *书读百遍，其意自现* means that, if the students read a book for more than one hundred times, there is no need for others to explain its meaning, as the students can understand it very well all by themselves (Marton, Wen, & Wong, 2005). Chinese teachers believe that skills should be taught first, and then when students accumulate these skills they can understand and create without direct teaching.
Another reason for Chinese educators to emphasise repetitive learning is that they believe in skill development coming first. They think that repetitive learning is a good way to develop the understanding needed to bring out the creative ability of their students. The latter is possible once they have acquired the requisite skills. They also believe that they should teach morally. Quality teaching is not only about showing the direction of studying, but also a process to show the student how to study step by step. The aim of teaching or studying is not just to pursue the process, but also to get the product. If students are taught all the skills that they need, then understanding and creativity will come to them sooner or later. The saying 熟读唐诗三百首，不会吟诗也会溜 means that, if students can recite three hundred poems, they will know how to create a poem for themselves. In Chinese education, studying subjects related to the arts is necessary for students to learn by repeating again and again. Just one or two repetitions are nowhere near enough to achieve the necessary learning. This is just like writing a doctoral thesis a few drafts are never good enough. Ideally, students should repeat what they have learned more than one hundred times, and learn from what they repeat in order to develop the capacity to generate new knowledge.

In sum, we can say that it is possible for international students from China to be critical thinkers, to engage in focused writing; to write informed essays using in-text citations and to learn through mindful repetition. However, it is suggested that turning a concern into a critique may be a problem related to the exercise of power rather than some unbridgeable educational gap. Second, it is a matter of distinguishing between the genres for writing literature and reporting research. Students who have learnt one writing convention may need to be explicitly taught others, as well as how their writing might benefit from combining both. Third, learning to skilfully use other peoples ideas and the need to credit them using in-text citations is taught to students in China as a means of their developing an informed and reasoned argument. Fourth, much of the process of learning involves the iterative working through of material which thereby deepens the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary for creativity.

The Challenges of Internationalising Quality University Teaching

The flows of international HDR students from China (and elsewhere in Asia) into Australia challenges pedagogical assumptions about quality university teaching. The movement of Chinese HDR students to Australia tests the pedagogical imagination that goes into the quality of teaching necessary to develop their theoretical, epistemological and methodological capabilities as researchers. Chinese students encounter many difficulties in their studies...
overseas. These include being characterised as uncritical, unfocused, plagiarising rote learners. However, these negative stereotypes enable the re-visioning of quality university teaching in Australia in the context of contemporary practices for internationalising education. Specifically, taken for granted stereotypes about “the Chinese learner” enable the development of pedagogies for forming and informing argumentative Chinese students.

It is difficult to change HDR teaching. This is especially so for fields such as education which are narrowly focused on nation-building or more parochial concerns. While the change required for internationalising education is difficult, it is also necessary. This change in research education is warranted because of the transformations in the relations between the Majority and the Minority Worlds, and between China and Australia in particular. It is needed to give expression to, and to respond to the realities of the local/global flows of international students from the Majority to the Minority Worlds, as much as the asymmetrical global flows of knowledge in the opposite direction. Contemporary knowledge flows are largely from the Minority to Majority World but in previous millennia these were reversed (Sen, 2005).

Following Appadurai (2001), it is perhaps reasonable to suggest that research education is comfortable being at home in its nation-centred focus. Any supervisory practices that respond to and engage with the desire for the internationalisation of research education require concerted, strategic actions. This suggests that such change is a matter of management at the same time as also being a matter of struggle. Australia’s research culture is not as open to changes that would see the both-ways flows of knowledge between the Minority and Majority Worlds as might be hoped or otherwise imagined. There are perhaps more constraints than possibilities for making such changes. In this chapter we have added to current explorations of ways of interrupting linguistically and culturally parochial approaches to knowledge and the training educational researchers (Singh, 2004). This challenges the nation-centred English-only focus of such knowledge and education. This work of change might usefully involve the following elements.

**Enhancing international HDR students’ agency**

Assumptions that the theories and research, as well as the stereotypes, produced in countries such as Australia should be accepted by international HDR students without question is being challenged. Sen (2005) provides a useful conceptual framework for doing so. These students can also make a critical contribution to knowledge in Australian higher education. This challenges the assumption that international students themselves are here only to be treated as research objects. Instead, this suggests that they can directly engage in testing and questioning Australian theorising about them. With quality university teaching, the agency that these students have for doing so is likely to be improved.
This is not simply a matter of including more people in the existing community of scholars. It means using Australian stereotypes, monolingualism and nation-centeredness to enable the exploration of possibilities for transnational research education. To change the existing orientalist approaches to teaching Chinese students requires openness to other possible ways of knowing. They have funds of knowledge available through their extended knowledge networks. However, for both Chinese HDR students and their supervisors to become aware of other pedagogical possibilities is a challenge. This requires interrupting habituated understandings of research education.

**Bilingual capabilities for multilingual knowledge economies**

For international students from China, acquiring advanced English language proficiency is a major problem for their lecturers and supervisors. In turn, this is a barrier to their getting ahead in their research education and in securing employment in the transnational labour market after graduation. The link among the English language, economic power and knowledge production cannot be underestimated in this context. However, an English-only perspective may be a force operating against the practices of quality university teaching, especially research education. For instance, it leads to the neglect of bilingualism, itself part of the politics of research education and part of the world’s multilingual knowledge economies. An approach to research education that recognises and acknowledges the exploration of ideas through and from two or more languages interrupts the view of quality university teaching as requiring English-only pedagogy. For Chinese HDR students their education draws on knowledge and the processing of knowledge in two or more languages. The use of *han zi* in this chapter illustrates the possibility of gentling reminding readers that it is not an English-only world. Students from China are bilingual and thus capable of accessing funds of knowledge from two different intellectual heritages.

**Knowledge networks**

With appropriate teaching, Chinese HDR students can access or otherwise develop bilingual or perhaps even multilingual knowledge networks. Such research education might be better conceptualised as being part of and contributing to multilayered local, international, transnational and global knowledge networks. In HDR education, languages, and bilingualism in particular hold a central position in pedagogical efforts for accessing or producing knowledge. This might advance the internationalisation of education by interrupting nation-centred, parochial supervisory practices. It is through the languages of HDR students from the Majority World, and the knowledge that they can access via the Internet and diasporic communities that new ideas and perspectives for research and research education might be found.
This chapter is suggestive of the ways in which quality university teaching might provide a site for the negotiation of knowledge available to and through different linguistic communities. It also suggests that where such academic learning appears invisible to the students’ teachers it may be rendered inconsequential for the students themselves. They learn to accommodate themselves to the requirements of Australian universities wherein their capacity to elaborate and interrogate knowledge across two (or more) languages is silently ignored. This epistemological exclusion is likely to be due to the English-only pedagogies privileged in Australian universities, despite their desires to internationalise their educational provisions (Appadurai, 2001). While the students read literature, write assigned tasks, listen to lectures and make oral presentations in English they also use the first language that they acquired, and the knowledge that it provides them access to, for their academic studies. They use their language to learn through paraphrasing, and to understand and question their studies—and representations—in English so as to comprehend better what they are learning. In the process they develop knowledge in both their first and their second languages. Through quality university teaching they can demonstrate the intellectual resources available within their educational culture. This chapter has indicated the funds of argumentative knowledge available for using stereotypes of the “Chinese learner” to enable the construction of the “argumentative Chinese student.”

Pedagogically this means viewing Chinese HDR students’ bilingual capabilities as providing them access to a network of knowledge and as a vehicle for the co-joint production of knowledge. Such pedagogy might incorporate three interrelated elements (Koo, 2007). First, knowledge from students’ particular Chinese educational culture would be visibly engaged in their learning, albeit not uncritically. Second, as has also been done in this chapter, such knowledge would be searched for evidence of stereotypes of Asian students to enhance their argumentative capabilities and thus their intellectual agency. Third, students could produce texts which make explicit the connections between their first and their second languages, and just as importantly the knowledge available in both.

Conclusion

This chapter has developed insights into how quality university teaching might engage and mobilise international HDR students from China in productively using stereotypes of the “Chinese learner.” In doing so, it is suggested that they (and perhaps other students from elsewhere in Asia) might develop important educational capital. This could help in their formation as researchers and in the production of their research theses. The review of the literature points to a range of possibilities that stereotypes about “the Chinese
"learner” have for enabling thinking our way into enabling “argumentative Chinese students.” It is useful for Chinese HDR students to appreciate the debates over the constructions of “the Chinese learner” that they enter into when arriving in Australia. Then they can ask, “How might we make use of these representations of Chinese students as uncritical, unfocused, plagiarising rote learners?” This chapter has opened up pedagogical possibilities for forming and informing argumentative Asian students. The point is that the challenges of internationalising university education might benefit from addressing changes likely to enhance international HDR students’ agency, their bilingual capabilities and their knowledge networks. The chapter has opened up another possibility for thinking about how the internationalisation of education might be done and thought about in the light of contemporary flows of HDR students from China.

Ratifying the learning strategies pointed to in this chapter as a pedagogical move in the strategic plans of universities committed to internationalising education has to engage with the challenge of nation-centred higher education. The challenge of turning the funds of knowledge of international students from China (and elsewhere in Asia) into educational capital also has to deal with the taken for granted assumption that because English is one of the world’s few international languages all other languages must be rendered invisible. However, for those academic leaders committed to quality teaching, defining the internationalisation of university education, in part, as the pedagogical negotiation of the knowledge available through different languages presents itself as an idea worthy of further investigation. It may offer a way to enhance graduates’ attributes for engaging local/global knowledge networks as much as it could enhance the value of their educational capital and the value of the universities at which they studied. Engaging and mobilising argumentative Chinese students in this process could prove advantageous.

**Acknowledgements**

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References


Section Three: Technology
Introduction

Geoff Danaher

On the face of it, the significance of technology in changing university learning and teaching in the 21st century seems quite obvious. Developments in information and communication technologies (ICTs) have transformed the ways in which students and teachers provide, access and engage with learning and teaching practices. Whereas once an Australian student confronted with an assignment on the archaeological features of Crete, for example, would have had to make the best of a relative dearth of material gleaned from the university and local libraries, now a simple Google search will uncover an abundance of material. The challenge has become how to manage information glut. In addition, the emergent Web 2.0 technologies such as Second Life offer many creative possibilities for designing curricula pertinent to the interests and practices of today’s university cohort.

As indicated in the editors’ introduction, beside facilitating the delivery of learning and teaching packages in new modes (such as distance and online education), technology is also increasingly used to underpin university administrative and support structures (such as content and course management systems). The sheer dependence on technology to inform pedagogical and supporting practices and the faith invested in it to achieve outcomes amenable to both educational and managerial interests points to an underlying tension or paradox: technology can help to change university learning and teaching in ways that are enabling and transformative or marginalising and restrictive, depending on the people who and the systems that design and implement it.

The framing question for this section, as articulated in the editors’ introduction, is: “In what ways does technology help and hinder innovation and transformation in university learning and teaching?” This question challenges authors to move beyond what can sometimes seem like excessively optimistic claims made for technology as a panacea for university learning and teaching in contexts where resources are forever being stretched and where a culture of accountability and a focus on maximising results at least cost can compromise the traditional, intrinsic values of deep learning. It encourages a nuanced engagement with the possibilities and impediments, challenges and risks, evident in technology’s incorporation within the domain of university learning and teaching.

In Chapter Fifteen, Joanne Orlando focuses on the divergent views among university management and lecturers on the place, value and use of ICTs. In order to provide some distance on what has become in some cases a heated and
divisive issue, the chapter explores the situation in schools, finding a similar gap between curriculum policy and the actual implementation of ICTs. In identifying the strategies that teachers adopt to resolve the dilemmas created by this gap, the author is able to suggest remedies that might be available to university lecturers faced with similar issues.

In Chapter Sixteen, Geoff Danaher, Jenny McDougall, Phillipa Sturgess, and Violeta Todorovic investigate the role of online discussion forums in assisting adult learners to take on leadership roles. The authors use discourse analysis of postings to the discussion forums of the external Skills for Tertiary Education Preparatory Studies preparatory program at CQUniversity to show how technology can be used to generate a supportive, student-centred environment in which the participants take on various roles.

Damian Sweeney, Tammi Jonas, and Kathryn Boin focus in Chapter Seventeen on the ways in which the university’s role as a gatekeeper of knowledge is being challenged by the flows of information among different institutions and industries. The challenge in this environment is to develop distinctive tools that consolidate a range of resources and add to the richness of materials available to students. The authors provide case studies showing how three transition and academic support Web sites can facilitate this aspiration, providing students with an authentic voice, highlighting student engagement and promoting scholarly practice.

Joy Penman and Bronwyn Ellis in Chapter Eighteen examine the incorporation of online discussion pages, videoconferencing and a virtual classroom experience into a clinical sciences course taken by nursing students in a regional Australian university campus. They highlight the importance of balancing ‘high tech’ technological resources with ‘high touch’, the human responses to these resources. In particular, they point to the role of the leadership of lecturers in championing the technology and mentoring others as a key to successful outcomes.

In Chapter Nineteen, Celia Thompson addresses the ways in which new and emerging cyber tools, such as blogs, podcasts, social bookmarking and wikis, challenge the traditional view of authorship as autonomous and singular. Drawing from the author’s doctoral thesis studies on the politics of knowledge, writer identity and textual ownership in the context of these technological developments, this chapter suggests ways of creating a ‘cyberpedagogy’ responsive to this new environment that enables students to become legitimate digital authors.

It is evident, then, that these chapters offer a range of responses to the section’s framing question: “In what ways does technology help and hinder innovation and transformation in university learning and teaching?” Questions of authorship and textual identity; the role of lecturers as champions and
mentors; developing tools that are distinctive and authentic; creating online environments in which students feel safe and disposed to take on different roles; acknowledging and negotiating the different perspectives that university management and lecturers bring to ICTs: all these are significant issues to consider in relation to the role of technology in higher education. It is through an engaged, constructive and necessarily somewhat sceptical approach that the advantages of technology for changing university learning and teaching might best be realised.
Chapter Fifteen:
Online Teaching in Universities and Management: Divided and Shaky Grounds for Change

Joanne Orlando

Abstract
While online teaching has been part of university teaching for a number of years now, there is increasing contestation around its negative impact on, and the future direction of, teaching. One aspect contributing to this is the incompatible views between university management and lecturers on the place, use and value of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in university teaching. These differing views contribute to a divided environment for developing future paths of change, which capitalise on using ICTs to develop innovative teaching and learning and the management of both. This issue is complex. Teaching with ICTs is a multifaceted process that is informed by many factors including the distinct nature of ICTs. This chapter offers some insights into the factors that may be contributing to the differing views held by lecturers and university management. This is done by looking outside the higher education field to research undertaken into this issue in schools. This is advantageous as it creates a distance that opens up new ways of thinking about this heated and enduring issue. Findings from the school-based study highlight the gap between ICTs and curriculum policy present in schools. It also identifies the ways that teachers are resolving the dilemmas that this gap causes. Evidence from this study is used to point to similar slippages that are occurring in universities and ways that these might be resolved. Strategies for easing these gaps are proposed. The intention is to contribute to more fertile grounds for the future use of ICTs in university teaching, learning and management.

Introduction
While information and communication technologies (ICTs) have been part of university teaching for a number of years now, the contestation surrounding their use remains unresolved. This lack of resolution is negatively impacting current teaching in universities and future possibilities for capitalising on the potential benefits that ICTs hold for quality teaching. The contestation centres
on a popular direction taken by universities to replace face-to-face teaching with online teaching. The latter is a process where students receive instruction over the Internet, or through an in-house intranet. Online teaching can also occur in a blended mode. This involves teaching a course via a blend of online and face-to-face teaching. Contestation around these pedagogical changes, centre on the incompatible views and contradictory analyses between two of the major stakeholders around the place, value and use of online teaching in universities. How it is currently panning out in universities is important, and affects what changes are needed to improve and move forward.

A dominant understanding embedded in university management documentation, is that online teaching with ICTs is pivotal to being competitive in the international higher education market and is therefore a priority (Clegg, Hudson, & Steel, 2003; Selwyn, 2007). Common themes of university policies regarding online teaching include cost effectiveness, enriching current learning and teaching, and targeted strategies for growing online learning. Commitment to online teaching is reflective of understandings that it will ‘free-up’ university teaching time. It is also considered necessary to meet the needs of today’s diverse student body. It provides the opportunity for flexible learning in a financially viable online learning environment (Phillips, 2005; G. Singh, O’Donoghue, & Worton, 2005; M. Singh & Han, 2005; Stensaker, Maasen, Borgan, Oftebro, & Karseth, 2007).

The contestation around online teaching is a significant issue for university management. While policy makes clear the need for lecturers to replace face-to-face teaching with online teaching, there continues to be significant commitment by lecturers to the former (McShane, 2004; Selwyn, 2007). Lecturers are contributing to considerable anxiety among university management (Stensaker et al., 2007). The actions of lecturers can be interpreted as contesting policy. Managers reason this as the cause of the disappointingly sluggish movement that universities are experiencing towards their anticipated benefits of online teaching.

Conversely, while many lecturers are making more use of online teaching the majority are not using it in the transformative ways that management is expecting (Davis & Fill, 2007; Kirkup & Kirkwood, 2005; McConachie, Danaher, Luck, & Jones, 2005; Stensaker et al., 2007). Lecturers are using ICTs in ways to support their own teaching. An argument proposed by lecturers regarding policies securing the dominance of online learning is that while such teaching has benefits it also has pedagogical limitations. It cannot address all aspects of learning and teaching in a meaningful way. There is advocacy by lecturers for the benefits of face-to-face teaching continuing as a significant part of university teaching (McShane, 2004). Kirkup and Kirkwood’s (2005) 10 year longitudinal study of university lecturers’ experiences with teaching with ICT drew on 10,000 surveys completed by lecturers. Findings indicated that while lecturers were enthusiastic about using
ICTs and increasingly used them in their teaching, preference for “face-to-face” teaching continued over the course of the study. Face-to-face teaching is considered by lecturers as extremely important for developing relationships with students and supporting them in their studies (Barak, 2007). Face-to-face teaching is considered to be more effective for developing professional relationships with students and engaging them in learning (McShane, 2004). Lecturers often experience online explanations of content as problematic, simplistic and drawn out. Furthermore, they consider that the provision of reliable assessment requires face-to-face teaching (McShane, 2004). Equally there are those lecturers who want to make pedagogical use of ICTs, such as Internet telephony and multilingual programs. They are often, however, required to sign up to a self-managed and self-funded system, because the university will not support such operations.

Additionally, ICTs were understood by lecturers as demanding even more time of them in an already time-challenged occupation (Ashton & Elliott, 2007; Davis & Fill, 2007; G. Singh et al., 2005). Online learning is understood by lecturers to increase student expectations and demands of them. Lecturers consider responding to students’ online queries on their assessed work as taking substantial “additional” time (Davis & Fill; 2007; Kirkup & Kirkwood, 2005; McShane, 2004). Furthermore, they experience online assessment submission, downloading, marking, and returning of assignments as a much lengthier process than the submission of a printed assignment, which the lecturer can write on for feedback (Kirkup & Kirkwood, 2005). Lecturers also indicated that the establishment and maintenance of online learning sites, such as WebCT and Campus Edition, contributing to online discussions, as well as learning to use ICTs was time-consuming. This problem was exacerbated in an environment where ICT resources are constantly changing (Davis & Fill, 2007).

I propose that one key factor influencing the lack of realisation of the benefits that ICTs potentially hold for universities is the presence of differing views between lecturers and university management regarding online teaching in universities, and the breakdown in communication occurring as a result. For university management, lecturers’ resistance to engagement with ICTs in ways that they expect can be observed and understood as resistance to “quality” university teaching (M. Singh & Han, 2005). This hinders them in realising the claimed benefits that ICTs hold for university teaching and student learning. Lecturers on the other hand, may well feel that their professionalism is being compromised and that they are being pressured into undertaking their teaching in ways that they do not necessarily agree with or are committed to (Davis & Fill, 2007; G. Singh et al., 2005; Stensaker et al., 2007).

A lack of sharing these understandings about online teaching is an important issue for quality teaching in universities. It contributes to an environment of unrest and resentment in the university; there is a sense of being unsupported
and divided from other stakeholders. This establishes a shaky and unclear basis for developing future goals and paths for using ICTs in university teaching. ICTs potentially hold many opportunities for rich pedagogical use and for better serving learners in different target groups (Kirkup & Kirkwood, 2005). Universities have to find ways to capitalise fully on the possibilities for innovation and transformation in teaching that ICTs potentially offer. The division and lack of confidence between two of the major stakeholders must be resolved if we are to promote this possibility.

This chapter does not aim to resolve this issue. My aim is to examine and gain insights into the factors that may be contributing to the competing viewpoints between lecturers and university management regarding online teaching in universities. To do this I look outside higher education to the school sector and to research undertaken to address similar issues. I do not suggest that one-to-one correspondence of findings between teaching with ICTs in schools and in universities is feasible. There are differences between these contexts: the nature of the students, as well as the curriculum. However, in this instance, considering findings from schools for insight into possibilities for universities has a number of distinct advantages for examining this particular issue. First, the contestation surrounding online teaching in universities is long-running and consistent and after a number of years remains unresolved (Clegg et al., 2003). Stepping outside the university and looking further afield for ways of understanding what is happening in universities has the benefit of interrupting existing thinking. It opens up alternative ways of considering and addressing this issue. This is a meaningful strategy if we aim to move the issue from its current, impervious position. Second, the considerable heat around this issue in universities makes it difficult to examine. Using research undertaken outside the university context may be useful, as it gives the distance needed for looking at the issue that universities are experiencing. A focus on ICTs in schools may assist us in taking a step back, in order to recognise the factors in universities that may be aggravating the division of views. Direction of this kind may contribute positively to an informed and more stable base for future innovation and transformation in university learning, teaching and management.

Outline of the chapter

I begin the chapter by discussing the complex nature of the practice of teaching with ICTs, and the many dimensions that influence it. A central concern is that teachers, regardless of whether they work in universities or in schools, are caught up in many situations, events and ways of understanding the educational use of ICTs. As part of their practice they must unravel, differentiate and make meaning from these factors in terms of the decisions that they make in their teaching with ICTs.
In section two, I describe an empirical study that examined teachers in schools and the ways that their teaching with ICTs changed over five years. A key finding from this study was the teachers’ recognition of an incompatibility between the ICT and curriculum policies. Identified in the study were the ways that teachers were drawing on these and other aspects of their practices in order to resolve this inconsistency in their teaching with ICTs.

In section three I use the findings from this school-based research for examining similar issues occurring in universities. This study is used as a conduit for examining the way that online teaching in universities is pansing out, and the direction that it needs to take. This study assists in highlighting the factors, events and situations that might be contributing to the differing views between lecturers and university management about teaching with ICTs. The intention of this section is not to pit one group against the other, but to gain insight into the factors that may be influencing their views.

The final section focuses on leading meaningful change in teaching with ICTs in universities. I propose that this requires recognising and negotiating the diversity in understandings of teaching practices with ICTs. This could involve contributing to building on the productive ways that individuals and groups are already working with the issue. It is on this basis that I identify points for reflection in order to inform change in this area.

**The Practice of Teaching with ICTs**

Using ICTs in teaching adds to the complexity of this practice. Teaching practice, or any professional practice, including university management, is part of the social action that individuals undertake in the world in which they live and relate to (Kemmis, 2006). There are many dimensions of teaching practice. There is the teaching that we can observe; this includes planning, teaching strategies, assessment, evaluation, learning environments and management. In addition, there are those dimensions that are less visible, yet important to the ways that teachers prepare for undertaking those practices that we can readily observe. These dimensions include the structures of teaching; the roles of those involved in the teaching; and the time, place and reason for the teaching. These are the competencies, capacities, judgements and discretions that are drawn on during the course of teaching and are used for reflection when considering future teaching (Kemmis, 2006). Teaching practice is multifaceted. These aspects both individually and collectively are constantly considered and addressed by teachers as they engage in their practice.

The decisions that teachers make in their practice, in accordance with these dimensions, are shaped by the heterogeneous world within and against which they take place (Kemmis, 2006). This includes a myriad of people (ranging in
levels in their connection with them) and their subsequent actions (behaviours), relationships (interactions, networks, associations, dealings) and situations (state of affairs, circumstances, time and places). Embedded within the world are diverse knowledge (information, facts), beliefs (viewpoints, ways of thinking, philosophies) and values (morals, ethics). This information is constituted by a blend of the social, cultural-discursive and material-economic features of their professional practice (Kemmis, 2006). For example, the social aspect of teachers’ practice gives information about what it means to act ethically and morally. For a teacher this informs expectations about relationships with co-workers, students and management. Another example is the different groups in our society and the ways that they view education. The discourses representative of these groups—for example, quality teaching documents—inform what should be important in the practice of teaching. Another aspect that informs teachers’ practice is the material-economic functions of the world. Understandings of economic gain, value for money and global economies also inform the practice of teaching.

ICTs further complicate the already complex world of the teachers’ practices. While technical in nature, ICTs affect the cultural-discursive, social and material-economic practices of teachers (Kemmis, 2006). They influence ways of thinking about how we work and the type of work necessary and available; views about what it means to be educated; ways of learning meaningfully and what we expect the end products of learning to be (Loveless, 2003; Selwyn, 2007). They also impact the ways that we communicate with one another, and the types of relationships open to us. Furthermore, these viewpoints can be presented in ambiguous ways. For example, the inevitability of contemporary learning contrasts with the consistent representation of traditional classrooms (Loveless, 2003). This complexity is further complicated by the continuous state of innovation in ICTs—something that undercuts arguments about their cost effectiveness. This distinct feature of ICTs requires continual learning, relearning and applying understandings about the resources, what they offer and the meanings that they contribute to.

In summary, teachers are caught up in many wheels. Their teaching with ICTs is undertaken within and against a complex backdrop. Teachers’ varied practices contribute to both the material-economic conditions and the organisational elements necessary for their professional use of ICTs. They also actively contribute to the competing discourses present in the decisions that they and managers make regarding university teaching with ICTs. The next section looks at the empirical research undertaken in schools. This research provides insight into what aspects of their practice are important to teachers, in terms of their understandings about teaching with ICTs and how this influences their practice.
Examination of Teaching with ICTs in Schools

A qualitative longitudinal investigation of practices for teaching with ICTs focused on five teachers in primary and secondary schools in New South Wales (Orlando, 2008). The aim of the study was to investigate how the practices of these teachers changed over a period of five years (2001–2006), and why they did or did not change.

The study used four layers of data collection and analysis. The pre-existing data used were from the study “Enhancing Learning Using New Technologies”, otherwise known as the E.ffects Project¹ (Hayes, Yates, Blackwell, Anderson, Harriman, Lal, & Dwyer, 2005). The E.ffects Project was a longitudinal, qualitative study designed to examine the use of ICT in schools, and their impact on student learning and teachers’ practices. Data were collected for the E.ffects study between 2001 and 2003 and included 110 semi-structured teacher interviews, 71 classroom observations and additional interviews and focus groups with principals, students and key ICT personnel within the school.

Five teachers from the E.ffects study participated in this study. A number of professional and personal characteristics were considered in selecting these teachers. A distinguishing feature used for their selection was the quality of the data set available for each teacher (Hinds, Vogel, & Clarke-Steffen, 1997). Each of the five teachers selected had a complete and comprehensive data set, including a range of interviews and classroom observations representative of their practices with ICTs over the period 2001–2003. Data collected over time focused on examining paths of change, rather than before and after scenarios. Additionally, the transcripts and field notes were clear and legible. Of the five teachers selected two were primary teachers, one a primary computing teacher, one a secondary English teacher and one a secondary computer studies teacher. Each of the teachers had between 10 and 35 years of teaching experience. The teachers varied in their enthusiasm for ICTs, as well as their approaches to teaching both with and without them. The teachers were not teaching in lighthouse schools, but rather in comprehensive government schools noted by local educational authorities for doing good things with ICTs. In each of their schools integration of ICTs was a school management priority.

¹ The members of the E.ffects team were Debra Hayes (Chief Investigator and Project Co-ordinator, University of Technology, Sydney); Lyn Yates (Chief Investigator, University of Technology, Sydney); Shirley Alexander (Associate Investigator, University of Technology, Sydney); Susan Harriman (associated Doctor of Philosophy investigator, and formerly of Curriculum Support Directorate, Department of Education and Training); Vijendra Lal (associated PhD investigator 2001–2002, and formerly of OTEN); Sally Blackwell (Partner Investigator, Curriculum Support Directorate, DET); Joanne Orlando (formerly Dwyer) (Project Officer 2001–2002, associated Doctor of Philosophy investigator 2004) and Sue Anderson (Project Officer 2003–2004).
The first layer of the research design was to analyse the five teachers’ pre-existing data. From this analysis, themes were identified as a starting point for tracing change in teaching practices with ICTs. Second, to build on the pre-existing data and continue exploring the individual paths of change that teachers moved along, new data were collected. This included semi-structured interviews and classroom observations with each teacher; document analysis of samples of their lesson planning; and interviews with teachers with whom they collaborated. While these two layers of data collection were undertaken, a matrix was developed simultaneously. The matrix categorised the data relevant to each teacher. It was used as a means of constructing a picture of how each teacher’s practices with ICTs changed between 2001 and 2005 and factors relating to these changes. The fourth layer of the research was recording and analysing the teachers’ retrospective analysis of their own longitudinal data sets. This entailed a session with each teacher reviewing and reflecting on her or his matrix, which contained a summary of the coded data, and discussing the data with me.

**Teachers’ priorities for practices with ICTs**

The teachers used many value statements when describing and rationalising their teaching practices with ICTs. Ingrained within these value statements were the teachers’ goals, values, beliefs and knowledge. These statements drew on a collection of the cultural-discursive, social and material-economic aspects of their practices (Kemmis, 2006). They gave insights into what was important to the teachers, and the ways in which they drew on them in the subsequent decisions made in teaching with ICTs.

A number of priorities emerged from the data as important to the decisions that teachers made in their teaching with ICTs. An important theme was that all teachers aimed to fulfil their role of teacher well. The decisions that they made in their teaching with ICTs were embedded within this priority. Three factors in particular contributed collectively to what they understood as fulfilling their role of teacher well. Firstly, for all teachers a central concern was that they taught to, and supported their students in achieving, the required curriculum. In New South Wales schools, these teachers understood this as facilitating students’ achievement of the mandatory outcomes in that state’s syllabus documents. A second factor was student experience. Teachers drew on what they understood that their students needed and wanted in the decisions that they made in their teaching with ICTs. What students needed and wanted drew on teachers’ understandings and analysis of a distinct range of dimensions. These ranged from discourses of education and schooling, to professional knowledge of child development, to social responsibilities of working with children. For example, a primary goal of the primary school computer teacher was that students needed to learn all their ICT skills in primary school,
because secondary school doesn’t make provision for developing ICT skills. In addition, this teacher believed that meaningful learning occurred only with formal, explicit, one-to-one teaching. The decisions that this teacher made, in terms of how she could facilitate student learning, included aspects such as classroom organisation. When teaching with ICTs, she allowed for maximum one-to-one time with student and use of explicit flowcharts, diagrams, instructions, and routines that supported student learning when she was working with another student. Through daily evaluation of her own teaching she sought to ensure thoroughness in the content that she included in her teaching with ICTs.

A third factor was what the teachers understood the place of ICTs to be in teaching and student learning. Over five years, each teacher increasingly defined using ICTs in their teaching as a characteristic of fulfilling their role of teacher well. Teachers related fulfilling their role well to preparing students for the future. They did not necessarily resist using ICTs in their teaching. Instead over time they acknowledged the growing importance of ICTs in society. Teaching students about ICTs, with them and how to use them, became an increasingly more significant aspect of their practices. The recognition, acceptance and agreement of and about the educational importance of ICTs were associated with attributing their use to being a ‘good’ teacher. This meant that teachers initiated changing their teaching practices with ICTs. Hand in hand with acceptance and valuing of ICTs was the desire to use them, experiment with them and extend their own learning with them. This was evident, for example, in an increased level of ICT integration into their planning; a broader range of ICT programs used in their teaching; and a wider range of purposes and teaching strategies using these programs. The ways that each teacher increasingly embraced ICTs more in their teaching, and experimented with them, reflected their priorities of teaching to mandatory outcomes and what students wanted and needed in their learning.

**Teachers changing practices**

It was evident that what these particular teachers understood their students as needing and wanting was not necessarily reflected in the prescribed curriculum, or in the policy governing the expected use of ICTs in teaching. Each of the teachers identified incompatibilities among the school curriculum policy, the school ICTs policy and the needs of their students (see Table 15–1). The teachers consequently made judgements about how to adhere to the mandatory curriculum, and use ICTs in ways that would meet what they understood to be the needs and wants of their students. The judgements were underpinned by the information communicated to them from the complexity of their practice. This included school imperatives, the messages that were meaningful in terms of student needs, the educational use of ICT and the role of teachers.
Gaps/inconsistencies identified by teachers in schools

Table 15–1: Gaps/inconsistencies identified by teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gaps/inconsistencies identified by teachers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I am expected to use computers with my English classes … the school computer labs are always booked out by computer studies classes.” (Secondary school English teacher, 2003.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Information Technology industry expects particular skills and understandings. The syllabus outcomes don’t reflect what the IT industry wants; it’s out dated. (Secondary school computer studies teacher, 2005.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They [the educational authority] just give us the computers, but they don’t provide any support. They need to take responsibility for them.” (Primary school classroom teacher, 2002.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“If they really want me to use a computer with my class then they [the school executive] should give me the resources I need. I shouldn’t be expected to chase after them!” (Primary school classroom teacher, 2001.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I know it’s important for children to learn how to use computers … I only have one working computer in my class and no Internet access.” (Primary school classroom teacher, 2001.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They [the educational authority] expect us to learn to teach with computers in our own time at our own expense … They can’t just keep putting it on us!” (Primary school classroom teacher, 2002.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers as decision-makers: Discerners of meaningful information

A significant factor that influenced these five teachers’ use of ICTs in their teaching was their decisions about what was important to them. These teachers drew on their own knowledge and experiences (professional and other) in order to analyse the many messages that they were receiving about what was and should be important to them professionally. Messages that were considered unclear, ambiguous and uninformed worked against changing their teaching practices with ICTs in the ways expected. For example, early data revealed that the teachers acknowledged mixed messages about the importance of ICTs to fulfil their role well. Teachers could see that ICTs were playing an increasingly important part in many aspects of their material-economic, social and cultural world. However, the prescribed curriculum, which guided their teaching, gave little acknowledgement to the importance of ICTs and little guidance for their use in their teaching. This is what they took notice of. Syllabus documents were central to decisions that they made in their teaching. As professionals with substantial knowledge and experience these teachers read ICTs as an ‘add-on’, so they did not need them to fulfil the curriculum requirements.
As teachers increased in their expertise and familiarity with ICTs, so too did their level of autonomy and the confidence that they expressed in analysing discrepancies in information and underlying messages from their schools. This influenced the decisions that they made about changing their teaching with ICTs. Towards the latter stage of data collection, these teachers indicated that messages that were meaningful to them came from outside of curriculum documents. This led them to changing their practices in diverse and inconsistent ways. For example, over the five years the teaching of the secondary school computer studies teacher changed markedly. In the early years of the study he taught the prescribed curriculum. Over time, however, he better identified students’ needs and took greater notice of this in his teaching. He increasingly noted the limitations of the prescribed curriculum for computer studies, when the information technology resources, industry and students skills and understandings continued to develop so quickly. So by the fifth year he taught the prescribed curriculum in class first. Then he would ensure that he allowed time to teach what he considered to be important learning. For this he was guided by a combination of what he understood that industry wanted in their workers and therefore the knowledge that students needed to gain such work. He also understood what students took as important or interesting about using computers. He prepared his students for this workforce as a priority for his role as a teacher. Similarly, for the primary school computing teacher, preparing students for secondary school was an important priority. She did not feel that primary curriculum documents addressed this adequately. Therefore she deliberately shaped her teaching to what she understood to be the ICT knowledge and skills that students would need at the local high school.

In summary, as educators, these teachers prioritised student learning. They focused on helping their students achieve the required curriculum and preparing them for their future—for example, future schooling and jobs. These priorities guided the way that these teachers undertook their teaching practices with ICTs. The gaps and inconsistencies among the curriculum documents, school ICT policies and uses of ICTs outside these documents and policies raised issues associated with fulfilling their role well and providing meaningful learning for their students. These teachers resolved these issues by discerning and analysing these communications, and their underlying messages, and applying them to the ways that they considered ICTs were educationally valuable. Hand in hand with this is the central role of decision-making for teachers. While the decisions that teachers made were individual and reflected their “stories to live by” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), the process was similar for each of them. Furthermore, teachers also acknowledged the need to make a compromise between their own understandings of learning and children and the expectations for teaching in the prescribed curriculum.
Depending on their understandings of children and learning, the degree and frequency for compromise differed for each teacher. So teachers approached their teaching role in ways that they equated as valuable, responsible and providing valuable learning for students. The decisions that they made in their teaching with ICTs reflected this.

**Implications and Suggestions for Universities**

This school-based study provides a useful starting point for reflecting on the current differences in understandings between lecturers and university management about the place, value and future of online teaching in universities, and what is contributing to these differences. As in the school-based study, lecturers in universities too are caught up in many wheels and inundated by information about using ICTs in their teaching. For example, there is management change, social change, changes in work practices, material-economics change and changes in the language used (Loveless, 2003; Selwyn, 2007; Stensaker et al., 2007). It is from this breadth of information that lecturers draw in order to reflect on and make decisions about what is meaningful and important to their teaching.

It may be argued that lecturers do not have the same drive as teachers in schools to fulfil their teaching role well. Often it is claimed that university lecturers are driven by their research. This would lead to a different situation for using ICTs in their teaching. However, not all lecturers are active researchers. Teaching and research are the two main activities of universities and there is a current interest in promoting the nexus between them (Jenkins, Breen, Lindsay, & Brew, 2007). Thus, this chapter links my research with considerations about university teaching. There is also a growing body of research on the use of ICTs in higher education (Ashton, & Elliott, 2007; Brill, & Galloway, 2007; Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006; Stensaker et al., 2007). Furthermore, Australia is claiming to lead the world in online teaching with 63 per cent of universities reporting a major online presence, or planning to do so in the near future (Woodhouse & Stella, forthcoming). The outlaying of the significant funds that this requires is matched with an equal interest in ensuring value for money. A further example of interest in improving the quality of teaching in universities through research is this book. This chapter contributes to our understandings of using ICTs in teaching in universities by looking ‘outside the box’ to school-based research. This might give some insight into the differing viewpoints surrounding online teaching, what may influence these differences and the ways that we might work towards addressing them.

**Using the school study as a staring point for reflection**

The school-based study encourages us to think about gaps, contradictions and inconsistencies in information relevant to online teaching in universities. Highlighting where these inconsistencies are occurring could assist in
identifying the types of breaks in communication, and understanding the reliability of messages. Thinking about universities and online teaching in this way may help in exploring factors which are hindering or slowing the opportunity for innovation that ICTs potentially offer. In this section I identify where these gaps and inconsistencies may be occurring.

At the core of these inconsistencies are the decisions made about teaching in universities. A critical issue for lecturers and managers is control over learning and learners (Clegg et al., 2003; McConachie et al., 2005; McShane, 2004). Traditionally, lecturers as professionals have made the decisions to use whatever strategies and resources that they considered meaningful to support their teaching and student learning. Policy direction regarding online teaching, however, is challenging lecturers’ control over their teaching. The integration of ICTs in university teaching is linked to the “big business of learning” (M. Singh & Han, 2005). This has consequently seen university management restructuring the power base governing the making of decisions about teaching (Stensaker et al., 2007). Policy decisions communicating replacement of all or some of their face-to-face teaching with online teaching is indicative of this. A feature of this decision-making approach is that it diminishes the capacity for lecturers to make decisions about their teaching and students’ learning.

University management argue that their new ‘teaching’ policy is informed by the learning needs expressed by students. One source of data for such decisions is the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) completed by final year students. These provide feedback on their university experience and their satisfaction with it. For example, Scott’s (2006) study gives an indication of the type of analysis undertaken and the types of information that university management draw from these surveys. This study analysed the responses of 280,000 comments made on the CEQ between 2001–2004/5 by 94,000 students in 14 Australian universities. This study was undertaken to identify how university students experienced their studies, and what areas universities can focus on for improving their learning and retaining students. One of the three key findings of this study was that, while students prioritise meaningful and extensive learning options, the educational use of ICTs did not contribute to achieving them. Students indicated that they found the educational use of ICTs in universities to be very limited, ineffective and inconsistent. The aspects of university identified by these students as contributing to their success were face-to-face learning and teaching, and its associated independent and problem-based learning.

Restructured policy processes and direction by university management are meant to send clear messages to lecturers: first, that lecturers fall short in supporting students’ learning; and second, that university management know more about what students are learning than do their lecturers. Moves such as
these may be understood as suppressing or dismissing the central and important role of lecturers’ decision-making (Kemmis, 2006). This could undermine their professionalism, aggravating the situation even more. These are significant messages in terms of the decisions that lecturers will make in teaching with ICTs.

The policies indicate pressure for effecting particular changes to teaching with ICTs, leaving little room for other ways of thinking and teaching (Clegg et al., 2003; Selwyn, 2007). However, the school study suggests that those teachers have a sense of responsibility for providing meaningful learning experiences to their students, as a necessary exercise of their professional responsibility. The process of discerning whether this information is meaningful and informed is still likely to take place. This is because it is central to teaching, to identifying what is needed to fulfil their role well, and the meaning that they give to their role (Kemmis, 2006). Lecturers find the current situation contradictory and uninformed, even though they must discern and make meaning from it. The professional knowledge, relationships and understandings of ICTs draw on a range of social, material-economic and cultural-discursive aspects of their world (Kemmis, 2006).

First, research in this area highlights that what lecturers identify as inconsistent is managements’ construction of teaching policies regarding online teaching (Barak, 2007; Valcke, 2004). There are significant external factors that impact curriculum decisions that university management and lecturers make—for example, professional bodies governing course requirements and graduate attributes (White, 2007). The development of students’ ICTs expertise is often a necessary requirement. This expectation impacts on management’s decisions regarding ICT integration in teaching and student learning. However, lecturers are generally not part of this decision-making process. The resultant decisions made by university management about teaching communicate to lecturers a focus on and commitment to markets and customers. Keeping up with technological advancement is shadowed by simplistic understandings of the learning processes (Clegg et al., 2003; Stensaker et al., 2007).

Second, can university management claim to be the better allies of students than their lecturers in claiming to know what they want? The information that university management gather is primarily sourced from survey data. Lecturers gain information about students’ needs mainly through their day-to-day relationships and communications with them (McShane, 2004). Lecturers’ experiences of students’ motivation, success and happiness with their learning are derived from different sources from those of university management. Lecturers advocate the importance of face-to-face teaching, because from their experience many students express a high demand for personal interaction with academics and other students (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005). For example, Ashton
and Elliot’s (2007) Australian-based study and Hirschheim’s (2005) United States-based study each sought to gain students’ comparisons of traditional teaching with online teaching. Each study interviewed approximately 80 students. Both studies found that the students wanted to maintain some face-to-face interactions, even in a largely e-learning environment. The students believed that they ‘missed out’ educationally when taking an online class. They found academic literacies, spontaneity of lecturers’ discussion and technical issues were matters not easily addressed online. Face-to-face learning helps to alleviate blockages to students. This is difficult for lecturers to dismiss particularly in the face of distanced and inaccessible survey material which they had no part in collecting or analysing.

While university management prioritise the use of ICTs in teaching and student learning (Stensaker et al., 2007), there are many other uses of ICTs that could be effective in universities. For example, Internet telephony has been available for a number of years now; however, lecturers who want to use it in their work are denied the chance to do so by university policy. It is a cheap and effective resource for a lecturer to use to undertake communications and teaching. Despite universities aiming for financial efficiency, this form of ICTs is not included in their policies. Likewise, many lecturers question why university management prefer lecturers to use paper-based ways of communicating in some aspects of their work and not in others.

Additionally, while the CEQ (Scott, 2006) indicate the failings of lecturers they perhaps say more about the failures of university management. In order to capitalise on the suspected potential benefits that ICTs offer university student learning, university management must establish appropriate infrastructure and necessary conditions, as well as the human capabilities to realise this (Guri-Rosenblit, 2005). Furthermore, if management aims to restructure the decision-making process of teaching because of business imperatives, what is their responsibility regarding the silo-based policies that they have established for teaching with ICTs (Davis & Fill, 2007)? This responsibility needs to move beyond communicating that lecturers are not doing it right and that they need to improve. Is it feasible for university management to focus attention on lecturers, and what they need to change, without taking responsibility for addressing the areas the that CEQ indicated needed changes (White, 2007)?

Furthermore, while there is a push from university management to use ICTs in teaching, actual use is not being formally recognised or rewarded (Stensaker et al., 2007). Generally for lecturers there is no reward structure in place for reshaping teaching practices around online teaching, or mechanisms for strengthening the informal ways through which it is often learnt. Career promotion requires quality and commitment to a number of areas, teaching being only one area. The added demands required for online teaching
contribute to imbalances in lecturers’ use of time. Spending too much time doing online teaching takes lecturers away from the time that they can spend on their research, which is also valued and rewarded.

Lack of reward for online teaching also communicates contradiction to lecturers. While there is an imperative for using ICTs in their teaching, developing expertise is not important enough to be valued formally. It is for this reason that online teaching can be seen by lecturers as an “additional task” (Brill & Galloway, 2007). Managers suggest that blended mode is less demanding on lecturers in terms of the additional time required of them. There are still, however, the standard requirements of lecturers teaching online, whether all the time or some of the time. For example, the establishment and maintenance of online learning sites, addressing student e-mail and initiating, maintaining and developing student online discussions still demand time from lecturers (Ashton & Elliott, 2007). There is also the expectation that lecturers teach casual staff to teach in the online mode; the latter now make up a significant proportion of university teaching staff. Teaching online some of the time is still time demanding and undervalued in terms of career reward.

University lecturers have made changes in their teaching in terms of online teaching (Ashton & Elliott, 2007; Brill & Galloway, 2007; Cook, Holley & Andrew, 2007; Kirkup & Kirkwood, 2005; McShane, 2004; Stensaker, et al., 2007). Considering the school-based study, it may be suggested that policy directions regarding online teaching in universities continue to be questioned and contested by lecturers and managers, because there are gaps, inconsistencies and ambiguities in university curriculum and ICT policies concerning these two factors. Therefore the valuing of online teaching and the decisions made regarding it are influenced by this lack of reliability. Furthermore, disconnected practices of teaching with ICTs were evident in the school-based study. If university policy around teaching with ICTs continues to lack reliability, then teaching practices will potentially change in individual directions rather than towards common goals. Individualised practices that communicate different approaches within a department or course are unlikely to be sustained (Phillips, 2005). Shared visions and practices are needed for continued and successful change.

**Conclusion**

To improve university teaching, then, it is important to work towards resolving the lack of shared understanding between managers and lecturers about online teaching. This could contribute to solidifying trusting and informed grounds for leading productive and positive change in this area. This chapter has limitations; for example, students were not included in the data collection, nor did it address the multilayered management structures
in universities. Additionally, some lecturers are resistant to administrative driven changes in teaching. However, the current presentation of ICTs in predetermined, segmented and problematic forms by university management is proving to be a weak vehicle for innovation in universities (Cook et al., 2007; McConachie et al., 2005). To date university management have relied on techno-centric assumptions about the ways that ICTs might transform universities. While these assumptions may have been used as a starting point, it is time to move forward. More meaningful ways of strategising how ICTs can benefit universities and student learning are needed. Movement is needed away from the technology to the people using it (Kirkup & Kirkwood, 2005).

Some lecturers are already working with the issues that have arisen because of the gap of understandings present in current university policies (White, 2007). Lecturers are using ICTs in their teaching in ways that they consider meaningful, that meet their priorities of achieving the required curriculum and that address the needs of their students. Rather than communicating that lecturers are not living up to standards, a positive strategy for future direction in this area might be for university management to acknowledge those areas where teaching with ICTs is working (Larramendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006). This strategy could provide a basis for meaningful professional development for staff. It could also contribute to an environment of inclusiveness, where both groups of stakeholders are valued in curriculum decision-making.

A second strategy for stabilising the grounds and building trust, is for university management to take the effective practices of lecturers and their teaching with ICTs, and to develop policies based on them (White, 2007). This could enable clarity around what change is necessary and why (M. Singh & Han, 2005). A policy developed in this way could also contribute to bridging breaks in communication.

Furthermore, it is the diverse ways of using ICTs in learning and teaching, which provides a fertile basis in universities for using ICTs in ways that contribute to the innovation in teaching. Therefore, it is also important for lecturers to see what is important to management and the process of managing. This could support the sharing of visions, and promote respect for other groups and what is central to their work—ownership of policy and working towards a common goal.

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Chapter Sixteen:
Changing University Learning and Teaching from the Outside in: The Role of Discussion Forums in Supporting Student Leadership in the STEPS External Preparatory Program

Geoff Danaher, Jenny McDougall, Phillipa Sturgess and Violeta Todorovic

Abstract

The STEPS preparatory program within Central Queensland University (CQU) has, since 1986, been assisting interrupted adult learners from non-traditional backgrounds to access university studies. The program has aimed at instilling academic skills and building the resilience and confidence of its students so that they can go on to complete successfully undergraduate programs within the university. These students have played a significant part in changing learning and teaching practices at CQU, demonstrating that the life experiences and values of adult learners can play an important role in transforming their educational and career outcomes. Since 2006, STEPS has supplemented its internal classes on the Central Queensland campuses with an external program that has served over 300 students. Those students who choose to study STEPS in the external mode may be considered on ‘the outside’ in terms of both geographical location and academic experience. External study therefore has particular implications for the STEPS program, given that ongoing help and pastoral care from teachers and peers within a supportive background have been fundamental in creating a distinctive ethos within the on-campus programs, assisting students in cultivating the intellectual qualities, technological know-how and positive attitudes necessary for university. This chapter explores the role played by online discussion forums within the external program in facilitating a supportive environment for such learners and cultivating leadership roles among the students. Using discourse analysis and drawing on Berge’s (1995) model of leadership roles, it reports on a study of students’ contributions to the program’s online discussion boards as a means of understanding the significance of these engagements to their learning journeys.
Introduction and Context

The Skills for Tertiary Education Preparatory Studies (STEPS) program has been a government-funded program within Central Queensland University (CQU) since 1986. The program is designed to assist Australian citizens and permanent residents to develop the academic skills needed to complete undergraduate university studies successfully. Along with subjects in language and learning, computing for academic writing and transitional mathematics, the program addresses areas such as study skills and informational literary and schools students in university protocols and procedures.

The focus on Central Queensland has been significant, given the region’s under-representation in tertiary education participation. While figures from the 1996 census show that the regional higher education graduate rate stood at 4.8 per cent for the Fitzroy Statistical Division, which covers much of Central Queensland, this was significantly lower than the national average of 8.2 percent, as measured by the then Australian Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training in 2001 (McConachie & Simpson, 2003). For the thousands of STEPS graduates who have gone on to complete undergraduate study successfully, course evaluations and personal testimonies suggest that the STEPS program has been recognised and celebrated as a genuinely transformative learning experience, changing the educational outcomes of its cohort and challenging certain of the assumptions, values and philosophies of learning and teaching within CQU and higher education more generally. As a regional area with traditionally an economic base in rural industry, Central Queensland has been subject to the vicissitudes of forces such as drought and fluctuating commodity prices. In recent years, the region has experienced an economic boom based on the export of coal reserves from the Bowen Basin to the rapidly expanding economies of China and India.

Paradoxically, such economic success presents particular challenges for the STEPS program, as prospective students opt instead for affluent employment opportunities in the mines and related industries. In order to make up for declining student numbers on its Mackay, Rockhampton, Emerald, Gladstone and Bundaberg campuses, STEPS introduced an external program in 2006 that has thus far attracted about 400 students. While many of these students reside in the Central Queensland area and balance their studies with employment and family responsibilities, others live in other parts of Australia.

One of the significant features of the on-campus program has been moulding a distinctive STEPS ethos in which self-reflection, mutual support and pastoral care are emphasised. While some of these reflective techniques are replicated within the external STEPS program, what is less certain are the support networks and close pastoral care that the on-campus experience generates. This raises the concern that the traditional challenges of external study—the sense of alienation from the on-campus student life of the
university, the need to stay focused in the face of work and family life—
might be even more difficult for STEPS students seeking to transform their
learning outcomes, and might lead to them disengaging from the program and
dropping out. At the same time, emerging online facilities such as discussion
forums might be configured as a way of generating a culture of support and
pastoral care that replicates the on-campus experience.

In the STEPS external program, a discussion forum is provided for each
course accessed through a dedicated Web site in CQU’s learning management
system, Blackboard (Sturgess, in press). These Web sites also have other
resources, such as study materials and provision for lecturers’ announcements.
While lecturers might decide to intervene in the discussion forums to initiate
topics or respond in cases where incorrect advice has been offered or students
are confused about a particular issue, these forums are intended more for
interaction among students. Thus, teachers are faced with strategic decisions
about when and when not to intervene.

It is clear that STEPS students and teachers have played an ongoing role
in changing university learning and teaching by creating opportunities for
non-traditional students to become self-reliant and students who exercise
their own leadership. The move to external provision creates a challenge for
generating and sustaining this objective. This chapter considers the ways in
which this new cohort of STEPS students uses technological facilities such
as discussion boards to cultivate various roles that contribute to fostering an
environment conducive to student leadership and transformative learning.

**Implications of online learning**

The pedagogical shift from face-to-face teaching to an external offering
that relies on online communication has had significant implications for the
role of the student and the teacher in the STEPS program. In this preparatory
program, where students frequently have negative associations with formal
learning, teachers have worked hard to establish a climate of belonging and
trust. There have therefore been concerns about how students who chose
to study in external mode would fare when deprived of the usual access to
personal teacher support and ongoing pastoral care. The sense of isolation
that often characterises online learning seems to contradict the very premise
upon which the STEPS program has been built. If learning is inherently a
social process, as endorsed by Vygotsky (1978) and other constructivists, then
the achievement of meaningful learning seems much more challenging when
the face-to-face dimension of social contact is removed.

On the other hand, there are potentially a number of positive outcomes from
online learning that may also be directly attributable to the student’s changing
role. One such benefit is the potential for students to take more ownership
over their own learning. Leadbeater (1999) argues that education in a post-
industrial age is no longer about the transmission of knowledge, but is about helping students learn how to learn. Certainly, high levels of student autonomy have been observed in online learning environments (Diaz & Cartinal, 1999). Vonderwell, Liang, and Alderman (2007) contend that online asynchronous discussions promote autonomy since they allow students to work independent of time constraints and to reflect on their own learning via feedback from peers and the instructor. This kind of independence would seem to encourage students to take more responsibility for how and when they learn.

Another possible advantage of participating in online learning is the opportunities to develop social skills via online discussion boards. Such forums can provide opportunities for students to work collaboratively with others in a non-threatening environment (Lam, 2004). Much has been written about the sense of “community” that students can experience in these online learning groups (Dawson, 2006; Lowell, 2006; Rovai & Wighting, 2005). The notion of community is frequently defined as a psychological construct that is expressed in terms of “a sense of attachment of belonging to a particular group” (Dawson, 2006, n. p.). Participation in online learning communities can reduce the sense of isolation that students often experience in online learning (Beffa-Negrini, Cohen, & Miller, 2002). This interest in community-building in online environments reflects a fundamental belief in the social nature of learning (Dawson, 2006). Thus, this form of communication potentially instils an important humanising element that can provide a counterbalance to other alienating trends.

From this perspective, the online environment also encourages students to take on a leadership role in their own learning, rather than remaining passive recipients of knowledge. As well as encouraging a sense of autonomy, students are given the opportunity to share their skills, knowledge and experiences via online discussion boards. In so doing, the program acknowledges that students can learn from and actively support one another, both academically and socially. It cannot be assumed that the teacher is the sole, or even the principal, provider of such guidance or support, since leadership can be shared amongst the members of the class group. As students go out of their way to help others in the learning process, their role may transcend that of ‘participant’ and become more aligned with patterns of behaviour that have traditionally been associated with ‘leadership’. While online learning can, then, potentially provide scope for autonomy, community-building, and leadership, this is not to say that there are not substantial factors standing in the way of such outcomes. The context of the STEPS program in serving a cohort whose past educational outcomes and confidence in their education capacity have been comparatively limited also generates challenges to the cultivation of autonomy, community-building and leadership.
Leadership in online learning

In order to explore the leadership possibilities of online learning, it is important first to define the concept of leadership. While it is frequently associated with sought-after traits exhibited by particular individuals, it can also be viewed as processes, behaviours and relationships dependent upon a number of variables. Traditional notions, emanating from the Industrial Age, portray the leader as “an independent entity separate from colleagues or context” (Zajkowski, Dakin, & Mouly, 2001, p. 78) who exercises authority over others. In such contexts, a “good” leader is someone who demonstrates qualities such as intellect, passion, vision, empathy and charisma. A leader who is considered “transformational” is one with a capacity to inspire others so that they work together to effect positive social change (Foster, 1989). Such leaders typically work collaboratively and encourage others to take a proactive role in achieving a shared purpose. Beyond a capacity to motivate and inspire others, leadership can also be viewed in terms of social awareness and responsibility. Goleman (1998) cites the importance of social/emotional strengths such as self-awareness, self-regulation and empathy as being essential ingredients of a successful leader. Such definitions have applications to educational contexts, not only to administrators but also to classroom teachers. Implicit in these understandings of leadership is the conception of educational systems as hierarchical structures in which leadership is derived from those in authority.

Increasingly, however, theories of leadership have moved away from the identification of particular traits and qualities. Such constructions of leadership, though progressive, still rely on assumptions of traditional hierarchical structures and are therefore losing relevance in a knowledge economy (Zajkowski, Dakin, & Mouly, 2001). Concepts such as ‘reciprocity’, ‘collaboration’, ‘relationships’ and ‘community’ are becoming part of a new leadership vocabulary. Hence, an interest in patterns of leadership, as opposed to the traits of the leader, has become a new focus, with leadership being defined in terms of relationships among participants, rather than residing within one particular individual (Foster, 1989; Rost, 1991; Zajkowski, Dakin, & Mouly, 2001). From a social constructivist standpoint, leadership refers to “reciprocal learning processes that enable participants in communities to construct meaning towards a shared purpose” (Lambert, 1998, p. 17). Pivotal to this construct is the notion of interdependence. Leadership is evident when members of a group see beyond self-interest and put energy into supporting one another (Bass, 1990; Gastil, 1994; Hosking & Morley, 1991). That is not to say that leadership qualities do not exist; what is being suggested is that these behaviours can be attributed to anyone within the group, rather than being the responsibility of a particular individual.
In an online learning environment, then, a shared leadership model would imply the blurring of boundaries between instructor and student. Traditionally, the role of facilitating is performed by the instructor, but if a model of shared leadership is adopted, this role, theoretically at least, can be filled by any member of the group of students. In the context of online discussion forums, Rohfeld and Hiemstra (1995, p. 91) describe the responsibilities associated with the instructor’s role in terms of “keeping discussions on track, contributing special knowledge and insights, weaving together various discussion threads and course components, and maintaining group harmony.” While these roles and responsibilities mirror those of a face-to-face classroom situation, the centrality of the instructor’s role seems less certain in an online context.

Berge (1995) unpacks the responsibilities of the online instructor further by nominating four interconnected roles: pedagogical, social, managerial, and technical. First, the pedagogical role refers to the strategies used to enhance understandings of key aspects of the course content. The online instructor elicits student responses by questioning and probing in a way that focuses discussion on critical concepts. Second, the social role embraces all attempts at “creating a friendly, social environment in which learning is promoted” (n. p.). This includes the promotion of positive relationships and a sense of group cohesiveness. Third, the managerial role is an important one in the online environment, since this encompasses all efforts to ensure that constructive procedures are followed in the discussion. The instructor generally sets the agenda for discussion and ensures that its objectives are met. Last, the technical role may be understood in terms of assistance in negotiating the online environment and other study materials pertaining to the courses under review. From Berge’s (n. p.) perspective, this requires making the technology “transparent”, so that “the learner may concentrate on the academic task at hand.” Clearly these four roles and their related responsibilities do not represent a definitive guide to understanding the instructor’s role, but are used here to provide a starting point for discussion about the way in which leadership might be evident in an online environment.

The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to examine the ways in which these leadership roles are taken up by the STEPS students who participate in online discussion forums. The positive outcomes in terms of developing a sense of community are well documented, but there is also considerable scope to explore the notion of leadership in this context. Leadership is defined in terms of the ways in which students take a proactive role in progressing the group’s common purpose, which is assumed to be the optimisation of the learning experience. While it is understood that leadership is a process contingent upon the relationships that form within the group, it is also acknowledged that certain behaviours are more ‘helpful’ to that process than others. Thus, the contributions of some class members to the discussion board may be understood as being more beneficial to the group’s common purpose than
others. Using the four roles of the online instructor identified by Berge (1995), what evidence is there to suggest that leadership is shared amongst various members of the group?

**Method**

In this study the relationships among students were examined using discourse analysis of the postings made to electronic discussion boards in the online component of two courses in this distance education program (Sturgess, in press). Discourse analysis is a method arising from a number of different disciplinary backgrounds, and, as such, the term “discourse” is subject to many interpretations and the analysis of discourse has no single set of procedures. Our interests are closely aligned with the principles suggested by Rowan, Knobel, Bigum, and Lankshear (2002, p. 54), who use the word discourse to describe “a way of speaking that is consistent with the beliefs/values/mindsets of a particular context and that, in the process, helps to produce the context.”

This view of discourse as not only describing but also creating the social context is particularly relevant in the current situation which focuses on the members of a social group which is geographically dispersed. The participants are physically distant from one another and the interactions can be expressed only in the written words used in the discussion boards. Markham (2004) suggests that the particular characteristics of the medium of Internet communications—that it is text based, lacking non-verbal cues, chrono-malleable, public, etc.,—will influence the interactions that can occur in this space and may make the use of such texts problematic in many cases. However in the current case they provide the most accurate record of the interactions within this social group. The conversations that occur using this electronic medium are essentially the only interactions possible among the members of this particular group.

In the discussion boards being examined, messages can be posted, read and responded to by any student or teacher involved in the target course. Although all students were invited to make use of the discussion boards, participation was not mandatory and only 65 of the 220 students enrolled in the courses posted messages to the boards. There are, however, no data on the number of students who read the messages; it is possible that the engagement with the discussion boards may have been much broader than is indicated simply by the number of postings.

Of those students who posted messages the level of activity varied widely, from 11 students who posted only one message each to one student who posted 129 separate messages. A total of 805 messages was posted to the discussion boards by students and teachers in the target period from March to July 2007.
All students in the courses were invited to participate in this study by giving permission for their posting to be included in the analysis. For ethical reasons, the analysis included only messages sent by the 15 students who gave formal consent for inclusion. However, this cohort included most of the more prolific contributors and the analysis was able to include 453 messages, or 62% of all student postings.

The texts for analysis were taken verbatim from these messages with only identifying material removed, and examined by the authors. Meanings were attributed to the resultant texts by the authors identifying particular discourses that emerged from the data.

Analysis

The texts of the students’ postings were examined by the authors for discourses that suggested leadership behaviour in line with the four leadership roles listed by Berge (1995): pedagogical, social, managerial and technical.

Although both teachers and students were participants on the discussion boards, this analysis particularly focussed on exchanges among students. Early in the course the teachers established the tone of the discussion boards as a space primarily for students to interact with one another. This attitude is typified by the welcome message posted by one of the teachers:

I will pop in from time to time to see how the discussion is going but basically it is your area to ask questions, provide support for each other, get to know one another and contribute to scholarly discussions about the content in the course.

Pat (Announcements)

In addition to the explicit invitation to students to use the discussion boards as they saw fit, this message also set the tone of the boards by its informality. The teacher is positioning herself as similar to the students, blurring the lines between students and teachers, and thus setting the scene for students to take on roles that, in more formal settings, may be seen as the sole domain of teachers. In this analysis, we have examined some of the ways that students have responded to this opportunity to adopt leadership roles.

Social discourse

In quantitative terms, social interactions made up the bulk of the postings to these discussion boards with almost all postings including some social elements, such as discussing emotional reactions, disclosing personal information, joking, etc. However, Berge’s (1995) conception of the social role of leadership goes beyond simple social chat to members of the group.

1 Participant names have been changed to preserve confidentiality. Each discussion board posting is identified by a unique number.
actively working to establish and maintain a social climate of trust and support.

Students in this study can be seen to take ownership of the space by inviting and encouraging their colleagues to contribute to the discussion, not wait on invitations from the teachers before speaking. They also speak explicitly about being part of a group and talk about the benefits that flow from this membership:

…Still as a group we should be able to nut it out.

Thomas (693)

There are also several instances where individuals appear to be adopting a role that could be described as pastoral care in line with the concepts of empathy and reassurance described by Goleman (1998). For example, when Helen expresses concerns about her motivation, Josh responds with the advice that:

I think you need to cut yourself some slack. Now that the excitement is over, it’s only natural that reality might set in. As Bree says, remember why you’re doing the course and writing in your journal might help too. Go back to baby steps and celebrate everything you achieve.

Josh (270)

As with the aforementioned responses, there is an element of directiveness in this response that indicates active social leadership transcending mere badinage.

**Pedagogical discourse**

The pedagogical role of the discussion board relates to exchanges which are centred on developing an understanding of the content of the courses. Berge (1995) suggests that leadership in this context relates to assuming some responsibility for ensuring that course content is understood. In some instances, this responsibility might be expressed by offering information and insights for other students to use. For example, Meg suggests a technique for managing an assessment task:

I noticed some of you were not quite sure how many words you had in your paragraphs. I hope this helps…

Meg (293)

And Jackie shares a learning tool that she has developed independently:

I started to copy the pages referencing “The Coloured Hats” as I wasn’t going to remember all the information, and then decided on a verbatim cheat sheet which I did. Then thought a few of you might find it handy as well, so here it is attached.

Jackie (184)
Both of these offers of information were unsolicited by either teachers or other students, and show these individuals taking the initiative to share their knowledge. As one student expresses it:

Knowledge is for sharing.

Thomas (716)

In addition to offering their own insights, students demonstrated pedagogical leadership by facilitating discussion of content related topics in the discussion boards. In addition to content-based discussion initiated by the teacher, there were several content based discussions which were initiated by students:

Hi Guys,
Have just read this one and couldn’t help thinking it seems a lot like clustering but different. Trouble is, I really can’t work out the difference between the two and why you would use one over the other. Any ideas? Does anyone else think the same way??

Josh (173)

In exchanges such as this, the student is not only nominating the topic of discussion but also showing a level of ownership of the process by explicitly inviting others to participate. Students also adopted the role of providing feedback to their peers, supporting their participation and commenting on the value of their postings:

Excellent précis, Jeff, thanks.

Thomas (126)

Thanks for the witty and informative contributions to the [discussion board].

Anna (356)

By initiating and facilitating such discussions, these students not only enabled less forthright students to participate in a pedagogical discussion with their peers but also led by modelling desirable learning behaviours.

Managerial discourse

Although leadership in the social and pedagogical realms might be seen to fall within the normal range of behaviour for any peer group, it might be imagined that leadership within the managerial role would be the sole preserve of the teacher, since the student has no actual power to change the structure or delivery of the course. However, there were examples of students helping others to negotiate the learning spaces. For example, they adopted the role of explaining the course structure and processes to their peers:

Calm down everybody the assessment quiz doesn’t have to be completed now until Week 12 according to announcements.

Robyn (694)
Students also at times critiqued the organisation of the courses.

Pat, I understand that Unis work in their own special and unique way. But why do we have to mail something in which could take up to 4 days (Australia Post is just wonderful). When we could attach everything through scanning and email?

Jackie (184)

As the course progressed, particular students included its delivery in their critique:

I suppose my next question would have to be, why are there so many conflicting instructions?

Thomas (681)

There were also students who defended the institution.

One thing I have found in this course is that I have decided to trust the Uni people’s judgement and advice—and it is paying dividends at present. Yes, there are little things they don’t appear to tell us or don’t get quite right, but they are human and will make mistakes. I try to allow for that and concentrate on the big picture and am not as frustrated as some others appear to be.

Josh (272)

Whether they are positive or negative comments, the students are showing that they do have a voice and are not simply passive recipients of the course material.

In another interesting example of the students taking the initiative to shape their own learning situation, some students used the discussion boards to organise face-to-face study groups with students living in the same geographical area, thus adding a face-to-face element to a course that was designed as a distance education course. These kinds of initiative illustrate that students were proactive in managing their own learning, thus demonstrating a form of managerial leadership.

Technical discourse

Leadership in the technical domain is problematic for students. Berge (1995) ties this role to the production and delivery of the media used to facilitate learning. In any distributed course where contact between students and teachers, content or the institution is dependent on some form of media, power is very heavily invested in the institution which controls those media. In some cases, even the teachers have limited control over the technology that they are required to utilise. It is extremely rare for students to be granted access to make actual changes to the course structure or the delivery of the content.
However, although students could not change the technological landscape in the current courses, they did offer support to one another to navigate that space. Much of this support was in the form of advice about negotiating the particular software package used to deliver the online components of the course:

...just be aware of when answering questions to the quizzes that you leave spaces [in the text] where spaces need to be.

Anna (535)

The adoption of a leadership role in the technical area was most obvious in the case of one student who offered advice in a number of areas but most commonly in assistance with technology, an area in which he had previous experience. Other students also accepted the technical leadership of this individual to the extent of referring other students to him for help:

I am sorry I can’t offer any info but someone (usually Thomas) will be able to give you something to try.

Anna (714)

These responses show that, although students were not in direct control of the technology used in the course presentation, they could act to make that technology transparent to other students.

Overall, the data have highlighted the ways in which students have used discourses that support the social, pedagogical, managerial and technical roles defined by Berge (1995). Although there is a convergence of these discourses, particularly the technical and managerial, there is evidence of all four leadership roles in one form or another. However, given that a significant minority of students was participating actively in the discussion board, we are cautious in making claims about the capacity of such a facility to promote leadership and transformative learning outcomes among the external student cohort as a whole.

**Implications and Conclusions**

While the limited number of students engaged in the discussion forum requires that we qualify any implications that this participation might have for changing university learning and teaching practice, nonetheless we can suggest possibilities for transformation evident in the data. Specifically, our analysis highlights the ways in which changing modes of delivery can promote student leadership that transforms the dynamics of learning and teaching.

First, we would assert that, according to the social constructivist notions explored in the literature review and conceptual framework of this chapter, the external version of the STEPS program is, in effect, providing opportunities for students to take on leadership roles rather than their remaining passive
recipients of knowledge. Engagement in online discussion boards has emerged as a valid means for students to take a proactive role in the learning process. Participation in such group interactions does not necessarily equate with leadership, though the potential for this to happen is always there. In many ways, the lecturer-student relationship has transformed in much the same way as the manager-worker or leader-follower dichotomies in non-educational contexts. While it is evident that leadership was not widely distributed amongst this group of students in terms of encompassing a high proportion of the cohort involving themselves in the discussion forum, those students who became more actively involved did demonstrate aspects of leadership, according to Berge’s (1995) model.

At the same time, our findings tend to problematise Berge’s model at the level of discursive taxonomy. Distinctions among the different types of discourse, particularly the technical and managerial, were not clear-cut, although this might have been a function of a context in which students were not positioned to exert autonomy over technological arrangements, as they might have been in an engineering or software design course, for example, but rather called upon to accustom themselves to the technological environment in which they found themselves. Certainly, from the perspective of leadership roles, the pedagogical and managerial discursive practices assumed particular significance, although social discourse dominated in terms of frequency of invocation. Further research might explore this relationship between volume and significance in relation to pedagogical leadership. That is, within any learning environment, we might expect that social discourse would play a valuable ongoing role in generating and sustaining relationships; however, it is at the level of the significance exerted through pedagogical and managerial discourses that leadership roles are more clearly discernible. It is in this sense that, while we acknowledge the risk of romanticising the findings—that is, attempting “to ennoble relationships by calling them leadership” (Rost, 1991, p. 110)—at a level of discursive analysis it is possible to distinguish between genuine leadership and other social relationships.

From a pragmatic perspective, the discussion forum does offer a way of responding to economic pressures confronting higher education provision today. While there is caution and some scepticism about the vision customarily articulated by university management that contemporary information and communication technologies provide a means of reducing the unit cost of higher education by reaching a wider number of students at lower cost (Taylor, 2001, p. 4), there is evidence that discussion forums can facilitate student interaction and peer support while minimising the expense required to facilitate ongoing intervention by the teacher. Students have shown themselves to be willing to take on leadership roles within this site to offer quasi-teacherly functions such as pastoral care, pedagogical advice and
managerial assistance. That is not to suggest that lecturers do not provide an essential role in terms of monitoring discussion boards. While it is important that they read the discussion regularly, perhaps they need not feel obliged to make frequent contributions if the flow of student discussion is positive in tone and conducive to learning.

As such, the STEPS discussion forums offer a distinctively local example of what is emerging as a global phenomenon: people using online technologies to assume positions of authority, authorship and autonomy formerly conferred upon a privileged class of gatekeepers vested with the values of expert knowledge. While Wikipedia is perhaps the best known example of open knowledge construction, where the community itself manages the content, blogs, MySpace, and online book publishing are all manifestations of trends that are challenging the authority of gatekeepers (book and newspaper editors, publishing companies, critics, teachers and so forth) to determine what knowledge perspectives and cultural judgements are worthy of circulating within the public domain. There are evident dangers as well as opportunities within this challenge to authority, particularly in the context of a preparatory program designed to instil students with the values and attributes to negotiate university study effectively. Thus, while teachers might seek to minimise their presence in order to make the space available for students to assume these leadership roles, ultimately they need to intervene to limit the risks attendant on a completely anarchistic, laissez faire approach towards student learning. Nonetheless, the value of the minimalist approach, here as in Wikipedia, is in challenging and empowering students to assume relatively autonomous positions in relation to their own learning, not merely of pedagogical content but also of university protocols and procedures.

This research shows that the emergence of leadership roles is evident when the lecturer takes a low profile in the discussions. Further research is needed to study how leadership evolves in groups where the lecturer takes a more interventionist role. Our findings also raise important issues concerning the character and timing of such intervention. In addition, if, as demonstrated, leadership can play a significant role in ameliorating students’ anxiety about moving into a learning environment after years removed from full-time study, there needs to be consideration of processes to increase the participation in group discussion and to enhance the educational experience of the rest of the cohort. As a corollary, some consideration might be made of the risks involved for the whole cohort when a particular group of students assumes leadership roles as has occurred here. Such presence might deter the opportunities for other students to exert their own leadership; on the other hand, it might be that other students have been encouraged through these leadership models to exert greater control over their own learning. While it is evident that attrition among the active participants in the discussion forum was significantly less than for
the external cohort in general, further research would be required to establish any meaningful corollary between active participation and retention.

In summary, this chapter has considered the role of discussion forums in mobilising leadership among external students in the STEPS bridging program at Central Queensland University. Using a constructivist approach utilising discourse analysis based on Berge’s (1995) model, we have identified the ways in which within this cohort a small group of students have assumed leadership roles in relation to pedagogical and managerial matters, while using a social discourse to sustain a sense of group identity. We argue that the emergence of a model of shared leadership offers risks, challenges and opportunities for changing university learning and teaching in the 21st century. In particular, in relation to this cohort, it is evident that external students removed both geographically and culturally from the traditional values and protocols of higher education are playing a leading role in changing university learning and teaching from the outside in.

References


Chapter Seventeen:
Connecting Students to Changing Institutional Imaginaries: Online Innovations in Academic Support

Damian Sweeney, Tammi Jonas and Kathryn Boin

Abstract

The Internet now provides students with significant academic support at the touch of a search engine. In the education sector there is a wealth of academic support material available on university Web sites that often duplicate efforts at other institutions. The university’s role as a gatekeeper of knowledge is changing to a more porous institutional imaginary in which flows within and between institutions and industry are increasingly encouraged and developed within the constraints of a highly competitive market. Finding points of difference to guide new developments allows the consolidation of a range of resources and adds to the richness of materials available to students. Concurrently, in the environment of Web 2.0, students are interacting with technology in different ways.

This chapter presents narrative case studies detailing how three transition and academic support Web sites realised this difference. The First_Year@UniMelb blog offers students an authentic voice; the Academic Interactive Resources portal highlights student engagement; and CourseWorks emphasises scholarly practice—all three seek to enrich cohort experience. We examine the research behind these Web sites and their implementation, consider the data gathered in evaluation cycles and reflect on the increasingly global interaction between these and other academic skills sites.
Introduction

It’s late at night. After a long day of classes, catching up with friends and putting in a few hours at the restaurant, you hit the books. You’ve got a couple of assignments on the go and are conscious that you need to start the research for another. You sit at your laptop, put on some music and fire up your Web browser. Now what?

Any university considering moving its resources for academic skills online needs to realise that its students have already moved. In the kind of learning environment described above, there is enormous potential for the education sector collectively to provide a wealth of information, interaction and learning through the innovative use of Internet technologies. Students are not interested in who provides the information. They are trained to sift through academic argument for relevant information, so why not Web sites when searching for assistance with study skills? In a connected classroom, universities can no longer justify spending time and resources developing something that is readily available elsewhere. What is required is a strategic approach which discovers where gaps exist and creates a resource that adds to what is already on offer while linking to existing resources.

While this may seem self-evident, the current competitive environment in the tertiary sector does not lend itself to collaboration. There are exceptions to this rule and it is often because the material is exceptional (e.g., Australian National University’s learning skills podcast [Academic Skills Learning Centre, 2007] and Monash University’s Language and Learning Online [Monash University, 2006]). There has been a significant shift in the production of resources into learning management systems which often create a disincentive to share information with ‘unprivileged’ users. For collaboration and student support to be more effective on the Web, universities must allow wider access to support materials. Of course, there are legitimate reasons to secure information on a Web site—privacy, copyright agreements, provision of targeted services for one’s students—but we would argue that the default position when generating new material should be to make it available to all. Do not ask, “Should we release this material?” Ask, “Why should we restrict this material?”

Universities are in the business of creating and sharing knowledge. Yet it seems that respecting intellectual property is sometimes conflated with commercialisation, usually to the detriment of potential beneficiaries of new knowledge. If we accept as a basic premise that knowledge is a public good (goods that are non-rivalrous and non-excludable [Marginson & van der Wende, 2006]), it stands to reason that universities have a duty to share freely what they collectively know. And according to Stiglitz (1999) knowledge is one of the purest forms of “global public good.” So how can...
educators overcome the competitive marketplace mentality that leads to the protection of knowledge via commercialisation of so many of its ventures? One way might be to recognise that cultural capital in the form of reputation is converted to economic capital in the long term (Bourdieu, 1984). That is, as one’s reputation grows as an institution of quality (increased cultural capital), the university attracts more students and research grants (economic capital). This is pivotal to our argument to match practice to the increasing porosity of institutional imaginaries, a notion informed by Benedict Anderson’s work on nationalism. Since Anderson published *Imagined Communities* in 1983, there has been a widespread uptake in political science, critical theory and cultural studies of the understanding of different sorts of imagined communities, including institutions such as universities. According to Anderson, “it is imagined because the members ... will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (1991, p. 6). As with the shifting boundaries and understandings of nations in an increasingly globalised world, so too are the imaginaries of universities shifting and becoming, as we argue, more porous, global and interactive.

Universities do not need to deploy the latest technologies to develop high quality Web sites. In fact, using the latest and ‘greatest’ can put universities in danger of violating anti-discrimination or human rights laws if they fail to provide content (especially course content) in an accessible format. The examples provided here use well-established online norms for the delivery of quality resources.

In this chapter you will find three narrative case studies detailing how the University of Melbourne’s transition and academic support Web sites address current changes in university learning and teaching through innovative uses of existing technology. The three Web sites detailed here offer students an authentic voice, highlight student engagement and emphasise scholarly practice—all enriching collegial practice.

**The First-Year@UniMelb Blog: Changing Students’ Learning and Fostering Connections**

Transition and Orientation Programs is a University of Melbourne student service unit, working with faculties, student services and schools to facilitate the successful transition to tertiary study. Unless they have a close relationship with someone already at university, first year students have indicated that they have very little concept of what to expect from university life and how to prepare.
Prior to starting Uni, I thought I was well prepared—as the year went on I realised more and more how ill-prepared I was. I wish someone had told me that...hard work, dedication and consistency are required just to stay afloat with Uni (as cited in Kreltszheim, 2006, p. 7).

The First-Year@UniMelb (n. d.) blog was piloted in February 2006 to offer an insight into these realities. Seven first year students from a range of programs and backgrounds were selected to ‘blog’ about their experiences. Using freely available and adaptable software from WordPress (n.d.), the blog was originally intended as a snapshot of the first six weeks of first semester. 18 months and over 300 posts later, it has exceeded all expectations and this source of authentic student information has also grown into a community where students can find new connections and support.

Much has been written about how today’s 18–25 year old undergraduates use technology in their study and personal lives. This group, referred to as “The Net Generation” or “Digital Natives”, embraces new technologies and is the most active in social networking (Gefter, 2006). A 2005 University of Melbourne study found that one-third of first year students had their own blog and over half had read or responded to other people’s blogs (Kennedy et al., 2006).

In addition, research on the first year experience told us that students are most likely to make a successful transition to university study when their chosen program and institution match their expectations, and when they develop a positive connection with their new environment. First-Year@Unimelb offered a new way to foster both of these. Reading authentic stories helps prospective students develop realistic expectations of university life. The blog also offers current students a new way to connect and learn in an environment of academic and personal support.

The amount of information available to influence students’ expectations of university life is vast, but there can be a tension between marketing the benefits of a program and institution and providing a realistic idea of everyday life. We believe that motivating students about the benefits of university life should be complemented by preparation for the more challenging and sometimes difficult aspects. This is not to say that we want to emphasise personal and academic hurdles, but rather to present a balanced view of how students overcome difficulties and succeed. A blog offered us a new way to reach a large prospective student audience, make the reality of everyday university life more accessible and augment the information gathered in other formats, using a communication tool familiar to this generation. The blog mobilises technology as a forum for changing the way that students learn about university.
A different voice: Monitored, but not moderated

Our desire to allow space for the authentic student voice guided the development of blog protocols. Many official university student blogs are developed by the marketing office. In these instances, bloggers are paid and their writing is moderated prior to appearing online. This is First-Year@UniMelb’s major point of difference; the bloggers are volunteers and their posts unmoderated. We decided that letting the students find their own topics of discussion and their own style and voice would deliver richer transition and learning outcomes for our intended audience of prospective students.

This is not to say that blogs designed for marketing do not have their value or provide real information. However, since our writers are freed from demands to present any particular image, we feel that it leads to a more genuine version of student life. The First-Year@UniMelb bloggers share one of the university’s most valuable resources: the experiences of its students. It is in an accessible format, unlimited by the readers’ location or personal circumstances. Using such cheap and accessible technology also enables us to share freely our experience of using it with colleagues at the many other universities who have sought our advice.

Some of those colleagues are incredulous that we leave the blog unmoderated. The blog is, however, still monitored regularly by Transition staff to watch for inappropriate or offensive entries. The writers were given protocols to help them understand the aims and intended audience and to help them protect their and others’ privacy. The only moderated feature is Readers’ Comments, requiring approval by staff. This does frustrate some users who like to see their comments appear immediately, but it is necessary to protect the blog from spam and the bloggers from potentially harmful comments.

The inaugural bloggers responded to their task so positively that our trust in them was justified. Having been asked to write an entry per week for the first six weeks of semester—to capture just those first crucial weeks of transition—the bloggers found a rhythm and enthusiasm for the blog that we had not expected. 18 months after the blog was created, the 2006 bloggers created over 200 entries and continued in 2007 in a second year blog called Back for Seconds (Transition and Orientation Programs, n.d.). 10 new bloggers—some of whom had read the blog as prospective students—were recruited by Transition with simple flyers in 2007 and have embraced the task with as much dedication. During all that time, fewer than 20 staff edits or interventions have been necessary.

Evaluating the blog

First-Year@UniMelb’s initial aim was to create connections between prospective students’ expectations and reality. While it is difficult to evaluate
the effectiveness of such an aim, it is interesting to note that, once the Marketing and Recruitment office decided that the blog had some value and included it as a link on their Future Students site, it almost immediately became the top referring site. Clearly, prospective students are at least curious about this new resource. Individual readers have also posted comments indicating that they find it useful and even inspiring:

I’m a year 12 student and I actually have been reading the blog this year, checking it pretty often in fact. At the start of the year Chris I worshipped you and your playwrighting prowess and was all inspired and also wanted to do creative arts/look at transferring to law (it wasn’t all ’cause of you but I did think it was pretty awesome that we were looking at doing the same thing)… but now I want to go to ACU and do midwifery. I still want to write plays but I want some really rigorous subject matter and I’m passionate about birthing.

Whoops, I didn’t mean to write my life story. But yeah, this blog has been groovy (reader response to an entry by Chris, November 2006).

There have been other, unexpected connections fostered through the blog, and these new connections can be evaluated more easily.

**Connecting students**

One way to evaluate the blog’s success is to track how students use it as a form of support. On a large campus where finding one’s own place can take time, the blog became a community within months. The 2006 bloggers met in person and support one another through blog comments. In addition, they have attracted a loyal fan base of other students who regularly read the blog and contribute comments.

One example of community support occurred with a blogger’s revelation that she had long-term depression. Johanna did so consciously, to address the blog’s aims:

Seeing as this blog is supposed to chronicle the bad as well as the good things involved in First Year uni, I thought I should share something a little... well, personal. Hopefully being open will make others feel better about being open as well, because stigma is a horrible thing… I do think that it is important for this blog to offer a real view of what happens to First Years, rather than the sugar-coated version. (Johanna, October 2006)

Johanna’s decision to include this entry shows the bloggers’ awareness of their role in providing a realistic picture. It also indicates her perception of the blog as a supportive space, which was confirmed by nine heartfelt responses from her fellow writers and readers. Similarly, at exam time when anxiety levels rose, the bloggers were able to write about their concerns and motivate one another, while later in the year readers offered tips and encouragement. Students would also advise one another on where to find help in the university,
removing any need for staff to intervene with suggestions. These interactions demonstrate the benefits of the blog as a form of peer support: presumably, prospective students would also be reassured to see that this kind of mutual support is available.

A glance at the number of active users might suggest that the audience is not very large: only about 10–15 readers regularly contribute. The bloggers sometimes wondered if there was anybody ‘out there’. Research indicates that such “participation inequality” is common: “in most online communities, 90% of users are lurkers who never contribute, 9% of users contribute a little, and 1% of users account for almost all the action” (Nielsen, 2006). Site usage statistics reflect this, with an audience averaging up to 2000 separate visitors each month from over 20 countries. The audience definitely is out there; we hope that the blog is helping to bring some of them closer together.

After only two years of success with the blog, it is also important to remember that, while the tendency of its audience to adopt new technologies rapidly made it the perfect medium for its time, those very preferences may make the medium of the blog old fashioned very quickly. Already, a meeting of the bloggers and staff revealed that the huge increase in the number of blogs, plus the rise of social networking sites such as Facebook, means that students are finding new communities and ways of connecting. The bloggers have suggested that perhaps First_Year@Unimelb is already being superseded by the various Unimelb groups on Facebook and other spaces, and that they and their peers enjoy the interfaces of these sites better than a blog. A review of the blog—both its medium and purpose—will be required in the new academic year, demonstrating that if universities are to adopt such technologies, they cannot afford to stand still if they are to keep up with the audience.

Connecting students with the university

Other unforeseen connections that contribute to the success of the blog are those between students and the university: connecting staff to the realities of student life and bloggers to their institution. Many staff read the blog and enjoy its insight into the lives and thoughts of people whom they may see only in class or at service counters. Very simple technology was mobilised to change the way that staff learn about students, contributing to a two-way process of learning and teaching.

The bloggers have also become connected with their university by knowing that they are valued, contributing members of the community; most are active members of student clubs and have volunteered for other events such as giving presentations to school groups or as orientation hosts. It is this kind of engagement that Transition and Orientation hopes to foster in students from their first year, and it was done by using technology to change the way that we think about how information about university life is gathered and shared freely as a public good.
AIRport—students first, technology second

Learners expect on-demand, anytime/anywhere high-quality learning environments with good support services. They want increased *flexibility* in learning—they want to have more say in what they learn, when they learn and how they learn. (Khan, 2007, p. 1; *emphasis in original*)

AIRport (Academic Interactive Resources Portal, 2008) began in 2004 as a project of the University of Melbourne’s Transition and Orientation Program and its Language and Learning Skills Unit (LLSU). Its intention was to provide an interactive and accessible transition and academic skills resource for first year undergraduate and international students. The existing online resources were static, requiring students to do a great deal of reading to find the support that they sought. Our challenge was to help students to reflect actively, while also creating a resource that engages the user with the quality of its content and innovative delivery, rather than its animations and gimmicks.

Reviewing existing offerings in this area at other institutions, we found that many Web sites had what we call “faux-interactives.” We do not consider an activity that sends users to the same information regardless of their input into the system as interactive. Such a system is only placing an additional barrier to the information in front of the learner. Also in the non-interactive category were many image rollovers or Flash animations that provided visual appeal without any contribution to the learning experience of the user. In some cases these technologies provided significant barriers to the information for some users (Sweeney, 2004).

Gayeski (2005) captures the current confusion in online learning nicely:

I find that most people have formed their opinions about this technology through very limited experience with the possible instructional designs and techniques. Most of today’s programs are no better than those from the early days of interactive video—in fact, they are worse. We still see too many textbooks or PowerPoint slides ‘ported’ over to the Web, with a few links or silly questions inserted to make them ‘interactive’ (p. 98).

Student evaluations within the LLSU show that students value speaking face-to-face with academic advising staff. This is primarily because face-to-face contact provides students with immediate feedback and gives them an opportunity to test ideas and practise skills.

AIRport is designed to emulate this type of experience online. That is, we want students to think, to try, to test their answers and to learn from their efforts. To achieve this, the online experience must be genuinely interactive. Thus we aim to stretch the notion of interactivity so that students are encouraged to think, explore and test themselves whenever they attempt AIRport activities.
Web site design

AIRport is divided into three sets of resources, organised into ‘gates’ of the AIRport site. Students can access this material any time of the day from any where, including from a mobile phone.

AIRport Gate 1 houses interactive transition, study skills and basic writing and critical analysis resources. These resources address topics such as settling into university, critical thinking, time management and the use of sources. By the innovative use of familiar structures such as multiple choice questions, we have increased the interactive features by providing multiple random question sets and annotated feedback, allowing further attempts or access to worked examples and employing problem-solving constructions. All these features increase the thinking required of the student and move the AIRport resources to a new level, clearly differentiated from static text advice.

AIRport Gate 2 contains a self-paced writing course (adapted from Macquarie University’s “Writing Gateway”, through a licensed agreement), and two sets of tutor-moderated writing courses. These “Developing Academic Writing” courses feature seven lessons which include both automated response and tutor feedback exercises. Advisers from the LLSU provide tutor feedback by e-mail. These tutor-moderated courses are available on demand at any time from January to November.

AIRport Gate 3 houses discipline specific resources. As at September 2007, an extensive range of materials had been implemented for students in the Architecture, Building and Planning, Education, Law and Science faculties. These resources often combine transition and academic skills aspects to help shape student expectations about studying in these faculties.

Engaging the students

Our first challenge was that concurrent academic support is not an inherently engaging topic. It can be hard to create exciting and engaging activities around tasks like essay structure, effective study and referencing conventions. This is also true in face-to-face sessions, lectures and workshops and becomes even more problematic when designing self-access materials such as print- or text-based online resources.

Among the automated response activities of AIRport, we present a range of transition, study skills and basic academic writing tasks. To make these topics interesting for the users, we have adopted a number of strategies:

- multiple choice questions. Here we use a bank of questions or scenarios so that a fresh random set is presented at each visit. Alternatives are also randomised each time that the page is refreshed.
qualitative automated feedback. We created, in collaboration with our content providers, automated responses which respond to different combinations of answers for more rounded user feedback.

• opportunities to “try again.” Where there are a number of possible answers, each presenting degrees of appropriateness to the task, we’ve allowed students to explore more than one selection.

• “turn the tables” items. In these we present students with the problems, rather than listing the answers. For example, in “Henry and the racist”, students are asked to choose from a list of strategies for dealing with a fellow student expressing racist opinions in class. We used this strategy to explore hurdles that students might face and their rights and responsibilities in a university context, rather than just presenting advice or listing solutions.

• graded exercises. We present a more challenging level for students who feel that they have developed the basic competence.

Student responses

Initial evaluation of the pilot implementation of the Gate 2 short courses found encouraging results for the format. All students (40 in total) found the course helpful and 87.5% reported greater confidence with their academic skills (Baik & Sweeney, 2005). This trend has continued and been bolstered by subsequent questionnaires completed by students who did not complete the course. We received 15 responses to a multiple choice e-mail survey sent to students who enrolled in but did not complete a Gate 2 short course. 13 respondents said that they did not finish because they did not have time and/or they had more important things to do. When prompted with “I probably would have done more lessons if…” 13 responded that they would have done more if they had more time and all thought that the course was useful.

Even when reporting problems, students reported satisfaction with the site:

I clicked on “phagocytosis”, and the answer says incorrect. Funny enough, the correct term is not shown in the answer, but a bare definition. Please correct this bug. Thanks (I love your site!) (student feedback, May 2007)

Only very occasionally do we receive feedback that the site is missing some glossy feature:

[T]he interface is not animated enough. Too many words, too few pictures or dynamic illustrations (short course evaluation, April 2005).

And this student reported that the course was helpful and highly relevant.
Quality Web sites do not need to be encased in elaborate packages and jazzy animations. Our aim is to educate. We will never have the resources to compete with games manufacturers and movie studios and universities should stop trying. Students are capable of separating their entertainment life from their educational life. We need to respect that and change our attitude towards the technology that we employ in the service of their education.

CourseWorks—An Online Home for the Academic Homeless

Changes to the postgraduate cohort

The development of the Bologna Process in Europe in the late 1990s was watched with interest in Australia, and eventually taken up by the University of Melbourne (which launched its “Melbourne Model” based on the Bologna Process in 2008). The critical shift in placing increasing importance on the ‘+2’ part of a ‘3+2+3’ model of tertiary education has meant that universities must pay greater attention to a hitherto neglected sector—postgraduate coursework students—who have provided a growing source of revenue in a climate of decreasing government funding. The growth of the postgraduate coursework cohort, approximately 25% of whom are international students, has resulted in the reconsideration of many aspects of learning and teaching in higher education.

A number of reports have identified the diversity of the coursework postgraduate cohort (Chang, 2001; Chang & Pham, 2002; Cluett & Skene, 2006; Rashford & Dowsett, 2000; Reid, Rennie, & Shortland-Jones, 2005; Salmon, 2002; Symons, 2001). At the University of Melbourne in 2006 coursework postgraduates were: returning to study after a significant break (40.8%), changing discipline (37.4%), new to Australia (25.8%), from non-English-speaking backgrounds (NESBs) (19.5%), part-time (41.1%) and/or working part- or full-time in addition to study (58.9%). An area of commonality in this cohort is the need to develop skills of academic discourse, including effective reading, note taking, database searching, writing and critical thinking, amongst others. In this sense, coursework postgraduates’ needs may appear similar to those of undergraduates, but for the difference in age and experience. A further difference is that coursework postgraduates are usually writing much longer assignments, and many will complete a minor thesis or major research project requiring close work with a supervisor.

Using technology to address change

Responding to the changing postgraduate cohort, in early 2006 the Transition and Orientation Unit and the School of Graduate Studies at the
University of Melbourne received a Teaching and Learning Performance Fund grant to develop a transition and academic skills Web site for coursework postgraduate students. The project ran from June 2006 to March 2007, and included a team that consisted of a project liaison officer, an online language writer and an instructional designer, overseen and supported by the instructional designer for AIRport. Our first priority was to identify the needs of the cohort, a task that we commenced by conducting a benchmarking exercise of academic skills support, followed by a literature review of reports on the quality of Australian postgraduate coursework degrees.

Having gained an overview of the generic needs of Australian postgraduate coursework students, the team conducted faculty interviews and an online student survey (Melbourne Experience Support Programs, 2006) that consisted of ‘radio button’ and open-ended questions. 364 students, or approximately 4% of the coursework population, responded (a number that we initially found disappointing, until learning that this is similar to response rates in other national surveys, such as Cluett and Skene [2006] and Reid et al. [2005]). A key finding of our research was that coursework postgraduates often lack a sense of belonging and collegiality, and that this is often attributed to a) feeling like ‘second class’ postgraduates (owing to parallel teaching with undergraduates, and lack of access to the funding or work spaces available to higher degree research students), and b) an inability to access university resources owing to work and family commitments.

I sometimes feel that coursework students are considered the ‘poor relations’ of research students, who are ‘real’ postgrads. Not only does this diminish the hard work of coursework students[,] it also ignores the research component of coursework degrees. (coursework student, University of Melbourne, 2006)

A pivotal moment in the development of CourseWorks occurred when one of the team attended a workshop for supervisors led by Barbara Kamler of Deakin University, who spoke of the research for her book Helping Doctoral Students Write: Pedagogies of Supervision (Kamler & Thomson, 2006). Although the book was written for supervisors of higher degree research students, the team was struck by Kamler’s argument that students need not only a skills-based approach to working on their scholarly texts but also support in working on their scholarly identities. This notion then framed the entire development of CourseWorks: The online home for postgraduate coursework students (n.d.), and led to the creation of a section entitled “Scholarly Life”, which includes subsections on learning styles, critical thinking and working with a supervisor.

The CourseWorks development budget precluded any moderation of student input or writing, necessitating a creative approach to student engagement. Given the historical lack of generic cohort experience for
coursework postgraduates, the team believed that it was important to go some way towards creating a sense of community and collegiality, even though students would not be able to communicate directly on the Web site. By addressing the cohort as a whole and even by subtitling the Web site “the online home of postgraduate coursework students”, we hoped to contribute to students’ sense of themselves as part of a larger community, one deserving of its own online home. The site contains videos, primarily of other students speaking of their experiences of getting organised, research and writing, working with a supervisor and finding pathways into further study or careers. A section entitled “Getting Connected” was another attempt to help students find ways to connect to the academic community, both in person and online via new media such as blogs, wikis and social bookmarking.

One of the challenges that the team faced was the diversity of an adult population of learners, all at different stages in the fluency of their academic discourse. Starting from the premise that “Academic language … is no one’s mother tongue” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, n. p.), the team sought ways to scaffold the academic skills of diverse emergent scholars. One of the strategies developed for this purpose was to build in reflective exercises in which students could self-evaluate their skills in order to ascertain the most relevant sections of the Web site. Another strategy was to teach a variety of writing skills, including some fairly high level grammatical techniques (e.g., nominalisation) as taught in critical literacy pedagogies, which explicitly offer students a more authoritative tone.

**Online resources as “global public goods”**

Surveying academic skills Web sites at other universities globally, the team discovered a wealth of excellent resources already freely available. We decided early that, instead of replicating existing quality resources, we would direct students to them, and focus on writing sections that were not sufficiently covered elsewhere or deemed of immediate importance to students (as defined by responses to the student survey). Hence, for example, the section on writing a literature review gives a very basic definition of the essential elements, and then directs students to the University of Melbourne’s thorough discussion on the library Web site, as well as to external resources at three other universities. A topic that we did not find to be comprehensively available elsewhere was oral presentations, so we opted to include a lengthy section on creating and delivering successful PowerPoint presentations.

An initial difficulty in resolving to direct students to external sites was a perception that the university wanted to create and promote its own high-quality materials, and would prefer password protected resources (as is common with many learning management systems). The team did not wish to restrict others’ access to our Web site any more than others had restricted our
access to theirs. As Marginson and van der Wende (2006) wrote in a major report on globalisation and higher education:

The essential private goods in teaching and learning are not the content of courseware (which once the product is out there becomes a natural public good) but the brands, positional advantages, networking and high quality teaching (if provided) in elite institutions … This highlights the importance of open source models of ICT use, enabling these national and global public goods to become universally accessible, and thereby maximising their utility, to industry and to national and global society, as public goods. (p. 25)

The plethora of freely available online resources offered by highly ranked universities was encouraging. Furthermore, the reputation of those universities was enhanced by making high quality resources available to all. Susan Hockfield, President of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is quoted on their OpenCourseWare home page:

OpenCourseWare expresses in an immediate and far-reaching way MIT’s goal of advancing education around the world. Through MIT OCW, educators and students everywhere can benefit from the academic activities of our faculty and join a global learning community in which knowledge and ideas are shared openly and freely for the benefit of all. (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2002–2007)

This worthy aim of sharing global public goods is well supported by the less tangible benefits to the authoring university. Other notable open sites frequently cited on CourseWorks include Monash University’s (2006) Language and Learning Online, the Writing Center (2005) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the Purdue Online Writing Lab (1995–2008) and UniLearning (n.d.) at the University of Wollongong.

An Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report in 2005 also supported our rationale:

In brief, better knowledge management has become crucial for e-learning. Governments could help by:

Encouraging the dissemination of good practices to stimulate innovation, avoid wasteful duplication of efforts, and scale up successful experiments (p. 19).

Ultimately, it was agreed to maintain CourseWorks as an open Web site. The only limitation was our inability to use previously published works owing to copyright but, given our attempts to write an online friendly Web site, as opposed to a static site akin to an e-book, this was not a major hindrance.
Conclusion—Global Flows and Changes to Culture

The response to changing university learning and teaching within transition and academic skills support at the University of Melbourne has been to rely increasingly on technology that is interactive, porous and, where possible, freely accessible. Students today expect to contribute to their own learning experiences, to develop relationships to support those experiences and to construct online environments that further support both learning and community, and their understandings of community are no longer linked so explicitly to the old institutional imaginary.

Higher education has undergone significant changes over the past two decades, and will continue to respond to market pressures and the pedagogical imperatives of teaching the digital natives’ generation and beyond. While creating resources that are flexible, open and stimulating, universities must also work out how to incorporate new media continually, such as Web 2.0 tools, as users increasingly expect to be able to network socially within and customise their online environments. These technologies, by their very structure and genealogy, draw on increasing understandings of the flow of information, people, goods and ideas. “Global flows tend to loosen global relations of power; they contribute to the innovative and transformative character of globalisation, and impart to the global higher education landscape a certain openness, dynamism, instability and unpredictability” (Marginson & van der Wende, 2006, p. 18). Universities need to adapt constantly and capitalise on the opportunities and pressures of globalisation, whilst not losing sight of the benefit of lived, local experience. Online resources such as academic skills Web sites and student blogs are just some of the ways of emphasising the glocal nature of higher education today.

References


Chapter Eighteen:
Evaluating Technology-based Learning:
“High Tech” and “High Touch”

Joy Penman and Bronwyn Ellis

Abstract
This chapter investigates the introduction of three technologies into a clinical sciences course taken by regional Nursing students: online discussion pages; videoconferencing; and Centra (computer-enabled linking of students from a number of locations in a virtual classroom experience). It examines the issues surrounding the implementation of these applications, identifies perceptions of the impact of their use, and clarifies practical issues encountered. The goal of such change is to enhance the quality of student learning and university experience, and to produce quality graduates. The leadership of lecturers championing the use of the technologies, and mentoring others, facilitates the successful implementation of new practices.

Introduction
The exponential spread of new communications technologies is apparent to all, no less so in higher education (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2002; McCann, Christmass, Nicholson, & Stuparich, 1998), where today’s information and communication technologies (ICTs) can enhance the quality of university teaching and allow students greater accessibility, flexibility and interaction. For example, the now taken-for-granted e-mail has revolutionised communication between students and lecturers, helping collaboration and expanding contact over time and distance. Particularly when students and lecturers are geographically separated, ICTs can enable timely responses to questions. ICTs can also be used to encourage, highlight essential learning and contact all students within a course efficiently, whether or not they have attended a particular lecture. Other forms of asynchronous communication such as voicemail, podcasting, Web-based course materials, discussion pages and Weblogs (“blogs”) extend staff and students’ access to each other, and are increasingly part of the students’ everyday experience.
Synchronous communication channels, such as videoconferencing and Centra, allow an approximation of face-to-face lecturing and tutoring when it is not possible for a lecturer to be at the same site as the class. These technologies enable universities to respond to changing student and employer demands, and thus to remain competitive.

However, what is new is not necessarily a panacea for improving the quality of learning and teaching; it is important that academics continually evaluate each innovation and appraise their changing practices. The “high tech” of technological resources and the “high touch” of human responses to them, to use Naisbitt’s terms (Naisbitt, 1982), are aspects of learning that the academic must strive to balance. If we learn from past experiences, we can draw on the knowledge gained and build on this to continue meeting the needs of students. If we determine what aspects of a technology are achieving or failing to achieve objectives, we are able to design ways to maximise its use and minimise useless expense. In using what is most effective we can enhance the quality of outcomes for all.

“Blended delivery” is a term referring to the combination of face-to-face instruction with videoconferencing and self-directed study. This is the way courses are delivered to the Centre for Regional Engagement’s (CRE’s) Mount Gambier Regional Centre (MGRC) (established in 2005) from a base at Whyalla, 850 kilometres away. Local tutors provide tutorials, and lectures are delivered by local and visiting lecturers and by videoconferencing. This format provided a way of meeting the needs of a regional community that had long hoped for a higher education presence. While business, social work and nursing programs are offered, this chapter focuses on specific examples of technology being used in a Clinical Sciences course taken by students in the second year of their Bachelor of Nursing program. We describe their use, perceptions of the degree of success they have had and ways of improving their actual and perceived effectiveness, so that they are seamlessly integrated into the learning and teaching environment. First we consider some relevant current trends in the higher education context.

**Technology in Higher Education**

**From flexible delivery to blended learning—the flexible learning environment**

The advent of flexible delivery was a response to changes in university students’ characteristics, and in an effort to provide equitable higher education opportunities for increasing numbers of students. Flexible delivery has led to several shifts in direction: from thinking that education has to be either distance or face-to-face on-campus to a blended approach; from teacher-
centred to student-centred learning; and from viewing a formal qualification as something leading to a whole career to being but one stage in lifelong learning (Moran, 1995). The first shift is new for both internal and external students. Previously external students were out of sight, except at occasional residential workshops, though not out of mind (Ellis, Miller, & Lowings, 2002). The student-centred approach, in which the student has more say in what to learn, where, when and how to engage with the learning offered, is also facilitated by e-learning. This approach is better aligned to principles of adult learning than a teacher-centred approach, and also caters better to the diversity of student life situations—many are involved in full- or part-time employment, have family responsibilities or have disabilities that limit their access to a traditional lecture environment. Lifelong learning is not a new concept, but is now considered essential (Candy, Crebert, & O’Leary, 1994); it empowers individuals with the resources to answer their own questions and continue learning beyond lecturer and textbook knowledge. The continuous growth of knowledge calls for e-learning, essential for keeping up with recent developments in some disciplines where professional knowledge has a very short shelf life.

ICTs also make possible cross-campus and cross-university study, thereby widening opportunities and enhancing university competitiveness. The learning contexts examined in this chapter involve cross-campus and off-campus learning by a diverse cohort, which includes school-leavers and mature students, with varying life and employment experience.

While terms such as “flexible delivery” have often erroneously been equated with “everything online”, the availability of online courses has increased options for students. Online discussion groups have provided an asynchronous tutorial replacement, while chat rooms have allowed synchronous discussion via computer screens. Our university’s earlier learning and teaching framework, which incorporated foci on student-centred learning and flexible delivery, is moving on to a new flexible learning environment focusing on promoting student engagement (Krause, 2005); students are now scholars in a reciprocal learning community, engaged in experiential learning of various types (Learning Connection, 2007). The technologies examined here have been instrumental in fostering such reciprocal learning and in leading to greater student engagement.

High tech and high touch

Good technology does not compensate for poor teaching practices. According to Naisbitt (1982), the “high tech” of technological innovations does not do away with the need for the human aspect—the “high touch.” In fact, the more advanced the technology, the greater the need for supplementing it with the real or virtual presence of keen, caring teachers, along with
supportive colleagues, if its benefits are to be maximised. Courses designed
to be student-centred still need to allow students to feel the presence and
concern of teachers. While this aspect was not specifically targeted in our
evaluation, the questions concerning benefits and areas for improvement
allowed such less tangible areas to be mentioned by the students. Lecturers,
bearing in mind their own abilities and passions and the diversity of their
students, need to work out “a personal hybrid approach to IT that brings their
students the best of both worlds—the benefits of high touch and high tech”
(Green, 2001, p. 3). Naisbitt’s recent ideas involve the convergence of the two:
“the dual directions of high tech and high touch no longer suffice. High touch
must begin to inform high tech. High tech/high touch now means consciously
integrating technology into our lives” (Naisbitt, Naisbitt, & Philips, 2001,
p. xiv). “High tech” for us refers to the highly productive activities to be
achieved with technology, while “high touch” refers to the connections
and relationships that are developed and facilitated, as new capabilities of
self-expression and communication unfold. These connections are not uni-
directional, but involve student–student supportive relationships and students
affirming their lecturers, as well as vice versa.

Quality and leadership

Maintaining and improving quality is important for all universities. The
Australian Universities Quality Agency (2007), makes it very clear how
quality can be achieved through setting objectives that are responsive to
stakeholder needs and expectations, and by ensuring that these objectives
are reached. For our university, the evaluation of quality embraces both
“systematic consideration of stakeholder views and benchmarking activities
about the quality of programs and the courses that comprise them” and “the
aggregation, analysis and interpretation of students’ feedback about their
perceptions of the quality of their courses of study to inform judgments about
the quality of programs which incorporate those courses” (University of South
Australia, 2008). Tools used in course and program evaluation processes
include: the Course Evaluation Instrument (CEI), the Graduate Course
Experience Questionnaire (GCEQ), the annual program report and periodical
program evaluations. At the end of each study period (semester) students also
have access to a Student Evaluation of Teaching questionnaire (SET).

As well as contributing to delivering a body of knowledge within a course,
the technologies that have now become an integral part of higher education
are preparing graduates for their working lives. In the workplace ICTs will
be a part of their work (Ediripuligge, 2005; Ross, Stewart, & Baldwin,
2007) and will often be used to provide professional development. While the
development of generic graduate attributes was not specifically questioned
in our evaluation, student comments included their perception that the ICT,
to which they had been given access, were helping them to develop some of these qualities. Our university’s list of “graduate qualities”, developed through undergraduate assessment tasks, can be found at:


University educators have a leadership role. Leadership decisions underlie the introduction of new technologies, but leadership is also involved at different organisational levels in the implementation and uptake of innovations. Developing positive relationships is vital for leadership (Wildblood, 1995), as it is concerned with both action and people: “Leaders know that people are as important as the goals they have and the actions they take in pursuit of them” (Wildblood, p. 126). This applies to the leadership of both students and colleagues available to support new technological initiatives. By being aware of and confident in our own identities, and reflecting on our abilities and limitations, we can all be leaders (Sanders, 2001), and we need to recognise and affirm the leadership qualities of others. As in team cycling, shared leadership, in an atmosphere of trust and cooperation, and changing roles as needed enable the team to succeed.

The Technologies and Evaluation of Their Use

We now consider the wider application of the three technologies—online discussion pages, videoconferencing and Centra—and examine their use in the course Clinical Sciences in Nursing 2 (now called Scientific Basis of Clinical Practice 2), run for second year students in the second semester of 2006.

The three technologies and their application in Clinical Sciences 2

These three technologies were used to varying extents in Clinical Sciences 2. This course, which aimed to give students an understanding of the diseases of human body systems, was delivered over 10 weeks of lectures, practicals and assignment work, the rest of the semester comprising a clinical placement. Some of the practicals were manageable by off-campus students, while videos compensated for other experiments. All tutorials and practicals were conducted face-to-face with local staff, while videoconferencing was used for some of the MGRC lectures.

The university’s Flexible Learning Centre (FLC) facilitated the setting up of online discussion pages for all Bachelor of Nursing courses, with students both on- and off-campus. FLC staff mentored lecturers and provided guidance in the use and management of discussion pages, initially used primarily for external students. The discussion pages are asynchronous—students access their course discussion pages at a time convenient to them, irrespective
of whether others are online at the same time, by clicking on links on the course’s Internet home page. If a number of students happen to be online at once, the postings may start to approximate a synchronous discussion, as progressive postings continue the “thread” of the discussion. There may be separate discussion pages for internal and external students, and access is restricted by password to students of a particular course. The way discussion pages are applied depends very much on the lecturers involved. See also:


In Clinical Sciences 2 the CRE lecturer (the first author), like her Adelaide counterparts, linked the discussion pages to assessments, which involved group work. Further activities allowing interaction between lecturer and students, and among the students, were provided. Each week a topic for discussion, corresponding to a course module, was proposed via this forum, with questions about the topic or news about relevant research used as prompts for ongoing conversations. The discussion pages were introduced as a means of helping the external students by highlighting the key points for each topic, at the same time showing concern for their progress and assisting them to succeed. They were also available to internal students.

Prior to the establishment of the MGRC, videoconferencing had been used minimally by the Whyalla campus. The current arrangements are point-to-point between Whyalla and Mount Gambier, with the intention of expanding this to include other sites. Initially Whyalla-based lecturers supplemented occasional visits to Mount Gambier with regular video conferenced lectures. Now, in some courses, some video-conferences originate in Mount Gambier for Whyalla students. In some cases a lecturer is simultaneously teaching a class in the lecturer’s location and a class in the remote location, with each class being able to see the other as well as the lecturer; in other cases, the lecturer has no audience present in the same room, and can more easily focus exclusively on the remote audience. In Clinical Sciences 2, videoconferencing was an unavoidable component for the MGRC students, as their lecturer was normally based in Whyalla.

Centra (http://www.centra.com, which includes a demonstration) enables teaching in a variety of formats, linking students in multiple locations by computers to simulate a classroom experience. Introduced as part of the continuous exploration by the university of ways to update delivery options and teaching techniques, and to enhance quality provision, it was available to CRE Nursing courses in 2006. It was left to individual lecturers to determine whether to use it and, if so, how to apply it in their courses. Centra’s eMeeting format was used; this allows a tutorial-type situation in which the leader and other participants can be heard in turn, responses can be given by clicking on buttons and feedback can be given. Text, video and graphics can all be used in this collaborative, real-time learning environment.
Centra was used for four revision tutorials for limited numbers of external students enrolled in Clinical Sciences 2. As it was a trial of the technology in this course, this assistance was made available only to less confident students.

The discussion pages and Centra both involved individual students interfacing with a personal computer screen, while videoconferencing was a group learning experience led by a lecturer remote from them, but also able to see and hear them. Centra and videoconferencing were synchronous learning contexts, with Centra providing more opportunities for interaction, because of the smaller numbers involved, and because its virtual learning environment resembled a tutorial, rather than the lecture format of the videoconferencing session. The asynchronous discussion pages allowed considerable interaction among the students themselves as well as with the lecturer. With all three technologies it was possible for students to be relatively passive participants, but this was less so with Centra, where non-contribution was much more obvious.

**Method of evaluating the technologies**

Survey methodology was used to evaluate the technologies: a brief series of questions regarding the use of the discussion pages and the use of Centra, and a Web-based instrument for the videoconferencing. The SETs at the end of the study period, allowing comment on each staff member’s approaches to teaching including the use of technology, provided extra anonymous data. In addition, the lecturer involved critically reflected on the outcomes of the use of these technologies. All students enrolled in Clinical Sciences 2 through the CRE were invited to participate in the evaluation. A limitation of the discussion pages and Centra evaluations via the discussion pages was that responses were not anonymous, which may have discouraged some frankness. However, there was no such discouragement in the case of the SET and videoconferencing responses. While the videoconferencing survey produced mainly quantitative data, the responses to the discussion pages and Centra surveys were less structured.

The discussion pages were evaluated by inviting students to respond to the following questions (taken from instruments used in evaluating earlier projects):

1. Have the discussion pages helped you in studying for the course?
2. If yes, how have they helped you?
3. What were the difficulties?
4. How could your experience be improved?
The invitation posted on the discussion pages included an explanation of the purpose of the survey. E-mail invitations were also sent as reminders. The questions themselves were posted on the discussion pages. The evaluation of Centra was conducted in a similar fashion.

With regard to evaluating the videoconferencing, a 19-item anonymous Likert-type questionnaire, followed by three open-ended questions, was administered by TellUs2 (http://www.unisa.edu.au/helptellus2/). An e-mailed invitation provided the URL for the questionnaire and information about the survey. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with statements (see Table 18–2). The open-ended questions gave them the opportunity to express their likes and dislikes about videoconferencing, and to suggest improvements. TellUs2 automatically collated the data.

SET responses provided further feedback. In addition to 10 core Likert-type questions, the three final open-ended questions provided the opportunity for students to comment on the discussion pages and/or Centra along with any other aspect of their course. These were: “What were the best aspects of this staff member’s teaching?”, “How could this staff member improve?” and “Any other comments?”

Critical reflection by the lecturer, progressively over the 10 weeks and in light of the student survey results, also contributed to the evaluation of the technologies. This involved considering consequences, listening to student feedback, reflecting on the evaluation data and contemplating the students’ experiences with a view to improving practice.

Perceptions of These Technologies: Student Respondents and Lecturer

The tables below summarise the results of the study. Table 18–1 summarises the study mode of participants involved and numbers of responses; reflects responses to the discussion pages survey; Table 18–3 shows the responses to the quantitative questions in the videoconferencing online survey, and is followed by a brief summary of the qualitative responses; Table 18–4 contains responses relating to students’ perceptions of Centra; and Table 18–5 gives the SET responses relating to the discussion pages and Centra. Finally come the lecturer’s reflective insights.
Table 18–1: Summary of the Clinical Sciences 2 students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Internal Whyalla</th>
<th>Internal Mount Gambier</th>
<th>External</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion group eligibility</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, and meant mainly for them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videoconferencing involvement</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centra eligibility</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes (limit of 10, 6 actually involved)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total students enrolled in CS2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation responses:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion pages (DP)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>34 (44% of externals)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>17 (57%)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A (evaluating a MGRC lecturer)</td>
<td>3 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videoconferencing</td>
<td>16 (1 relating to DP)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>34 (7 relating to DP; 3 to C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centra (C)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET responses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The discussion pages were provided primarily, but not exclusively, for the external students, for whom they were a necessity, and only external students chose to participate in the evaluation. While 10 had initially indicated their interest in participating in Centra tutorials, only 6 eventually did so. The other 4 students advised the lecturer of their reasons for non-participation: time constraints; employment demands; and inadequate computer equipment and knowledge.
Table 18–2: Representative responses to the discussion pages survey questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have the discussion pages helped you to study for the course?</td>
<td>Yes (all)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If yes, how have they helped you?</td>
<td>“daily contact with lecturer”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“helped to keep on track”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“allowed students to share techniques to understand the material”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“provided challenge”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“personal connection”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“support and guidance”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“learning deep and meaningful”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“linking of knowledge and experience”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I can honestly say it was fun”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“reflection”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“enriched by others’ personal experience”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“quick responses to any queries”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“additional revision questions”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“keeping in touch with other students”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“what keeps me going and are a great support … as sometimes one feels so isolated”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“preparing us for exams”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“makes me feel part of something special”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“[lecturer] was monitoring our progress”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were the difficulties?</td>
<td>“I am a silent listener; however, most questions are answered before I can answer them ...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How could your experience be improved?</td>
<td>“just keep doing what you’re doing”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“one way of increasing interaction—have it counting for marks”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students’ responses on the discussion pages or via e-mail were all positive. However, they tended not to include specific answers to each of the questions asked, but rather to be an expression of appreciation for the positive aspects they had identified, with some indication of areas for improvement.
Table 18–3: Videoconferencing—evaluation of statements (n=17)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. We were adequately introduced to the strengths and limitations of videoconferencing.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Students were informed about it and were invited to participate.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The number of participants during the videoconference was optimal.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The duration of the videoconference was acceptable.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The technology provided clear quality pictures.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The technology provided audible sounds.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. We did not experience any technological problem during our videoconference.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. There was a staff member available to assist when we encountered problems with the machines.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The lecturers have embedded the technology in their teaching, assisting the clarification of the lesson.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Videoconferencing provided opportunity to interact with the lecturer.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. It allowed the class (student–student) interaction.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Videoconferencing assisted my learning about the topic.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. This approach provided me with a realistic reproduction of the lecture session.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Videoconferencing was a productive and effective way to learn.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Videoconferencing offers an innovative and flexible learning and teaching method.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. My experience with video-conferencing has been a pleasant one.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I rate the value of videoconferencing very highly.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I feel confident about participating in future videoconferencing sessions.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I recommend this new approach to learning to other students.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All respondents answered all quantitative questions in the survey except for Questions 18 and 19, which each received 16 responses (see Table 18–3). The first open question, “Specifically, what did you like about videoconferencing?”, drew nine responses, four of which were fairly negative because of technical difficulties, whereas the others mentioned the opportunity to receive lectures and see the lecturer. The following question about what they disliked about it, attracted eleven responses, ranging from technical difficulties, particularly with regard to audio quality, to finding it difficult to ask questions or concentrate compared to a face-to-face situation, because of the reduced interaction. The final question, “Please suggest how we can improve the use of this technology”, was answered by only seven students, mostly expressing a preference for face-to-face or technical improvements.

Table 18–4: Responses to the Centra survey questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Centra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has Centra helped you to study for the course?</td>
<td>Yes (all)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If yes, how have they helped you?</td>
<td>“explaining concepts clearly—leaving no option but to understand”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“enabled positive thinking and confidence in a tricky subject”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“encouragement given when feeling down”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“helping the low flyers”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“engaged with the material rather than just rote memorising”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What were the difficulties?</td>
<td>“getting to know which button to touch and stay calm”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“spent $70 on a headphone”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How could your experience be improved?</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 18–5: SET responses relating to discussion pages and Centra

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Discussion Pages</th>
<th>Centra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **What were the best aspects of this staff member’s teaching?** | “feedback received via the discussion page”  
“quick responses to queries … each comment was very helpful”  
“preparing us for exams right from the start by asking questions on discussion page”  
“communication with students via discussion boards was fantastic, and that helped me to understand some difficult concepts”  
“an invaluable tool. [Lecturer] made contact with us constantly… really did care about how we were all progressing” | “[lecturer’s] great interest in our learning needs”  
“huge benefit (nearly face-to-face) giving me an opportunity to ask and clarify questions”  
“offer of extra online tutoring” |
| **How could this staff member improve?**       | –                                                                                | “more Centra meetings for external students”                           |
| **Any other comments?**                        | “thought-provoking questions”  
“[Lecturer] checks these pages daily” |                                                                         |

Another source of information was the reflection by the lecturer. From the lecturer’s point-of-view, academic issues identified related to assistance needed for students with technological anxieties or inadequate ICTs preparation, whether use was in line with best practice and the potential problem of transition to the clinical work environment. Furthermore, personal issues identified related to the workload involved in adopting the technologies, the role change from lecturer as controller to lecturer as facilitator, keeping up-to-date with technological changes and the consequent need for staff development and support.

We now examine the information gathered from students. In each of the learning contexts, they revealed that they had received, to differing degrees, both intrapersonal (within themselves) and interpersonal (relational) benefits.

Of the three contexts, the discussion pages were most favourably rated by the students in the evaluation. As well as strictly course-related areas, their learning included being able to relate science to nursing practice, and sharing their clinical placement experiences. Intrapersonal benefits included: having their knowledge and understanding affirmed and increased; being motivated to do their best; and gaining confidence and mastery. Interpersonal benefits included: engaging in open discussions; sharing techniques to understand the material; feeling supported and guided; and enjoying their study experience
with other students and learning from them. The following statements taken from the survey responses, and corroborated by the external students’ SETs, illustrate the benefits:

I will miss this subject but hope to keep asking myself...“why things work the way they do” (in the body etc.)...I think you have done a super job on this discussion page.

[After being away for a few days] I felt alone, out of contact, it was so weird. Just got home and the first thing I did was get online! It’s good to be back in the game and the last few posts have made me think! These discussions help us all.

Your input on this discussion page is very encouraging and makes me feel like you care. Also, your revision questions are great!

The videoconferencing survey revealed that most respondents found the session times, length, number of participants, and their preparation for them adequate, as was the support available if problems arose. While most found that the lecture content had been clarified using this technology, there were mixed responses to other questions relating to learning and teaching. Despite the overall experience of videoconferencing being rated as negative by over half the students, “the ability to gain insight into the topic from a lecturer who could not be available to us in a face-to-face environment” was appreciated, and some did find it an effective way to learn and looked forward with confidence to future videoconference sessions.

The students who responded to the Centra evaluation found their sessions of great benefit. This was corroborated by the SET responses. Many of these advantages could be categorised as having a combination of intrapersonal and interpersonal implications. Centra had particularly assisted the weaker students by reviewing the subject matter, and by helping them engage with the material. External students’ requests for more Centra eMeetings highlighted their favourable perceptions of this learning context. Some technical difficulties arose, but extra practice after the session was able to increase confidence prior to the next one.

**Discussion**

In this section we consider the ways in which the technologies described and evaluated have helped, or otherwise, in the learning and teaching of Clinical Sciences 2, and how the benefits may be enhanced and the difficulties minimised. Other implications relating to providing and maintaining a high tech/high touch balance, the quality of the students’ university learning experience and their graduate outcomes, and the role of leadership in adopting technology are also discussed.
Benefits experienced, difficulties encountered and areas for improvement

We have already categorised benefits received as intrapersonal and interpersonal. Another way of grouping them is as personal, academic, and social benefits. Some students remarked that they found interaction via these technologies enjoyable, and they also took pleasure in the sense of accomplishment they experienced. They found that technology could be a friend, in allowing prompt responses to questions and mediating the lecturer’s interest in their learning. Both asynchronous and synchronous learning occurred, as sometimes the discussion board resembled a chat room when many students engaged with it at the same time. By developing a familiarity with electronic communications they were also adding to their skills for the workplace. Technology can be used to link with further ICT resources, as members of the learning community refer others to relevant Web sites, items in the library collection’s online catalogue and databases. They need to be ready for ICT applications that they are likely to encounter as practising nurses—for example, knowledge of e-health (E-health, what health?, 2007), something in which many nurses now feel a need for training (Edirippulige, 2005). As individuals’ confidence in using technology grows, there is an ever increasing growth in their ITC literacy.

Some of the issues encountered include the intermittent technological failure, frustrating and stressful for both students and lecturer, the cost (for the institutions and the student) of equipment upgrades, and training required (for staff and students). One criticism of the discussion pages was that many students were not actively involved, but remained as “lurkers” in the background, though this did not mean that they did not benefit; for example, one comment, of several similar, was, “I was more a listener than a contributor, but I was there learning.” A few students felt that greater active participation was needed from others. Although videoconferencing has been in use in other tertiary education contexts for 10 to 15 years, for most of these students it meant becoming used to something quite new. The problems experienced (also noted by others, including Ross, Stewart, & Baldwin, 2007) proved a distraction from benefiting from it to the maximum. Much of this also had to do with expectations of what being an on-campus student meant; from lecturers’ anecdotal reports, this is lessening as students come to understand what blended delivery entails, and with continuous development in the technology. There have been considerable improvements in the videoconferencing facilities and quality since the establishment of the MGRC, and these upgrades are continuing.

The limited numbers that Centra can accommodate were an issue. The financial outlay needed for obtaining suitable equipment, technical problems, the need to be familiar with the technology and sometimes to overcome fear of it, and difficulty in finding a common time for participants to meet for
a session were also challenges. Time and personnel resources were a real constraint. It is suggested that Centra sessions be embedded into the timetable, to allow for adequate numbers of sessions to cater for all students who want to participate, and to allow for workload adjustments.

Reasons why some students have been reluctant to engage fully in activities such as the discussion pages and Centra include: lack of access to the technology; unfamiliarity with the system; or unwillingness to spend time on something if it is not seen as relevant. Access is less an issue now than in the past, when home Internet connections were less common, but it is still very real for some, according to our experience. Other improvements can be effected through better induction, and by making sure that discussion topics are relevant, and that students can see how they can benefit from participation. (For useful tips for optimal student engagement, see http://www.unisa.edu.au/helpstudents/discussion/tips.asp.) An assessable component that relies on the use of the technology is also likely to increase participation (Keens & Inglis, 2001; Martyn, 2005). Continuing to advance the technology so that it runs smoothly and efficiently will remove other barriers.

For further detail, see an earlier paper by the authors [Penman & Ellis, 2007].

Other implications

Provisioning a high tech/high touch balance

The “high tech” of technological resources and the “high touch” of human responses to them are aspects of learning that the academic must strive to balance; technology successfully enhanced “high touch” in the case of the discussion pages and Centra, adding value to their course. This was less so with videoconferencing, which many students saw as a poor substitute for face-to-face teaching. The discussion pages used “high tech” but also provided “high touch”, enabling lecturers and students to interact with each other, perhaps more than they would have done in face-to-face circumstances, as Arbaugh (2000) found with graduate students. The following student comment reveals the “high touch” aspect of the experience with sophisticated technology:

I read the discussion page every night and have found it to be very helpful. I felt there was concern and interest in my learning and this inspired me to do my best.

The fact that Centra sessions were provided showed that the lecturer was interested in students’ learning needs, and it was an opportunity to encourage students having difficulty with the course (Table 18–4 and Table 18–5). Both Centra and the discussion pages had “high touch” benefits for the lecturer as well as the students:
I love your encouragement and way of teaching. (Student)

My students like you are my inspiration. You keep me on my toes, challenging me to be better each time. (Lecturer)

These technologies can expand possibilities for connectivity, building new relationships with people in the university, the workplace and beyond. Balance is needed so that technology is integrated into existing systems, converging in a “high tech high touch hybrid” (Green, 2001). Further research examining the lived experience of students with technology is desirable; this is the only way to understand fully the impact on the students’ learning and satisfaction with their university studies. The evaluation instruments could be improved in order to reflect specific areas of benefits and possible improvements, and to delve further into the “high touch” aspects. The use of focus groups could be considered.

Providing a quality university experience and graduate outcomes

The goal of such learning context changes, mediated by technology, is to enhance the quality of students’ learning and university experience, and to produce quality graduates, through improving the quality of the courses and their delivery. Our university has clear indicators for each graduate quality; the following student comments support the attainment of qualities such as professional knowledge base, lifelong learning, and collaboration, as well as reflecting the notion of “high touch”:

…I have enjoyed reading the discussion page. I learned more. It is nice to have a lecturer who works with students.

I have been checking the discussion pages a lot, although quietly, and found your encouragement and driven attitude to be very helpful!

I was motivated to continue studying, and to becoming a lifelong learner.

Leadership

While university leadership decisions enable the implementation of new technologies, in all these changes in ways of delivering courses, success is fostered by the leadership of those actively involved in using these technologies to enhance their learning and teaching practice, particularly those in a position to spread information about the innovations and encourage their use. These enthusiastic champions (Salveron, Arney, & Scott, 2006) implement strategies that suit the academic needs of their students, and have the potential to influence and shape students’ attitudes and decisions about the technology. Moreover, satisfied students, who have experienced the new technology, can become leaders themselves, encouraging others to get the most out of it as well.
Conclusion

All three technologies, to varying extents, have helped the students by providing options, choices, flexibility, accessibility and a new way of learning and by meeting their needs for greater connection/interaction, and some control over their learning with regard to time and place. Issues of encouraging participation in discussion pages, technological difficulties in videoconferencing as well as in Centra, and scheduling conflicts for Centra are some areas for improvement. Some indications of means of addressing these have been discussed above, along with implications for quality and leadership.

The purpose of any change should be to enhance the status quo or replace it with a superior alternative, not simply to change for the sake of change. Continuing evaluation and reflection are important, so that the uses of ICTs that have been implemented can be adjusted to maximum effect. Our interpretation of our students’ experiences with technology has shown that “high tech” leads to, and necessitates, “high touch”, with greater emphasis on positive human interaction and relationship building, being pivotal to successful learning and greater student satisfaction. Items that explicitly gauge this aspect need to be incorporated in future evaluations.

References


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Chapter Nineteen:
Dialogism and Social Computing: Academic Authorship in Cyberspace

Celia Thompson

Abstract

Questions concerning authorship, originality and plagiarism continue to echo through the halls of academe, especially when assessments of student assignments are due. In recent years, these concerns have increased as concepts of authorship and the processes of knowledge/text production have begun to change with the development of Web 2.0 authoring tools such as blogs, podcasts, social bookmarking and wikis. This chapter investigates how the use of these cyber tools in higher education contexts challenges traditional views of authorship as autonomous and singular, thus highlighting an urgent need to develop a theoretical framework that is responsive to such changing authorship practices. Bakhtin’s notion of dialogism (1984), and Kristeva’s concept of the subject-in-process-and-on-trial (1986a, 1986b, 1986c, 1996), have formed the framework for analysis of university student and staff interviews, together with extracts from student assignments, which comprised data gathered for a doctoral dissertation on the politics of knowledge, writer identity and textual ownership (Thompson, 2006). Drawing on this study, it is suggested that as university educators we need to create a “cyberpedagogy” that embraces the notion of text as multi-voiced and dynamic if we are to develop an approach to textual ownership that enables our students to become legitimate digital authors (or “prosumers”) in the increasingly dominant and ever-changing world of cyberspace.

Introduction

The research and pedagogical issues discussed in this chapter have emerged from a learning and teaching university context that was very different 10 years ago. Like elsewhere, Australian universities have been transformed in recent times in order to address the needs of their culturally diverse and potentially globally mobile student populations. Not only do 16 per cent of
the Australian population speak a language other than English in the home (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007) but also the number of overseas students attending Australian universities comprised almost one quarter (23 per cent) of all university students in the first half of 2006 (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2007). It is within such transcultural (Singh & Doherty, 2004) learning and teaching environments that universities have needed to rise to the challenge in order to frame and deliver their pedagogical objectives using new and appropriate forms of information communication technologies (Kell, 2002; Taylor et al., 1997, p. 4).

The ‘knowledge age’ in which we live has been fuelled by a technological revolution that has led to the creation of the World Wide Web and more recently to the development of its second version—known as Web 2.0. The latter, while still in its development stage, has already been heralded as one of the most significant enablers of new forms of computer-based communication media ever to be created (e.g., Collis & Moonen, 2006; Richardson, 2006). Universities are viewed by the global communities that they serve as educational leaders who are creative, yet critical, knowledge producers, located at the cutting edge of their disciplinary developments (Marginson & Considine, 2000); consequently, they need to be able to address effectively the challenges posed by Web 2.0’s new battery of facilitating tools for knowledge production such as blogs, social bookmarking, podcasts and wikis to their modes of pedagogical delivery and assessment (see Lorenzo et al., 2007).

These challenges extend to issues relating to the construction of author identity (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, pp. 131–132); the authority (Young, 2007, p. 13) and credibility (Young, p. 183) of electronic texts over print media; questions concerning student authorship and ownership of the kinds of text/knowledge artefacts that these new communication media generate (e.g., Landow, 2006, pp. 305–306); and the problem of the “author function” (Foucault, 1997), when traditional boundaries between textual producers (writers) and consumers (readers) are merging to create the “prosumer”: the simultaneous producer and consumer of digital texts and identities (Satchell, as cited in Scott, 2007, p. 5).

Based on earlier research into plagiarism, intertextuality and the politics of knowledge, identity and textual ownership1, it is argued in this chapter that it is especially necessary as university educators that we lead the way in a reconceptualisation of the author as a unified and autonomous producer

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1 The data referred to in this chapter were gathered for my doctoral dissertation. The students were completing undergraduate studies in the same Australian university as the staff members. Participation in the study was voluntary. All participants attended semi-structured interviews of between 60 and 90 minutes in length. Data analysis occurred in three stages, with the work of Bakhtin and Kristeva providing the final conceptual tools for analysis (see Thompson [2006] for more details).
of original texts. In the era of Web 2.0 authoring tools and socially produced text/knowledge artefacts, which are “giving more people a voice” (Freedland, 2007, p. 19), the importance of understanding and legitimising text/knowledge construction in the academy as the dialogic (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984) and intertextual multi-voiced creation of dynamic subjects-in-process-and-on-trial (Kristeva, 1986a, 1986b, 1986c, 1996) has never been greater.

The wiki as an example of a Web 2.0 Authoring Tool

The word “wiki” takes its origins from an Hawaiian expression “wiki wiki”, which denotes “quick”, and refers to an interactive Web site (or dynamic knowledge base) whose content can be edited by its users. According to Daniel (2006), Ward Cunningham developed the first wiki in 1994, which was called “WikiWikiWeb”; this was put online in 1995. The free online encyclopaedia called Wikipedia was created in 2001 by Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger (both from the United States of America), and can be edited by anyone from anywhere in the world. Content on the site is checked regularly by a group of ‘expert’ editors for accuracy and appropriateness. It now carries well in excess of one million articles (Schiff, 2006, p. 36).

However, the credentials of one of its editors were called into question recently, when The New Yorker magazine investigated the educational background of Essjay. It was found that Ryan Jordan (Essjay) held no higher degrees, and that his claims to be a professor of religion at a private university were false (Elsworth, 2007). Wales asked Jordan to resign. This occurrence clearly highlights the potential problems of epistemological instability and authenticity associated with the making and remaking of knowledge claims in borderless virtual environments.

There are a number of key issues relating to teaching, learning and digital authorship that seem common to the literature on wikis (and blogs). For instance, since these communication tools reflect constructivist principles of knowledge and information production, the need for the creation of opportunities for maximum student involvement in the use of these tools in educational contexts seems self-evident. Collis and Moonen (2006) discuss the value of “the contributing student” and their potential role in the development of Web-based learning materials, especially as students often know more about, and have more experience of, e-learning tools than their teachers (Richardson, 2006).

It would seem to be a pedagogical commonsense that the more students are engaged in managing their own learning processes, the greater their sense of individual ownership will be over the knowledge that they produce. In other words, what might previously have been viewed as ‘domain’ knowledge

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2 See Holmes et al. (2001) for an interesting discussion of the nature of the concept of “communal constructivism.”
owned only by experts has the possibility of becoming transformed into the intellectual property and ‘personal’ knowledge of the learner (see Penrose & Geisler, 1994). It is arguable, therefore, that emerging technologies such as wikis are creating “a society of authorship” (Rushkoff, 2004), where online publication provides the writer/author with access to a ‘real’ audience (albeit still ‘virtual’) that extends beyond the learner/teacher world determined by the physical confines of the pre-Internet traditional classroom environment.

The use of wikis (and blogs) as learning tools promotes learning as interactive, social and “borderless”, where the co-construction of open-ended texts is undertaken by “prosumers” who are “always in the process of becoming” (McWilliam, 1996). Such texts anticipate readers’ responses and authors’ reflections and revisions and have led to the birth of a new genre of textual (re)production, which Richardson has termed “connective writing” (2006, p. 29). There are several significant implications for the theory and practice of literacy when students are not only readers and writers of texts, but also their collaborative producers and editors (Richardson, 2006). Such forms of engagement and textual reworkings require the development of a new language (and meta-language) that is capable of naming the new digital literacies and competencies that are emerging. Terms such as digital natives, digital immigrants and the hypertext mind (along with the “prosumer”) are clear examples of this (see Prensky, 2001).

The Dialogic Struggle to construct Text/knowledge and Authorial Identity

In earlier research (Thompson, 2006) the ways in which undergraduate university students used source materials in their research-based assignments were examined. The research participants (both staff and students) described their understandings of the processes involved in the construction of text/knowledge and authorial identity, which included tensions concerning identity, authorship, textual originality and writer authority. It has been Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism (1981, 1984) and Kristeva’s belief in the intertextual creation of subjectivity (1986a, 1986b, 1986c, 1996) that have provided the greatest insights into the ways in which low status emergent writers, such as Caroline and Tony (see below), struggle to become legitimate academic authors by attempting to appropriate and claim ownership over the domain knowledge that they encounter in their high status disciplinary source texts. It is precisely this traditional division between the production and the consumption of text/knowledge that in an academic environment maintains the separation between the scholar/expert (producer) and the student/novice (consumer). The use of Web 2.0 authoring tools in the academy, it is argued, has the potential to reconfigure text/knowledge production processes and to legitimise emergent student authorship through the creation of the read/
write textual “prosumer”.

Bakhtin conceives the construction of texts as a form of “dialogue” that occurs not only between different individuals (“external” dialogue—for example, where different textual producers and consumers engage with the language and ideas of other textual producers and consumers) but also within the individual in what he terms “interior” or “internal” dialogue (1981, p. 427): a “dialogue with the self” (1984, p. 213). In these exchanges that take place within all individuals, the words that are used are “double-voiced”. Within each of these “double-voicings”, Bakhtin believes that a conflict between voices occurs as each strives to communicate with the other “These voices are not self-enclosed or deaf to one another. They hear each other constantly, call back and forth to each other, and are reflected in one another” (1984, pp. 74–75).

Not only do individual textual producers and consumers engage with each other’s language and ideas but also the language and ideas of the “conversations” and “debates” that one has with oneself during the process of textual creation are simultaneously socio-historic and personal/autobiographical in nature. For Bakhtin, these textual multivoicings are sites where competing interests struggle for dominance, both among and within individuals. Such a fragmented and conflicting view of “the self” is common in poststructuralist thinking, whereby identity (or “subjectivity”) is conceived as constructed by language and produced through different social, political and economic discursive practices, “the meanings of which are a constant site of struggle over power” (Weedon, 1997, p. 21).

For Kristeva, both producers and readers of texts, therefore, experience what she terms “the same putting-into-process of … identities”, which engage with one another to produce meanings; these meanings, however, are not fixed but are in a constant state of flux and may change over time (Kristeva, 1996, pp. 190–191). Kristeva compares these different components of an individual’s identity to the facets of a diamond, suggesting that it is along the borderlines of these different facets that the greatest degrees of fragility are located (see Kristeva, 1996, p. 203). Furthermore claims Kristeva, the subject is dynamic and in a constant process of becoming, while at the same time being “on trial” (p. 190).

It is this sense of conflict (the dialogic-self), struggle and fragility in conjunction with a notion of subjectivity as evolving under the scrutiny of others (“on trial”), which it is believed characterises the processes of text/knowledge and identity formation that abound in the kinds of social computing practices that the Web 2.0 enables contemporary university students to pursue. As potential designers and assessors of such intertextual activities, we clearly need to understand the implications of these practices for the ways in which we conceive of the notion 3 The importance of such interrelationships (especially among Bakhtin, hypertext and multivocality) have also been noted by Landow (2006, p. 56).
of authorship and textual ownership in the academy. It is to the analysis of two undergraduate university students’ intertextual academic writing practices that we will now turn to illustrate the case being made.

**Caroline’s Construction of Intertextual Authority**

Caroline (all participants’ names have been changed) was Australian-born, spoke English as her first language and was in her thirties at the time of her interview for the study presented here. She was in her second semester of part-time study at a major Australian university for a degree in Media and Communications. The assignment discussed below was submitted for assessment in a first year subject on contemporary culture and media. Students were required to analyse an advertising image or photograph, drawing on a semiotic analytical framework discussed in class and based on the work of Thwaites et al. (1994). Caroline chose an advertisement for Kirov vodka.

In her interview, Caroline described how she wanted to be able to participate in this new field of study by appropriating and demystifying the terminology of semiotics, in order to claim ownership over its language and content. Such acts of appropriation and “re-accenting”, where speakers or writers force the language that they choose to use to comply with their own particular intentions, carry with them a degree of uncertainty and risk, as Bakhtin explains:

> ... not all words for just anyone submit equally easily to this appropriation, to this seizure and transformation into private property: many words stubbornly resist, others remain alien, sound foreign in the mouth of the one who appropriated them and who now speaks them; they cannot be assimilated into his [sic] context and fall out of it; it is as if they put themselves in quotation marks against the will of the speaker. (1981, p. 294)

Furthermore, how can Caroline ensure that her attempts to “demystify” and “claim ownership over” certain words will not be rejected by her lecturers and tutors? It is this sort of asymmetrical tension that Canagarajah (2002) discusses in relation to the kinds of textual negotiations that multilingual students undertake as they attempt to forge new rhetorical and discursive identities for themselves as academic writers in English.

In his study Canagarajah (2002) distinguishes between textual acts of opposition and textual acts of appropriation. The former, he suggests, may fail to engage sufficiently with the dominant discourse conventions to pose a viable counter-discursive challenge and are therefore more likely to be ignored and rejected by the target audience. By contrast, Canagarajah argues that acts of appropriation are more “empowering” because they are “more
synthetic and dialogical”, since they create points of textual connection with the dominant conventions that have the potential to disrupt the stability of historically established forms of discourse (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 116).

Although Caroline is clearly not reacting to a history of colonial oppression, as experienced by the students in Canagarajah’s study, the kind of intertextual engagement that she is seeking can be usefully compared to the ways in which the collective electronic practices, facilitated by blogs and wikis used by Generation Y students, or “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001) pose a counter-discursive challenge by disrupting the dominant view of authorship in the academy as autonomous and singular that is associated with the production and consumption of print-based ‘original’ texts.

When Caroline described her use of source materials in her semiotic analysis of the Kirov advertisement, she stated that she had been told by her tutor that she did not need to “do any research”, and that she should “tap into [her] own personal experience and imagination” to complete the assignment. This caused some consternation for Caroline:

I imagine they want you to use the [subject] readings, but the tutor definitely said, “You do not have to research this exercise”. But to me, if you don’t research this exercise to a degree … if you were brilliant and if you knew this subject well fine, perhaps you could get 1500 words of eloquent, flowing critical analysis … but I think I would struggle with my own ideas without doing some research, really. Plus, I think I have to research because I don’t think I am proficient enough with the terms not to research.

Here Caroline highlights the struggle that she is experiencing in understanding how to participate in the construction of disciplinary text/knowledge as an emergent academic writer. She considers herself to be neither “brilliant” nor familiar with the subject material and therefore she is dependent on engaging with her course readings in order to “free up” her own ideas and develop the linguistic means through which she could express them. Caroline emphasised that she did have ideas of her own (“I’ve got ideas”) and saw research as a means of supporting the ideas that she had. Unlike Tony below, Caroline is envisioning a dialogic approach to epistemology and academic authorship, in which her ‘own’ ideas could play a legitimate role—an approach that resonates with Richardson’s concept of “connective writing” (2006, p. 29).

In her interview Caroline explained the nature of the “intertextual links with Russia” that she claimed were evoked by the word “KIROV” (see Figure 19–1 below):
The name KIROV also has intertextual links with Russia. The name evokes the Kirov Orchestra, Ballet and Sergei Kirov, a Russian Revolutionary and member of the Communist Party. Kirov was murdered on a cold December day in 1934 and it is interesting that the logo in the advertisement is portrayed as cold and the red used for KIROV in this band is reminiscent of the colour of blood.

Caroline was asked whether or not she already knew, before writing the assignment, that Sergei Kirov (a member of the Communist Party when Stalin was General Secretary in the former Soviet Union) “was murdered on a cold December day in 1934”, as she claimed (see Thompson, 2002 for discussion of the same point), since this was particularly an example of the kind of detail that she might have acquired as a result of researching into Kirov’s life. Caroline replied that she had obtained the information from a Web site:

I just did a little bit of homework on Kirov. I just looked up on the Net. I just put in a search for Kirov. I thought, “Kirov’s fairly well known historically”. I was going to source but I don’t know why I didn’t. I didn’t actually quote. I summarised what I saw and just took the bits I wanted. It was a bit like a dictionary summary. No-one had laid claim to that site in terms of a name. It was just a Web site… Do you think I should have? I guess I should have; I probably should have.

Caroline’s comments highlight five important points that pose considerable difficulties for students, especially in their first year of university study, as they struggle to engage with the processes of disciplinary text/knowledge construction to create a sense of authorial presence in their writing. First, Caroline believed that Kirov was a well-known historical figure. As she stated later in her interview, although her “Russian knowledge wasn’t particularly brilliant, anyone with a bit of Russian knowledge would perhaps know those things”. It could be argued therefore that Caroline appropriated this information to demonstrate to her marker her insider knowledge about one of Russia’s revolutionary figures, as a means of trying to assert her authority as a writer in her assignment.

Second, she believed that she had summarised rather than quoted from the source, implying that by producing a summary she had already reworked the source material sufficiently to be able to claim (at least partial) ownership over it. Third, as opposed to wholesale copying of the entire text from the Web site, she engaged in a form of “patchwriting” (Howard, 1999) by taking “the bits [she] wanted” to reshape for use in her own context. Fourth, Caroline believed that the information was presented in the format of a dictionary, suggesting a form of “general” or “common” knowledge that she in turn could appropriate. Fifth, there is the issue of authorless Web sites that lend themselves to acts of appropriation, since they do
not conform to traditional notions of textual ownership and attribution practices (Landow, 2006). Despite such possible explanations, however, Caroline had clearly begun to wonder whether her appropriation of the information from the Kirov Web site was indeed acceptable. (“Do you think I should have [referenced]? I guess I should have, I probably should have”.)

Ben, the lecturer responsible for coordinating the subject for which Caroline submitted the above analysis, stated that such referencing omissions would not be judged as transgressive, since referencing would not have been deemed a central aim of the assignment. He added that students often had difficulty with critical analyses, especially of “texts which seem to be a little more authoritative and more legitimate—published critical texts.” This was the rationale behind asking students to select advertisements for critical analysis, as he felt that they would find visual texts in particular to be more accessible.

Questions of authority and legitimacy were also central to Tony’s struggle for engagement in and ownership of the academic writing that he produced for assessment, a case that we now examine.

**Tony’s Search for Authority and Legitimacy in His Writing**

Tony was in his forties at the time of our interview; he was born in Turkey, and speaks Turkish as his first language. He had been living in Australia for 38 years, completing his final years of primary and all of his secondary schooling in English, and was returning to study after 24 years to enrol in a Law degree. The essay that he submitted was entitled *What are the implications of the decision in Osland v R (1998) 73 A.L.J.R. 173 for women who resort to deadly force against their abusers and are charged with murder?* The assignment was set for the subject “Criminal Law and Procedure”, and required students to discuss the difficulties involved in deciding whether or not women who had experienced periods of physical abuse by their partners (“battered woman syndrome”), whom they subsequently killed, were entitled to be treated differently (a plea of “manslaughter” might be considered acceptable) from other cases where “deadly force” had been used (see Thompson, 2005 for an extended discussion)⁴.

In his interview, Tony explained that although in legal writing “authority is everything”, he saw his role as comparing and criticising the “underlying philosophies” of the writers of his reading materials. Legal writing was especially onerous he claimed, because the consequences of misquotation

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⁴ I would like to thank the editor of the *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, Tracey Bretag and former editor Helen Marsden, for granting permission to re-use some of the data and discussion above that relate to Tony. The relevant sections of the original first appeared in Thompson (2005, pp. 7–9).
could be far-reaching “Someone could misquote and it could have bad repercussions. You’ve got to be precise in saying what a judge said [otherwise] someone could sue you. That’s why a lot of importance is placed on it.”

As the first paragraph of Tony’s assignment shows (see Figure 19–2 below), the first three sentences contain footnotes. The fourth and fifth sentences are without references, and were highlighted by Leila (the Law lecturer participating in this research) as problematic and in need of supporting footnotes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tony (p. 1, paragraph 1)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Osland v R(^1) is significant because for the first time the relevance of battered woman syndrome (BWS) has been considered by the High Court. In R v Runjanic; R v Kontinnen(^2) it was said that BWS was ‘so special, so outside ordinary experience’ that expert evidence should be made available to the courts to judge the situations(^3). The Osland case was complicated by, and turned on, the question of inconsistent verdicts in the context of defendants who acted in concert(^4). While BWS was discussed in Osland, Kirby and Callinan JJ said that there was no place in Australian law for a defence of BWS. The appeal did not proceed on that basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Ibid, at 118.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 19–2: Tony’s assignment extract

As an educator, Leila believed that it was her responsibility to provide students with “the tools to work with”, so that they could “develop their own style.” Tony could have achieved this by developing an argument that “sounded” convincing:

This student, if they’d simply had a more coherent argument, could have sounded as if they were expressing more of a line. One of the problems with this [Tony’s writing], is that it’s never really clear what the line is.

Leila elaborated that it would have been acceptable for students to have simply repeated the ideas contained in their sources, providing that they had demonstrated that they had consulted and understood a range of material and had developed a well-structured argument. More sophisticated writers would have had “a much greater sense of what their argument is” and, although this would still have been derived from their readings, they would have been able to present their argument “more creatively,” Leila added. However, clarifying exactly how students could be “more creative” in their writing was difficult. She commented: “It’s such an intangible, I think. They can put the argument in just a slightly better way, perhaps not so pedestrian.” Her principal criticism of the essay was as follows:
There’s no sense in which the student [Tony] has set out what they’re claiming and there’s no sense in which they bring that together at the end … That student has never got beyond simply putting down what other people have said; never been able to extract from that and say, “Well, that then supports this.”

It was precisely how to get “beyond simply putting down what other people have said” to the point where (as Tony put it) “a mutated expression/idea become[s] one’s own” that he found so difficult in legal writing. Tony exclaimed that he “didn’t see how else [he] could do it,” because it was always necessary to find support for any arguments presented “As far as the arguments go, they’re all said … so as a student I’m not going to be able to contribute with much original material because it’s all there.”

If knowledge claims are viewed as unauthored, unassailable and “true”, then the authorship function becomes synonymous with that of a reporter who reports on “truths” (Penrose & Geisler, 1994). The author as “outsider” view of textual production subscribes to an information transfer model of learning and is in marked contrast to constructivist notions of knowledge production (Penrose & Geisler, 1994, pp. 514–515), in which the role of the writer is conceived as that of an (inter)textual creator. On the one hand, Tony seems resigned to holding a fixed view of legal writing as a source of finite arguments (“they’re all said”) and knowledge (“it’s all there”) produced by non-agentive writers, yet on the other hand he states that legal writing is not as formulaic as a mathematical equation where “2 + 2 = 4” since “subjectivity always comes into everything”. Dealing with two such conflicting positions is clearly very problematic for Tony. He commented that he was criticised by his marker for using other people’s ideas, but then asked “How else could [I] do it?” He described his frustration and powerlessness at only being awarded a Pass grade of between 50 per cent and 64 per cent (“I thought that was a bit subjective. Who am I to question, I suppose”), adding:

I really should have helped myself more. I didn’t consult the lecturer at all. I did it on my own … Writing a paper you’ve got to get some feedback and get some pointers and then you’re on to a better track but … doing it on your own, not knowing really what the lecturer wants is not a good way to go.

Here it is suggested that Tony is the subject-on-trial writing for assessment, tapping into what Kristeva has termed the subject–addressee (or writer–reader) dimension of intertextual production and meaning negotiation (1986, p. 37). Although he did not in fact discuss his assignment with his lecturer, he conceives of academic writing as interactive and consultative (“Writing a paper you’ve got to get some feedback and get some pointers”). Here Tony is highlighting the intertextual and dialogic nature of the struggle that he has experienced in the processes of text/knowledge construction and writer identity.
formation, which constitute such an integral and complex part of writing for
the academy. As Penrose and Geisler (1994, p. 517) have pointed out, it is
only by “understanding the development of knowledge as a communal and
continuous process” that student writers can gain control and authority over
the texts that they produce, and thus begin the process of overcoming the
traditional producer/expert and consumer/novice divide highlighted above. It
is precisely this potential for control and authority as intertextual “prosumers”
that Web 2.0 authoring tools have the facility to offer.

Academic Authorship in Cyberspace: Concluding
Comments

As discussed above, both Caroline and Tony have highlighted the
necessity of engaging with the ideas of others in the processes of academic
text production and emergent authorship. Caroline believed that it was through
researching that she would develop her disciplinary knowledge; this in turn
would familiarise her with the terminology required to articulate the ideas
that she wanted to express in a form that would legitimise the text that she
produced. For Caroline, the process of becoming a credible and authoritative
academic author was inextricably linked to the reading/research process (see
also Landow, 2006, p. xiv). In Tony’s case, not only did he recognise the need
to engage with the ideas from his source texts, but also he expressed a desire
to receive feedback from his lecturer before producing a final version of his
writing for assessment.

Ben and Leila, the lecturers who participated in this study, were also
aware of the importance of the reading/writing nexus. It was with the express
intention of legitimising students’ developing understanding of and writing
on semiotics that Ben encouraged students to engage with visual (advertising)
texts, which he felt were less intimidating and therefore more accessible
than writings published by academic authors. Leila clearly recognised the
intertextual nature of academic writing, commenting that students needed to
“develop their own style” in order to produce arguments that were “more
creative” if they were to sound convincing. She struggled to articulate,
however, exactly how to enable students in their written assignments to go
beyond “simply putting down what other people have said.”

The fact that texts are dialogically and inter-subjectively constructed by
writers in relation to other texts, and in turn dialogically and inter-subjectively
constructed by readers in relation to other (and different) texts, is crucial to
the development of our understanding of the processes involved in academic
authorship in cyberspace. Such a view of authorship encompasses the open-
ended and continuous nature of texts produced through blogs, wikis and other
social computing activities (e.g., bookmarking) that have been afforded by the advent of Web 2.0. Furthermore, providing that there is access to the Internet, wikis and other e-learning tools that are available to anyone, any time clearly offer the potential for increased student engagement through a democratisation of learning and knowledge production (Sunstein, 2006, p. 149).

Knowledge management systems such as e-portfolios, digital filing cabinets and personalised databases have already become a reality for the younger digital natives (see the University of Technology Sydney [2007] online e-portfolios Web site, which provides an excellent example of how educators can begin to engage in pedagogically effective ways with these new interactive technologies): it is the older digital immigrants who are likely to be less proficient users of such tools. It is essential, therefore, that such inter-generational differences be confronted effectively, since it is precisely within our classrooms and computer-enabled virtual worlds where different kinds of literacy and textual forms (e.g., audio, visual and hypertext), and different levels of digital competency, are struggling for dominance (Jewitt, 2006).

It is the open-ended and continuous nature of wikis (and blogs) that is so well-suited for use, for example, in review exercises involving student writers, their peers, their teachers and potential others (contributors from beyond the students’ immediate academic environments). Such exercises could focus on the process of academic writing, emphasising the synthetic and dialogical aspects of intertextual production which, as Canagarajah has argued, can lead to a greater sense of empowerment in emergent student authors (2002, p. 116).

Furthermore, the visually explicit (i.e., screen-based) medium through which the comments would be lodged would not only expose the dynamic and inter-subjective nature of the dialogues that are inherent in the construction of all text/knowledge for the students to see but also provide academics with innovative pedagogical tools that could make the teaching of such academic writing practices more transparent. The open access feature of Web 2.0 authoring tools, which allows for the possibility of contributions from expert disciplinary specialists (as with Wikipedia), could add further credibility and authority to students’ final written products5, as well as providing students with the opportunity to develop their critical thinking abilities as they evaluate the usefulness of the comments that they receive.

As educators, we need to be able to lead the way in the design of appropriate and challenging curricula and assessment tasks that critically examine, rather than simply describe the challenges posed by these literacies (see also Byiers, 2005; Jewitt, 2006; Martin, 2005; Martin & Madigan, 2006), so that we can

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5 However, as the case cited above by Elsworth (2007) demonstrated, the authenticity of so called ‘experts’ would need to be carefully monitored.
capitalise on the levels of engagement, motivation and knowledge of e-learning tools that our students are already demonstrating. In sum, the advent of Web 2.0 in the academy has created a new and potentially democratising cybertool, which requires lecturers to shed traditional notions of the author as unified and singular in favour of a dynamic view of authorship that embraces the concept of students as legitimate “prosumers”: the simultaneous producers and consumers of dialogic and multivocal texts.

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Bionotes

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