Chapter Two: Bachelor of Learning Management Initiatives: Preferred and Actual Futures

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Abstract

It is argued in this chapter that we live in the knowledge economy, a term coined by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development in a report entitled *The Knowledge Based Economy* (1996). According to this report, the economy has become a hierarchy of networks fuelled by the rapid rate of change in all aspects of life, including learning, which in turn has compressed the world, encouraging the merging of the world's economic and cultural systems. Contemporary economic and social contexts coupled with competing perspectives on the "future" place significant demands upon educators and educational leaders who are increasingly expected to act in futures-oriented ways whilst also remaining true to the professional standards of their present environments (Faculty of Education and Creative Arts, 2003).

In response to these issues and internal organisational reviews of Central Queensland University, the revision and renewal of a number of degrees currently being offered by the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Education have become increasingly necessary. The Bachelor of Learning Management (BLM) is one program that is claimed to be a new and innovative pre-service teaching degree. This chapter explores a project that was undertaken to investigate current student perceptions of the extent to which the BLM has met these claims. Of particular interest was, firstly, student satisfaction with and achievement in the degree and, secondly, the extent to which the BLM has managed to broker the change needed to deliver the required client outcomes.

Globalisation, the Knowledge Economy and Lifelong Learning

It is difficult to engage in a discussion about education today without having to address the concept of change and/or eventually acknowledging that things have changed (Peters, 2001). Contemporary economic and social contexts coupled with competing perspectives on the future place significant demands upon educators and educational leaders who are increasingly expected to act in futures-oriented ways whilst also remaining true to the professional standards of their present environments (Faculty of Education and Creative Arts, 2003).

Thinking about the future of education is not new. What is argued from this research is that today's youth interpret, interact with and experience the world (in general) and the visual world (more specifically) in ways significantly different from previous generations. As a consequence of this, education as traditionally taught or experienced also has to respond to changing circumstances.

Regardless of how we conceive of youth, it is unlikely that we would argue against the fact that the world in which youth operate has changed, boundaries have become unclear (Buckingham, 2000) and the passage of youth has become uncertain. In order to explore this construction of how the world has changed, this chapter examines the impact of the recently implemented pre-service Bachelor of Learning Management (BLM) teacher degree at Central Queensland University (CQU). It examines how the BLM has attempted to respond to the changing global environment and how these responses have been brokered between key stakeholders and knowledge producers, products or services that are valued by the broader community (Florida, 2002; Walker-Gibbs, 2001, 2003).

As Crump (2002, p. 1) argued: "Educational institutes are facing increasing challenges in responding to changes in the nature of their business needs, service delivery needs and community expectations. Facilities capable of responding to these changes will be very different to what they are today". Success has therefore become dependent on all stakeholders' abilities to negotiate, navigate and broker access to and use of information—in effect to become part of the increasing population of knowledge workers (Morris, 2000). The stakeholders in the context of this chapter are the pre-service teachers as students, the schooling communities in which they will be employed and the communities in which they will live.

Today we live in the knowledge economy, a term coined by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) in a report entitled *The Knowledge-Based Economy* (1996). According to this

report, the economy has become a hierarchy of networks fuelled by the rapid rate of change in all aspects of life, including learning. This in turn has compressed the world, encouraging the merging of the world's economic and cultural systems. This phenomenon is also known as globalisation, the primary cause of recent change in both economies and societies. The knowledge economy is defined as a network of economies based on the production, distribution and use of knowledge and information. The key commodity in the new economy is knowledge and a key feature of the economy is the way that knowledge is used to create new products and services (Lynch, 2003). In response to this increasing need to manage knowledge, governments all over the world, including the Queensland Government, have reacted by implementing policies (such as 'Queensland: the Smart State') which embrace this ideology. Unfortunately, teacher training institutions have generally not embraced the concept that this is a world in which learners require different skills for a different labour force to meet different challenges in order to create very different futures. Fundamentally, this changed world requires a change in pedagogical practices and, by implication, a change in teacher preparation programs (Lynch, 2003, p. 6).

The knowledge economy increases the importance of lifelong and autonomous learning. As the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (1996, p. 19) posit:

> …it is indeed the changing nature of *work* that now makes lifelong learning …so imperative. It is…expected that there will be a strong, and potentially unsatisfied, demand for highly skilled professional, technical, administrative and managerial staff…[T]he demands of this new knowledge economy mean that qualifications are becoming obsolete more quickly than ever. [original]

As a consequence, it is now recognised that all sectors of the economy, including education, must respond to this new demand by equipping young people, including graduates, with the knowledge and skills necessary to operate in this new milieu. This means that teaching graduates must be equipped with skills in how to learn and how to access information—in short, how to manage their own learning and how to facilitate the continuing learning of others.

Linked to these discourses is the need to become more creative about how we cope with/in the information economy in which we are situated and how this will lead to a reconceptualising of educational practices. According to Florida (2002, pp. 4–5):

> What's more fundamentally true is that we now have an economy powered by human creativity….In virtually every industry, from automobiles to fashion, food products, and information technology itself, the winners in the long run are those who can create and keep creating.

Hence the preparation of teachers as learning managers needs to be more readily responsive to changes in the skill needs of the workplace.

Teacher Preparation: The Preferred Future

There has been much debate about teacher preparation at all levels of society nationally and internationally with regard to the kinds of philosophy and practice that should regulate the pre-service preparation of teachers in the new knowledge age (Gardner, 1999). Because of new demands on teachers and schools, there is a need to link schools and university courses in a way that connects students to the lifelong learning knowledge economy of the 21st century. As a result of these new demands on teachers, there has been a pressing need for pre-service teacher preparation courses that provide for the needs and meets the demands of this new age, in particular, regarding the self-regulation of pre-service teachers so that they can better manage their own learning (Smith, 2000).

Whilst the demands for change have been loud, responses to these demands from educational institutions, especially faculties of education, have been slow, and many institutions continue to deliver courses based on institutional needs rather than the pressing needs of students and the economy. Although this is not to suggest that universities are merely training institutions and it is acknowledged that they can also be seen to have wider educational functions, what is suggested is that the slowness of the response reflects the problematic relationship between schools and universities that has existed for decades as a result of structural constraints that have continued to isolate the world of teacher education from that of teachers (Thompson, Smith, & Mienczakowski, 2002). It is argued that the solution is a pedagogical scaffold that bridges the theory/practice divide and demonstrates good teaching practice (Lynch, 2003, p. 8). The result will be graduates with better skills that will enable them to face the working realities of professionals employed in the knowledge economy and to graduate

students with exemplary techniques to manage their own educational experiences (Thompson, Smith, & Mienczakowski, 2002).

Brokering Change: The Actual Future

As has already been discussed, there is a need for change to occur in the field of teacher education. The rhetoric that has been discussed so far presents the case in a way that appears to be fairly straightforward—that is, that change needs to happen and this is how it should happen. What this rhetoric does not make explicit is the fact that change is complex and non-linear. The creation of industry-ready graduates with the skills required to function in the knowledge economy is dependent upon the graduates' ability to embrace the vast array of changes that characterise the knowledge economy and the degree to which these graduates are able to "broker change". *Brokering change* in this context refers to the way in which teachers *broker* their compliance with system imperatives through their professional practices (Harreveld, 2002). Brokerage involves buying or selling something on someone else's behalf, not necessarily for a monetary value. Teachers broker learning for their employers and also for their students. In this sense, participants in the knowledge economy are not passive receivers of system imperatives but rather are active negotiators of these changes.

Change is one of the dimensions of the globalisation process and crucially involves the transformation of power relationships, identities and networks within cultures, economies, work communities and civil societies (Beck, 2000). As a result, as teachers broker compliance with their students and the system they become new types of educators, engaging in a kind of "border pedagogy" where there is a commitment to a pedagogy that accounts for different worlds, including the students' own lives (Giroux, 1992).

The Bachelor of Learning Management Degree

In order to meet the demands of changing educational futures, and actively participate in brokering change and thus constructing desired futures in the ways suggested by Keleher in Chapter 1 of this volume, CQU has developed a generic teaching degree whose aim is to produce teachers for the schools and students of 2006 and beyond. An essential difference between traditional pre-service teacher degrees and the BLM is the distinction made between theories of learning and theories of instruction. The BLM emphasises the importance of procedural knowledge (Marzano & Pickering, 1997) and hence values theories of instruction over theories of learning. Learning theory is in its scientific infancy and in order for graduates to be

able to do what is taught the taught elements ought to reflect a theory of instruction rather than a theory of learning (Smith, 2000, p. 5). The BLM also emphasises the importance of declarative knowledge (Marzano & Pickering, 1997) or

> …knowing about and being able to do pedagogy; knowing about and being able to incorporate in teaching and learning work the idea of futures; knowing about and being able to do networks and partnerships[;] and finally knowing about and being able to do things related to essential professional knowledges. (Smith, 2000, p. 9)

The BLM is constructed around principles drawn from teacher education research, professional teacher experiences, social indicator research and futures-oriented education. The degree consists of 32 courses, including a compulsory "internship" of six weeks towards the end of the four-year degree (this degree is also able to be fast tracked and completed in three years). A cornerstone of the degree is the emphasis on industry partnerships, ensuring that the students graduating are very comfortable being in schools from the outset of their career. The degree contains four core areas of knowledge that reflect the perceived requirements of education in the new economy. These four areas (or domains as they are known in the degree) are Futures, Networks and Partnerships, Pedagogy and Essential Professional Knowledge. Twelve graduate exit standards with related outcome statements are linked to the four core areas and progress and assessment are mapped along these four dimensions. All BLM courses are designed, taught and assessed using this framework. The degree recognises that knowledge in the new age demands an ability not only to value but also to use information communication technologies and a high degree of personal competency in literacy and numeracy. The aim is to graduate "industry-ready" recruits with a second-to-none expertise in the management of learning (their own and others').

From Rhetoric to Perception

The main focus for the research project that was undertaken as part of a pilot study by the authors of this chapter was to investigate the extent to which the theory of the BLM is translated into practice according to student perceptions and experiences of the degree. The focus on perceptions was linked to what Amoako-Gyampah and Salam (2004) argue influence how we view the success or otherwise of implementations.

The questions that guided this project were:

- How has the BLM provided graduates with the skills to "manage their own educational experiences"?
- To what extent has the BLM "delivered" the required outcomes to graduates in terms of client satisfaction with their degree?
- How has each of the BLM domains (that is, Futures, Networks and Partnerships, Pedagogy and Essential Professional Knowledge) contributed to providing the outcomes described in the BLM graduate standards?

The main data that were collected were from a survey based on the four domains of the BLM and administered to soon-to-be graduands currently practising in schools in the Rockhampton area and beyond (this project is in the initial stages and it is intended to follow these graduates as they progress in their teaching careers). Basically this project sought responses from BLM graduates regarding the usefulness and relevance of the undergraduate degree courses undertaken in the BLM whilst at CQU. The responses were documented and analysed using a Likert scale survey which measures degrees of satisfaction across BLM domains, adapted from the graduate standards. The following table outlines the questions and results of the survey. While the sample response is too small to make generalisations, the data gathered provide the researchers with key indicators for further exploration in the next phase of the study.

What these data demonstrate is that the majority of students agree or strongly agree that the degree is actually doing what it has set out to do. What the data do not tell us is whether or not this perception can be backed up by evidence. In order to make any significant claims there needs to be a longitudinal study of graduates in order to better track these results. The greatest differentiation is in terms of how technology is used as a precipitator of this change. The complicating factor for this degree is also the fact that like any product the BLM needs to be renewed on a regular basis. This necessitates constant adaptation, fuelled by ever-shifting societal pressures and the need to meet new demands and situations as they arise. The challenge becomes how to ensure that this adaptation and change is brokered with the participants and stakeholders of this degree (Cooling, Graham, Moore, & Walker-Gibbs, 2003). At the time of writing this chapter, the BLM is about to undergo further changes. Another study will need to be undertaken in order to analyse to a greater degree how successfully or otherwise change continues to be brokered.

Table 2–1: Survey results

Key: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree

Participation in BLM courses has equipped me with the skills and knowledge required to:	SD	D	A	SA
Construct intellectually challenging learning experiences that actively engage learners and connect them with the world beyond school			4	9
Design and implement learning experiences that acknowledge and cater for difference			4	9
Create a safe and supportive environment where students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour			5	8
Create learning experiences where learners actively use technology to organise, research, interpret, analyse, communicate and represent knowledge		3	9	1
Promote language, literacy and numeracy development within and across the curriculum areas			8	5
Use multiple sources of evidence to assess learning progress and provide meaningful reports on learning progress to parents, caregivers and other relevant authorities		1	6	6
Understand how the “knowledge economy” may impact on the future role of schooling, teachers and teaching			6	7
Think about what it means to be a futures-oriented Learning Manager			6	7
Develop qualities of creativity and introduced me to strategies that helped me to look at things in new ways			7	6
Successfully apply the views of different futurists in an educational context		1	8	4
Consider the changing needs of learners now and in the future			4	9
Design successful learning experiences for students			5	8
Provide an engaging and meaningful curriculum to my learners			5	8

Recognise the importance of using community resources to allow my students to experience real applications of knowledges and skills (connectedness)			4	9
Understand and make use of connections between education policies, cognitive development, ICTs and new patterns of learning for individuals and communities			9	4
Build and maintain effective networks and partnerships			3	10
Utilise effective interpersonal communication to enhance teaching and learning			4	9
Establish relationships with the wider community			5	8
Contribute to professional teams			2	11
Critically reflect on professional practice			4	9
Understand and use relevant traditional and non traditional educational theories and practices			4	9
Provide meaningful and engaging learning environments for students			4	9
Utilise knowledge of individual learners to create meaningful learning experience			5	8
Understand legal, ethical and professional responsibilities			6	7

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that there is much rhetoric around the changing nature of educational futures. The challenge becomes how we map this change, how it is brokered and what change does or will occur. The chapter has also examined the difficulties inherent in sustaining change once brokered. The authors have explored these challenges in terms of a pilot study centred on a particular degree that is attempting to help pre-service teachers to meet the demands of a 21st century knowledge economy which reflects the CQU motto of *Doctrina Perpetua*.

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