



Tertiary
Education
Management
Conference

Refereed Papers

Edited by Ian R Dobson, Maree Conway and Raj Sharma.



**Association for Tertiary Education Management and
Tertiary Education Facilities Managers' Association**

**Tertiary Education and Management Conference 2011
Refereed Papers**

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EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Ian R Dobson, Raj Sharma & Maree Conway

Readers might find some of this editors' introduction to be reminiscent of the one produced last year. Perhaps this is only to be expected; 2010 was the first year in which a formal e-book had been prepared for the Tertiary Education Management (TEM) conference. There is only so much that can be said about an excellent conference with excellent papers and an even more excellent social programme and opportunities for networking. We apologise in advance for the small amount of self-plagiarism involved in this introduction.

The history of the TEM conference is also a history of evolving institutions and their obligatory acronyms. TEM conferences grew out of those held in earlier years by the Association for Tertiary Education and Management (ATEM) and its predecessor AITEA – the Australasian Institute of Tertiary Education Administrators. The first AITEA conference was held in 1977 and the AITEA / ATEM conference grew in size and esteem until 1992. This was the year a marriage of sorts took place: from 1993, the then Australasian Association of Higher Education Facilities Directors (AAAPA) became ATEM's partner in running the conference. (There are other subtexts about why AAAPA wasn't known as AAHEFD, but we won't trouble you with them here). The process of evolution and fine-tuning is also part-and-parcel of those involved in facilities management, and they renamed themselves to the Tertiary Education Facilities Management Association (TEFMA) in 2003.

No one could argue that the TEM conference and its antecedent have not stood the test of time. It is now into its 34th year as a major annual event on the Australasian higher education. It attracts around 600 professional managers and higher education researchers from universities, vocational education institutions, polytechnics, wānanga, government departments, private providers and other organisations. The Conference is the flagship activity each year. It is the opportunity for TEFMA and ATEM to bring their members together for a significant period of professional development, for ATEM/TEFMA to co-host and listen to significant figures in tertiary management and administration as plenary speakers, and to network with like organisations and clients through formal links and sponsorship arrangements.

When the conference was re-badged in 2003, the aim was to build it into the pre-eminent professional development activity for managers in tertiary education. In this regard, it has been highly successful. The conference is organised by an organising committee with members from both associations. In the interests of professionalism, the conference has used the services of a professional conference organiser, appointed by the TEMC and TEFMA councils either through a tender process or through other arrangements. For the past several years, Leishman Associates has filled this role superbly.

The TEM conference is the only one in the tertiary sector that covers the full range of functions in institutions, and is designed to allow participants to build strong networks across Australia and New Zealand. TEMC has a strong practitioner focus to support the sharing of knowledge and 'know how', and provides opportunities to focus on big-picture issues as well. It allows participants to reflect on their management practice in a regional, national and global context.

Even if this is only the second time refereed papers from the TEM conference have been formally published, ATEM is not without considerable experience in scholarly publishing. It has sponsored its own journal for 33 years, the Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management. ATEM has had a co-proprietor since 2009, the L H Martin Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Management.

Over its life to date, the Journal has seen a steady decline in the number of practitioner papers written by its own members. The main reasons for this have been the relative decline in the number of such papers submitted to the Journal, against the rapid increase in the number of papers submitted by academics. Establishing a refereed stream was seen by ATEM as being a possible way of getting more papers from administrators into the public arena. The TEM conference has always been rich with the sort of practitioner research with fewer opportunities to be published compared with the output of ‘academic’ conferences: ‘academics publish, but not the rest of us’, seems to be a common mantra. In fact, even if material produced by university administrators and managers is based on a background of scholarship and empiricism, often it will not be accepted by scholarly journals, because it is based on experience or practice from a single institution. This volume represents an attempt to promote the publication of material with a practice-driven bent.

Peer-reviewed papers published as part of a refereed stream are counted in the formal annual collection of publications, so there are externally defined standards to be met. The requirements for what can be accepted in a conference ‘refereed stream’ is laid down by the in the regulations for the Higher Education Research Data Collection (HERDC). To be eligible for inclusion in HERDC, the conference publication must meet the definition of **research** as amplified in the key characteristics of research publications and must:

- be peer reviewed on the full paper
- be presented at conferences, workshops or seminars of national or international significance
- be published in full; the papers may appear in a number of different formats, e.g. a volume of proceedings, a special edition of a journal, a normal issue of a journal, a book or a monograph, CD Rom or conference or organisational web site.

Quoting from the 2009 HERDC Guidelines: ‘For the purposes of the HERDC, an acceptable peer review process is one that involves an assessment or review of the research publication in its entirety by independent, qualified experts before publication. Independent in this context means independent of the author. Peer review is relevant for journal articles and conference publications being counted in the [HERDC] Research Publications Return - Return 2.’

The main reason for this amorphous process is that duly refereed papers accepted for inclusion in a conference refereed stream are eligible to be included in an institution’s publications, in the E1 category. Material on the collection and the process can be retrieved from <http://www.innovation.gov.au/Research/Pages/default.aspx>

For the TEM Conference 2011, 11 papers were submitted and reviewed, and of these, 9 were accepted for inclusion in the refereed stream. When required, reviewers’ comments were reported to authors, and of those papers deemed ‘acceptable’ several had to be resubmitted having corrected references and adjusted papers to meet the pre-stated style guide. In the editing work that we have all done over the years, we are always surprised when authors haven’t followed the ‘rules of getting into print’ (including e-print). Rule 1 is ‘Read the

instructions and follow them'. Rule 2 is 'Read Rule 1'. In her book on having papers published, Ann Körner (2008) lists 'failure to read the instructions' as the first of the 'ten most common mistakes'. Without doubt, this is the major source of annoyance to editors.

The editors hope that readers find this set of papers to be of interest. They also hope that ATEM members that attend the TEM conference regularly might start to consider submitting their work for consideration for the refereed stream. There's a little more involved than just having a paper accepted to present at the conference, but provided the few style, content and referencing protocols are followed, IT ISN'T THAT DIFFICULT!

The editors also hope that more authors from the TEFMA side of the conference might consider submitting their papers for scrutiny for the refereed stream. These writers have much to inform the rest of us about their place in the important processes of teaching and research, the main functions of tertiary education.

Readers' comments on this volume and the processes behind it will be gratefully received.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Ian R Dobson's career in higher education started 40 years ago in the Planning Branch at RMIT. Since then he had long spells at the University of Melbourne and Monash University, and currently is a higher education researcher at the University of Helsinki, Finland, and an adjunct at Monash's Centre for Population and Urban Research. He is editor of the Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management and Australian Universities' Review. He completed a PhD at Monash University on higher education equity policy in 2004.

Raj Sharma worked in higher education for nearly four decades at institutions in three Australian states, both in higher education management and as an academic. He completed the Master of Educational Administration and PhD from the University of New England during the 1980s. Raj is a consultant in higher education in areas such as planning, institutional research, resource allocation and related fields.

Maree Conway spent almost 30 years working as a tertiary education manager before starting Thinking Futures, a strategic foresight practice, in 2008. She now works with people in educational, non-profit and government organisations to strengthen strategy development and implementation through the use of environmental scanning, strategic thinking and enhanced strategic planning. Maree sits on the editorial boards of the Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management and On The Horizon, and recently guest edited a special issue of On The Horizon on New Media and Learning.

THE CHALLENGE OF LEARNING SPACE DESIGN FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper considers the relatively new field of learning space design from the educator perspective in the context of vocational education in the post compulsory sector. Given the recent nature of the challenge to the traditional classroom as the expected space in which to learn, empirical research is still developing. There is significantly more written about the ideas and trends that have informed this shift and many practical examples described. This paper provides a brief review of some of the relevant literature and with reference to specific space design projects, proposes components and principles that may inform future developments. More urgently, this may inform research that will provide evidence of the effects on student learning and on the delivery of pedagogies that will serve vocational education in reaching its purposes of achieving relevance and excellence.

Keywords: Classrooms, vocational education, space design, pedagogy, change

This paper was accepted for the TEM Conference 2010 refereed stream.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper proposes a role for learning space design in current and future approaches to the delivery of education. This role is to provide learning spaces that contribute to reaching designated learning outcomes as an active ingredient of the pedagogy. This may be achieved through the built design of learning spaces, flexible configurations of furniture and accessible technology. Trends and influences are described and examples from vocational education are offered to highlight practical components and to inform the development of principles that may guide the effective and responsible use of space design to create ‘spaces to learn in’.

Change in education often comes quietly as teachers shift their practice incrementally, creatively and sometimes without fanfare. Using hindsight, these changes become part of recorded history as theorists and commentators create labels and organising frameworks to describe and debate. Thus, many 20th century shifts are now evident and almost taken for granted. Examples with particular relevance to learning space design include the move to inquiry learning brought to attention through the writings of John Dewey(1938), the reconceptualising of the child/student as an agent of free will debated through the 1970s and exemplified in the work of A.S. Neil (1968), the eLearning ‘revolution’ that had its earliest outings in the online courses of the 1970s (Hiltz & Turoff, 1978), and Paulo Friere’s (1970) writings that highlighted the community embedded and political nature of learning.

While the turn of the century is no more than a moment in time, it has provided a label for a new wave of drivers and influences that make up ‘21st Century Learning’. Jane Gilbert (2005), for example, describes these as continuous and quantum shifts from an industrial age focus on repetitive production of goods and services for localised communities to a knowledge age focus on responsive and creative development for a community unconstrained by geography. Learning/education thus becomes less a consumer of knowledge and more a producer. The implications of this philosophical shift for how organisations design, deliver and resource education is complex and challenging.

The classroom as an element of the educative process has received only modest attention in the past. While education was about reproduction and transmission of knowledge, the traditional classroom and the prevailing philosophy of education have not been at odds. An interesting challenge and exemplar of the link between space and the educative process can be seen in early years education. Long at the forefront of thinking/education practice, this sector tailored its learning spaces to support its espoused learning outcomes well before others (MOE, 1996).

A somewhat unsuccessful attempt to challenge the dominance of the traditional classroom occurred in the late 1960s with the emergence of the open plan classroom in the US, UK and a little later in New Zealand. There are many interpretations of the impetus for this movement. Larry Cuban (2004) observes that there was a mix of political and child rearing notions split along conservative and progressive lines driven at least in part by politicians, parents and educators who failed to attend in sufficient detail to the multiplicity of learning and teaching approaches needed to foster the talent of diverse groups of children; the ideological drivers overshadowing wise and flexible implementation.

More recently, there have been a plethora of projects across many countries that have in general arisen out of the uncomfortable fit between rapidly shifting pedagogies and their associated learning spaces. While the ‘transmission’ model of education and its fit with a

traditional classroom has certainly not disappeared, there is increasing recognition that physical space is an active part of pedagogy, that many pedagogies are premised on acknowledging multiple and practice based learning outcomes, and that many learning spaces now have significant virtual elements. Thus, the 'learning space' exists beyond the walls and the customary walls may be a hindrance to desirable achievement.

Current work in learning space design is both descriptive of existing cases and predictive of future thinking. In the US the seminal work of Diana Oblinger (2006) under the EDUCAUSE banner focuses on learning space design both as a support for learning and as an agent of change. How to evaluate Learning Spaces is the key question of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council work (Lee & Tan, 2011) on developing a learning space evaluation model. In the UK the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) is a leader in research and practice regarding infusing digital technologies into learning spaces. Research into the impacts of learning space design is in its early stages of development with many projects seeking to identify links between space design and change in teaching practice, student engagement, interactivity, student behaviours and student results. While there are many research design issues yet to be solved, this work indicates that learning spaces and learning outcomes are well linked. An indicative example of this work can be seen in a mixed methods project at the University of Minnesota comparing the effects of different spaces on students, different groups of students and teachers with regard to their learning and teaching modes of activity and grade outcomes (Brookes, 2010; Whiteside, Brooks & Walker, 2010).

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The context of this paper is the polytechnic sector in New Zealand and draws examples from a large urban institute. The primary purpose of polytechnic education according to the relevant legislation is to provide 'a wide diversity of continuing education, including vocational training, that contributes to the maintenance, advancement, and dissemination of knowledge and expertise and promotes community learning (Education Act, 1989 (162 (b) (ii)). Thus, the polytechnic sector has the responsibility to prepare people for workforce and community participation both in the sense of skills training and of education for effective engagement in the life of their communities. At this level of analysis the learning and teaching role of a polytechnic is significantly connected to the real and practical task of delivering programmes of learning that meet these goals. This implies that there is a thoroughly validated set of graduate outcomes both in the technical skills of the particular vocation; a set of people-focussed capabilities (generic) that will serve both in the workplace and the community to ensure peaceful/ethical/productive engagement with their worlds and a mind and skill set that will ensure ongoing, relevant and excellent learning can occur beyond participation in a programme. What follows, therefore, is an assumption that the activities that make up any programme of study will mirror these outcomes in increasingly authentic approximations of the actual accompanied by increasingly complex meta analyses for and with the student of the theory, practice, performance interface that allows the student to increasingly reflect on and achieve self regulation/ self determination and future learning.

To achieve this exemplary outcome of an educative process, it may be considered that attention to multiple components of this process is essential. These might include: curriculum that is well authenticated by industry insiders, teachers who are industry informed/experienced, teachers who have pedagogical expertise such that they can make sound judgements about design and management of the learning experience, and learning

spaces that support/enhance the integrated practice of vocational learning. The last is the focus of this discussion.

Polytechnics have traditionally understood and *almost* implemented the proposed approach to space. There are many examples of authentic learning spaces to be found in a polytechnic: the engineering workshops, the building sites for carpenters and many examples of requirements that engage students in authentic learning spaces e.g. teaching practicum, nursing clinical practice. The next step sometimes not achieved in these cases is to integrate theory into practice using interactive and self-directed methods rather than resort to talking to students in a classroom. This is also a possible approach / outcome where authenticity is less obvious than in trades' education. Business education, for example, does not routinely mirror the spaces and uses that would reflect the patterns and processes of workplaces engaged in accounting, PR account delivery, organisational development, marketing teams and many more instances. Similarly, programmes designed to develop/integrate generic skills such as team work, problem solving, communication skills, ethical judgement and leadership may currently be delivered as classroom based transmission of content and/or seatwork exercises that might, through the use learning space design processes, be supported into authentic delivery and practice.

EXAMPLES

What follows are five examples offered to build a set of components and principles that arise from the direction taken by one polytechnic to increase the effectiveness of its learning and teaching in part through improving its learning spaces given their capability to support relevant and excellent vocational pedagogies. Key questions to consider when reading the examples are:

Question 1. Can the design of a classroom support particular learning outcomes?

Question 2. Does changing the space design of a classroom change learning and teaching practice?

Question 3. Can designs be established that allow for future learning and teaching intentions that may yet be unknown?

Question 4. What are the higher level responsibilities of organisations with regard to the sustainability of their learning spaces and associated activities?

Example A: City centre distributed campus

In this example, a floor above a large shopping centre was made available for development as a distributed campus. This facility was developed in a very short space of time with minimal input from teachers and very little time for teachers to shift their practice before classes started. The design included a mix of enclosed classrooms albeit with glass walls, and open and flexible spaces defined by movable furniture and learning technology. These spaces can be reset just by shifting the furniture and more substantially but still as minor works by shift the glass partitions. The spaces draw admiring comment on their smart appearance but the teachers have struggled to adopt the practices that match the space. It has taken 18 months to build their confidence and to see the students enabled to learn in a more interactive/independent way rather than in a teacher directed pedagogy given the outcomes of these programmes that are significantly linked to skilful/effective and self-determined functioning in the community and workplace.

Example B: Sandpit

A classroom in the institute's home campus was allocated for use by a range of staff as an experimental facility – this was called the 'sandpit'. This room was booked for meetings and classes. It was set up with movable interlocking tables that could be configured into multiple shapes with wheeled chairs. The room includes a data show and computer with DVD player, sound capability, an interactive whiteboard and fixed whiteboard, wireless key board and remote. The operative consol is against the wall. The room can be redesigned by shifting the furniture and changing the technology but the fundamental shape and size is fixed except for a major rebuild. The room has been instrumental in fostering confidence and opportunity to use technology and to reset thinking about the orientation of the room towards a traditional 'front' so that the teacher is encouraged and enabled to facilitate student learning rather than to carry out direct delivery from a front point that no longer exists.

Example C: Interactive Learning Space

A faculty located on the home campus wanted to increase the amount of interaction among students in their learning practices and converted existing space from a traditional classroom to an interactive learning space. The redesign of this space was constrained by its original traditional architecture, building consents were required and the space could only be redesigned for the current needs, redesign later will be equally major. This involved taking out individual desks and replacing them with circular pods, easily moved chairs and more recently the addition of a 'cow' providing net books for students use during class. While not all teachers are comfortable with the changes, most report considerable satisfaction with the practice students now have at interaction and self /team direction alongside building skills with technology that reflects the requirements of their future workplace.

Example D: New Campus Design

The institute is designing a new campus with the key guiding principle of ensuring maximum flexibility of space for delivery of current and future pedagogies. While this space is in the design phase a key strategy for ensuring responsiveness to future needs has been the inclusion of large uninterrupted floor plates that can be partitioned but have no structural divisions. This allows space design to be managed via movable furniture and fixed or movable partitions. This provides challenges for acoustics design and thermal comfort but can be factored in up front (rather than added on) as the design progresses. A new campus also provides the opportunity to build in sustainability features that might reflect the responsibilities of public organisations to the environment.

Example E: Library Learning Commons

The institute has a traditional library building including a small learning commons space that had lost its appeal/currency. In keeping with the desire to support interactive, team based and independent learning pedagogies as is fitting in preparation for the workplace, the library elected to redesign its commons space. However, before much staff engagement could be carried out, the opportunity for the refit to be carried out arose with minimal notice. The new design involved significant changes in workflow practices and ethos for the library staff and significantly altered opportunities for the students to engage independently and in groups and to use technology independently as the associated net book loan system was initiated. The new commons space is a resounding success in terms of student engagement and staff support raising the issue of how change is best effected.

COMPONENTS

Key components of learning space design drawn from the examples above have been part of the development of pedagogically supportive space design as shown in Figure 1.

PRINCIPLES

The preceding discussion and examples guided by the questions at the start of the last section leads to a set of possible principles that might guide learning space design and associated research as follows:

- The primary driver for learning space design is the expected learning outcome and thus must be defined at the start of the design process to inform choices and be evaluated.
- The learning and teaching behaviours of students and teachers are influenced by the design of the learning spaces hence the designs must work in concert with the valued pedagogies.
- Future learning and teaching needs are unpredictable so learning spaces must have inherent future variability.
- Public/educational organisations must meet their responsibilities to society and the future by exemplifying sustainability.

IN SUMMARY

Learning space design is a new discipline with enormous potential to be an influential part of the trend towards education that is authentic, contextualised, student centred and creative. The traditional classroom as a ‘tool’ of education is rapidly losing its relevance and may hinder effective pedagogies. There is significant work to be done to understand the component parts of learning space design and the principles that may drive design. This is fertile ground for research, practice development and design innovation – a challenge to vocational education to ensure that its learning spaces support excellence and relevance.

Component	Issues and Considerations
Design process	Where possible, the design process should involve the teachers/staff who will work in the spaces. The start of the design process must be identification of the expected learning outcomes so decisions can be tested against the purpose of the space.
Space location/size	The advantages of new spaces are noted over the difficulties posed by refurbishing traditional spaces
Acoustics	The use of open spaces for variable learning activities creates the need for significant acoustic dampening to ensure that groups and individuals can work effectively in larger spaces without the acoustic protection of walls.
Thermal comfort	Similarly, temperature control may be simple within four walls but more difficult to design for open learning spaces while still being very important.
Power and data infrastructure Computer access	The goals of learning for vocational relevance assume that as a goal all students will be working on their own fixed or mobile device. This assumes intensive power and data availability and increasingly, effective wireless coverage.
Walls	Given a shift from 'hidden' education to open, transparent, see through and accountable education, the opaque walls come down and are replaced with glass.
AV equipment	A goal of vocational education is that students will graduate as confident, flexible, future proofed and innovative users of technology. The AV equipment in learning space design should be developed to match this outcome first. It has less value where it is designed to deliver content.
Sustainability	Educational organisations have a responsibility to model sustainability both as part of the educative process and as an exemplar in the community.
Teacher Professional Development	This is an interesting point of discussion and the examples offer two approaches, where teachers are involved closely in the design work, professional development is contextualised, underway and effective. If staff is not included this may delay uptake but where staff are not included and student uptake is significant this may not be a negative but create impetus. Whatever the approach, timely, effective, professional development is essential.
Student Induction	Similarly for students, while the assumption that students have better technology skills than the teachers is often true, it is less likely that they are skilled at interactive learning approaches, team work and expectations of independence and self direction.
Evaluation Processes	Learning space design is in its infancy, there is only a small base of existing practice to draw on and little of this has been evaluated systematically and robustly. Thus, evaluation, especially of the formative kind, is essential.

Figure 1: Key components of learning space design

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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NEW WAYS OF MANAGING CHANGE IN THE WORKPLACE

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the development and implementation of a University-wide project that aims to reduce administration work and establish a service environment that is well positioned to respond to the current and future needs of the organisation and its stakeholders. The 'Service Improvement Project' focuses on the core business practices of professional staff in each of the University of South Australia's four academic divisions and their interactions with central units. In the project to date, there have been many positive outcomes including a marked reduction in duplicated work, clearer roles and responsibilities between professional staff across the University, and the development of comprehensive guidelines for responsibilities and accountabilities. This paper documents some of the Project's achievements and shortcomings, and proposes tactics for large organisations that are looking to improve their service levels, whilst concurrently creating positive change towards a workplace culture of continuous improvement.

Keywords: Change management, service improvement, organisational change, continuous improvement.

This paper was accepted for the TEM Conference 2011 refereed stream.
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INTRODUCTION

Context

Contemporary universities are large organisations with many stakeholders and sophisticated governance and management arrangements. Universities have existed in Australia since the mid-1850s, but it wasn't until about 1980 that the Australian higher education landscape started to experience significant growth, from a small number of publicly funded institutions to what is now a large-scale system comprising both public and private universities as well as a range of other tertiary providers. Universities Australia (2009) reported 'Education services to be Australia's third largest export industry (after coal and iron ore), and released a statement declaring: Education exports increased from \$12.2 billion in 2007 to \$15.5 billion in 2008, making education also the clear number one service export ahead of tourism. For the last decade, education exports have been growing by an annual average of 15.7 per cent, compared to 10.8 per cent for total exports'.

Marginson (2000) wrote that good academic practice can all too readily be defined as keeping administrators out and trying to evade their requirements. Equally good corporate practice is often seen as subsuming the will of the academic profession and breaking down its cultures. Further, corporate organisations can seek to maximise the conditions enabling academic performance, or it can be hostile to these considerations. As Marginson (2000, p.34) suggests:

Clearly the old idea of collegial governance, whereby academic staff govern the university, administer it and provide some of its auxiliary services, is obsolete. ...Competitive pressures, efficiency imperatives, and requirements as to transparency and accountability ensure that administration, management and professional service functions must be carried out by professionals. These professional general staff are as important as are academic staff to the long term health of their institutions. ...Resource decisions (the domain of managers) and educational decisions (the domain of academics) are always closely implicated in each other. Without a stable collaborative relationship there will be tendencies for one group to try to secure control over the other's functions...

Universities also need to demonstrate that public funds are being used effectively and efficiently in pursuit of the core activities of teaching and research. Administrative and support functions which contribute to these core activities are therefore under increasing scrutiny to show how they add value.

In building a new service foundation, there is much to consider to ensure transparent, simple and effective administrative processes which are customer oriented, value adding and forward looking, and which respect the importance of academic judgement as well as recognise the expertise of professional staff.

A changing service environment

The University of South Australia (UniSA) has matured during this higher education evolution but remains a relative newcomer in higher education market in South Australia. It was formally established as an institution in 1991 and since then has undergone substantial and at times tumultuous change. A previous vice-chancellor was heard to remark on the University's ability to be 'fleet of foot'. The current vice-chancellor has publicly stated that we all 'need to sleep fast'. Many staff have been heard to hope that the constant renewals are

simply symptomatic of an institution struggling through its teenage years and that maturity will bring a sustained period of clearly defined focus. This period of rapid growth over the last twenty years has necessitated quick, though sometimes inconsistent, development of our systems, processes and services.

The University has four distinct academic divisions: Information Technology, Engineering and the Environment; Education, Arts and Social Sciences; Health Sciences; and Business. It employs over 2,500 continuing and fixed-term staff, has over 36,000 students enrolled at five campuses (including a regional campus), offers a number of programmes offshore and by distance, and has an established reputation as an industry-focussed research university.

Concurrently, the State's higher education sector continues to undergo change. All three universities now have law schools, and with the Royal Adelaide Hospital moving to a location adjacent to UniSA's City West campus, the Vice-Chancellor has recently announced an aspiration to develop a medical school, which would draw on the University's strengths and reputation across a range of health science disciplines. Continuing changes in federal government policy and regulation will always require the University to remain strategic about how resources are used to develop; in that context, the changes proposed for establishing this service foundation are not short-term solutions, nor can they be inflexible.

Like all service organisations, the way that the University has provided its services during this time has also undergone fundamental changes, particularly because of new technology and information management systems. Perhaps most noticeable has been the shift from a more traditional typewritten and formal bureaucratised document system, to a high-speed electronic communications system in which enrolments, assignments and interactive activities are completed online. This is complemented by a comprehensive, high-volume email system.

That staff will be familiar with the use of information technology is now assumed, with many organisations, therefore good information technology and information management skills are included in staff selection criteria. Myburgh (2005, p6) writes that: 'Some areas of information management are becoming ubiquitous, such as file structures, web page marking up and design, and e-mail management, which are now the transparent skills required by every literate person'.

Two positions advertised recently at the University (Job vacancies, 29 June 2011) included statements about the electronic information management skills that were required:

Among the essential criteria for a Manager: in a central unit 'Demonstrated ability to manage complex information systems and processes and a high level of information management skills.'

Among the essential criteria for a frontline service role:

'Demonstrated experience in Microsoft Office suite software (including Microsoft Outlook and intermediate skills in Excel), and knowledge of web-based applications.'

Such expectations of high-level information systems knowledge were virtually unheard of in 1991 when UniSA was established. From that time, there has been a steady increase in demand for computer literacy skills. Compare the above-mentioned criteria with a 1997 UniSA position description for a secretary, which listed 'advanced computer skills in word

processing' as the final 'essential criterion'; in a manager level position description in 2002 'Experience in the use of Microsoft desktop products such as Word, Excel and Outlook' was listed under 'Desirable Criteria'.

For staff working in universities, this evolution in the way work is done has meant major changes to practices and attitudes. Many staff employed by the university and its antecedent institutions were dismayed with some of the changes. Some disliked what they saw as the replacement of a close working relationship with a small number of students by the imperative to promote independent learning practices, flexible teaching models, and systematic provision of services in an environment that was still learning to cope with round-the-clock online activity.

Increasingly, students expect simple transaction type services to be available online, enabling students and staff to complete these tasks in their own time. This requires organisations to think about services from the perspective of the customer and to provide simple and easy to use web-based systems.

Professional staff support students and staff in various ways – offering assistance with the more complex service enquiries, helping people make connections between services, and supporting the information management systems that underpin the online service environment. These expectations relating to how simple transactions and requirements for more personal support are not peculiar to university services and simply reflect what is happening in society generally (such as paying bills and banking online). As Kanter (2001, p168) suggests, these changes also have implications for service provision arrangements:

Then along came the Internet as a revolutionary integrating force, and the problems of excessive decentralization became apparent. In a global, high-tech world, organizations need to be more fluid, inclusive, and responsive. They need to manage complex information flows, grasp new ideas quickly, and spread those ideas throughout the enterprise.

The University's organisational arrangements developed rapidly and often reactively to meet the norms and expectations of their workplace. As a result, connections between the range of support activities and where they should be located in the organisation as a whole were not always considered strategically. This meant that despite their best efforts, even the most diligent of staff members had the potential to produce less than optimum outcomes. It was common to hear of frustrations with systems and processes, and staff working around them or even developing their own invariably resulting in duplication of effort, lack of consistency, and inefficient work practices.

Change management in context

The focus of this Service Improvement Project is 'process re-engineering' but it has been identified within the context of a broader long-term strategy to position the University. It is having a significant impact on people and roles across the organisation, and therefore the literature pertaining to change management, particularly organisational development and performance measurement, has also informed the conceptual framework, methodology and evaluation strategies.

In today's organisations, change management is a key part of the management toolkit. Change has become an ongoing outcome of the processes of strategy formulation in response

to a rapidly changing internal and external environment. In achieving these changes, Walsh et al. (2006) refer to a number of interdependent 'change levers' including leadership, structure, systems and culture, any and all of which will impact on the rate of change. These elements are similar to those identified in the recent literature about change management, which suggest there is no single way to implement change. Rather change needs to be undertaken in the context of the particular organisation and the challenges or external contexts it faces. The change levers identified by Walsh et al. therefore provide a framework for thinking about change management in organisations, not in a linear way but rather as ways of thinking about the challenging dimensions of change required.

Pettigrew in Buchanan (2005, p199) illustrates the complexity of change in context: 'Change is a complex and "untidy cocktail" of rational decisions, mixed with competing perceptions, stimulated by visionary leadership, spiced with "power plays" and attempts to recruit support and build coalitions behind ideas'.

Pettigrew suggests that in understanding the process of change in context, attention needs to be paid to the flow of events as well as to the local and wider context of change. His context includes three dimensions: 1) the internal structure, organisation and culture; 2) the external context which includes economic conditions, competitor behaviour and customer demands, and 3) past and current events and experiences (Pettigrew in Buchanan, 2005, p199).

A UniSA strategy includes both longer-terms statements about vision and intent as well as short-term priorities designed to guide the action and focus of managers and staff. These statements are deliberately ambitious and externally focused. Take for example the University's vision that by 2020:

UniSA will be a leading contributor to Australia having the best higher education system in the world, supporting the world's best educated and most innovative, cohesive and sustainable society.

Our administration will be streamlined and efficient and will greatly facilitate our academic work.

We will apply technology intelligently to our research, learning environment and administration.

While the focus of such broad statements is necessarily on the core business activities of teaching and research, within institutional planning documents some attention is also paid to the infrastructure and support resources as contributors to strategy. This includes both longer-term strategy (for example, human resource policies focusing on organisation growth and development and infrastructure development including both information and physical resources) as well as short-term responsibilities for meeting legislative and other compliance issues and facilitating service provision in an increasingly complex and diverse organisation. Administrative and support resources can be seen as enablers and it is therefore critical that they too are focused on customers (both internal and external), develop strategy and accompanying plans, ensure continuous improvement, and identify measures to track performance and evaluate strategies and plans over time. A key part of this must necessarily include a focus on productivity gains and the value of these services.

An unsustainable public funding base forces universities to seek productivity gains and develop innovative practices to meet complex operational requirements. As Hilmer (1991, in Dunphy & Stace, 2001, p 54) notes, there is a need to recognise productivity as a more comprehensive concept which he refers to as 'strategic productivity', comprising cost, value and time (innovation) productivity. He suggests that the change dynamic is part of this last element and is a core part of achieving strategic productivity.

This idea of strategic productivity is a more all encompassing understanding of productivity and can be a valuable way of thinking about improvements to service and business functions in universities. It is therefore a valuable goal of business process improvement and business process re-engineering efforts.

Hammer and Champy (2005) provide an excellent framework for understanding business process re-engineering, and like many authors who offer advice about 'transformational' change, they recognise the importance of operating in context. The UniSA change project has needed to be mindful of the need to recognise differences across the academic divisions: 'Traditional one-size-fits-all processes are usually very complex, since they must incorporate special procedures and exceptions to handle a wide range of situations. A multiversion process, by contrast, is clean and simple, because each version needs to handle only the cases for which it is appropriate. There are no special cases and exceptions (Hammer & Champy, 2005, p59).

Building on initial business process improvement efforts, the longer term aims of this Project are to build organisational capability to sustain improvement outcomes and which recognise that stability is not the aim within service functions, but rather the agility and flexibility to address the external context. Dunphy and Stace in their book about Australian organisations in transition, write that 'More and more managers and change agents are searching for programmes of action that will guide continuous improvement that is revolutionary in its scope. The critical requirement for longer-term viability and success in the corporation of the future is the ongoing development of what are increasingly being referred to as *organisational capabilities* or *corporate competencies*' (Dunphy & Stace, 2001, p16).

THE SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The Service Improvement Project was commenced in 2009 and will conclude in 2012. Its focus is on one academic division at a time and building on outcomes as it moves through the organisation.

The scope of the Project includes administrative processes and organisational structures, which involve service provision and staff activity including:

- academic and student support and administration,
- business development,
- finance,
- human resources,
- international,
- information technology,
- marketing, and
- research administration.

Completely centralised functions have not been included in the main Project scope; however, since the Project commenced a number of centralised processes have been identified and the Project team is working with these areas to undertake a similar review and analysis programme.

The Project applies examples of good practice from across the University and externally, examining administrative processes across workplaces, mapping and testing new processes, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and developing clear guidelines and service standards. To this extent, the Project is being developed by the staff themselves through their participation in vision, focus, working and process groups, as well as via many opportunities to provide feedback in a range of forums including informal meetings in workplaces, a Communication Network Group, and at School and Division Boards. This extensive two-way interaction and knowledge-gathering between staff has been essential to ensure that the Project is informed by those staff who are actually doing the work at the local levels, and in mitigating perceptions of risk and uncertainty (see Shockley-Zalabak 2006, p383-4).

The Service Improvement Project is a:

- strategic and well considered redesign of administrative support processes and practices,
- university-wide initiative to respond to external and internal drivers around quality, excellence, compliance and effectiveness,
- significant investment of resources to improve the way academic work is supported, and
- part of the drive to improve business practices and service levels continuously.

The conceptual framework for this Project is based on the work of Kotter (1996) and Kotter & Rathgeber (2005) but there are also many similarities with an action learning/research approach. Kotter's framework was chosen because the model is simple and translates well into the University administration context. However, within the University, the discipline attached to an action learning model with its emphasis on collecting and analysing data as well as the need for participation of people within the organisation at all stages of the change project has also influenced the framework for this Project (Waddell et al., 2000; Sneyd & Rowley, 2004). In their model, Dunphy and Stace (1992, 2001) also highlight the importance of collaboration and consultation given the nature of the organisational changes proposed here.

Kotter's framework includes some salient reminders about the importance of communication, widespread engagement, strong leadership and vision, detailed planning, and the value of trial and error. The adoption of Kotter's framework to a simple business improvement methodology led to the development of a new service model at UniSA.

The first stage of the Project involved defining the rationale for change or clarifying the problem which needed to be solved in the context of external customer expectations and the competitive environment. In this case, there has also been a need to review internal customer expectations and current concerns with the processes. Kotter describes this as creating the sense of urgency.

Initial support was obtained from senior management and key stakeholders in administrative teams of the Division and Schools, and the support was strengthened following the Project's stage 1 outcomes, which documented existing processes and structures and highlighted areas of duplication or extra unnecessary work. This widespread support for the Project is also attributable to the work of the Project team whose knowledge, expertise and widespread consultative activities have generated credibility amongst their peers. This is an important part of what Kotter refers to as the 'guiding coalition' needed for the life of the Project.

The success of the Project's capacity to affect institutional change in often-disparate workplaces necessitated a team that could develop strategies to engage staff across a range of levels, and present information and data that were gathered in a way that both reflected workplace needs and accurately addressed workplace needs. The team comprises 12 positions, including senior professional staff with specialisations in human resource and change management, financial and data management, business intelligence and systems development, communication and information technology, as well as administrative support staff. The Director reports to a Project Steering Group, which includes senior management group members, the Director: Human Resources and the senior professional staff responsible for professional staff in Divisions. This group has been essential for ensuring that the Project continues to have the support and resources from the University.

As well as a core Project team, staff from across the University have been involved in a range of groups to review and analyse existing processes, develop new ones and to identify roles, responsibilities and service standards. Together, the Vision, Working and Process groups have:

- identified and analysed issues that have an impact on service provision,
- articulated desired outcomes and improvements for each administrative function,
- proposed new processes and developed process maps which have been informed by the challenges/issues, vision, desired outcomes and causal analysis,
- analysed the nature and volume of work to understand estimated workload for each activity which has informed a set of metrics to determine the number of staff required to provide services, and
- proposed organisational arrangements and functional roles within the proposed structure for each administrative function, based on the findings of the function reviews.

In addition, desired service outcomes have been developed for each functional area through consultation with key stakeholders. Outcomes of the functional reviews occur incrementally to create short-term wins, build credibility for the Project and demonstrate value. Performance metrics have also been established to demonstrate outcomes and improvements.

Underpinning the Project is a detailed change management and communication plan involving a range of communication strategies focusing on all major stakeholders including staff, management and customers. Stakeholders are involved in all stages of the Project to facilitate their commitment to outcomes as they unfold. This is particularly important in the context of the collegial nature of universities where consultation and two-way communication is expected.

To assist in the process of having workplace and cultural changes used and accepted, the Service Improvement Project team works closely with staff in the divisions to write service guides, and to foster an understanding of the relationships between the organisational layers.

Evaluation of the Project includes reviewing specific performance and productivity outcomes across all functional portfolios. In recognition that transition to the new service arrangements will take some time, the longer-term evaluation plan includes assessing the extent of cultural change, which occurs through the embedding of continuous improvement tools and skills.

Figure 1 is based on the work of John Kotter (1996), is a useful guide for implementing major organisational change at strategic and operational levels. This model has been particularly helpful when discussing the Project with staff as it provides a simple illustrative overview of the Project during all stages of development and consultation.

The Project’s guiding principles

In its development stage, the Project steering group rejected the notion that services can be improved simply by an increase in budget or resources. Instead, it directed that the Project should seek to managing professional capabilities more effectively to maximise service outputs without an increase in budget or wholesale reduction of staff. A set of guiding organisation principles were developed to inform decisions about the sorts of processes and

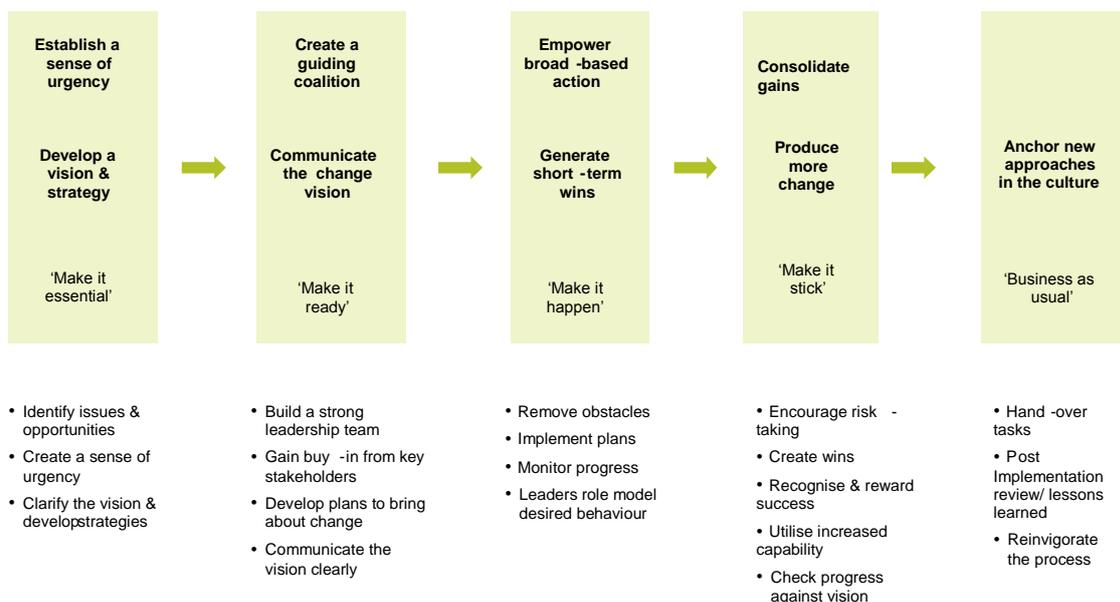


Figure 1: Organisational change approach (based on Kotter, 1996)

activities that should be viewed as core to school/research concentrations, division/faculty and central unit activity. This then led to the development of high-level responsibilities across functions, which involved staff activity at each of these three organisation levels:

- schools and research concentrations are the primary units for teaching and learning and undertaking research,

- the division services team are responsible for common service provision in line with University-wide strategic priorities, and
- the portfolios/central units are corporate service providers who manage and maintain infrastructure and develop, oversee and provide university-wide operations, policies and standards.

The methodology for the Project is summarised in Figure 2.

The extent of organisational development proposed for the Project requires significant collaboration and consultation, so efforts to seek input and share outcomes are widespread. Scholars (see Kotter 1996; Elving 2005; Fernandez & Rainey 2006) also cite the importance of communications and widespread participation in the process as being an essential component to mitigate resistance to change.

A distinctive feature of the Project is the two-way nature of its development. Staff gain access to information through a range of media and forums, and contribute to the Project's progress by sharing their ideas and opinions via emailed feedback or through participation in a range of working groups. To ensure that the service culture would be relevant to the end-users, students were also consulted during a range of on-campus focus groups to learn more about how they related to the University and what they needed and wanted of University services.

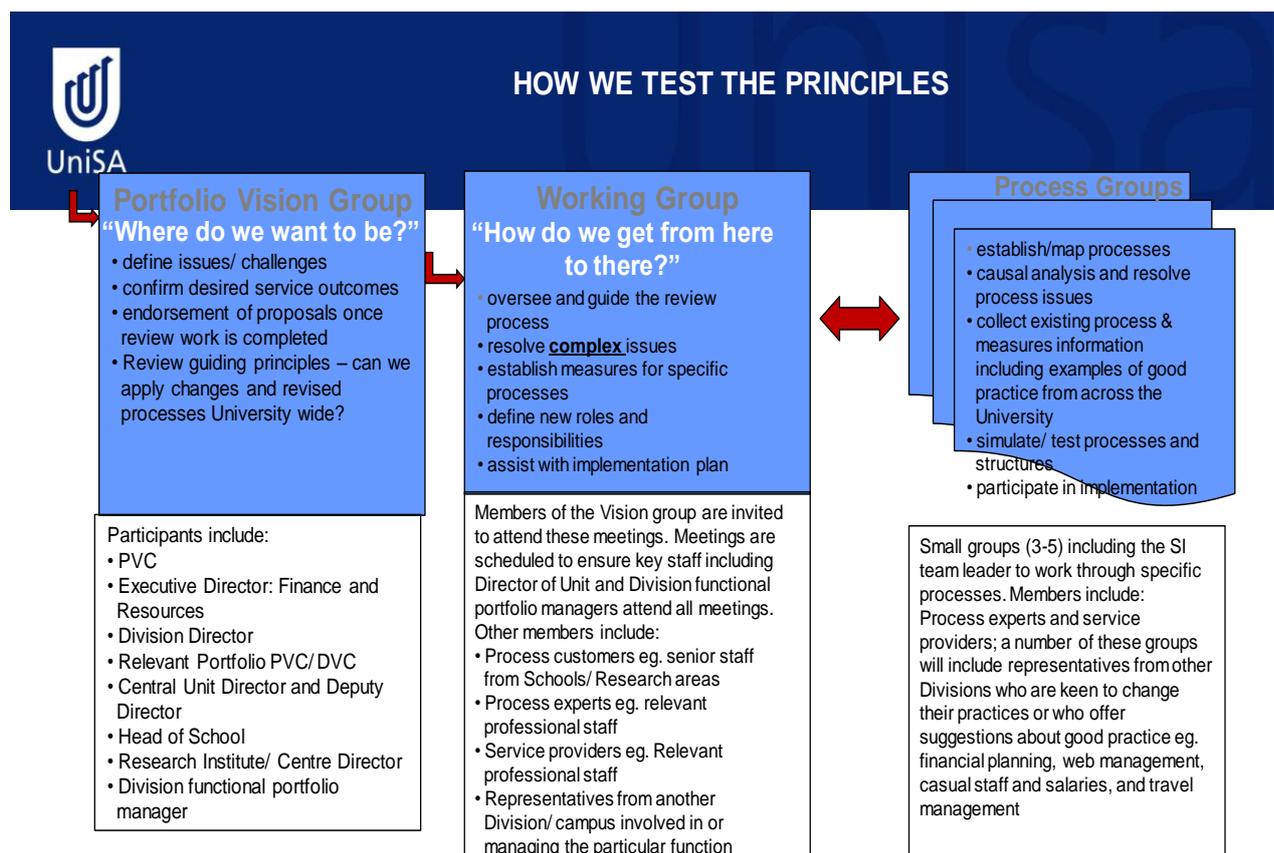


Figure 2: Engagement with a wide range of staff to develop an informed proposal for service improvement

Students commonly expressed a desire for administrative and support services that would leave them with more time to focus on their studies rather than having to spend their time on

campus or online to complete administrative tasks. In particular, students identified the following general service improvements:

- common approach to services including in the online environment,
- accurate information and advice,
- effective referrals if referred to another area of the University,
- more activities on campus – feel that some students have better facilities than others,
- more opportunities to interact with other students,
- bigger email inboxes,
- positive attitude to students,
- consistent feedback on assignments; understanding what is required to get high grades, and
- better services after 5pm, including food.

Academic staff were also consulted in focus groups and commented on the following general service improvements:

- clarity and equity about support arrangements,
- better communication and coordination across service areas,
- more intelligent reports which assist with decision making,
- better workflow if using online forms,
- less email,
- less cumbersome programme and course approval processes,
- online Course Information Booklet or at least a streamlined one (reduce waste),
- fewer changes to processes and policies,
- less paperwork ... and forms,
- services developed with the 'customer' in mind,
- casual staff treated as important contributors; better support, and
- streamline 'onboarding' of new staff to be able to work effectively from the start.

To provide a first-hand context for the Project, informal interviews were held with a range of professional staff from the first Division to participate in the Project, who had been affected by the changes in their Division. The common themes identified by participants included an initial reluctance for workplace change, a climate of rumour and conjecture as staff perpetuated misinformation, participation in communication and engagement activities to learn more about the Project, a cautious acceptance of the new culture, and a positive change experience, even for those who experienced significant alterations to their working lives.

Records of these interviews (with the participants de-identified) were published on the Division website so that staff in other Divisions could read first-hand narratives and glean an understanding of how others had dealt with workplace change, and to perhaps learn strategies for dealing with change when it occurred in their workplace. Some of the interviewees' observations are provided below.

Staff experiences: Administrative Officer

I've worked at UniSA for almost 10 years ... I'm some of the old blood! But in all the years I've been here, Service Improvement was probably the most major managing change process I'd been through.

When I first came to the University, I couldn't understand how the place made any money. It just wasn't running like a business at all! There used to be so much duplication and crossovers and everyone was always busy competing for what often turned out to be the same resources. We have become strategic and business-like over the years, and Service Improvement is now clarifying all those past efforts.

Before Service Improvement I knew exactly what I was doing, who I'd be working with, all the ins-and-outs of the job and, really, nothing ruffled my feathers. It was a huge challenge, but I came out of it. I picked up my little bundle and got it all back together and now in retrospect it was the best thing that could've happened to me! ... Let's face it, it's not as if this will be the last managing change process here, so I figure you might as well accept it as an opportunity.

Staff experiences: School Manager

Initially I remember hearing a lot of negative rumours, and not really any positive ones ... so there was much doom and gloom about something that was very unknown and was simply not very true, or that people had just made up!

One of the biggest issues in large organisations is the silo approach that exists – only the known or the approach that has always been used is done and Service Improvement offers the opportunity to move into a more contemporary style of management and overcome that sort of mentality.

I've heard from some of my networks in the Division that some staff who have remained in their same role think they can just keep working the same way that they always have and don't perceive that there will be a flow-on effect. So it will still take a bit of time to get it right and for people to become accustomed to new ways of doing things ... but in many ways I think we will feel more like one university rather than all these separate little bits trying to make up a whole. For example, some of the older schools in Information Technology, Engineering and the Environment pre-date the University and have been very set in the way they do things and it hasn't necessarily been the most effective or efficient way ... so Service Improvement really needed to happen. The University wouldn't have succeeded without its heritage, but some practices really did need to change. That's where hands-on management over the initial 12 month period can be so important, because some people and processes do have to be managed well to make sure that the new ways of working become embedded into the workplace.

Yes, change can be difficult. It's been difficult in some instances for academics to be patient while we learn new processes. And even for someone like me who's experienced a lot of workplace change over the years, I still find it challenging because it means doing some of your everyday practices differently.

Service Improvement will not just be something that staff go through once and then it's done: this is something that will become embedded in the organisation and will be continuous. So I don't view workplace changes as a threat; I see them as an opportunity because it gives me the chance to really contribute to how I

would like to see the place change and gives me a clearer idea of what the future might look like.

The Project team understood that large-scale change is often difficult for staff and so provided a range of support services and workshops to develop positive personal responses to change. Attendance at the self-nominated workshops was high, with staff accessing a range of sessions. These included workshops run by a clinical psychiatrist to assist with accepting change and developing strategies to maintain the momentum for sustaining change, as well as others run by the Human Resources team which provided staff with the practical skills necessary for preparing *curricula vitae* and attending interviews.

TANGIBLE IMPROVEMENTS

As the Project has progressed, the team has recorded tangible improvements and monitored staff feedback about service outcomes. As can be expected from any large project, there have been difficulties, but staff have identified a number of specific outcomes including:

- improved support to academic staff with programme development and amendment – there has been overwhelmingly positive feedback from academic staff in 2011 about new support arrangements,
- division-wide research publication tracking sheet reduces the need for local areas to maintain their own (ultimately this will become a University-wide system),
- casual contract request processes provide calculations on cost based on specific components of the contract,
- approved University-wide process for managing visitors (particularly international staff and students) – this ensures there is a transparent process for managing all aspects including visas, record keeping and correspondence,
- an online referral tool for student enquiries to track enquiries referred by Campus Central to Schools as well as vice versa,
- an 83 per cent reduction in travel purchases not being done via preferred suppliers,
- tracking of marketing events to assess their effectiveness and better management of academic staff involvement to ensure their assistance is used more systematically, and
- improved financial management support and associated reporting to assist with financial decision making.

One of the key sponsors of the Project summarised the outcomes of the Project in a *UniSANews* article published in March 2011: ‘I knew that it would involve significant commitment from professional and academic staff at all levels. But the gains in terms of removing unnecessary work, streamlining our administrative processes, freeing up academic staff for their core business of teaching and research and ensuring that our professional staff are well skilled in the areas they support have proved worth the effort. It was a tough and rigorous job, and one that will require an eye on continuous improvement, but I am confident we have come through the exercise with major gains. Improvements in our travel booking system, awarding of academic credit, range of marketing capability, administration of casual teaching staff, student and programme administration and perhaps most importantly the on-the-ground support for academic staff in Schools and research concentrations, are just a few specific examples (Parfitt, 2011).

In addition, there are a number of other improvements, which are focused on creating a consistent, transparent and coherent service organisation:

- documented processes for key administrative functions including student and academic support, research administration, marketing, business development, finance, human resources, international and transnational. This documentation shows how the different organisational levels relate to one another in the service provision process, highlights inputs and outputs, and related processes,
- specific responsibilities matrices (high level summary for specific functions as well as a more detailed document which relates to the processes which have been documented),
- various metrics for specific functions which can be used to assess the volume of work in the context of particular School idiosyncrasies to determine staffing levels
- clarity of roles and responsibilities through a standard suite of position, descriptions (like jobs will have standard nomenclature across the University)
- online service guide – all the information about services and processes (including forms, contact info etc) in one place – there is also a search engine to enable all staff to access what they need, and
- a service reporting tool to track service performance against agreed service standards (performance is reviewed monthly at Division/ School manager meetings).

CONCLUSION

The Service Improvement Project will continue to develop a deep organisational knowledge and understanding about how UniSA can run its daily business more efficiently and effectively, while concurrently ensuring that academic staff and students are able to complete their administrative tasks easily. The project methodology and approach to change management outlined in this paper will be applicable to a wide range of organisations that aim to serve their internal and external stakeholders better.

The Project team continues to be involved in constructive discussions about the way work is done, and to progress staff commitment to a new service environment further characterised by:

- customers being at the centre of thinking,
- a desire to embrace continuous improvement and constructive engagement which will sustain improvements into the future,
- University priorities and directions being well understood,
- the alignment of service processes across organisational levels, and
- a collaborative approach to the way work is done.

Ultimately, the Project will create a renewed service culture that continues to build the University's reputation for responsiveness, agility and quality.

The University of South Australia has set a clear path for the remainder of the decade. It is one of many organisations that expects change to be a constant factor. The University will need to remain prepared, but these challenges are being approached with defined and

integrated organisational structures and the confidence that can be expected from an institution that is committed to making a positive difference to the working lives of its staff.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Simon Behenna is the Senior Analyst: Change and Communication for the UniSA Service Improvement Project, which aims to improve the University's administrative processes and practices. He has worked at UniSA since 2000 in a variety of roles including as a tutor, as a writer and website developer, as an executive officer, and in student equity. He has a BA (Hons.) in professional writing and has almost completed a doctorate in communication, examining the use of new technologies in modern workplaces.

Lucy Schulz has worked for UniSA since 1990 in a range of roles, culminating in her current position as the Director: Service Improvement, responsible for a corporate project to develop a new service provision model for the University's administrative activities. Previously she was Director: Student and Academic Services and Academic Registrar. Lucy has also been the University's Quality and Change Manager, providing advice to staff and management on effective approaches to quality systems, organisational change, innovation and management. She finished her Masters degree in human resources in 2000 focusing specifically on organisational culture and values in the context of change management.

THINKING BEYOND THE STATUS QUO TO DEAL WITH STRATEGIC UNCERTAINTY

Maree Conway, Thinking Futures

ABSTRACT

The future is full of uncertainties that will create new ways of living, working and just being in the world. Humankind knows this either consciously or unconsciously, since thinking about and planning for the future, is an innate human capacity. When we plan for the future, however, there is an often unspoken assumption underpinning that planning, that the future will be an extension of the present. This type of status quo thinking provides a level of certainty that humans crave. Thinking beyond the status quo is essential if organisations and governments are to develop strategy that truly prepares organisations for the future that our strategic decisions today create. This paper explores why traditional strategic planning methods constrain responses to strategic uncertainty and provides a four level strategy development and implementation framework that can be used to build future focused strategy. It also explores how integral theory and lessons from neuroscience can help us change the way we think about the future to move beyond the status quo to deal with the strategic uncertainty of the future.

Keywords: strategy, strategic planning, strategic thinking, futures approaches, neuroscience

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INTRODUCTION

Universities are currently in a transition to a new phase of their development. The ability to change their shape and form to maintain a strategic fit in the environment in which they operate is a characteristic of universities, and transitions are not a new phenomenon. Transitions, however, can be highly disruptive and uncomfortable for the people working in the midst of these shifts, as ways of working change rapidly.

This current transition is characterised by strategic uncertainty to a degree not seen before. Over time, universities moved beyond the ivory tower of their origins to a space where they have existed in a market environment over the past 30 years, accompanied by the rise of managerialism, new ways of managing and the emergence of a new occupational grouping - the professional staff. In parallel, traditional forms of academic work and learning have been challenged, primarily by increased demands for accountability and transparency by government and the public and also by the potential of educational technology, and more recently, by the rise of social media. The rate and pace of change, particularly for those who have lived that change, has been quite extraordinary.

What is becoming very clear is that the rate and pace of future change affecting the university will be equally extraordinary. That change will also be highly uncertain, and assuming that the future will be more of today is foolish. The university's next phase of development will be as different as both the ivory tower and the market driven institution phases have been. Strategy development today must therefore be structured to enable explorations of future strategic uncertainty in order to be able to better understand both the nature of the changes occurring, and the implications for work and learning within institutions today and into the future.

To prepare for this future university, which has but an emergent form and shape today, will require the capacity to think about and design strategy that embraces the uncertainty that is inherent in the future. Thinking needs to go beyond the status quo, because the status quo holds few clues to help to prepare for the future, and constrains thinking about what is possible and probable in that future.

Today's university is poorly equipped to deal with this nascent change, however, precisely because its strategy is driven by the status quo. This is the case because organisations are made up of people who are poorly equipped to think strategically about the future and its strategic uncertainty. This is not a criticism of individuals; rather it is a reflection of the way in which strategy development is now undertaken using processes and tools that result in business as usual thinking dominating strategic decision making.

Dealing with strategic uncertainty is about dealing with change. Today's change management models are based on a view of organisations as machines. Humans prefer ways of operating and changing 'that are predictable, stable and controllable' (Watluck, 2011). However, the single biggest factor in the failure of change management processes – and the failure for strategy to be executed effectively - is the neglect of individual and group beliefs and values. The same problem afflicts strategy development and implementation. People implement change and strategic actions, yet most current strategy processes relegate staff and stakeholders to the role of commenting on a draft plan.

One thing is certain: the future of higher education will not look like anything one sees and experiences today, and strategy development processes will need to be open to new ways of understanding what is possible beyond the status quo. This paper explores why traditional strategic planning methods constrain the ways of responding to strategic uncertainty and proposes a four level framework that can be used to build future focused strategy. It then explores how integral theory and lessons from neuroscience can help to change the way we think about the future and its associated strategic uncertainty to move beyond the status quo.

WHAT IS STRATEGIC UNCERTAINTY?

Strategic uncertainty is the degree of understanding that surrounds decision making about how to position an organisation to be sustainable in the future. Strategy is about the future, not today, so the thinking that underpins strategy development needs to be futures focused, not stalled in the status quo of today. Because the future is highly uncertain and cannot be predicted or known to a degree where data can be produced, the human proclivity for certainty means the value of thinking about the future is dismissed, and the focus of strategic thinking remains on the status quo.

Effective strategic decision-making requires decision makers to embrace strategic uncertainty, not dismiss it, and to explore its nature and possible outcomes, to build an understanding of possible implications for their organisations and to develop proactive strategic responses. Our current planning approaches, however, actually prevent us from analysing and seeking to understand strategic uncertainty.

TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO DEALING WITH STRATEGIC UNCERTAINTY

When faced with strategic uncertainty in the external operating environment, the usual response is to engage in strategic planning. Strategic planning has a significant history with methods and approaches built over time, but this has not generated any consistency of approach, terminology or method. While strategic planning is a routine part of business practice today, Mintzberg (1994, p.5) suggested that ‘planning lacks a clear definition of its own place in organisations’. While planning as a function may be accepted, the resulting plans are often not often executed successfully, resulting in failed strategy, suggesting a problem with planning processes themselves. As Fuller (2003, p. 2) pointed out, ‘while the need for planning has never been greater, the relevance of most of today’s planning systems and tools is increasingly marginal’.

The apparent failure of many strategic plans, despite investment of extensive time and resources, suggests that there is something missing from planning traditional planning models. Sidorowicz (2000) commented: ‘It may well be that the typical strategic planning exercise now conducted on a regular and formal basis and infused with quantitative data misses the essence of the concept of strategy and what is involved in thinking strategically’.

What, then, are the shortcomings with traditional planning models?

- They allow us to think tomorrow will be more of today, and develop views of the future that are little more than linear extrapolations of the status quo, business as usual. To

believe that the next 10 or 20 years will be the status quo is, at best, misplaced optimism, and at worst, ignorance about the nature of the environment in which organisations now exist.

- Because today's planning models are underpinned by status quo thinking, they usually lack the flexibility to deal with unexpected and surprise changes in the external environment. Without a continuous environmental scanning system in place, organisations have no way of being alerted to a significant change that is emerging and to which they must respond. The result is crisis management when that change happens. While some plans do include an 'environmental analysis', this is usually a snapshot of change that is occurring in the mainstream, rather than change that is just beginning to emerge at the periphery of our strategic vision (see Day and Schoemaker, 2006).
- Current planning models usually do not include overt processes for thinking strategically, that is, for systematically exploring how the long-term future of the organisation might evolve as a result of strategic uncertainty. Without any understanding of drivers of change in the external environment, how they might evolve over time and the nature of possible disruption those drivers may cause, any assertion that the long term has been considered during a planning process is usually little more than rhetoric.
- The reliance on 'data driven decision making' today suggests that a single outcome is possible. In a planning context, this single outcome is a status quo future, more of today. This is because the data we have today are derived from our understandings of the past and the present, not an exploration of the future. There are no future facts, so the future is dismissed when quantitative analysis is undertaken. The exception is forecasting, where today's trends are extrapolated into the future, but this type of data are really only valid for around three years – the pace of change in the external environment means that beyond this time frame, the basis upon which the forecast was made is likely to be invalid.
- Because current planning processes do not spend any useful time exploring the future, potential innovative opportunities and risks are missed because thinking is stalled, constrained and limited to what is known and what is likely to happen – that is, what is probable. Unless this status quo thinking is challenged, people do not have the opportunity to move into the space of the possible, where innovation occurs and where new strategic options emerge. Indeed, the biggest enemy of innovation is status quo thinking.
- Plans are implemented by people in an organisation who have the power, whether used consciously or unconsciously, to undermine that implementation. If people are not involved in the development of a plan from the beginning and provided opportunities to express their beliefs and values about the type of organisation that they would like to see emerge in the future, then the much sought after 'buy in' to a plan that is often talked about today will remain elusive. This is not to suggest that all staff views will need to be reflected in final strategy. If the only time staff and stakeholders are asked to be involved in planning, however, is to comment on a draft plan, then alignment of, and 'buy in' to, that plan across the organisation, and its use to inform day-to-day decision making is unlikely to occur. Systematic processes for listening to staff, providing them with information and opportunities to be involved in strategic conversations are missing from most traditional planning processes.

The principal problem with traditional strategic planning models is that they focus on the plan as the product and ignore or pay lip service to the depth of strategic thinking that is needed to deal with strategic uncertainty. Today's planning models confuse the plan – the written document that articulates the actions that will be taken to implement a strategy - with the strategy itself. Focusing on the plan AS strategy means we have made an orphan out of strategic thinking, and we plan without thinking.

Strategy would be stronger and more futures ready if the amount of energy and resources now expended on publishing glossy versions of what is regarded as a strategic plan was instead applied to scanning the external environment for, and thinking about the implications of, future uncertainties. That strategy would be flexible enough to deal with whatever challenges and uncertainties emerged over time, because the drivers of change creating those challenges and uncertainties had been considered and responses to them developed ahead of time.

With such a focus on documentation and implementation, exploration of strategic uncertainty and consideration of future options as an input into formulating strategy does not occur in any systematic way with traditional planning models. Understanding the future and its inherent uncertainty is therefore the least understood or analysed element of strategy development, even though that strategy is being developed to allow the organisation to survive and grow into that future. The result is what Slaughter (1998) calls the flatland, the land of the status quo, where 'sterile, machine-led notions of the future still remain dominant in popular culture and official thinking alike'.

MOVING TO STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION: RE-THINKING TRADITIONAL PLANNING MODELS

If strategy development and implementation is approached using a traditional planning model, there will be little overt consideration of the nature of strategic uncertainty. The underpinning and usually unarticulated and unchallenged assumption is that the future for an organisation will be a linear extrapolation of today. This is both naïve and dangerous thinking when it comes to developing strategy to position an organisation in an external environment that is increasing in both complexity and the degree of disruption that it will inflict on an organisation.

A rethinking of strategic planning using a futures perspective (Conway 2005) to focus on strategy development and implementation is needed. Strategy development and implementation involves four stages as shown in Figure 1 - environmental scanning, strategic thinking, decision making and planning. That is, *gathering* information about changes in the external environment, *thinking* about that information to identify possible and plausible future strategy options, *deciding* on options, and then *implementing* those options.

Current definitions, however, generally regard 'strategic planning' as shorthand for all four stages. The line between the stages is therefore blurred, as Mintzberg (1994: 32) pointed out:

A major assumption of the strategic planning literature ... is that all of these terms [strategy, strategic planning, strategic thinking] necessarily go together. Strategy development is a planning process, designed or supported by planners, to plan in order to produce plans.



Figure 1: Four level Strategy Development and Implementation Process

Strategy development is more than producing a plan. The basic differences among environmental scanning, strategic thinking, decision making and planning are at the heart of the four stage model shown in Figure 1. Each of the four stages requires dedicated time and processes to be applied in order to create strategy that deals with strategic uncertainty.

Mintzberg (1994a) indicated that *strategic planning* is about taking an articulated and agreed goal and turning it into formal, documented action steps that can be implemented to achieve agreed results. This sort of activity requires thinking which is analytical, logical, pragmatic and deductive to make sure that actions are implemented and monitored to ensure they are achieved.

In contrast to strategic planning, Mintzberg (1994a) pointed out that *strategic thinking* is about synthesis. Liedtka (1998) suggested that such thinking is intuitive, experimental and necessarily disruptive, and attempts to explore areas beyond logical thinking, in order to develop a vision of an organisation's future. Because information about potential futures is always incomplete and uncertain, the thinking required for success in this activity needs to be 'synthetical' and inductive, rather than analytical and deductive.

Strategic thinking is informed by *environmental scanning* which is the art of exploring the external environment systematically for potential opportunities, challenges and drivers of change likely to have an impact on your organisation's future. Environmental scanning explores known issues and trends, as well as new, strange and weird ideas that provide weak signals of change likely to emerge over time.

Without high quality environmental scanning to inform strategic thinking, strategic processes are based on status quo assumptions about the future. While many organisations do some form of environmental scanning, strategic scanning is needed for futures focused strategy. Strategic scanning is continuous, and applies depth and breadth to seeking out signals of change. It is scanning that moves beyond what is known about the past and present, and seeks to challenge worldviews about what is meaningful and what is 'right' that would otherwise create blind spots that mean we miss important signals of change. As Voros (2001) reminds us 'In an organisational setting this collection of blind spots can have disastrous implications for strategic thinking and strategy...In essence, the job of strategic scanning is to interrupt our daily thinking, break us out of routine views of the world and how it might be changing, and, frankly, to smack up against some of the blind spots which we all possess'. In other words, strategic scanning aims to move us beyond status quo thinking.

Strategic decision making is the interface between strategic thinking and planning, where directions are set. At this stage, options are assessed, choices examined, decisions made and a destination selected. How this happens will differ among organisations, but somehow, someone makes the final decision about strategy to pursue.

Environmental scanning, then, is about seeking to understand what how strategic uncertainty is being generated in the external environment, *strategic thinking* is about exploring implications of, and possibilities and options to address, those uncertainties, *strategic decision making* is about setting future directions, and *strategic planning* is about implementing actions. Successful strategy needs all four stages. As Wilson (2004, p. x) wrote, 'there is little to be gained from developing a plan per se. There is everything to be gained from the thinking that lies behind the plan - and the action that follows it'.

This four level approach provides a framework for dealing with strategic uncertainty. It makes it clear that strategic planning is a critical element in a larger process that allows the future and its strategic uncertainty to be considered as an integral element in strategy development and implementation. It includes all elements of current planning models and adds discrete approaches for environmental scanning and strategic thinking to create a stronger model for dealing with strategic uncertainty.

THINKING BEYOND THE STATUS QUO

The four-level framework provides a structure for a stronger strategy development process to help deal with strategic uncertainty. Using the framework, however, will not guarantee **thinking** beyond the status quo. For such a shift in thinking to occur, the strategic thinking stage needs explicit approaches that challenge and test assumptions about the nature of change affecting organisations today and into the future.

Integral theory provides such an approach. Stemming from the work of Ken Wilber (2001), integral theory is based on the need to integrate a range of knowledge and experience to understand the evolution of both individuals and societies in a more holistic way. It is a broad and deep theory, with a key element being the four quadrant model: a matrix created from interior and exterior and individual and collective perspectives, which generates four quadrants to explore: interior/individual, exterior/individual, interior/collective and exterior/collective as shown in Figure 2.

Wilber’s integral theory says that to understand the reality of an issue or phenomenon being explored or investigated, a holistic approach needs to be taken to integrate values, experience and knowledge in all four quadrants. In each quadrant, there are different phenomena at work and different ‘ways of knowing’ are needed to understand and study them. Voros (2003: p.3) pointed out that these ‘ways of knowing’ are based on different ways of thinking which influence how we view reality:

These different ways of thinking represent, in essence, alternative ways of knowing and the reflexive use of them is able to contribute to many new insights into how we filter, both consciously and unconsciously, what is going on in the world.

The **Upper Left** quadrant is the intentional, subjective realm, the region of individual consciousness, thoughts, values, motivations, ideas and images. The only person who can ‘know’ this realm is the individual. For other people to begin to understand the perspective of an individual, a process of ‘engaging’ with that individual needs to occur. The validity claim in this quadrant is truthfulness to the individual. The **Lower Left** quadrant is the cultural, intersubjective realm, where only the group can provide interpretation and meaning. The validity claim in this quadrant is justness.

The **Upper Right** quadrant is the objective realm of individual and organisational behaviour, with a validity claim of truth, while the **Lower Right** quadrant is the inter-objective social realm, the world external to the individual or the organisation. The validity claim here is functional fit. Tensions exist between quadrants, such as tensions between individual and organisational or cultural values, or tensions between the individual truthfulness of the Upper Left and the collective justness of the Lower Left.

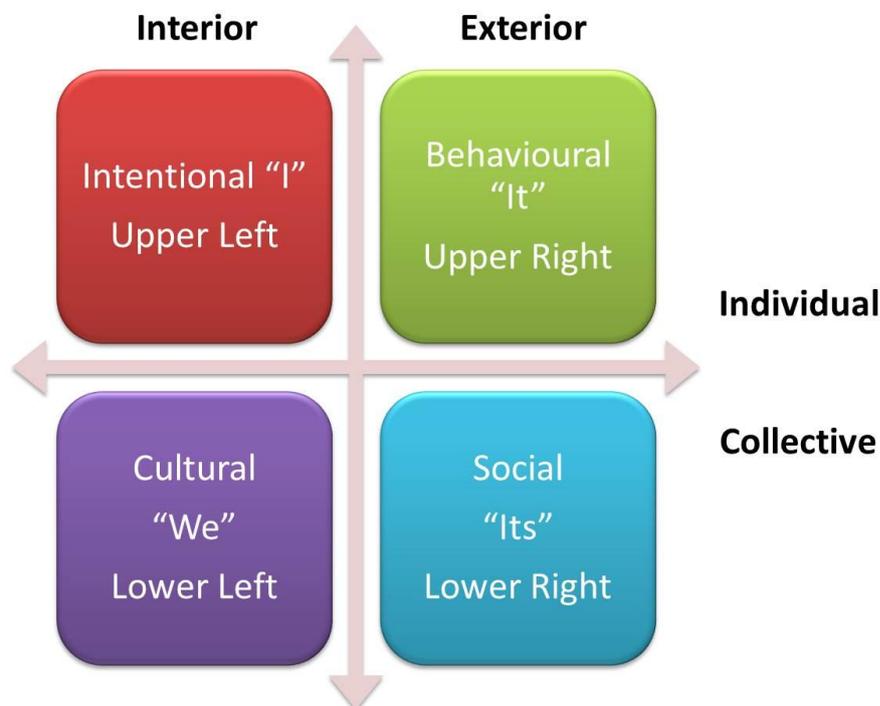


Figure 2: Wilber’s Four Quadrants

As indicated earlier, accessing left hand quadrant knowledge always involves the engagement of people as individuals, since that knowledge is held within the minds and brains of those individuals, and can only be measured and interpreted if it is shared by the individual. Right hand quadrant knowledge, on the other hand, is empirical and observable, as it can be seen and measured.

Wilber's integral theory is significantly more complex than just the four quadrants, and consists of a range of concepts such as holons, lines or streams, states, waves and types found in each quadrant (see Slaughter, 2004). As indicated above, each quadrant also has a different type of 'truth' or validity claim that relates to different types of knowledge held there, and if action does not match the truth of that quadrant, then the action is unlikely to be successful.

For the purposes of this paper, the model is used at the quadrant level which allows strategy development to be considered by integrating left and right hand quadrants and interpretative and empirical approaches, in order to describe the different perspectives required to design a strategy process that can deal with strategic uncertainty effectively.

Figure 3 shows the four quadrants translated for the task of thinking strategically and understanding strategic uncertainty.



Figure 3: Wilber's Four Quadrants Applied to Strategy Processes

To understand strategic uncertainty better, strategy processes therefore need four elements:

Upper Left: engagement of individuals to understand their beliefs about the future, and to identify how to change those beliefs if they are no longer helpful for the organisation,

Upper Right: organisational processes and tools that allow individuals to come together to understand 'the future' – the four level model discussed earlier in this paper,

Lower Right: strategic scanning processes to understand what’s coming – how the external environment is changing and what it might mean for your organisation, and
Lower Left: an organisational culture that is futures focused and asks proactive futures questions.

Traditional strategic planning processes focus on the right hand quadrants, the realm of the measurable and empirical. Organisational planning processes are set up according to conventional wisdom, usually managed by a planning department, with plans developed through strategic retreats of executive and senior managers. Understanding the external environment is achieved in a number of ways, ranging from chief executive officers who believe they know what is important to consider, to a limited, snapshot scan of current trends. All this activity takes place in the right hand quadrants. The standard process for interacting with left hand quadrants is to ask staff and stakeholders to share their views about a draft plan – in other words, staff are asked to move into the Upper Right quadrant and operate within a pre-determined process that they did not help to shape, and which may or may not match their beliefs and values.

The obvious problem with this right hand quadrant focus is that it ignores the importance of the need to engage individual staff and stakeholders in ways authentic to their worldviews, and assumes that a single snapshot understanding of the environment will be sufficient to deal with strategic uncertainty. Ignoring the Upper Left risks undermining of strategy execution, and snapshot views of drivers of change in the external environment are often out of date by the time they are published. Snapshot scans also lull organisations into believing that they can ignore the need for a futures focused organisational culture that supports continuous scanning and thinking about strategic uncertainty, and which requires proactive future questions to inform strategic decision-making.

Proactive futures questions allow proactive responses to change to be identified ahead of time, rather than reacting to that change after it has happened. Strategic thinking that is futures focused means decision makers must take a proactive stance to the future rather than the reactive and crisis driven stance that is often seen today. It involves asking different questions, as shown in Figure 4.

Reactive Futures Questions	Proactive Futures Questions
What has happened?	What is happening?
What caused it to happen?	What is driving the trends that will influence how this might evolve over time?
	What are the alternative possible outcomes?
How do we respond?	What might we respond?
	What would be the long term consequences of action we take today?
What will we do?	What will we do?

Figure 4: Differences Between Reactive and Proactive Future Stances

Both reactive and proactive questions relate to an event. Reactive questions are asked after an event has occurred, however, when the future has happened, and the only response is to react.

These questions are usually asked by senior or executive decision makers in the Upper Right when in crisis management mode. Proactive questions are asked in anticipation of an event that has been deemed likely to occur. They enable strategic responses to be developed which are available when change in the external environment reaches a point where a decision can be made whether or not to implement a particular strategy.

Because these questions are asked in anticipation of an event, they can be asked of staff and stakeholders in the Upper Left, with answers considered using strategy processes located in the Upper Right quadrant. The questions can also be used as part of decision making processes across an organisation, that is, to require consideration of the future as part of those processes. In other words, the rules of the game around decision making change, and the organisational culture (Lower Left) becomes more futures focused.

In a strategic context, decision makers make decisions about the future of the organisation, and it would seem to make perfect sense to inform that decision-making by first exploring potential long-term consequences and unintended outcomes by both scanning activity in the Lower Right and engaging staff and stakeholders in the Upper Left. Not exploring long-term consequences today is likely to result in someone saying, “it seemed like a good idea at the time” just before the organisation moves into crisis management mode.

In terms of thinking beyond the status quo to be able to deal with strategic uncertainty, the Upper Left quadrant – the realm of the interior/individual – is where most change needs to occur, because this is the space in which changes to deeply engrained ways of thinking about the future will occur. How do we do this?

LESSONS FROM NEUROSCIENCE

Discussions about moving beyond the status quo to deal with strategic uncertainty are about our ability to cope with change. Anyone who has worked through change, from restructuring to changing procedures and even changing offices, will know the challenges involved. Those challenges stem from the way human brains work when faced with the unfamiliar or the threat of change, and when they are faced with strategic uncertainty.

Human brains are habitual pattern recognition machines. Snowden (2003:1) explained this as follows:

Humans do not make rational, logical decisions based on information input, instead they pattern match with either their own experience, or collective experience expressed as stories. It isn't even a best fit pattern match, but a first fit pattern match...The human brain is also subject to habituation, things that we do frequently create habitual patterns which both enable rapid decision making, but also entrain behaviour in such a manner that we literally do not see things that fail to match the patterns of our expectations.

Schwartz et al. (2011) point out that: ‘Habitual thoughts and behaviours are not bad in themselves; indeed they are often the basis for what a company does well. But when circumstances shift or the company becomes dysfunctional, those habits may need substantive change.’

Neuroscience tells us that this habituation occurs deep in the brains, in the basal ganglia or basal nuclei, which influence the choice of action to take at any given time. This is the part of

the brain that is not usually accessed in a conscious way. Schwartz et al., (2011) describe the way the basal ganglia operate in the context of organisations as follows:

The basal ganglia's processing...is so rapid compared to other brain activity that it can feel physically rewarding; people tend to revert to this type of processing whenever possible. Moreover, every time the neuronal patterns in the basal ganglia are invoked, they become further entrenched; they forge connections with one another and with other functionally related brain areas, and these neural links (sometimes called 'action repertoires') become stronger and more compelling. This helps explain why when people in a workplace talk about the way to do things, they often reinforce the link between their own neuronal patterns and the culture of the company. If an organisational practice triggers their basal ganglia, it can become collectively ingrained and extremely difficult to dislodge.

New ways of thinking must be embedded in the basal ganglia for them to take hold, and this is often 'unfamiliar and painful because it means consciously overriding deeply comfortable neuronal circuitry' (Schwartz et al., 2011). This means that when confronted with disconfirming evidence about a particular issue or faced with significant change, or asked to consider proactive futures questions, particularly without notice or preparation, our brains will move to defend the thinking habits embedded in our basal ganglia. Being asked to think differently about an issue can generate fear or anger (the fight or flight response generated by the amygdala), resistance to change and a reduced capacity to objectively analyse what is happening and develop an appropriate response.

Neuronal connections in the brain can change – this is the concept behind neuroplasticity which, while an umbrella term for several types of brain plasticity, identifies 'the ability of the brain and nervous system in all species to change structurally and functionally as a result of input from the environment' (Wikipedia, 2011). This suggests that even deeply entrenched thinking patterns and ways of seeing the world – and viewing the future - can be changed. The process of changing the way humans think is not automatic, however, and they first need to identify, focus and call attention to the fact that existing thinking patterns are no longer helpful. Without active meta-observation, it is often easier to refuse to engage with any exploration of a proposed change, even when the benefits of that change might be overwhelmingly positive.

Specific processes therefore need to be put in place to support people through what can be a challenging shift in perspective and understanding and subsequent changes in 'the way we do things around here'. Schwartz et al., (2011) provide the following six steps as a guide:

Step 1: Recognise the Need for Change: reflecting on how current thinking habits are influencing the achievement of strategic goals, starting with the premise that 'the way we do things around here' cannot continue,

Step 2: Re-label Your Reactions: finding a new term for a situation that generates fear or anxiety to allow a more impartial view of what is happening,

Step 3: Reflect on Your Expectations and Values: working to replace old expectations and values, and to generate a clear vision for the future,

Step 4: Refocus Your Behaviour: identifying new habits required to achieve the vision and refocusing how you respond to challenges; this refocusing starts to ‘re-wire’ the brain to support the new habits,

Step 5: Respond with Repetition: ensuring that everyone in the organisation responds to challenges with the new behaviours and processes in order to embed new habits in the brain, and

Step 6: Revalue Your Choices in Real Time: being increasingly mindful of thoughts ‘in the moment’, to be able to move beyond automatic responses and create new ways of operating.

Step 1 is the most important if individuals are to recognize the need to think beyond the status quo to explore strategic uncertainty in order to be able to proactively respond to change. Without this recognition that the degree of strategic uncertainty an organisation is facing means that current thinking habits are no longer useful, changes in thinking habits will not occur, and strategy will continue to be based on the status quo.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Traditional strategic planning models no longer provide the framework needed to understand the strategic certainty that is influencing both our future as a society, and the future of universities. This paper has provided a number of ideas about how to move beyond these existing models to ensure that universities are able to deal with that strategic uncertainty. The four level strategy development and implementation framework provides an alternative approach to strategy development and implementation. Wilber’s four-quadrant model highlights the need to integrate our understanding of the external environment and organisational systems and processes with the intangible and unobservable realm of the individual and organisational culture in order to develop more holistic ways of dealing with strategic uncertainty. Lessons from neuroscience provide ideas about how to move beyond habitual thinking to be able to deal with the new and the different that characterises strategic uncertainty.

If organisations in general, and universities in particular, are to build strategy that is proactive and sustainable into the future, the way strategy is developed will need to change. New processes and behaviour will be needed that:

- seek to understand the external environment from a long term perspective by scanning continuously in order to identify current trends and early warning signals of change,
- provide overt spaces, time, information and opportunities for all staff to think about the implications of what scanning is identifying as strategic uncertainties, and to explore possible future options to respond to them,
- support staff to change the way they think about how to respond to strategic uncertainties, and
- build a future focused organisational culture that requires the future to be considered in decision making processes and in ‘how things are done around here’.

These sorts of processes will help people move beyond the status quo to deal with strategic uncertainty. They will build processes that are future focused, and support people to engage with the future and its uncertainty, rather than trying to mitigate it or explain it away. The trends and drivers of change in the external environment that are generating strategic uncertainty for universities and other educational institutions are complex, uncertain and interconnected, and require a new way of thinking about how to respond that is not stalled in the status quo.

This paper has explored ways in which new ways of thinking can be developed by seeking to understand the nature of strategic uncertainty through processes designed to understand the external environment as it changes over time, and by seeking the views of staff about the future of the institutions in which they work. Strategic decisions would be made only after the nature and possible impacts of change in the future, both negative and positive, had been investigated prior to strategic decisions being made. Only then will thinking have moved beyond the status quo.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

After a career as a tertiary education manager lasting almost 30 years, Maree Conway established Thinking Futures, a strategic foresight practice, in 2007. She works with people to help them to build a more futures focus approach to strategy development and implementation.

Maree is currently Vice-Chair of the Association of Professional Futurists, and works with Shaping Tomorrow in the UK to improve the quality of information about trends and drivers of change available to strategists. She sits on the editorial boards of the Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, and On The Horizon, and recently was guest editor of a special issue of On The Horizon on new media and learning.

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT THEORY AND STUDENT ADMINISTRATION: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is an evolving concept. It has been variously portrayed as a technological solution for a specific project, through to a whole of business strategy for managing relationships with customers. A holistic view of CRM is used to examine recent work by the Faculty of Professions at the University of Adelaide. The drive to automate standard processes led to an emphasis on software and improvements in efficiency. Staff perceived the software was primarily deployed to support their functions and resulted in resistance to creating a process built around the student as a customer.

Keywords: CRM, student administration, dual value

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is an attempt to provide a conceptual analysis of how Customer Relationship Management (CRM) theory can be used to establish organising principles to guide the delivery of student administration. Importantly, the paper does not attempt to provide a unified model for student administration. The authors have provided the historical background to the evolution of CRM as it helps identify some of the core elements of the theory. Next is a discussion of these elements and how they can be applied to student administration. The remainder of the paper applies CRM theory to early work undertaken by the Faculty of Professions at the University of Adelaide. It examines an initial effort to automate standard processes. Although the work was a technological success, it neglected the need to engage with frontline staff, and subsequently created resistance to change.

DISCUSSION

History of CRM

CRM largely evolved from marketing theories melded with improvements in data warehousing and new technologies that integrate various functions of an organisation with customer touch points. Messner (2005) identified two critical points in this evolution, the adoption of relationship marketing as opposed to transaction marketing, and the move from information management to customer knowledge management.

In the pre-industrial and early industrial era, people who produced goods sold directly to consumers. Production was based primarily on customer requests and did not require marketing practices such as advertising or price competition. Mass production techniques of the post-industrial era and the advent of middlemen significantly changed how producers and consumers interact with each other, leading to a transactional approach. This approach emphasised the economic benefit of exchange through sales and promotion of goods (Chen & Popovich, 2003; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). The post-industrial era has seen a swing back towards developing connections with customers to increase customer loyalty. It's theorised that delivering superior customer value in an extended relationship, significantly increases the financial or psychological cost to the customer of switching providers. As a result, customer retention and profitability increases and customer sensitivity to price decreases (Payne & Frow, 2004).

The second critical point identified by Messner (2005) was the shift from information management to customer knowledge management. Messner links this shift to an article by Porter and Millar (1985) that introduced the concepts of database marketing and sales force automation. Modern CRM software grew from these sales force automating systems and further integrated support for marketing, sales and service processes.

CRM in Universities

With a lineage so closely linked to marketing, it is not surprising that within universities, areas of student recruitment and alumni were the early adopters of CRM techniques. More recently, areas of student of administration have started to investigate the advanced functionality of CRM software as ways to improve service delivery. However, the focus on CRM as software as opposed to CRM as a comprehensive business strategy is likely to end in failure (Crosby, 2002; Verhoef & Langerak, 2002). A more nuanced understanding of the

basic theory behind CRM can help university administrators avoid indiscriminately overlaying jargon-laden technical solutions onto existing practices without reengineering processes (Boulding et al., 2005).

Core Components of CRM Theory

There have been many attempts to define CRM. Payne and Frow (2005) conducted a significant research project to identify a strategic framework for CRM. Their research identified a wide range of definitions, which they portrayed on a continuum from the implementation of a specific technology solution project to a holistic approach for managing customer relationships to create shareholder value (Payne & Frow, 2005, p.168). The authors of this paper adopt the holistic approach to CRM and the following definition:

CRM relates to strategy, the management of the dual creation of value, the intelligent use of data and technology, the acquisition of customer knowledge and the diffusion of this knowledge to the appropriate stakeholders, the development of appropriate (long-term) relationships with specific customers and/or customer groups, and the integration of processes across the many areas of the firm and across the network of firms that collaborate to generate customer value (Boulding et al., 2005, p.157).

Creation of Dual Value

Boulding et al. (2005) postulate the core of CRM theory is the dual creation of value. This central precept has direct relevance for administrative areas working closely with students. Student administration is increasingly called upon to improve processes by performing more effectively and efficiently whilst simultaneously improving the student experience.

Although Boulding et al. (2005) believe the creation of dual value is core to CRM theory, there are difficulties in using this as an organising principle for student administration. One way for universities to envision the dual creation of value is to see the value for students as the total package of benefits derived from the core product (the teaching and learning experience) and the product surround (student services and support). The value to the university is the total outcome of providing and delivering superior value to the student. This can be direct value e.g. increased efficiencies leading to lower human resource costs, or indirect value e.g. an increase in the student experience leading to more brand advocates. Only a balanced value exchange can lead to a long term positive relationship (Payne, n.d.).

Transactions vs. Relationships

Another key element to the theory of CRM is an emphasis on relationships as opposed to transactions and how this can redefine an organisation's interaction with their customers (Payne & Frow, 2004, p.528). In the realm of student administration this draws in the debate about the nature of students as customers, products or partners (Muncy, 2008). It is incompatible to place an emphasis on relationships and at the same time view students as a product. This aspect of CRM theory inevitably shifts the student paradigm towards customers. The view of students as customers is predicated on acknowledging an educational experience is multifaceted (Muncy, 2008). As such, the customer paradigm is appropriate for student administration e.g. class scheduling, however it is not appropriate for matters associated with credentialing e.g. determining graduate attributes.

Adopting a relationship perspective also requires universities to reject the view of student administration as a series of multiple independent transactions. Instead it forces us to

acknowledge the interdependency of transactions and how the sum of these experiences creates its own relationship over time. Thus CRM processes are longitudinal (Reinartz, et al., 2004, p.294).

Acquisition and Diffusion of Customer Knowledge

This aspect of CRM theory receives relatively little coverage in the literature but is extremely important to universities and student administration. If customer knowledge is used correctly, it can be leveraged to engage customers proactively. When a customer interacts with an organisation, there is an exchange of knowledge. This knowledge should be made available for future interactions. If the knowledge is not captured or made available to the appropriate area of an organisation, it can't be used to improve the experience of future interactions. A simple example for universities would be the management of academic progress. Many universities monitor academic progress and manage the contact with poor performing students through a central unit. If this information is not also provided to academic support units, the opportunity to proactively assist the students is limited.

Integration of Processes Across Many Areas of the Organisation

Understanding and managing customer touch points represents an extremely important part of CRM (Payne & Frow, 2004, p.534). A customer's overall experience of an organisation is normally the sum of their interactions through different channels at various touch points (Payne & Frow, 2004, p.533). It is important to maintain the quality of the relationships over time and across all touch points. Integrated structures should be in place to allow the flow of activity and information across an organisation in order to deliver the value proposition in the eyes of the customer. Customer issues need to transition smoothly among departments, functions, and people. Seamless hand-offs need to occur between departments during the transition (Payne & Frow, 2004, p.532). Poor transitions between departments, at best, result in customers being forced to repeat information. At worst, the customer may become despondent and refuse to engage with the process further.

This is a significant challenge to universities with a high degree of segmentation between activities e.g. student recruitment separated from exams or graduations. These are often logical and necessary divisions, easily understood by staff, but of little importance to students who perceive their interactions with a university as a singularity. Students partially judge the value of their university experience on the seamlessness of these interactions.

Of particular note for student administration is efforts to increase efficiency, e.g. electronic channels to enable customer self-service, should not be deployed at the expense of choice of channel.

Software as an Enabler

Information technology, such as CRM software, has the potential to redesign business processes significantly by facilitating changes to work processes (Chen & Popovich, 2003; Reinartz et al., 2004). The drivers for change should be for the specific purpose of better initiating and maintaining customer relationships (Reinartz et al., 2004). Software enables a number of the above concepts, including the creation of dual value, the ability to diffuse knowledge to appropriate areas of an organisation and to integrate process across an organisation. Additionally, software enables an organisation to analyse large quantities of data, which is essential in assessing whether or not an organisation's CRM strategy is being fulfilled.

CRM in the University of Adelaide's Faculty of Professions

In 2007, the Faculty of Professions at The University of Adelaide decided to pilot the use of RightNow CRM software to improve services provided to enrolled students. The original aims were to;

- provide accurate and timely online information to students,
- reduce repetitive front counter enquiries,
- reduce inconsistent responses to enquiries,
- create a centralised record of communications with students, and
- provide students with alternative channels for self service or submission of enquiries.

Initial work concentrated on creating an information and customer enquiry portal. This new portal was branded 'ASKthePROF' and launched in semester two, 2008. The original audience was all postgraduate coursework students in the School of Business. This has now been expanded to service all undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students across the Faculty of Professions. The two key components are a 'knowledge base' that students can search, and the option of submitting enquiries directly from the knowledge base webpage or via email. Software based business rules route all electronic enquiries to the most appropriate staff member according to topic and origin of enquiry. Analytics provide managers with the ability to monitor metrics such as response times and the number of outstanding enquiries.

Automating Standard Processes

Following the initial rollout of ASKthePROF, the Faculty investigated using RightNow software to improve standard processes by automating previously manual tasks. Within the Faculty, applications for supplementary exams constitute the highest number of forms processed. Each semester the Faculty processes up to 1000 applications. For every application;

- it is received at the front counter,
- initially checked for completeness,
- assessed against an approval matrix,
- entered onto Total Records and Information Management (TRIM) for tracking and cross checking,
- entered into PeopleSoft, and
- a notification of the outcome sent to the student.

Due to the volume of applications and multi-stage processing, the exercise draws in many staff. Additionally, processing of applications is time critical, often coinciding with other time critical processes. Therefore, the Faculty considered improvements for supplementary exam applications a priority.

The original intention of automating applications was to:

- allow electronic submission,
- automate processing of applications on medical grounds, and
- process compassionate and last course applications within an electronic environment.

A significant amount of background work was undertaken to test the feasibility of the project, however after conversations with the Coordinator: Student Policy and Appeals, it was discovered any changes to the application form, including digitisation, would require changes to the underlying policy and approval from Academic Board. It was therefore decided to pare back the scope of the project.

Through firsthand experience, it was estimated approximately 80 per cent of all applications

are approved on medical grounds, when a doctor has confirmed the student was;

- ill the day of the exam, and
- the illness severely impacted their academic performance.

It was believed major efficiency gains could be generated by automating the approval and notification of such applications. Additionally, minor efficiency gains were envisaged for the remaining 20 per cent of applications by processing in an electronic environment.

When judged against the project scope, the approval of applications met most expectations. The algorithm accurately assessed applications, automatically approving and notifying the bulk of applicants. Overall, the electronic processing automatically approved and notified 83 per cent of all applications. This demonstrated the potential for significant gains in efficiency when compared to individual paper based processing.

Table 1: 2010 semester 2, supplementary exam applications processed through RightNow

Type of Application and Assessment	Number of Applications per Course (Subject)
Auto-assessed	
Medical – no review required	659
Manually assessed	
Medical - review required	109
Compassionate	20
Medical/Compassionate	1
Total	789

ANALYSIS

The analysis is based upon the authors’ observations, drawn from working directly with and managing staff responsible for processing applications for supplementary exams. Both authors are involved in the use RightNow in the Faculty and the automation of student administration. To date there have been no surveys or interviews with the students. Perceptions of customer service are likely to be biased depending on the outcome of the application for a supplementary exam, posing significant design issues for the collection of quantitative data.

Software as an Enabler to Improve the Customer Relationship

Essentially, automation was applied to existing work practices. A culture that resisted change inhibited efforts to use the software to redesign our business processes. Therefore, the main value gains were increased efficiency for staff and reduced response times for students. For the majority of students, this presented a worthwhile improvement. However, the authors did not improve the value proposition for students in terms of increased transparency in decision making. This is of concern to students who are denied a supplementary exam. The authors did not clearly articulate the importance of segmenting applicants according to the outcome of their supplementary applications and then tailoring the communication appropriately to help improve the student experience. The software enables the segmenting of students, yet tailoring the relationship appropriately requires staff to translate the value a university places on its students into a real life experience for the students.

Supplementary exam applications can be segmented into three groups. The first group is composed of those students who clearly meet the criteria for a supplementary exam. Within the Faculty these applications usually comprise 80 per cent of all supplementary exam applications. Through the use of business rules, these students automatically receive notification their application has been approved and are directed to the University's website for the supplementary exam timetable.

The remaining 20 per cent of applications are allocated to staff to be individually assessed against an approval matrix. Applications that are approved as part of this process comprise the second group. These students receive the same information as the first group. Applications that are not approved fall into the third group and require an individualised response to explain why their application was not approved. The main value proposition for these students is increased transparency in decision-making. They are the students who are most likely to require an ongoing dialogue. However, these students received a standard response stating the application was denied and a reference to the University's policy. No details were provided in relation to why the application was denied. In this regard the software should have been seen as a way of enhancing our relationship with such students (Seeman & O'Hara, 2006), however this opportunity was largely missed.

Transactions not Relationships

The failure to see software as an enabler to improve our relationship with students stems from a more basic problem. Working through a large number of administrative tasks, such as supplementary exam applications, can blur the view of students as customers and result in staff operating in a task or transaction oriented manner. Staff viewed applications for supplementary exams solely as a series of administrative transactions. They did not see that each application is one part of an ongoing relationship between the University and the student. This reflects a common culture where students are viewed as a product of the University. Student administration then becomes a series of transactions performed on behalf of the University and places the University at the centre of the relationship.

Creation of Dual Value

If CRM theory were to be accepted as a guiding principle for delivering student administration, then an appropriate outcome should involve the dual creation of value. However, only a balanced value exchange can lead to a long term positive relationship. The value of an automated supplementary exam application process to the University is reduced staff workload; the value to students is an improved response time. Therefore, on one level the process can be described as a success.

However, students not granted a supplementary exam were only sent a standard reply with no explanation of the reason for the decision. In one instance, a student was advised there was no need to submit supporting medical documents with their application. When the student received the standard response with limited detail, they enquired why the application had not been approved. With only the application form, the University was unable to review the decision adequately and provided an explanation based on incomplete information. Through the combination of treating the interaction as a transaction and not acquiring and disseminating the appropriate knowledge, the University was unable to provide a value proposition other than a reduced response time.

CONCLUSION

When viewed from a purely technical perspective, the Faculty's effort to automate supplementary exam applications was successful to a point. If student administration was only concerned with speed and accuracy, there would be little more to add. However, when using the organising principles of CRM theory to analyse and assess our performance, several lessons were learned. In particular, if software is not viewed as an enabler for building, maintaining and enhancing relationships with students, you restrict the value proposition to efficiency outcomes. For the example of automating supplementary exam applications, efficiency outcomes were adequate for the majority of students, but underutilised the potential to improve transparency in decision making. This could have been avoided if there was greater emphasis on students as customers as opposed to products and student administration as an ongoing relationship as opposed to a series of discrete transactions.

Most of this can be traced to our own failure to clearly convey a strategy, the purpose for change and the resulting value proposition for students. Several authors have identified the integral role of staff in delivering CRM activities (Boulding et al., 2005; Chen & Popovich, 2003; Reinartz et al., 2004; Xu, Yen, Lin, & Chou, 2002). They discuss the need for cultural change when redesigning process to focus on the customer. From our own observations this challenge is equally important when automating student administration. There was resistance to creating a process built around the student as a customer, as staff believed the software was deployed to support the functions of the unit in terms of reducing time and effort to process applications.

As with CRM, automating student administration should not be viewed just as a technical solution. It must integrate people, processes and technology to create dual value for the university and the student. In application, this requires staff to have a clear understanding of the overall strategy and how it translates into a value proposition for the university and the student.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Mark Hopps has worked in the higher education sector for over a decade, holding a range of positions in faculties, central administration and student services. Since 2008, he has worked in the Faculty of Professions at The University of Adelaide, managing support services for postgraduate coursework students. Mark is currently completing a Master of Health Economics and Public Policy.

Nicole Waker is currently working on the development of a RightNow CRM for the new Learning Hub at the University of Adelaide. Nicole has an honours degree in computer science and is currently completing a graduate certificate in management. Nicole has a keen interest in how CRM can be used to enhance the student experience with regard to university administration.

DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP: WORKING TOGETHER TO RIDE THE WAVES: THE ACTION SELF-ENABLING REFLECTIVE TOOL (ASERT)

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ABSTRACT

New models of leadership are required if the higher education sector is to continue to provide leading edge change. While multiple theories of leadership exist, the Higher Education sector requires a less hierarchical approach that takes account of its specialised and professional context. This paper explores how an action self enabling tool, developed from research into the experience of several higher education institutions, can be used to support a distributed leadership process to build leadership capacity. While the focus of the project that underpinned the tool was on building leadership capacity of academics for learning and teaching, the findings demonstrate the need for an inclusive participative approach by which professional, administrative and academic staff benefit from collaborating to build a systematic, multi-faceted leadership approach appropriate for the sector.

Key Words: Distributed leadership; leading change, collaboration

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INTRODUCTION: LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

New approaches to leadership in higher education are being explored as universities face the dual challenges of competing in a globally competitive world while at the same time designing opportunities to build and develop sustainable leadership. To be successful in the complex and ambiguous world in which new social, political and environmental challenges are ever-emergent, new governance and leadership models are needed. While similar challenges are experienced in all industries, higher education occupies a unique position given its role in the development of new knowledge and dissemination of existing knowledge. Any new model of leadership for higher education needs to go beyond the 'managerialist', corporate 'service' focus on documenting, formalising and systematising interactions and networks between groups across the university that has been described by Lumby (2003) as waves of managerialism' that demonstrate either overt oppression or subtle manipulation. Rather, the new leadership model needs to encompass more participative approaches that encourage and support collaboration while acknowledging the individual autonomy that underpins creative and innovative thinking as well as the social nature of knowledge development.

What is needed is a more blended approach to leadership that looks past this focus on the traits, skills and behaviours of individual leaders (Stogdill 1948; Du Brin & Dagleish 2003; Stogdill & Coons 1957) within the context, situation, environments and contingency in of higher education (Fiedler 1967; Hersey and Blanchard 1988; Vroom & Yetton 1973; Blau 1964; Burns 1978; Kouzes & Posner 1987), particularly the more distributed context. Gronn (2008) has recently described this as the need for a 'hybrid' leadership approach. This is in keeping with Marshall's (2006, p.5) description of the development of leadership capability in higher education as 'not a simple process...rather, it is a complex, multifaceted process that must focus on the development of individuals as well as the organisational contexts in which they are called to operate. This new approach needs to more overtly identify the difference between management and leadership to incorporate what Anderson & Johnson (2006) describe as the difference between management (that relies on formal positions, often attracts relatively conservative and risk-averse personnel and relies more on systems maintenance with decisions based in data analysis, rather than change) and leadership (that is change oriented, aiming at a perceived vision for the future that is achieved by encouraging a culture of enthusiasm for change). Finally, the new approach needs to recognise the need for both cultural and structural adjustments in recognition of the fact that academic leadership 'is a highly specialised and professional activity' (Anderson & Johnson 2006, p.3). Ramsden (1998, p.4) has scoped the breadth of change required as: 'a practical and everyday process of supporting, managing, developing and inspiring academic colleagues....leadership in universities should be by everyone from the Vice Chancellor to the casual car parking attendant, leadership is to do with how people relate to each other'.

Such a degree of change requires an integrated, inclusive university-wide approach that is anchored in the overall strategic direction and budgetary provisions of the university. Failure to recognise that changes made in one part of an organisational system impact on other parts of the system will, as Marshall (2006, p.5) explains 'inevitably lead to organisational environments that stifle rather than enable the development of leadership capability'. In so saying, while identifying the central role of academics in leading in learning and teaching, Marshall acknowledges and emphasises the contribution made by professional staff. He includes amongst these professional staff senior executives as well as service providers such as student learning services professionals, librarians, information technology specialists,

facilities managers, laboratory managers/technicians and administrators. He describes these professionals as staff who ‘do not hold academic appointments but who are actively involved in the planning and decision making processes associated with the development of the organisational context in which learning and teaching occurs....[and provide]... expert advice and support in their area of specialist expertise to enable others with more specific responsibilities for learning and teaching ...to make informed decisions’ (Marshall 2006, p.9).

In Australia in 2005, this lack of a clear framework for effective leadership in higher education led the Carrick Institute (now Australian Learning and Teaching Council [ALTC]) to establish a Leadership for Excellence in Learning and Teaching Program. The overall aim of the program was to ‘fund projects that could provide empirical evidence on which to base new understanding and definitions of effective leadership in the context of Australian higher education learning and teaching in which there is need to promote and support strategic change’ (Parker 2006, p.6). The ALTC (2010) has described the Leadership Program as classifying projects into two priority areas - institutional and disciplinary and cross-disciplinary, leadership. The first priority area - institutional leadership - was broadly defined as contributing to an institution’s capacity to effect change in learning and teaching through specific roles and structural arrangements through the support of staff with expertise and passion who engage with colleagues to strengthen learning and teaching as part of their general duties. The Institutional leadership classification was further separated into two categories of leadership. Positional / structural leadership includes persons with particular responsibilities for learning and teaching or supporting the development of systems that assist leaders to effect change in learning and teaching. Distributed leadership offers a framework which encourages the active participation and partnering of experts and enthusiasts and the networks and communities of practices that are built to achieve organisational change. The second priority area- disciplinary / cross disciplinary leadership - was described as identifying models of leadership that enhance community partnering.

To date 61 projects have been funded as ALTC Leadership for Excellence projects, 24 as Positional/Structural leadership; 19 as Distributed Leadership and 18 as Disciplinary/Cross Disciplinary networks (ALTC 2011). As the projects identified under this last category aim to build leaders in learning and teaching in specific discipline areas and is closer to distributed leadership, this results in 37 projects implementing a distributed leadership approach. Included in this number are also eight projects funded to consolidate the outcomes of earlier projects - four positional / structural, three distributed leadership and one disciplinary/cross disciplinary).

The diversity of leadership projects and their outcomes was recently described by the ALTC (2011, p.ix) as enabling ‘the testing of a number of approaches to the development of the capacity and capability for leadership to effect ongoing improvements in outcomes for both undergraduate and postgraduate students in Australian Institutions’. One outcome from the Institutional Positional/Structural leadership projects was a major cross-institutional report on the capabilities that make an educationally effective higher education leader (Scott et al. 2008). The impact of this report is evidenced by the use of the Scott et al survey by the Association for Tertiary Education management (McKellar 2011) to identify the capabilities most important to effective practice for experienced leaders in professional and executive roles in tertiary education institutions in Australia and New Zealand who are not employed under a teaching classification (McKellar 2001, p.9). This paper next focuses on the second of the Institutional leadership classifications, distributed leadership. This will be followed by

a discussion to encourage participation in these emerging distributed leadership models by professional staff in higher education.

DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Distributed leadership is being recognised in a variety of developed countries as an emergent leadership concept relevant to the culture of the educational sector as a whole (primary, secondary and higher education). In the USA, the focus has been on primary and secondary education (Spillane et al. 2001; Spillane 2006; Spillane & Diamond 2007; Spillane et al 2009; Leithwood et al. 2009), while in the UK (Bennett et al. 2003; Harris 2004, 2005, 2008 & 2009a, 2009b; Woods et al. 2004; Bolden, Petrov & Gosling 2008;) and Australia (Dinham et al. 2009; Gronn 2000, 2002, 2003, & 2009; Gronn & Hamilton 2004) all three sectors have been explored. In his early writings, Gronn (2002) described distributed leadership as a 'new architecture for leadership' that incorporates a complex interplay in which activity bridges agency (the traits/behaviours of individual leaders) and structure (the systemic properties and role structures in concertive action. When combined with activity theory (Engestrom 1999) distributed leadership offers a new conception of workplace ecology for higher education in which contextual factors are incorporated to identify both a more holistic perspective of organisational work and a focus on emergent approaches.

Literature on distributed leadership from the USA provides detailed empirical examples of how distributed leadership occurs within schools, while from the UK the focus has been on theoretical conceptualisation. The Leadership for Excellence project in Australia tries to bridge the gap between conceptual theory and empirical practice by adopting a praxis approach and focusing on the operationalisation of distributed leadership to build leadership capacity in learning and teaching (ALTC 2011). Projects funded to utilise a distributed leadership approach to learning and teaching have taken either an issue-based focus (leadership and assessment; on-line learning; emerging technologies; student feedback; peer review) or targeted leadership development (indigenous research, indigenous curriculum development and indigenous women; building communities of practice and networks; developing faculty scholars). Projects funded to develop disciplinary and cross-disciplinary networks have focussed on building discipline-based leaders by networking specialists in a broad range of disciplines including maths and statistics, science, dentistry, chemistry, childhood education, nursing, speech pathology, languages, law, mental health, creative arts, social sciences and humanities, engineering and clinical health (ALTC 2011).

In 2009, the ALTC sponsored a consolidation project with the aim of identifying the synergies between four completed ALTC Projects funded as Institutional Leadership (distributed leadership) grants in order to design a matrix of, and self enabling tool for, distributed leadership (Jones et al., 2009a). Three of these projects had used an issue-based approach (assessment, on-line learning and student feedback) while the fourth had targeted leadership development (Faculty scholars) (Harvey 2008; Lefoe & Parris 2008; Schneider et al. 2008). A critical common factor identified during this analysis was the need to support a complex interplay of participants from across the institution between formal managers and formal and informal leaders at all levels of the institution and between academics, professionals and administrative personnel involved in a range of functions. This paper focuses on this finding.

METHOD

The methodological framework that underpinned the consolidation project (LE9-1222) built on the common methods and strategies of an action research methodology and participant reflection that was used in the four initial projects. Over an eighteen-month period, the project used a participatory and inquiry-based action research methodology of reflexive inquiry (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). This provided the opportunity to implement and research change simultaneously using an action research cycle of plan, act, observe and reflect. The action research methodology offered the benefit of an emphasis upon collaboration and collegiality, considered essential to the multi-dimensional, interdisciplinary, multi-university and multi-campus project. The great strength of the model was its inherent flexibility that enabled adaptation of the project in response to ongoing evaluation that was achieved through reflective practice of the project team and the reference group at each project phase. In three cases the process involved cycles of change using an action research approach that relied upon reflection, on and in, action by the participants. An early project action was to collect and share the reflections of each of the project team leaders of the original projects; this was validated at an ALTC meeting of a group of leaders of learning and teaching (recipients of ALTC funded leadership projects). Based on these reflections and feedback from these leaders the Project Team identified a series of further questions that required detailed responses from participants representing the four original projects. These participants met as a Community of Practice reflective workshops in each of their respective institutions and elicited responses from the participants on the contextual conditions and leadership skills needed to achieve an effective distributed leadership process. These responses provided the data that was collated into a draft Distributed Leadership Matrix. The Matrix was then reviewed by the Project Reference Group of national experts in distributed leadership, with their feedback included in the final design of an Action Self Enabling Tool (ASERT) for distributed leadership. This tool was assessed by a second group of leaders of learning and teaching for its potential to assist universities to design distributed leadership approach on issues relating to learning and teaching.

RESULTS

Given that the outcomes of this project were iterative they are presented below according to the major phases of the project.

Phase 1

The first (scoping) phase confirmed theoretical research undertaken in the United Kingdom, namely that there are five Dimensions to distributed leadership - context, culture, change, relationships and activity as follows:

1. Context - distributed leadership is effective in a context in which there are both external and internal influences. In this project the cases under analysis were designed to respond to an external (government) pressure on higher education to improve the quality of learning and teaching while concurrently increasing research output. This resulted in creating (common) internal pressures to review existing hierarchical (managerialist) leadership approaches that, it was recognised, are being subject to increase resistance from by academics who are used to acting autonomously. In all projects it was recognised that the establishment of the Leadership for Excellence program by the ALTC was an important external stimulus to the executive leadership of the institutions to recognise the importance of building

leadership in learning and teaching. In several cases new learning and teaching strategies that encourage greater engagement in distributed leadership were implemented. For example, in several cases changes were made to criteria for promotion to encourage greater participation and involvement in leading change to improving learning and teaching quality.

2. Culture - the importance of adopting new leadership approaches that support the existing and deeply embedded culture of academic autonomy was evidenced. In each project academics self selected for participation in the projects based on their interest and expertise rather than having a formal (structural) position. While identifying this, the essential need for persons in formal managerial and leadership positions to overtly support a distributed leadership approach was recognised. In addition it was recognised that while the projects were focussed on the role of academics in the delivery of a quality learning and teaching environment, the contribution by, and concomitant need for, collaboration between academics and members of the executive, professionals and administrators, was identified as part of the supporting culture. This multi-level and cross-functional collaboration provided each of the projects with a range of 'lenses' (Brookfield, 1995), or perspectives, to better inform innovation and project decision making.

3. Change and Development - the central need for change was recognised in all cases, supported by an integrated change process that includes formal senior leaders leading policy decisions at the top of the organisation, committee structures supporting the formal process as well as informal leaders implementing this policy (academics-as-teachers). In each case institutional change was required that had wide impact designed to produce a mix of top-down policy with bottom-up implementation strategies. In each case, the important role played by the Executive (in the form of the Deputy (Pro) Vice Chancellor/Provost of Learning and Teaching) in positively and overtly encouraging, endorsing, supporting and recognising the contribution being made by the informal leaders and in providing mentoring and coaching support, was identified. In several cases at the conclusion of the projects, several participant who had become acknowledged as leading experts of learning and teaching as a result of their engagement in the project, were appointed to formal positions.

4. Activity – the role of teams that consisted of academics, professional and administrative staff with expertise in a broad range of relevant knowledge, ideas and values in collaborative processes of change, was acknowledged. This was shown by the fact that in each case the participants were assisted by academics, professional and administrative staff from the Learning and Teaching Units who adopted a facilitative role using regular sharing of individual reflections on activities and change such as through the embedding of Supported Reflection (Harvey, 2008). The importance of the provision of resources in the form of finance to 'buy-out' time from other tasks to enable networking and communicating opportunities, provision of rooms and IT facilities and training in leadership and professional development, was acknowledged.

5. Conflict Resolution – while the theoretical research from the United Kingdom identified the need for discrete conflict resolution mechanisms, this was not recognised as an important factor in the Australian projects. However it was acknowledged that adoption of an action research methodology, with evaluation and reflection inherent in each cycle, have obviated the need for conflict resolution

mechanism as it enabled the flexibility for timely adjustments to be made if potential conflicts arose.

These findings were validated for their broad relevance across institutions by leaders of learning and teaching at a national (ALTC Leadership) forum in February 2010. Feedback from participants emphasised two meta-factors underpinning these dimensions - the need for activity to produce change and the importance of a blended approach in which executive and senior (formal) leaders champion the distributed leadership approach and encouraged the 'voice' of (informal) experts to be heard.

Phase 2

In the second, Community of Practice phase, responses from the participants in the four original projects to questions that arose from the original scoping study were sought. The issues identified for further reflection by these participants included:

- What motivated participants to become involved in their institutional project?
- How did they see the original project as being influenced by university policy and leadership what challenges were there in the development of collaborative process?
- What processes, factors, resources and support were most effective in encouraging collaboration?
- What skills did they believe were needed by participants in a distributed leadership process?

Participants met in a Community of Practice organised as a focus group, with their responses compared across the four institutions then used to inform the development of a two-part Distributed Leadership Matrix (DLM). Distributed Leadership Matrix A (DLMA-Appendix 1) identifies the responses under the headings of Dimensions, Elements and Inputs of Distributed Leadership. The dimensions and associated elements were identified as:

- a context underpinned by influence rather than power
- a culture underpinned by autonomy rather than control
- a change process underpinned by interdependence between top-down, bottom-up and multi-level policy development and implementation
- relationships focused on collective rather than individual identity
- activity based on shared purpose through cycles of change using reflective practice.

The Inputs required to achieve these dimension and elements included:

- encouragement for the involvement of people
- creation of supportive processes
- development of shared or distributed leadership
- resourcing of collaborative activities
- support for individual participation.

The skills, traits and behaviours considered most effective in encouraging collaboration were incorporated in part B of the matrix. Distributed Leadership Matrix B (DLMB-Appendix 2) identified personal (and organisational) values required to support distributed leadership including - trust, respect, recognition, collaboration and commitment to reflective practice. Associated with these values were behaviours that included the ability to - consider self-in-relation to others, support social interactions, engage in dialogue through learning conversations and grow as leaders through connecting with others.

The two-part Distributed Leadership Matrix was reviewed and analysed by the Reference Group of experts. This review confirmed the central role of Actions taken by participants and the management of Relationships between participants as vital in developing capacity for distributed leadership, rather than the traditional emphasis on the skills and traits of individual leaders. The 'fit' between four particular elements was identified - the people involved, the processes developed, the professional development provided and resources made available. It was recognised that this classification is pragmatic as in practice each action is an integrated and interdependent part of a holistic process that includes all levels and functions across the university.

The outcome of this phase was agreement that while it is difficult to define distributed leadership given the need for flexibility to accommodate different institutional contexts, it can be described as 'a form of shared leadership that is underpinned by a more collective and inclusive philosophy than traditional leadership theory that focuses on skills, traits and behaviours of individual leaders' (Jones et al. 2011, p.4).

Phase 3

The third and final, reflective, phase of the project used the findings identified in the DLM and the agreed description of distributed leadership to design a two-part Action Self Enabling Reflective Tool (ASERT) to be used as a framework to assist institutions that are considering the adoption of a distributed leadership process. Part 1 (Appendix 3a) of the ASERT is identified as an Action Tool (AT). This provides a description of how the philosophy and principles that underpin distributed leadership are identified in terms of the Dimensions, Values and Criteria for distributed leadership. On the one axis the Dimensions of distributed leadership include:

- a context in which trust rather than regulation exists
- a culture of autonomy rather than control
- change that recognises a variety of inputs
- relationships that build collaboration rather than individualism
- activity based on shared purpose rather than individual purpose.

These dimensions are associated with the values of: trust rather than regulation, respect for expertise, recognition of contribution, collaboration and reflective practice through action research cycles.

On the other axis criteria for distributed leadership are identified. This includes identification of the people involved in distributed leadership, the process required to support the process, the form of professional development required, and the type of resources needed to support the process. The cells that are created through the intersection of these dimensions, values and criteria identify actions required to use a distributed leadership process to achieve change. For example, a context in which trust rather than regulation is emphasised requires people involved for the expertise they can offer to inform decisions. This in turn requires processes through which leadership is seen as a collaborative process that involves many people rather than being invested in a single person identified by their formal position. In turn this requires the provision of professional development by which any (and all) leadership training includes a component on distributed leadership. Finally, resources such as space, time and finance, need to be provided to support collaboration for collaboration.

Part 2 of the ASERT is an identified Self Enabling Reflective (SER) process of scaffolded (after Vygotsky, 1978) Reflective Prompts to assist participants to identify action needed to move towards a more distributed leadership approach.

In combination the ASERT (AT = SER) provides a tool for institutions who have identified that distributed leadership can be used to build leadership capacity for change. The ASERT provides a useful tool to assist institutions that have made the decision to implement a distributed leadership process for change based on principles and practices identified from an in-depth exploration of the synergies between four projects funded by the ALTC to use a distributed leadership approach to build leadership capacity in learning and teaching. Based on this tool, a further two-year study designed to develop a systematic evidence-based benchmarking framework for Distributed Leadership, designed as a web-based interactive tool, to facilitate benchmarking across the sector has recently been funded by the ALTC (Jones et al 2011b). The benchmarking framework will be identified from a national survey of existing practice of using distributed leadership to build leadership capacity. Through the identification of benchmark indicators the project will provide the means to ascertain areas for improvement. This will provide a valuable contribution to identifying an effective response to the impending crisis of leadership facing HE identified in a recent study as: 'not conducive to encouraging new staff to enter the academic profession nor ... for keeping existing staff enthusiastic and retained...this carries serious implications for sustaining and developing the academic profession. It suggests radical change is needed in the institutional climate within which academics operate' (Coates et al. 2009, p. 28).

The benchmarking framework will provide the opportunity to test the need for 'clear leadership devolved from the top throughout the institution....through....management and leadership styles that are aligned with the specific nature of the university' (Coates et al. 2009, p. 31). It also offers opportunities for international benchmarking of leadership development (see for example findings of a UK report by Burgoyne, Mackness & Williams 2009).

DISCUSSION

Given the learning and teaching focus of the ALTC projects that have been the subject of this paper, it is not surprising that the focus of attention has been on engaging academics in the distributed leadership process. What is interesting, however, has been the emphasis in the findings on the importance of engaging professionals, administrators and academics in collaborative processes if distributed leadership is to be effective. While this paper recognised that this is not a new revelation, its importance in distributed leadership is particularly emphasised in these projects. Examples of this include the Project Team that oversaw the initial project (RMIT) consisted of a diverse team that included academics and professional representatives (including heads of academic schools (departments), managers of IT systems, Property Services and the Survey Centre, and administrative staff responsible for academic development assistance). Similarly the Reference Group of experts included academic, professional and executive representatives. The Plenary sessions that operated as Communities of Practice did attract academic and professional participants (from Human Resources and Student Services). During the project the importance of ensuring that academics were supported in their teaching by professionals and administrators in the infrastructure service group to ensure that teaching spaces were appropriate and timetabling of classes was effective and by the IT and multi-media departments to ensure that each

teaching space had functional facilities and technical support was emphasised. This resulted in a number of changes (such as clearer signage in each teaching space on how to use the equipment and a 'hot line' to IT technical support during classes). In turn the positive changes that resulted led to one of the major outcomes of this project being the establishment of an ongoing cross-functional leadership group consisting of formal leaders from academic departments, student services, infrastructure, multimedia and information technology and the library to provide effective maintenance of existing teaching spaces and to advise on future teaching spaces (Jones & Novak, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c.). It also led to the adoption of a cross-functional as well as multi-level distributed leadership approach being adopted in a further major project on Assessment (Jones & Lang, 2007). In a second project (ACU) the importance of instructional designers, academics and IT experts working collaboratively to build and operate an effective approach to on-line learning that was both technically capable and pedagogically anchored, was emphasised. In a third project (Macquarie University) the focus on leading assessment engaged academics across all levels (from sessional to senior full-time staff) with professional staff that included policy developers as well as departmental, faculty and organisational administrators inclusive of human resources and IT services (Harvey 2008). In the fourth project (UOW), academics crossed faculty and disciplinary boundaries to implement change to assessment practice through multi-level interactions with professional staff, central academic development units and senior executive staff. They then crossed institutional boundaries to influence change in assessment practice at the international level through a challenging process of developing and leading a national forum which engaged both professional and academic staff, as well as external groups, across a number of institutions (Lefoe 2010; Lefoe, Smigiel & Parrish, 2009).

The question of how to engage professional and administrative staff in a more integrated way in an inclusive participative approach built on collaboration up, down and across institutions remains to be researched in more detail. While the ASERT identifies the need for any change process to involve interdependent, top-down, bottom-up and multi-level out processes in which policy and practice operate to be mutually supportive through the engagement of experts from multi-levels and multi-functions, the senior executive encourages the involvement of all stakeholders and systems and infrastructure are designed to support engagement, how this may occur, what are the challenges involved (including differences in work methods between autonomous academics and more structured professional and administrative approaches), has to date remained largely unexplored. This paper is presented to commence discourse upon how this further research may be advanced, beginning with a workshop by members of this research team at the 2011 Tertiary Education Management Conference. This workshop will explore with participants the implications for action by professionals and administrative staff in the various service and resource departments using the action cells identified in the AT and the SER process (Appendices 3a and b).

CONCLUSION

While multiple theories of leadership exist, the Higher Education sector requires a less hierarchical approach that takes account of its highly specialised and professional context. This paper has argued that there is need to develop a less hierarchical, more distributed leadership approach to leadership for Higher Education if the sector is to continue to provide leading edge change. In so arguing, however, the paper does not eschew the important role of formal, structural leadership, but rather argues for a dual, or hybrid, approach in which formal leaders and informal experts are recognised for the leadership contribution they make.

The paper presents the Action Self Enabling Reflective Tool (ASERT) developed from the experience of distributed leadership to build capacity in learning and teaching as a tool to assist institutions that have realised the value of adopting a distributed leadership process. While the focus of the project that underpinned the tool was on building leadership capacity of academics for learning and teaching, the findings demonstrate the need for an inclusive participative approach by which professional, administrative and academic staff, collaborate to build a systematic, multi-faceted leadership approach appropriate for the sector. The paper concludes by proposing the need to undertake further research, based on the workshop interaction, into how academics, professional and administrative staff may be supported to develop more effective distributed leadership approaches to change.

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The Distributed Leadership Matrix ‘A’ - Dimensions and Inputs

Inputs (required to move towards DL)	Dimensions (and elements) of Distributed Leadership				
	Context From power to influence	Culture From control to autonomy	Change From top-down to interdependent, multi-level and bottom-up	Relationships From individual to collective identity	Activity Shared purpose through cycles of change
Encourage Involvement	Move from regulation to trust	Value staff expertise identified in university vision and strategy	Policy influenced by practice at multi-levels and multi-functions	Create opportunities for self-identification of participants as leaders as well as teachers/scholars	Establish action research cycle with identified plan, role, activity timetable and responsibilities
Create Process	Formal leaders to support informal leaders	Develop culture of respect for expertise	Introduce opportunities for practice to influence policy	Encourage collaborative groups e.g. CoPs action research teams	Development of action research cycles and reflective practice techniques and tools
Develop Shared Leadership	Formal leadership training to include DL	Encourage representation on decentralised committees	Senior Exec. support involve all stakeholders	PD workshop on of DL opportunities for dialogue and networking	Encourage reflective practice as methodology
Resource Collaborative opportunities	Time and finance for collaborative activities	Leadership contribution recognised	Mentor and facilitate collaboration	Encourage regular meetings (Face-to-Face and online) & cross university networking	Fund time for reflective activities
Support engagement	Work-plans identify contribution	Leadership contribution rewarded	Systems and infrastructure support	Diagnostic tool to demonstrate outputs	Skilled facilitators for PAR process

The Distributed Leadership Matrix ‘B’ - Values and Practices

Practices of leadership (X Axis)	Values for Distributed Leadership (Y axis)				
	Trust not regulation	Respect for expertise	Recognition of leadership capabilities	Collaboration as ‘conjoint agents’	Reflective Practice for continuous change
Self-in-relation	Not ego-centric	Adaptable -open to new idea, ambiguity & change authentic credible	Mentor encourage	Forthright but flexible	Reflective as individual and group
Social interactions	Proactive resilient	Recognise peers	Willing to share philosophies	Beyond self interest	Critique not critical
Dialogue through learning conversations	Represent issues not positions	L&T expert	Accept free ranging discussion	Willing to listen, good communicator	Share goals
Growth-in-connection	Accept responsibility, work independently	Work outside comfort zone	Forthright but flexible	Accept shared goals, not authoritarian	Focus on growth-fostering outcomes

Action Self Enabling Reflective Tool (ASERT) for DL
Part 1: Action Tool (AT)

Criteria for Distributed Leadership (X Axis)	Dimensions and Values to enable development of Distributed Leadership (Y Axis)			
	CONTEXT Trust	CULTURE Respect	CHANGE Recognition	RELATIONSHIPS Collaboration
People are involved	Expertise of individuals is used to inform decisions	Individuals participate in decision making	All levels and functions have input into policy development	Expertise of individuals contributes to collective decision making
Processes are supportive	Leadership is seen as a shared process not a position	Decentralised groups engage in decision making	All levels and functions have input into policy implementation	Communities of Practice are modeled
Professional development is provided	DL is a component of leadership training	Mentoring for DL is provided	Leaders at all levels proactively encourage DL	Collaboration is facilitated
Resources are available	Space, time & finance for collaboration are available	Leadership contribution is recognised and rewarded	Flexibility is built into infrastructure and systems	Opportunities for regular networking are supported

Action Self Enabling Reflective Tool for DL
Part 2 Self Enabling Reflective (SER) process (scaffolded by Reflective Prompts)

STEP ONE: Identify where (i.e. level of the Institution) at which a DL approach is to be enabled

NOTE: If the Institution as a whole desires to introduce a DL approach at multiple levels the question needs to be asked about each level.

STEP TWO: Identify the Criterion for DL on which to focus (*eg Involve People*)

STEP THREE: Identify the Dimension (*e.g. Context*) for DL in relation to the chosen Criteria

STEP FOUR – Reflection on action: (Note the examples in brackets relate to the Action statement

What is the extent to which the identified action item occurs currently? (*eg extent to which the expertise of individuals is used to inform decisions*)

EG Individuals (both academic and professional) are asked for input on their experience as a means to inform Policy

STEP FIVE – Reflection for future action

- i) What action could be taken to **identify existing opportunities** that have not yet been taken advantage of? (*eg for individuals to contribute their expertise to decision making processes*).

EG Individuals (both academic and professional) could be asked for feedback on areas in which their expertise is not currently utilised

- ii) What action could be taken to **identify new opportunities**?

EG Individuals (both academic and professional) could be asked to identify areas in which their expertise could be utilised

- iii) What action could be taken to **generate new opportunities**?

EG Professional development could include exploration of issues that could benefit from input of expertise more broadly

- iv) What action should be taken to **ensure these new opportunities are sustainable**?

EG Develop a culture in which new ideas are celebrated

STEP SIX: Reflection to ensure integrated concerted, supportive action

- i) How does the proposed action arising from these reflective prompts affect the other criterion and dimensions?
- ii) What change is needed in the other four Criteria to ensure that the proposed action is implemented?

EXAMPLES OF ASET from the Lessons Learnt project in relation to:
Extent to which the expertise of individuals is used to inform decisions
 * Individuals were encouraged to contribute ideas with meeting notes acknowledging contributions
 * More regular communication and consultation was encouraged using both F2F and electronic media
 * Newsletters were established to share practice on a regular basis

STEP SEVEN: Identify a plan of activity to achieve the identified desired Action outcome

STEP EIGHT: Reflect on the outcomes of the action taken in terms of the desired Action outcomes

STEP NINE: Adjust the Reflective process as needed to flexibly accommodate the specific institutional context and culture

LOST IN THE NOISE: THE RISING TIDE OF DIGITAL INFORMATION AND HOW TO MANAGE IT

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ABSTRACT

Information is becoming ubiquitous, an ever-present commodity to be sent, received, bought and sold. The way we use and interact with information is changing rapidly and requires new ways of understanding information literacy. A rising tide of data and information means vital messages may be being ignored or forgotten. This paper discusses the ways in which universities can implement evidence-based communication practices. This includes practices like cleaning up the communication channels between stakeholders by harnessing web aesthetics and catering to what is known about how information is cognitively processed. Web designs and resources that cater to searching rather than reading, providing better user interfaces and screen space, looking at alternative channels like rapid simple syndication and sending clean and simple emails all help to cut down the 'noise'. The findings from extensive research in cognitive science and web aesthetics are at our disposal, what is needed is a vision and a commitment to work together to manage information so that messages stop being lost in the noise.

Key words: Information management, communication, ICT

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INTRODUCTION

Information is becoming ubiquitous. It surrounds us and is available anywhere and everywhere. Gone are the days when textbooks and the ‘sage on the stage’ were the only way to access knowledge (see Williams, 2011). The complete encyclopaedia of humanity is seemingly only as far away as the smart-phone in our pockets. The difficulty that arises from this increasing information availability, however, is that the human brain only has the capacity to process limited amounts of this information and it is uncertain which information is of value and which is not. The ability to evaluate digital information effectively is referred to as digital literacy and this ability is of increasing importance as the ease with which information can be accessed increases (Buckingham, 2008).

Higher Education is no different from any other environment; academics, executives, professional staff and students alike risk being swamped with information. Although it has been suggested that information and communication technology (ICT) is becoming a central consideration for universities (Selwyn, 2007), communicating with each other is becoming increasingly difficult for many stakeholders in higher education as the use of new technology increases. As mobile devices and online learning proliferate, this situation is only likely to become more complex. Some have found ways to deal with this growing availability of information and have high digital literacy, but for many, important messages are being deleted from inboxes, glossed over in a social networking news feed or deliberately ignored altogether (Bawden & Robinson, 2008). Even when there is a high degree of information literacy, there is no guarantee that any message will get through to the intended audience, as the subject matter might not be priority for them.

A number of authors suggest that information overload of this kind is due to the changing literacy levels required to manage information in the 21st century. For example, Jones-Kavalier and Flannigan (2006) suggest that interpreting and evaluating information is now more commonly associated with critically engaging with imagery, sound and text in an integrated way. This is in stark contrast to traditional forms of literacy based on the ability to read and write, abilities that have long been the foundation of education, particularly higher education (Lea & Jones, 2011). Becoming digitally literate can be a difficult process for some and there is a tension between traditional teaching methods and the introduction of new ways of storing, transmitting and engaging with information (Bawden, 2001). It cannot be assumed that all students and staff within institutions have high levels of digital literacy and it is therefore the responsibility of institutions to communicate internally in a manner that ensures all students and staff can adequately access the information they need. An important aspect of digital literacy is the ability to communicate effectively using digital media and it appears that universities are not currently doing this well (Beetham, McGill & Littlejohn, 2009).

Elegant solutions for dealing with the diversity in digital literacy amongst both student and staff populations and the increasing volume of information are not easy to come by. Universities are spending millions of dollars on new student information systems, learning management systems, web designers and integrated email systems. Despite this, there is little evidence that universities are developing coherent strategies towards improving internal communication (Beetham et al., 2009). It is becoming clear that ways of dealing with information overload from an institutional perspective are not to be found in a single piece of software but through a synthesis of aesthetics, marketing, cognitive psychology and efficiencies in digital interaction and user interface design. Implementing the newest, greatest tool without considering whether these tools can be integrated with existing practices is sadly

all too common (Goodyear & Ellis, 2008). Adopting social media provides a case in point. For example, previous research has found that first year students have strong tendencies toward various communication channels and will generally ignore messages from the university in social media, particularly if they are longer than around 80 characters (Lodge, 2010). Despite the evidence suggesting that students pay little attention to institutional involvement in social networking, this has not stemmed the explosion in university *Facebook* pages and *Twitter* accounts. This evidence implies that the message and the medium need to be carefully considered in terms of the psychological processes we employ online and when reading from a screen, being quick to adopt the latest trend is not always the most effective option, instead a more integrated strategy for internal communication is required. In order to improve internal communication within institutions so that important messages are attended to, it is necessary to harness what is known about information processing in the digital age.

PERSPECTIVES ON UNDERSTANDING INFORMATION OVERLOAD

The brain and searching

Although it is the most complex machine in the known universe, the human brain has several fundamental limitations that impact on our ability to deal with information. These limitations are responsible for a number of the issues discussed in the introduction and therefore provide a reasonable starting point for understanding why it is difficult for many to manage large quantities of incoming information.

Human beings are limited in our capacity to attend to incoming information; the remainder falls outside our attention and does not enter into consciousness. It is attention that determines what is processed and what is ignored. William James (1890) was the first to consider attention as a scientific endeavour in the modern sense. Despite James' insight, over 100 years of research has failed to produce a comprehensive model of the human attention system (Treisman, 2009). Not only is attention a seemingly rare commodity, it is also not completely understood.

What is apparent is that while access to information has become virtually infinite, our ability to process the information remains finite. A number of coping strategies have been developed to adapt to the amount of information available. Savolainen (2007) found that people generally use one of two tactics when faced with large quantities on information: filtering or withdrawal. What this means is that rather than consume all the information coming into our senses, we search for what is most relevant to us at the time, accept it as 'good enough' and ignore everything else. This type of behaviour is called 'satisficing' (Savolainen, 2007) and this approach to choosing which information to attend to suits our evolutionary propensity for searching. Perhaps the most striking example of the ways in which our attention is attuned to searching is that we will involuntarily attend to pictures of snakes or spiders, suggesting an automated process for attending to threatening stimuli in an environment (Öhman, Flykt, & Esteves, 2001). That we attend to stimuli that signal potential danger over other stimuli, even if we have never actually encountered them before, highlights the fundamental propensity we have for searching and how our brains are wired to carry out this task. Given that our brains are wired to search, it is perhaps not surprising that this is a common method for dealing with the larger cognitive load induced by increasing availability of information. Instead of searching the savannah for food or potential threats, we now search for the research article, video or e-book we need. This behaviour, however, does appear to fundamentally alter the way information is processed. Rayner (1995) argues that the eye movements made during

reading are very different to those in searching and that, therefore, very different cognitive processing occurs. Most communication channels still cater to reading and this helps explain why some of the messages are not getting through; we have a different mindset when searching than we do when reading and increased use of multimedia is encouraging us to do more of the former than the latter. Searching and choosing to attend to some sources of information over others also inevitably means ignoring various aspects of what we are presented.

Successful websites have been carefully designed to cater to this limited attentional capacity and tendency towards satisficing but are also often designed to elicit an emotional response and draw our attention in a similar manner to threatening stimuli. Instead of attempting to signal threat or danger, these sites are instead aimed at inducing positive emotional responses by being aesthetically pleasing. Information is clean, uncluttered and text is used sparingly (see Mathwick & Rigdon, 2004). When larger quantities of text are used, they are in an easy to read, fluent font. Research consistently shows that rather than a left-to-right, top-to-bottom linear process, we approach websites like a search task (Rowlands et al., 2008). Our eyes scan the scene for the information we need, ignoring anything that does not immediately attract our attention, feels good to interact with or draws our attention involuntarily. Catering to this processing creates a situation where information is indeed easier to process and is pleasing to the eye but simultaneously, there is potential that catering to this behaviour is creating conditions whereby our brains are only consuming information on a surface level. Carr (2010) calls this new way of processing ‘the shallows’ and suggests that our brains are being fundamentally rewired because we do not tend to read as we would a passage of text on a page. This is perhaps not surprising considering that our brains prefer to search but it also highlights the potential dangers of erring too far on the side of style over substance.

When considering what this means for the way we communicate, it is clear that we need to take into account the ways in which we are applying our brains, that are wired to search for evolutionarily relevant stimuli, to a 21st century task. This means that, in order to effectively deal with the wide variety of information coming in, we use the tools that helped us survive and adapt to our environment to help us integrate and evaluate information. Little consideration has been given to what our brains have evolved to do when designing communication. For example, when we apply this logic to a website or to another channel of communication, it becomes evident that aesthetics are not the only consideration. Creating a clean, uncluttered visual space that is both appealing and caters to efficient search is a paramount consideration. In this vein, Eshet-Alkalai (2004) argues that the most effective online communication employs “natural visual communication” (pg. 95). The popularity of websites such as Google also attests to this. Google has evolved to be the leader in search engines because it distils what is often a search through millions of websites into a list of 10 at a time. The list is clean, neat and colours are used to highlight various aspects of the search results, making the results easier to scan through. This approach results in a task that our brains are much more adept at dealing with hence making the task of processing and evaluating the incoming information much easier.

Despite the evolution of Google, Twitter and other communication channels that cater to our evolutionary propensity for satisficing, traditional approaches to website design in universities remain. Many have policies about how many levels of information are allowed or how many clicks it takes to get to any particular piece of information. Finding what you are looking for is rewarding (e.g. Seitz and Watanabe, 2003), particularly when there is an action involved (Barto, Singh, & Chentanez, 2004). Instead of being averse to increasing the

number of clicks on a website, research on attention and visual search suggests that a breaking information down into smaller chunks is a more likely to get the message across than trying to cram as much information as possible into the minimum number of web pages. When it comes to consuming the information we find, research suggests it is better to do so one small piece at a time rather than present large slabs of text in a more traditional manner.

Communication preferences

Beyond the limitations of our brains and the tendency we have for satisficing when it comes to processing information, the other factor that must be considered is our diverse preferences for communication. Prensky (2001) famously argues that the generation of students now entering higher education process information in a qualitatively different way than their predecessors and therefore there is supposedly a generational divide in technology use and communication preferences. These students are supposedly technically proficient and always engaged with technology. This is most apparent in the story of Miranda. Barnes and Tynan (2007) paint a portrait of Miranda, a 'net generation' student who uses multiple ICT devices to engage with course material, with academics and with her peers. The illustration is a captivating portrayal of the supposed day-to-day activities of a net generation student, however, it is uncertain whether Miranda is representative of the entire cohort.

In the years since Prensky (2001) made the argument that Millennials interact with information and use technology in a different way than previous generations, the suggestion has caused substantial debate. Ecological studies (e.g. Goodyear & Ellis, 2008) suggest that Miranda may be a good prototype for a net generation student but does not reflect the variation in digital literacy amongst that, or indeed any other, cohort. In a survey of 122 students at a regional university (Lodge, 2010) it was found that mature age students were using social media, micro-blogging and other tools synonymous with the net generation as much as the school leavers were and that these school leavers were in no way certain to be 'digital natives'. Using a measure like that used by Lodge (2010), 289 students across two metropolitan and one regional university was conducted in 2011 (Lodge, O'Connor, Ryan, & Hansen, 2011). The results from this survey suggest that there is still considerable variation within age groups that is greater than the variation between them.

In terms of their overall preferences for various channels of communication, the results of the survey also reflect those of the 2009 version. The pattern of results from the 2011 cohort is illustrated in Table 1. The results of the survey clearly suggest that a significant proportion of students want to speak to someone directly, either face-to-face or over the telephone, in various situations where they need to interact with the university. This was particularly so for students with an urgent issue concerning an assignment, have an enrolment issue or want career advice.

Again, these data highlight the need to consider the message and the medium. Students in all cohorts like to have access to a person to talk to under certain circumstances. Attempting to service student needs when they have an urgent or complex issue using an online mechanism is therefore unlikely to be useful to students.

Table 1 Student preferences for various communication channels

	Email the enquiry	Email to make an appointment	Telephone	Talk to someone face-to-face	Use social networking
Contact academic staff with issue with an assignment	52.6%	26.0%	1.7%	17.3%	2.4%
Contact academic staff with urgent issue with an assignment	22.5%	11.1%	41.2%	23.5%	1.7%
Contact peer with issue with an assignment	18.0%	0.7%	22.8%	9.7%	48.8%
Contact academic staff about general issue with course /unit/ subject	69.2%	16.3%	1.0%	11.1%	2.4%
Contact classmate about general issue with course/unit subject	24.9%	0.7%	11.4%	14.9%	48.1%
Contact academic advisor about issue with enrolment	29.4%	26.6%	24.6%	19.0%	0.3%
Contact student administration about issue with enrolment	20.8%	14.9%	38.4%	25.3%	0.6%
Contact classmate to socialise	5.2%	0.3%	17.6%	13.1%	63.7%
Contact support service for careers advice	27.3%	17.6%	4.5%	46.4%	4.2%

HOW TO MANAGE COMMUNICATION

Effective communication in advertising

One set of strategies that has been specifically developed to cater to variations in information literacy and communication preferences is the approach taken by marketing. The rise of consumer psychology and behavioural economics highlight a trend towards using information processing approaches to separate people from their money (Camerer, Loewenstein & Rabin, 2004). The point of this marketing is to elicit a behaviour, in this case purchasing and consumption. Because of the obvious benefits of effective communication in advertising, sophisticated models for understanding the way advertising information is processed are evident from marketing research (e.g. Thompson & Hamilton, 2006).

From a marketing perspective, aesthetics play an obvious role in approaches to visual communication (Robins & Holmes, 2008). Varying certain visual aspects create conditions where associations can be formed between what reaches the visual cortex and how consumers feel about a brand or product. All forms of media are now relying on imagery over text as the preferred method of communication because of the additional capacity to capture attention and communicate meaning (Janiszewski, 2008) but just as important is the capacity to convey or elicit emotion. An exciting and busy visual representation creates the impression of an exciting and busy brand, which in turn creates a positive affiliation for people who aspire to live exciting and busy lives. One could thus argue that we spend with our eyes first closely followed by our hearts. This is seldom considered in other forms of communication but is no doubt emphasises the importance of considering the medium as well as the message.

In addition to aesthetics, consistency is a key consideration in website design and will influence emotional responses to communication. Omanson, Cline and Nordhielm (2005) found that even minor changes to the layout of a website from one section to another led to confusion and a devaluation of the associated brand. A consistent presentation as well as a consistent message is important in ensuring that a negative attitude is not associated with the

message or the sender. A consistent and aesthetically pleasing way of communicating also implies that the organisation knows what they are doing and that their products or services are of high quality (see also Robins & Holmes, 2008).

At the same time that marketing provides a number of useful strategies for communication in the digital realm, there are also a number of observations that serve as cautions. For example, an observation of relevance to communication strategies is the distractor devaluation effect. A devaluation of a stimulus occurs when it is ignored whilst we are engaged in search tasks (Raymond, Fenske, & Westoby, 2005). Given that the process of gathering information is becoming more like a search task, it is possible that extraneous information will be met with negative attitudes, lessening the likelihood that the message will get through or lead to the desired behaviour being elicited. Even if the message content does make it through to consciousness, it is possible that a negative attitude will be associated with the message because the intention was to ignore it. One only needs to consider the response to a pop-up advertisement on the Internet when engaged in a search for specific information to see this in action. Considering the tendency towards satisficing many consumers of information have, it would appear that care must be taken to ensure that communication is informative without being distracting; a difficult balance to manage.

Ultimately, the impact of the emotional component of a message is given little consideration in communication strategies. Although the current discussion only touched on one or two examples, the point is that there are powerful tools that have been used to convey messages and elicit certain emotions and behaviours associated with advertising. These tools could be of value when attempting to increase the engagement with learning and teaching within a university or to help students through the transition from high school to higher education. In many respects, there is much to be learned from marketing in terms conveying powerful messages using a combination of imagery and text.

Higher education management perspectives

Although much of the research discussed here has been long known and applied in marketing, there is significantly less evidence that research informs communication policies in universities. Selwyn (2007) argues that universities have tended to engage in ICT use informally rather than embedding technology within strategy and institutional policy. Whilst the ‘champions’ of the ICT cause within institutions proclaim the new ICT tools available and students embrace them, often despite institutional policy, the institutions have not been as willing to adopt. Selwyn further suggests that the higher education community should be critically challenging the conservative commodity-based approach taken by most institutions. Moreover, Clegg, Hudson and Steel (2003) argue that the dichotomy between the enthusiastic adoption of ICTs and the reluctant, conservative ‘digital immigrant’ is false. Strategies that rely on the enthusiasm of early adopters are thus likely to be inefficient at producing organisational change. Instead, they suggest that the implementation of ICTs in universities should be driven by a critical approach based in sound pedagogy, perhaps driven from a grass-roots level but also reflected in institutional policy.

Part of the problem of ensuring that the communication practices used within an institution are consistent is that so often in Australian universities the organisation structure is built around silos (Carnegie & Tuck, 2010). Having various academic groups working autonomously from administrative units and from each other in a decentralised model does not lend itself to consistent ways of managing information. Senge (1990) suggests that if an

organisation is to learn and adapt to changing environmental circumstances, it requires a flat organisational structure and open collaboration policies. This is seldom the case in higher education (see Carnegie & Tuck, 2010) and the result is more often than not that various organisational units will compete with each other for the attention of students or other staff members.

So long as universities continue to treat information like other resources within the institution, the growing problem of information overload will continue. As has been established, the bottleneck does not exist in a single piece of software or in any piece of physical infrastructure; the information bottleneck exists in our brains. When an organisational structure is overly decentralised, individual organisational units within the institution often compete for funds and other resources. As with these resources, attention is finite and is thus another resource to compete for.

Although it may seem apparent from the arguments presented here that it is essential to completely restructure institutions to deal with the problem of improving internal communication, that is probably not necessary. What is necessary is that internal communication strategies need a rethink. Much emphasis is placed on the image of the institution portrayed through external communications. A similar emphasis needs to be placed on internal communication. The attention of those within the institution is a finite resource that needs to be managed like all other resources.

EVIDENCE-BASED COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Current approaches to managing communication do not adequately take into account various levels of digital literacy. In referring to ICT use in higher education in general, Goodyear and Ellis (2008) argue that evidence-based practice is minimal to non-existent. Although they were referring more to learning and teaching issues, similar problems are to be found outside the lecture theatre and learning management system. Myths and misconceptions abound concerning the best ways to manage information and increase digital literacy and most are based on anecdotal rather than research evidence. What is clear from the research evidence is that cognitive science and marketing approaches provide a number of suggestions for improving communication in universities. A brief discussion of each of these follows.

Keep messages short and sharp

If there is one message to be taken from the various perspectives on communication and digital literacy, it is that, if we process information within the context of searching, the message needs to be concise. The simplest examples of this are Twitter, which is a tool for short, sharp communication and rapid simple syndication, which assists with pulling information together. Both are steadily increasing in popularity because they cater to our preference for searching over reading.

Micro-blogging aside, there is also the option of using imagery to convey a message. Breaking up slabs of text with appropriate images will help cater to diminishing attention spans. It is clearly not always possible to communicate meaning through imagery, particularly for mundane messages such as how to enrol in a course. That does not mean that progress cannot be made to cater to this information foraging. If the message is to communicate the process for enrolling in a course, that message can be broken up into clearly defined steps that are easier to process.

Be consistent

The message to be taken from marketing research is that consistency in digital communication is vital. Not only can negative attitudes ensue when information is presented inconsistently online, it can also lead to confusion. Consistency is an issue for a number of reasons, not only are the consistencies of the visual characteristics of the message important but messages are so often inconsistent themselves. This is no doubt partly due to the silo organisational structures so common in universities. Short of changing these structures, more thought needs to be given to consistent communication within and between silos. From a student perspective, a quality institution will speak with one voice, not many.

Cater to digital natives, immigrants and refugees

The idea that all millennials are digital natives and that all baby-boomers are digital immigrants is too simplistic. As discussed, there is significant variation within all generations. It is common for a baby-boomer to behave like a digital native, it is just as common for a millennial to be a digital immigrant. The research evidence suggests that all students appreciate talking to someone when they have an urgent problem or complex issue. It also cannot be assumed that any student in any cohort has high levels of digital literacy.

Reflect evidence-based communication in policy

What is apparent from this discussion is that it is not information that is the finite resource to be managed, it is attention. Attention can be influenced via the way we communicate. Using images and fluent fonts can alter the way information is processed and how we feel about the message contained in the communication. The research from cognitive psychology and marketing tells us how to cater to this finite resource. Our students have clear preferences for the channels in which we communicate with them and we have the technology to match the preferences to the appropriate processing style. What are missing are the strategies and policies to ensure that the evidence is put into practice within institutions and that is the challenge going forward. Like all other finite resources within an institution, attention needs to be managed.

CONCLUSION

In an age where most universities have external relations departments and strict controls around the way in which the institution communicates with the outside world, it is anomalous that the same cannot be said for what occurs within institutions. This paper is an attempt at highlighting some of the most pertinent theories and research relating to various perspectives about communication within universities. It is hoped that this will stimulate further research and discussion about the ways in which information can be managed within institutions and for policies and practices to become more evidence-based.

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DOWNSIZING: DOES ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE MATTER? A STUDY OF PUBLICLY FUNDED AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

Even after three decades, organisations worldwide have continued the practice of downsizing. Interestingly, the reasons for differences in organisational approaches to downsizing still remain unclear. In order to investigate this problem, the present study gathered survey research data from 255 mid-level leaders such as deans, directors of administration units and research centres at ten publicly funded Australian universities, and then analysed those data using several statistical techniques. Empirical evidence suggests that universities which have engaged in limited or no downsizing are less likely to have a bureaucratic culture than those which use a dual strategy of voluntary and student enrolment downsizing are slightly less likely to have a bureaucratic culture. Interestingly, none of the cultural dimensions (that is, bureaucratic, innovative or supportive culture) were differentiated on forced downsizing nor on a dual strategy of forced and student enrolment downsizing.

Key words: downsizing, organisational culture, Australian universities

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INTRODUCTION

More than a quarter of a century has elapsed since downsizing was first introduced as a business practice by the American automotive industry. Despite its negative consequences and inconclusive evidence on objectives in extant literature (mainly argued as financial and performance), organisations across the world have continued to use a range of downsizing actions (e.g. use of voluntary early retirements, voluntary redundancy, targeted redundancies, forced layoffs, retrenchments, mergers and closures). Its usage has intensified greatly in recent times. For instance, worldwide job losses were estimated at 50 million by the end of 2009 (International Labour Organisation, 2009). An estimated 273,000 Australian jobs were lost due to retrenchments between 2008 and 2010 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010). Similarly, 382,007 American jobs were lost due to layoffs in the second quarter of 2010 (United States of America Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). Research articles on downsizing published annually across the world have demonstrated that it has become so pervasive or omnipresent that no country, no industry, no organisation has been able to isolate itself from its influence. Whether east or west, downsizing has had an impact on organisations to an enormous extent.

Like other industry sectors, universities started downsizing in the mid-1980s. For instance, the University of Michigan was reported to have eliminated some academic programmes and departments entirely (Colin, 1983). Australian universities were not immune to this worldwide business practice. For example, the Australian National University's Department of Prehistory was closed in 1997 (Finkel, 1998). Downsizing in Australian universities has been even more prevalent in recent times than it was in the mid-1990s. For example, the University of Canberra stopped enrolling students in the Bachelor of Communication (Information) programme in 2004 due to a sudden drop in numbers (Information Enterprises Australia, 2005). Subsequently, academic programmes such as Master of Library and Information Management and the Graduate Diploma Library and Information Management offered at the same university ceased to admit new students from 2005. La Trobe University offered voluntary redundancy to 180 staff members in 2008 (Andrew, 2008), the University of New South Wales disestablished its School of Risk and Safety Science in 2009 (UNSW website, 2009), and more recently the University of Ballarat offered voluntary redundancy packages to staff members (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, May 13, 2010).

Although the downsizing trend has fluctuated during the post-Dawkins era in many Australian universities, it has not diminished altogether. Publicly funded universities in Australia receive funding from the same Federal and/or respective State Governments and function under more or less similar economic, social, political and legal conditions, but still differ widely in their downsizing approaches. A limited body of downsizing literature has identified a multitude of internal factors for such differences in approaches to downsizing. The role of some internal factors (e.g. mutual trust between top management team and employees) have been analysed, and others have been alluded to in the literature (e.g. dynamic managerial capabilities), without being followed up by actual research. However, organisational culture, which is equally crucial for the differences in downsizing strategies have been given limited attention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organisational culture has been often theoretically identified as an influential factor affecting the downsizing (e.g. Gandolfi, 2007; Hickok, 2002; Radcliffe et al., 2001; Freeman & Cameron, 1993). However, it is difficult to review the literature on the link between organisational culture and downsizing strategies with authority, because these are areas of research which have limited empirical research and are often ignored by scholars. Organisations differ in their culture (Reynolds, 1986; Buono, Bowditch, & Lewis, 1985). Many organisations could be involved in the same kind of products and services but still vary in their organisational culture (Visagie, Kroon, & Walt, 2002). Previous studies (e.g. (Hickok, 2002; Freeman & Cameron, 1993) have emphasised the need to understand the culture of the organisations prior to downsizing.

Many change initiatives fail because organisational culture does not readily accept the organisational change (James, 2005), and downsizing is one of the most commonly used change initiatives by the organisations. Few researchers (e.g. Schneider, 2000; Perez, 1995; Wilkins, 1983) have strongly promoted the concept of culture based business strategies including downsizing strategies. Weber (1996) has highlighted that organisational culture about the difference between mergers and acquisitions is a highly relevant subject. In one of the key early studies on the role of organisational culture in downsizing, Freeman and Cameron (1993) theorised that certain core cultural dimensions (emphasis on organic or mechanistic processes, and internal or external orientation) can have a differential impact on approaches to downsizing (reorientation and convergent approaches). Accordingly, Freeman and Cameron (1993) introduced the convergence and re-orientation framework and argued that organisations with internal orientations will be more successful during convergent periods than organisations with external orientations. However, their propositions were not supported through an empirical investigation.

As organisations have been experiencing downsizing more often in recent times, a strong emphasis is being placed on organisational culture and its role in assisting or hindering the downsizing. For example, Radcliffe et al. (2001) stressed the role of cultural dynamics in inducing a crisis in organisations. These researchers used three firms in a case study approach and identified three types of downsizing, i.e. cost-saving downsizing, strategic downsizing and merger-acquisition downsizing while suspecting a significant relationship between organisational culture and its tendency towards downsizing. However, Radcliffe et al. (2001) failed to discern the cultural fit between three types of downsizing that they identified. Hickok (2002) proposed a categorisation of downsizing actions based on their impact on organisational culture, i.e. downsizing action may tend to be either culturally reinforcing (e.g. voluntary redundancy, proportionate staff cuts) or destabilising (e.g. forced layoffs). Hickok (2002) argued that downsizing destabilises an organisation and therefore acts as a catalyst for a culture change. However, there is no empirical evidence to support such a proposition.

The previous research studies alluded to the association between organisational culture and downsizing strategies being reflexive in that downsizing strategy is influenced by organisational culture as well as being affected by it. By far the most direct support for the present research comes from Radcliffe et al. (2001), and Freeman and Cameron (1993) whose studies suggest strong links between downsizing strategies and organisational culture. The extant literature therefore suggested that organisational culture could possibly explain the differences in downsizing strategies. It is evident from the literature that culture maintains a

major influence on approaches to downsizing. However, the links between downsizing strategies and organisational culture have not yet been empirically established.

RESEARCH METHOD

The present study adopted a quantitative research paradigm while using cross-sectional design, and a postal survey technique with self-report measures. Data from mid-level leaders such as deans, directors of administration units and research centres in publicly funded Australian universities were expected to provide a better understanding of how they approach downsizing. The objective was to ensure that the central research question (i.e. why do organisations differ in their approaches to downsizing?) is answered as unequivocally as possible in an exploratory way by explaining the differences in approaches to downsizing in terms of organisational culture dimensions, i.e. bureaucratic, innovative and supportive culture.

The sample consisted of mid-level leaders in schools and faculties, research centres, and administration units of the publicly funded universities in Australia. All 37 publicly funded universities as listed by the Department of Education, Science and Training, Australia (DEEWR, 2008) were contacted. Of 37 universities, permission was granted by ten universities, eight universities refused to participate, eighteen universities did not respond and one university gave permission subject to the condition of distributing the questionnaire internally to their relevant staff. However, the condition put forth by this university was not accepted owing to research methodological reasons. Therefore, only ten universities were available for participation in this research, which provided a representation of more than 25 per cent of publicly funded universities in Australia.

The survey questionnaire designed for this research was entitled 'Downsizing in Australian Universities' and contained 32 question items structured and separated into the following three sections: A (Downsizing Survey Questionnaire), B (Wallach's Organisational Culture Index), and C (Demographics). The following ten downsizing actions were identified for the Downsizing Survey Questionnaire: voluntary redundancy, voluntary early retirement, targeted redundancy, proportionate staff cut, forced layoff, closure of sub-units, merging of sub-units, delayering, elimination of academic programmes, and reduction in EFTSU intake. In order to minimize problems relating to respondent's memory and to have valid research findings for a period, the Downsizing Survey Questionnaire required leaders to rate on a five point scale the extent to which they had used each of the ten downsizing actions in the last three years. Wallach's Organizational Culture Index (OCI) (1983) is a validated instrument for empirically assessing the three dimensions of culture, which covers almost all aspects of organisational culture (Kanungo et al., 2001). Wallach's OCI is found to have good reliability. The demographics section contained six questions about the personal and professional background of respondents.

A survey questionnaire package containing a covering letter to the participant, a survey questionnaire, and a reply-paid envelope was sent through Australia Post to 1635 staff working mainly at the middle management level of ten publicly funded Australian universities. Relevant research ethical practices were followed throughout this study. After two e-mail follow-ups, 301 responses were returned, of which 24 respondents reported to have received the questionnaires but chose not to return them. A further 22 responses had to be discarded for a range of reasons. This finally resulted in 255 returned responses being

considered as valid and useable for this research. It is reasonable to assume that a set of 255 valid responses is modest in studies that are conducted under a downsizing environment in a university setting. It holds good in the case that every eligible staff member who has a position of authority to use downsizing strategies in each of the participating universities had received and opened the survey questionnaire package. Since the intention was to conduct an exploratory investigation, this response rate was judged to be adequate. Recent studies (e.g. Keeter, Kennedy, Dimock, & Craighill, 2006; Holbrook, Green, & Krosnick, 2003) have demonstrated that the return rate is not as important a measure of survey data quality as was thought earlier. Furthermore, Zahes and Baker (2007) have argued that surveys with low return rates, even as low as four per cent can yield results that are statistically equivalent to those from surveys with much higher return rates, though a high return rate is usually better than a low one.

The aggregate response data gathered from 255 mid-level leaders were statistically analysed through five stages using SPSS software, then descriptively interpreted. First, research data were analysed in order to gain an understanding of the sample and of the data using preliminary analysis, which included missing value analysis, checking for any possible outliers, and assessing the normality of the distribution, reliability analysis and validity testing. Second, descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means and standard deviations were computed. Third, Exploratory Factor Analysis through the Principal Component Method and Varimax Rotation was used to find out whether ten downsizing actions could be reduced to a smaller number of more general or ‘‘inclusive’’ dimensions referred to as ‘downsizing strategies’. Owing to the exploratory nature of this research, the aim was to generate hypotheses and not seek to test them. Fourth, the downsizing strategies identified through exploratory factor analysis were used to cluster the leaders into strategic orientation groups based on the similar emphasis that leaders place on a particular downsizing strategy. It was decided to use the two-step Cluster Analysis approach as suggested by many researchers (e.g. Punj & Stewart, 1983; Hair et al., 2010). The first step constituted a partitioning stage in which a hierarchical clustering procedure was used. Ward’s method and squared Euclidean distances were used to identify a preliminary set of cluster solutions as a basis for determining the appropriate number of clusters within the data. In the second step, a non-hierarchical clustering procedure of K-means clustering was used to arrive at the exact number of clusters solution. This was followed by profiling and validating the final cluster solution. In the final stage of the data analysis, one-way ANOVAs were used specifically to find out whether leaders pursue different downsizing strategies regardless of organisational culture types, i.e. to determine whether differences existed between the mean responses of clusters on organisational culture. Where differences did exist, Hochberg’s (1974) GT2 post-hoc tests were used to determine statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) between individual pairs of clusters.

RESULTS

Demographic Profile of the Sample

Demographic data of the leaders gathered for this research covered their personal as well as professional information. Two hundred and fifty-five mid-level leaders from ten publicly funded Australian universities provided valid and useable survey responses for this research. Of the 255 leaders, 47 per cent ($N = 121$) were women and 53 per cent ($N = 134$) were men. These leaders were divided into three age groups, namely, 35 years or under (six per cent), 36 - 50 years (42 per cent), and 51 years and above (52 per cent). Australia’s population like that

of most developed countries is ageing which is reflected in the current research as more than one half of the survey population (N = 132) are in the age group of 51 years and above. It is clearly seen that age distribution has its weight in the 51+ segment. There is no evidence from the demographic data of the sample to suggest that the responses are not from experienced leaders who are representative of the population at the middle management level in publicly funded Australian universities. Other relevant characteristics of the survey population are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of the Sample

Characteristics	Category	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)	Responses (N)
Gender	Female	121	47	255
	<i>Male</i>	134	53	
Age Group	35 years or less	15	6	255
	36 - 50 years	108	42	
	51 years and above	132	52	
Current Position Title	Academic / Research	111	44	253
	Administration	142	56	
Length of time in current position	1 year or less	90	35	255
	2 - 5 years	123	48	
	6 years and above	42	17	
Experience in Higher Education Sector	10 years or less	93	36	255
	11 - 20 years	96	38	
	21 years and above	66	26	

Reliability Analysis and Validity Testing of Downsizing Survey Questionnaire

In order to determine how reliable the ten-item measure of downsizing is, the reliability analyses were conducted for the Downsizing Survey Questionnaire. The Cronbach's (1951) Alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the respondents' answers to all question items. Sekaran and Bougie (2003) argue that reliabilities less than 0.6 are generally considered as poor, those in the range of 0.7 as acceptable and those over 0.8 as good. Results of the reliability analysis revealed that Cronbach's Alpha is 0.82. Thus, internal consistency of the Downsizing Survey Questionnaire can be considered as 'good' (Sekaran & Bougie, 2003). In addition to Cronbach's Alpha, Hair et al (2010) recommend a measure to assess internal consistency as item-to-total correlation. Therefore, to find out the degree to which each item correlates with the total score, Item-Total Statistics were analysed. All items were found to be worthy of retention for subsequent analyses. These results suggested further that the Downsizing Survey Questionnaire was reliable. The content validity was established by generating question items using scholarly literature, thus defining downsizing by theoretical means. This was followed by experts' validation. The criterion-related validity was ensured through the use of a five-point Likert scale for all variables of downsizing actions and organisational culture. The factor analysis indicated strong inter-item correlation and hence confirmed that each construct is being measured separately. Thus, the construct validity was established.

Identifying Downsizing Strategies

Exploratory Factor Analysis was used to reduce ten downsizing actions to a manageable

number of orthogonal factors identified as downsizing strategies. Collectively, the measures - correlation coefficients, KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity - all indicated that ten downsizing actions were appropriate for the factor analysis. Trial analyses were conducted using the Principal Component Method and Varimax rotation for one, two, three, four, and five factor solutions. The results of rotated solutions showed that factor solutions four and five have a substantial number of cross loadings. Inclusion of Scree plot and Horn's Parallel Analysis criteria were precluded due to the low value of total variance explained, subjectivity involved in judging the discontinuity in eigenvalues and the suspected possibility of under-extraction of factors by one and two factor solutions. The three factor solution explained a total variance of 62.19 per cent with factors one, two and three contributing 27.54 per cent, 18.94 per cent and 15.71 per cent, respectively. The three factor solution is therefore deemed appreciable and sufficient in terms of the total variance explained as it is above 60 per cent, a percentage of total variance considered to be satisfactory in social sciences (Hair et al., 2010). A marked pattern of variables with significant loadings and positive signs for each factor is evident (ref Table 2). It was therefore decided to retain three factors solution for identifying the common themes in order to label them appropriately.

Table 2 Rotated Factor Matrix for Downsizing Actions

Downsizing actions	Factors		
	1	2	3
Closure	.79		
Targeted Redundancy	.70		
Merger	.70		
Forced Layoff	.68		
Delayering	.53		.49
Proportionate staff cuts	.51		
Voluntary Early Retirement		.86	
Voluntary Redundancy		.80	
EFSTU intake reduction			.88
Eliminate Academic Programs			.63
Eigenvalues	4.06	1.15	1.00
Percent of variance	27.54	18.94	15.71
Cumulative per cent of variance	27.54	46.48	62.19

Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis
 Rotation method : Varimax with Kaiser Normalization
 Rotation converged in 6 iterations

The downsizing actions (closure, targeted redundancy, merger, forced layoff, delayering and proportionate staff cuts) that loaded heavily on the first factor represented a conceptually distinct aspect of 'forced' reduction of full-time equivalent staff numbers as well as organisational units. Although, delayering is found to be cross-loaded on factors three and one but heavily loaded onto factor one. Hair et al. (2010) suggest that variables with higher factor loadings require greater emphasis while labelling the factors. Therefore, factor one was labelled as 'Forced Downsizing'. The downsizing actions (voluntary redundancy and voluntary early retirement) that loaded heavily on the second factor represented a conceptually distinct aspect of 'voluntary' reduction of full-time equivalent staff numbers. Therefore, this factor was labelled 'Voluntary Downsizing'. Finally, the downsizing actions (that is, reduction in student intake and elimination of academic programmes) that loaded heavily on the third factor relate to different aspects of reduction in student enrolment.

Therefore, factor three was labelled ‘Student Enrolment Downsizing.’ Thus, the exploratory factor analysis of downsizing actions yielded three distinctive dimensions which can be identified as downsizing strategies. Finally as part of a validation of factor analysis, the two Varimax rotations for a split sample were found to be comparable in terms of loadings for all ten downsizing actions. Thus, it was possible to ensure that the results were stable within the current sample. Finally, factor scores were produced using the Anderson-Rubin method and used in subsequent analyses.

Categorising Leaders based on Downsizing Strategies

The factor scores on each of the three factors in the factor analysis were used in order to categorise the respondents into clusters. It facilitated the development of a taxonomy that segments leaders into groups based on the similarity in their downsizing strategies which would in turn provide an avenue for examining the associations between downsizing strategies and organisational culture dimensions. Based on the changes in the agglomeration coefficients followed by the K-means clustering, the four cluster solution was found to be most appropriate. The four clusters identified are Cluster 1 (leaders who use forced downsizing), Cluster 2 (leaders who use a dual strategy of forced and student enrolment downsizing), Cluster 3 (leaders who use a dual strategy of voluntary and student enrolment downsizing), and Cluster 4 (leaders who use limited or no downsizing strategies). Table 3 provides a summary of the clusters of downsizing strategic orientations that emerged from the cluster analysis.

Table 3 K-Means Cluster Analysis Results: Cluster Means for derived Factors - Downsizing Strategies

Factors	Clusters			
	1	2	3	4
Factor 1 - Forced Downsizing	1.52	1.53	-0.85	-0.42
Factor 2 - Voluntary Downsizing	0.16	-0.42	0.50	-0.09
Factor 3 - Student Enrolment Downsizing	-0.41	2.73	1.90	-0.28
Number of cases in each cluster	39	11	17	166

The significant F statistics provided initial evidence that each of the four clusters is distinctive. Furthermore, the results of the cluster stability test showed that the four cluster solution is not specific to the sample but could be generalized beyond the sample. Therefore, the four cluster solution was considered for subsequent analyses.

Exploring the links of downsizing strategies with the organisational culture

One-way ANOVAs were specifically used to determine whether organisational culture could explain the differences in the downsizing strategies. The final goal was to compare the four clusters on the 15 variable items of the organisational culture dimensions, that is, bureaucratic, innovative and supportive culture. The results of the one-way ANOVAs revealed significant differences ($p < 0.05$) across the four clusters: Cluster 1 (leaders who use forced downsizing), 2 (leaders who use a dual strategy of forced and student enrolment downsizing), 3 (leaders who use a dual strategy of voluntary and student enrolment downsizing), and 4 (leaders who use limited or no downsizing strategies) for only power-oriented variable item of bureaucratic culture dimension, $F(3, 30.16) = 3.77, p < .05$. Interestingly, none of the clusters differentiated significantly ($p < 0.05$) on the other four items of the bureaucratic culture dimension, viz. structured, ordered, regulated and established. In addition, none of the clusters differentiated significantly ($p < 0.05$) on any

variable-items of the innovative and supportive dimensions of organisational culture. Table 4 presents the means, standard deviations and Welch's (1951) F-ratio for the significant-variable-item only.

Table 4 Means (M), Standard Deviations (SD) and results of one-way ANOVAs for Organisational Culture by Cluster (Downsizing Strategies)

	Clusters					
	1	2	3	4		
Organisational culture variable item	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	F	p
Power-oriented	2.49 (.89)	2.73 (1.10)	2.94 (.75)	2.32 (.82)	3.77	.021

A post-hoc analysis using Hochberg's (1974) GT2 tests followed the significant results ($p < 0.05$) of ANOVA in order to explore the differences between each of the clusters. The Hochberg's GT2 post-hoc test results (ref Table 5) reveal that only 'power-oriented' variable item of organisational culture significantly differentiates ($p < 0.05$) Clusters 3 and 4 through its cluster means which ranged from 2.32 to 2.94.

Table 5 Comparison of means of Organisational Culture among Four Clusters (Practical Downsizing Strategies)

Organisational culture variable-item	Clusters				D*
	1 (n ₁ = 39)	2 (n ₂ = 11)	3 (n ₃ = 17)	4 (n ₄ = 166)	
	M	M	M	M	
Power-oriented	2.49	2.73	2.94	2.32	3 > 4

D - Difference between clusters: Results of Hochberg's GT2 post-hoc tests*

Although the overall results suggest the existence of a systematic link between downsizing strategies and the power-oriented variable-item of bureaucratic culture dimension, it cannot be considered potential. In summary, the present analysis contributed to a better understanding of the underlying factors explaining downsizing behaviour.

DISCUSSION

This research study used a contingency perspective to explain the differences in downsizing approaches in terms of organisational culture dimensions (bureaucratic, innovative and supportive culture). Fresh empirical evidence has been put forward to suggest the presence of a weak but systematic linkage between downsizing strategies and organisational culture. It needs to be noted that none of the three downsizing strategies as identified in the present study significantly differentiated between any of the variable items of innovative and supportive culture dimensions. Specifically, the findings of the present study demonstrate that organisations which use a dual strategy of voluntary downsizing and student enrolment downsizing are slightly less likely to have a bureaucratic culture (only power-oriented), whereas organisations which use limited or no downsizing are less likely to have a bureaucratic culture.

A bureaucratic culture characterised by power-orientation which insists on control of internal structure and processes of an organisation. This is a common organisational characteristic feature of public sector organisations such as publicly funded Australian universities. This reflects that the downsizing process is strictly constrained by the control and power in publicly funded Australian universities, which is not conducive for creative or ambitious people. The reason may be partly that there is an acceptable bureaucratic cultural fit between the academic/research activities, the marketing endeavours, and academic support services such as student services, human resources, media and information systems. Voluntary downsizing and student enrolment downsizing affect these organisational entities and therefore is influenced by the bureaucratic culture. Although the bureaucratic culture can encourage careful and precise thinking, it can limit creativity (Kirton, 1984). The results of this research are not a surprise as they are consistent with the findings of Currie (2005, p. 11) who reported that publicly funded Australian universities are mostly bureaucratic in culture. That is, they can be described by ‘a formal and structured place where the head is an administrator and the emphasis is on running smoothly, following rules and procedures, and maintaining stability.’

As noted in the literature review, few scholars (e.g. Radcliffe et al., 2001; Freeman & Cameron, 1993) have theorised about different aspects of the association between downsizing and organisational culture, and overall, much of the existing literature centres on whether a particular organisational culture influences downsizing approaches. The present study deviates from the previous studies by demonstrating empirically a systematic link between downsizing strategies and organisational culture dimensions. More specifically, the evidence in this research shows that within a single large industry such as publicly funded Australian universities facing more or less similar conditions in their business environment, the power-oriented element of bureaucratic culture plays a significant role in different approaches to downsizing. This provides a more practical and perceptive approach to the topic of downsizing research.

Implications

The results of the present study have interesting implications for the theory and practice of downsizing. The present inquiry into how leaders approach downsizing supports the existence of three types of downsizing. The empirically developed tripartite typology of downsizing adds to the existing literature on downsizing typologies (e.g. Cameron, Freeman, & Mishra 1991; Dewettinck & Buyens, 2002; DeRue et al., 2005). It not only helps make sense and provide some order for the downsizing phenomena but also helps to define what may be the underlying structure in the downsizing phenomena by building a theory of how things work. Given the exploratory nature of the present study, it needs to be noted that a plausible explanation could be offered for the different approaches to downsizing, but it is difficult to provide a basis for a strong inference. Caution needs to be shown because the main objective of this research has been to explain differences in approaches to downsizing that account for organisational culture, and not to prescribe the strategies organisations should use. Furthermore, the major challenge would be in answering questions such as: Is it ethical for organisations to manipulate their culture in order to endorse the downsizing strategies that they believe to be successful? What would be the responsibilities of researchers into downsizing? At this juncture such questions have not cropped up due to insufficient knowledge of downsizing for the conditioning of organisational culture. However, it has been raised here to sensitise the complexities associated with ethicalities of downsizing.

Limitations

Before further consideration of the observations of the present research, several limitations need to be mentioned. First, the cross-sectional design limits the extent to which conclusions can be drawn. Second, the data were collected using a self-report type of questionnaire, which could lead to apprehension relating to common method bias. Third, the present sample of 255 cases represents a relatively modest sample size in terms of the generalisation capability of the results. Nonetheless, the sample size is reasonably large for applying multivariate statistical techniques and making inferences.

Directions for Future Research

The empirical findings suggest that future research would benefit from attention not only to the bureaucratic culture, but also to other cultural dimensions while leaders differ in their approaches to downsizing. Furthermore, only publicly funded Australian universities were studied in this research, so it would be interesting to conduct similar research in the universities of other countries. Given that downsizing research has been largely conducted in the American industries, a cross-cultural analysis of downsizing strategies would be a worthy topic for future research.

CONCLUSIONS

The literature on downsizing research (e.g. Cameron, Freeman, & Mishra 1991; De Witt, 1998; Freeman & Cameron, 1993; Dewettinck & Buyens, 2002; DeRue et al., 2005) shows that there have been many past attempts to define useful categorisations of generic strategies of downsizing. However, very little empirical work has been undertaken in this direction. An exploratory factor analysis approach was used in the present research to reduce the data and also provide an exploratory factor model for identifying and analysing the empirical typology of downsizing that is prevalent in publicly funded Australian universities. Three types of downsizing strategies (that is, forced downsizing, voluntary downsizing, and student enrolment downsizing) were identified. Based on three downsizing strategies, four clusters were derived and analysed across organisational culture. Different clusters exhibited significantly different downsizing strategies. From the cluster analysis, it was concluded that leaders tend to use not only a mutually exclusive single downsizing strategy but also a combination of downsizing strategies. The cluster analysis revealed that there existed one cluster in downsizing that remained undifferentiated, i.e. having no clear strategic orientation. Further, the results of one-way ANOVAs suggested that downsizing strategies are significantly differentiated by the bureaucratic culture. The findings of this research suggest that bureaucratic culture does matter for leaders who use a dual strategy of voluntary downsizing and student enrolment downsizing, and those who use none of the downsizing strategies. Interestingly, culture was not significantly differentiated by the leaders who use forced downsizing and those who use a dual strategy of forced downsizing and student enrolment downsizing.

In summary, the fact that organisations differ in their approaches to downsizing is an important aspect of industry life. This study contributes to our knowledge of downsizing in that it advances a downsizing typology from which it offers an explanation for the differences in downsizing strategies selectively in terms of organisational culture dimensions. These findings add to the growing body of theoretical and empirical literature on downsizing by suggesting that within a university sector, where leaders face similar conditions of business

environment, a possible link exists between downsizing strategies and bureaucratic culture, though such a link could not be considered as strong.

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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RECONSIDERING SCHOLARSHIP: IMPLICATIONS FOR REWARD AND RECOGNITION OF ACADEMIC STAFF

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ABSTRACT

The academic workforce in Australia and internationally, is both aging and dwindling. At the same time, the increase of professional disciplines into the tertiary sector means this is an ever diversifying workforce, and the traditional model of a one size fits all academic career pathway no longer meets the needs of most institutions. The University of Wollongong has embarked on a project to rethink the way it manages staff in order to meet the needs of both its workforce and student body. The project draws on the theoretical framework of 'reconsidering scholarship' to propose new ways for appointing and promoting staff. Interviews and surveys have been undertaken, with draft documentation in development. This paper presents some of the findings and main themes from this consultation, and discusses their implications for management of academic staff.

Keywords: Scholarship, academic workforce, promotion

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INTRODUCTION

The academic workforce is aging, dwindling and diversifying (Coates & Goedegebuure, 2010; Hugo & Morris, 2010; Coates, Dobson et al., 2009) . In an 'era' of research quality measurement exercises, it is also a workforce coming under increasing pressure to perform against a set of criteria that can confine and restrict staff into narrow patterns of productivity. In the professional disciplines, it is often difficult to have staff perform well across existing academic governance frameworks. In the USA, many health and professional disciplines have adopted a reward and recognition matrix developed from work done by Ernest Boyer at the Carnegie Foundation for Teaching and Learning which divides academic work into four types of scholarship: discovery, integration, application and teaching ([Boyer, 1990](#)). This framework has been used to appoint new staff into particular career tracks focussed on one or another of these scholarship types, with specific and clearly articulated performance criteria, and to reward and recognise staff as they apply for promotion.

A project is underway at the University of Wollongong that is seeking to establish whether this framework can be adapted to existing university appointment, probation and promotion schemas. The aims of the project are to develop an expanded set of promotion matrices and documents that would more adequately reward staff and build more flexible and dynamic career pathways that meet the various needs of faculties and the university. The first phase of the project is about half-completed, and in this paper the methods and some of the findings to date, considering the implications for the management of academic staff are outlined.

BACKGROUND

Scholarship Reconsidered

Ernest L Boyer was the President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching at Princeton University from 1979 until his death in 1995. In 1990, he published the result of many years work, 'Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate' (Boyer 1990). This report drew on the results of a number of surveys run by the Foundation throughout the 1980s that asked academics about their experience of shifting agendas within the tertiary sector (especially the emphasis on publication from original research), the pressure this placed on them as academics, and the consequent impact on their career pathways, workloads, expectations and teaching practices. He noted 'At the very heart of the current debate – the single concern around which all others pivot – is the issue of faculty time. What's really being called into question is the reward system and the key issue is this: what activities of the professoriate are most highly prized?' (Boyer 1990: px).

Boyer's surveys found that overwhelmingly, academics felt that despite rhetoric to the contrary, when it came to promotion, teaching was not evaluated, assessed or rewarded appropriately, and that there was an undue emphasis on research by publication despite its inappropriateness for some disciplines, a lack of resources available to support publication, and a lack of real time in which to undertake research (Boyer 1990: pp30-35). It was obvious to Boyer and his colleagues that if research, or scholarly activity, was to be the central focus of university promotion systems, than the system was in need of an overhaul. The first step in this process, for Boyer, was to rethink the notion of scholarship itself.

The initial Carnegie Foundation report starts with a rejection of the teaching research binary ([Boyer, 1990: 14](#)). Instead, Boyer reminds us of the historical meaning of scholarship as the

dissemination of knowledge, the encouragement of enquiring minds, arguing that scholarly activity can take many forms in this paradigm. Rather than privileging pure research over pure teaching in universities, Boyer argues for a broader definition of scholarship that would help to form connections between research and teaching, between theory and practice, in ways that are mutually enhancing. In this report Boyer argued that a broader approach to academic work 'might be thought of as having four separate, yet overlapping, functions. These are: the scholarship of discovery; the scholarship of integration; the scholarship of application; and the scholarship of teaching' (Boyer, 1990: 16). These four functions actually have a close alignment with the existing aspects of academic life, that is, research, teaching, governance and community engagement. However, Boyer's proposal is that by considering each of these functions as separate arenas of scholarly endeavour, it is possible to reward staff who operate in ways that don't neatly fit the pure research/teaching paradigm, or that work in disciplines that have different needs for students and the profession to which they are attached.

In this sense, it is the narrowing of the paradigm in general that concerns Boyer in his studies. He wrote, 'what we urgently need today is a more inclusive view of what it means to be a scholar - a recognition that knowledge is acquired through research, through synthesis, through practice and through teaching... Such a vision of scholarship, one that recognises the great diversity of talent within the professoriate, also may prove especially useful to faculty as they reflect on the meaning and direction of their professional lives' (Boyer 1990: p25).

This idea has become the basis of an ever expanding academic reform program across the United States in particular, where the work of Boyer has been extended by a number of successors (Glassick, Huber et al., 1997; Hutchings & Shulman, 1999; Glassick, 2000; Rice, 2002; Hutchings, Huber et al., 2011). To date, more than 400 institutions in the US have explicitly adopted Boyer's work, in either the form of specific scholarship pathways, or the overhaul of promotion criteria (O'Meara & Rice, 2005), and most of them report varying degrees of success in terms of improvements in promotion outcomes and staff morale (O'Meara, 2005). Some of Boyer's ideas have already found resonance in Australia, and his work is most often used here in relation to the development of scholarship of teaching and learning pathways (Brew, 1999; Savage & Betts, 2005; Brew, 2007; Kenny, 2009) or for the reward and recognition of practice or professional discipline academic activities (Calleson, Jordan et al., 2005; Garlick & Langworthy, 2008; Stockhausen & Turale, 2011). The aim of this project is to ascertain to what extent these ideas can be adapted to the academic environment at the University of Wollongong.

The academic workforce at the University of Wollongong

The increasing 'diversity of talent' at the University is starting to cause problems for probation and promotion committees at the university. Current promotion processes revolve around applications being developed within faculties and supported by Heads of School and Deans, and then assessed by a committee consisting of professorial representatives from each Faculty. Applicants are asked to rank their activities into categories called Research, Teaching, Governance and Community/Professional Activity. There are two major issues with this system. First, of these categories, only Teaching has any guidelines about what kinds of activities might be considered for promotion at the various academic levels. While these are fairly uniform across the various disciplines, they still struggle to encompass the depth of activity that staff may do in relation to teaching, especially that which is not measurable by some kind of metric. At the same time, there are no guidelines for what constitutes evidence of sustained performance at a certain level, or capacity to perform at the

next, in the other three categories. This makes it difficult for committees who are cross-disciplinary, to assess the value of the work being claimed as evidence for promotion.

Second, despite the fact that candidates can theoretically rank any of those four academic functions (research, teaching, governance, community/professional activity) as their number one activity for promotion, it is more often than not the case that staff believe that ranking research as number one is the only way to get promoted. Extensive work has been undertaken across the university over the last few years to build an understanding of excellence in teaching and to help staff build a substantial track record in this area. Many more staff are now applying successfully for promotion based on teaching. Yet it is still the case that committees ask questions of these applicants based on their apparent ‘lack’ of research, and given the impact of government exercises like Evaluation of Research for Australia (ERA), the pressure to perform in traditional methods of research has made staff wary again of applying for promotion on other grounds. This has a flow-on effect to performance and morale, and is causing pressure and tension in faculties with high undergraduate student enrolments, and even more pressure for disciplines that do not follow traditional ‘academic’ pathways. It is almost unheard of that staff would rank governance or community/professional activity as anything higher than third or fourth, yet for some disciplines this is exactly where activity is and should be concentrated. The University of Wollongong has extremely large cohorts of undergraduate students enrolling in professional disciplines such as teaching, law, accounting and nursing. How are the staff who teach in these disciplines affected by an appointment and promotion system that has a one size fits all academic position description and promotion processes?

It is with these concerns in mind that the Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor commissioned a project that would explore these issues and develop some recommendations. The authors were chosen to spearhead the project because of the experience acquired working on a small scale version of the project within the Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences

METHODS

From Faculty to University

The Faculty of Health and Behavioural Science is one of the most student intensive faculties at the University, with an undergraduate student population of nearly 3,000, of which 900 are enrolled in the Bachelor of Nursing. Staff come from a range of backgrounds, with disciplines ranging from the hard sciences of metabolism, lipids and brain functions, to experimental and clinical psychology, to nutrition and public health, and to nursing, midwifery and Indigenous health. Many staff come from clinical backgrounds, and were finding themselves facing difficult questions from promotion committees. To some extent, this problem has been managed by appointments with specialised position descriptions, but even then some people faced a promotions committee that judged the applicant against unspoken expectations of research (usually by publication or grant income), which the applicant had not been appointed to perform. After a number of workshops and surveys with academic and clinical staff both locally and internationally, it was decided that Boyer’s ‘reassessing scholarship’ framework provided a potential solution to the problem.

Reconsidering Scholarship at the University of Wollongong

To ‘reconsider scholarship’ across the board is a large undertaking. It involves tackling issues of staff attraction, appointment and retention; reward and recognition processes; career

development; workload management; enterprise agreements; diversified academic pathways and the university mission itself. Recognising the complexity and enormity of the task, the project has been broken into a number of phases, tackling the most immediate need first. At a university wide probation and promotion forum held in early February, it was agreed that expanded guidelines for promotion criteria would be of immediate benefit to applicants and promotion committees that were struggling with the challenges faced by an ever diversifying workforce. The Senior DVC approved the allocation of funds to the project and work began immediately.

Phase One: Expanding Academic Promotion Criteria

The aim of the first phase of the project is to develop a prototype of an expanded set of promotion matrices that incorporate Boyer's areas of scholarship into the existing university academic promotions framework, providing an expanded set of guidelines for staff looking to rate certain scholarship functions highly for promotion purposes.

The methodology for the project has a number of stages, as set out below:

Stage One: Interviews

Members of the recent Probations and Promotion Forum were approached for individual interviews seeking their feedback from the presentation about scholarship at that forum. They were asked a series of questions about their expectations and ideas for SCHOLARLY performance within each ranking function (teaching/research/governance/engagement) and at various promotion levels. The interviews will be recorded and results transcribed.

Stage Two: Draft Documentation

Feedback from interviews will be incorporated into drafts of matrixes for each scholarly activity. Consultation with other universities and institutions that have reformed their promotion criteria along these same lines will also be undertaken at this stage, and will inform the drafting of supporting documentation. A small working group of 5 senior academics from those interviewed will be formed to assist with the drafting of documentation.

Stage Three: Focus Groups and redraft

The draft documentation will be disseminated to faculties and focus groups held to add discipline specific criteria, evidence and measures of assessment. Participants will be asked for feedback on the redrafted documentation and their views around issues of implementation and evaluation. The focus groups will be recorded and results transcribed.

Stage Four: Reporting and documentation

Feedback from focus groups will be used to redraft and finalise matrixes and supporting documentation. Feedback from the focus groups will be analysed for common themes and ideas and these results, along with those from the rounds of interviews, will be summarised in a report. The report will include drafts of the matrixes, and supporting documentation for portfolio guidelines and assessment and evaluation procedures for each function at each academic level. Recommendations for implementation, dissemination and impact on other promotion procedures will be included.

Stage One has been completed, and parts of Stage Two. Twenty eight senior staff across the University have been interviewed and were all asked a series of questions:

1. Is there anything in particular you'd like to discuss or want clarified from the discussion at the Probation and Promotion Forum which you attended in February?
2. Can you tell me a little bit about how you feel current promotion processes are working, or not?
3. When you are assessing someone for promotion who is ranking TEACHING as number one, what sort of things do you look for at each of the promotion levels? Does the current teaching matrix document provide enough information?
4. If a similar matrix for people wishing to rank research highly were produced, what sort of things do you think it should include?
5. What sort of scholarly and professional activity would you expect to see if someone wanted to rank GOVERNANCE as one or two at the various levels?
6. What sort of scholarly and professional activity would you expect to see if someone wanted to rank ENGAGEMENT as one or two at the various levels?
7. How would scholarly activity that was not peer reviewed journal articles or competitive grants be assessed and evaluated?
8. How do you feel about alternative academic pathways, e.g.: education focused/clinical or practice scholars?

Interviews were conducted with one pro-vice-chancellor, 11 deans of faculties or directors of units, eight professors, three associate professors, two senior lecturers and three members of the human resources (HR) department. Interviewees were chosen based on their role as dean, their attendance at the Probation and Promotion Forum, or their experience of being on the University Promotion Committee. Interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed by research assistants who attended the interviews and took notes. Interviews were coded using the main themes that the questions had sought to address and these results prepared into a summary.

RESULTS

Results have been analysed according to the questions asked and then coded for other themes emerging. The main themes were Research, Teaching, Governance, Engagement, Education Focussed Career Pathways, Expected Outputs and Promotion Process. Other themes that emerged were Gender Bias, Research Bias, Non-traditional academics, Unclear Expectations, Inflexible Workloads, Defining Scholarship, Probation Issues, Position Descriptions and Suggestions for Improvement. No new themes emerged after 20 interviews. The most frequently occurring responses that relate to staff management issues, especially for promotion, are presented below.

Research

- Different research has varied weightings of importance within different faculties. For example, some faculties put a high emphasis on book writing, while most push for publication in prestigious journals. This differing emphasis is not always appreciated by the promotions committee, so there should be recognition of what is appropriate research within a certain field (n=8).
- National competitive grants are given a heavy weighting in relation to research at promotion time. However, some disciplines do not need the same type of money to conduct their research and therefore some academics find themselves at a disadvantage in front of the promotions committee for lacking NCGP grants (n=8).

- Individuals are often pulled down at promotion time for not having published their work in the more prestigious journals despite the fact that the journal they have published their work in is the most relevant for their area of specialty and the most widely read among their peers in the field (n=4).

Teaching

- Currently it is seen that getting promoted for a teaching focused career is a lot more difficult than getting promoted for a research focussed career (n=14).
- For promotion, excellence of scholarship of teaching should be at the same level of excellence in research (n=11).
- There is a lack of understanding surrounding what is quality ‘scholarship of teaching’ (n=10).
- A teaching focus is often seen as a ‘soft’ option for those who do not wish to engage in research (n=7).

Governance

- Many individuals are involved in Governance activities (often at the expense of their research time) but do not gain enough recognition for it from the promotions committee (n=8).
- Getting promoted on Governance grounds is extremely rare; as such academics rarely rank governance higher than third or fourth (n=8).
- In relation to Governance, the most important aspect that should be presented to a promotions committee is impact (n=7).
- Attendance at committee meetings should not be seen as enough to constitute good governance. The individual must show active participation, outcomes and possibly a leadership role. (n=6)

Community Engagement/Professional Activity

- Participation in Engagement is hindered because academics do not see it as being a rewarded endeavour. Engagement is nearly always ranked third or fourth, because it is not well recognised by the promotions committee (n=8).
- Community Engagement should bring about impact and clear outcomes which can be evidenced, for example through policy change (n=8).
- Staying connected with the industry/profession is integral in certain faculties in order to remain current (n=7).
- Community Engagement benefits both the academic community and the student body and as such should be able to be encouraged (n=6) .

Other Issues Relating to Promotion

Unclear expectations: There is a perceived lack of structure for those who are entering the academic pathway. Many participants felt that a lack of sufficient or efficient documentation led to new academics (or those heading towards promotion) being confused as to what was expected at probation/promotion time (n= 20).

Academics from a non-traditional background: Many participants believed that academics that are sourced from non-traditional pathways face difficulties when they apply for promotion. This is often due to the lack of a sufficient ‘traditional’ research portfolio. The

question remains as to how these persons should be measured at promotion time and whether it is fair to judge them against a traditional academic (n=12).

Inflexible workloads: Many participants perceived the current work structures or job descriptions as too 'inflexible' and believed they failed to take into account changing career paths, differing needs and changing circumstances (n= 19).

Research Bias: Many participants from different faculties feel that there is a continuing perception among academic staff that ranking research number one is the best way to get promoted and that ranking another criteria number one will put the applicant at a disadvantage (n=14).

Gender Bias: Several participants felt that women face a disadvantage in regards to family commitments conflicting with the ability to retain a research focus, as such they are often pushed into teaching focussed careers (n=6).

DISCUSSION

These results support anecdotal evidence emerging from Faculties that promotion processes often act in contradiction to the work that academic staff are actively engaged in. Government research quality measurement exercises such as the Research Quality Framework and ERA have had the effect of appearing to valorise traditional forms of research, or what Boyer calls the scholarship of discovery. While the purpose of this project is not to downplay the importance of this sort of academic activity, it is the project's aim to remind promotion committees that this is not the only work that academics are engaged in, nor is it always the only one they should be rewarded for. Academic excellence occurs in a number of areas, and reflects the changing nature of the academic workforce, and the role of the university in society more broadly. The interview results suggest a pressing need for changes to the way staff are managed, and for the ways in which one thinks about the nature of scholarship.

Implications for management of staff

All deans interviewed acknowledged that they had or were experiencing issues with promotion to some extent. In the first instance, this took the form of a lack of documentation or clear guidelines around expectations at each academic level, which made it harder for Heads of School in particular to manage career development. Most Deans expressed a need for clearer documentation, but they also expressed concern that documentation and guidelines did not become mere checklists of evidence, which staff might then take as automatically meeting promotion criteria. The emphasis needed to remain on 'excellence' and evidence of that excellence, and to show how the staff member had made an 'impact' in the area they were ranking highly for promotion. If the point of promotion was to reward consistent performance at one level, and acknowledge the potential to perform at the next, then staff particularly needed to be able to show evidence of leadership qualities as they moved up the academic levels. For some faculties, evidence of impact and leadership is not always easily measurable, so the documentation and guidelines developed need to be more than just quantitative checklists, and to take into account discipline specific expectations and evidence.

Those faculties that followed more traditional research pathways were less likely to have trouble with promotion generally (Science in particular), which could be perceived as

evidence of the ‘research bias’ mentioned by at least 14 of the interviewees. Again, 14 interviewees indicated that they had experienced, or seen difficulty at promotion, for staff wishing to rank a function other than research highly.

This was particularly the case for staff from the practice or professional disciplines. Staff in accounting, law, health sciences and nursing especially all expressed concern at the way staff from professional or practice backgrounds, or working in professional or practice disciplines, were routinely disadvantaged at promotion time because of their perceived ‘underperformance’ in the traditional forms of research (e.g., publications, grant-getting). This disadvantage was often experienced despite the fact that the person might have been appointed to undertake particular tasks, or might come to academia with an extensive professional expertise, making them highly relevant and desirable for the learning outcomes of students.

All these issues indicate the need for a more structured career development and workload management model. All deans specifically noted that many of the problems people experienced at promotion could be overcome by specialised position descriptions (rather than a generic ‘teaching and research’ position), that was linked to the staff members’ career development record and against which the staff member was measured at promotion. While these do exist for some staff, it was often the case that these were neglected or dismissed by promotion committees, so it was important that promotion committees also received clear guidelines around expectations and the assessment of evidence for promotion.

Rethinking scholarship: a whole faculty approach

While this phase of the project is not aimed at overhauling the entire academic career model, interviews did overlap with other areas of concern around managing academic staff. Deans in particular were interested in developing alternative career pathways based on the articulation of scholarship as Boyer and his colleagues had set out. For many deans, again especially those from professional or practice disciplines, this approach had the potential to address a range of issues across a whole faculty, from appointment to probation, career development and promotion.

By articulating career pathways into particular kinds of scholarship, Deans felt they could manage their workload across a whole faculty, instead of within individuals only, so that the various needs of the faculty, staff and students could be met. The Boyer definitions of scholarship could be usefully applied here to help practice and professional disciplines develop specific position descriptions based on the of the staff member, which was required to provide the teaching and learning outcomes for students looking to enter that profession. It also suggests that these disciplines can still be involved in the scholarship of discovery, and that through the careful appointment and management of staff, this scholarship becomes integrated with the other scholarly functions undertaken by staff in these disciplines, such as curriculum development, maintaining clinical or professional credibility, and engaging with community stakeholders.

Deans were also interested in ‘education focused pathways’ that let staff develop a career based on the scholarship of teaching and learning. They did however express concern that this should not become a de facto way of managing underperforming staff. Similarly, staff already in the Faculty of Education, involved with education research, felt that there were pitfalls in this direction and stressed the need for a career pathway that involved a postgraduate qualification in teaching and learning. One interviewee involved in a teaching

and learning unit not based in a Faculty expressed serious concerns over education focused pathways because she felt they were seen as ‘such a low status option...a step down, career wise’. Yet most of her staff would obviously benefit from a scholarly-based education pathway. Indeed, HR staff held a very clear view that the academic workforce has already changed, and the university needs to find a way to promote staff from non-research backgrounds because ‘it’s already happening, and it’s the way of the future’. These concerns then speak to the underlying tensions within universities caused by the changing nature of academic life, and the changing role of the university in society more broadly. The need for a clearly articulated university mission or vision, and the overt championing of new processes by senior university executive are vital for any promotion reform package to succeed.

CONCLUSION

The University of Wollongong is not alone in the move towards reforming its probation, promotion and career pathway processes. Monash University, Deakin University, Edith Cowan University and the Queensland University of Technology to name a few have all been through promotion reform processes, and the University of Sydney has had a ‘scholarship of teaching and learning’ career pathway for some time. This project at the University of Wollongong and its findings so far, reflect sector-wide trends that must be addressed by universities. The need to do so hope to remain competitive, to attract the best staff and to keep them, and to be able to manage the myriad and diverse functions that are expected of universities by government, students and the broader community into the twenty first century. The clearer articulation of expectations for promotion that more obviously reflect the diverse work that academics perform is one step in this direction.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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PROFESSIONAL STAFF CARVE OUT A NEW SPACE

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ABSTRACT

A 2004 paper lamented the ‘invisibility’ of professional staff in Australian higher education (Szekeres, 2004). Even then, professional staff constituted more than half the university workforce, but they were defined by what they were not (non-academic) and they experienced a high level of frustration in their relationships with academic staff and with their institutions. This paper examines whether the situation for professional staff has changed in the intervening period. It would seem that by 2009, professionals had carved out a more critical space in the sector than they had been able to do by 2004. At senior levels, professionals are no longer restricted to specialist roles such as human resources or information technology or building services but have moved into the pro- and deputy-vice-chancellor space, roles previously reserved for senior academics. However, has there been much change in the junior or middle management roles? This paper considers the literature over the last six years as it relates to professional staff, look at the changing statistics in Australia around employment of professional staff, and consider what changes have taken place for professional staff at all levels.

Key words: administration, professional staff, roles, culture

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INTRODUCTION

A 2004 paper '*The invisible workers*' lamented the invisibility of professional staff (administrative staff, general staff, non-academic staff, allied staff) in the higher education literature (Szekeres, 2004). In 2011, it is worth reviewing the current situation to see if much has changed for this group of workers in the intervening years. Are they more visible in the literature? Have their positions in the sector changed much? Are they recognised for their contribution in any ways that they previously were not?

This paper considers the literature published since 2004, and some that was not used in the original paper, to assess whether the place of professional staff has changed in the writing about higher education. Staff numbers and levels are considered to see if there have been changes generally in the sector in Australia.

CHANGES TO STAFFING

There have been some changes to professional staff as a group in the sector over the last six years. The statistics available from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) describe a rather static picture (DEEWR, 2010a, 2010b). Between 1996 and 2009, professional staff numbers in the sector have risen steadily, from 41,447 to 51,334 (full-time equivalent), but so have academic staff numbers, which have grown at a similar rate, from 31,256 to 38,965 (full-time equivalent). The number of professional staff as a percentage of total staff has wavered slightly between years over this period but stayed at around 57 per cent. However, this is not fine-grained enough to provide a full picture.

The 2004 paper did not consider how many professional staff were in senior management positions in the universities. My doctoral thesis demonstrated how the staff profile had changed over the previous 10 years in the three public South Australian universities, from a workforce of low-level clerical workers, to higher-level professionals. However, my assumption at the time was that there was usually only one or two senior managers in most institutions who were not from the academic realm. This has changed over the last six years, although not dramatically. Looking at every Australian institution's 2009 annual report, it is possible to ascertain (crudely though it might be) how many members of the executive management team of each university are most likely to be professional staff. Crudely, because this was done by assuming that anyone without the title Professor or Associate Professor is likely to be from the administrative rather than academic stream. In 2010, this shows a slowly changing picture.

Many institutions seem to have two layers of executive management – the top, smaller layer is the Vice-Chancellor's immediate reports (usually Pro Vice-Chancellors, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Executive Directors, Vice-Presidents), and the second larger group usually operating in an advisory capacity and including many people reporting directly to the top layer. While some annual reports clearly show organisation structures and it is apparent who reports to the Vice-Chancellor, in others this is somewhat obscure. This paper uses the group which reports directly to the Vice-Chancellor when it can be ascertained, and in other cases, uses what appears to be the larger Executive group, whether it be advisory or not.

Out of the 37 Australian public universities with accessible 2009 annual reports, all appear to have at least one professional staff executive team member. The teams range in size from four to 17 and the percentage of professional staff ranges from nine per cent to 67 per cent. The most common titles for professional staff in executive teams are: Executive Director, Director, or Vice-President (Finance/Operations/Resources); Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Executive Director, or Vice-President (International/Development); and Executive Director, Pro Vice-Chancellor, or Vice-President (Student Services/ Services/ Students). There are also a number of other titles used less frequently: Chief Operating Officer, Deputy Vice-Chancellor or Executive Director (Corporate Services) and Executive Director or Vice-President (Administration). Only three Registrars are evident, although a number of Academic Registrars clearly manage just student administration. In total, out of 275 senior executive roles identified, 97 appear to be professional staff appointments, an average of 35 per cent. A similar consideration of 2000 (and in some cases where this is not available, 2001-2004) annual reports shows that the average percentage of senior executives who were not academic was around 29 per cent. So there has been a small increase in the percentage of professionals in the senior executive groups and the nature of the positions has also changed. For instance, in 2000, many universities still had a 'God Registrar', but few do today, or the position is called something else. Also, many of these 97 professional staff now have the title 'Dr', suggesting the importance of the doctorate qualification in gaining credibility at this level.

Other than the senior group, what changes have occurred to the rest of the professional stream? This requires gathering information not easily accessible, so I chose to look again at the three public South Australian universities to compare data with my original collection. The number of clerical workers, Higher Education Worker (HEW) levels 1-5 in central units has declined or stayed static and in faculties has stayed static or marginally increased. One suggestion for this decline, despite the growth in size of institutions, is that much of the work at this level has been outsourced, particularly in areas like facilities management. It may also be that some of the self-serve information technology systems have reduced the need for data-entry staff.

The balance between central units and faculties has evened out, compared with the bigger differences in the past. Since 1995, the middle management group (HEW6-9) has steadily increased across both central units and faculties. This has been the fastest growing group of staff in the university, reflecting the increased professionalisation of these workers. Since 1995, this group has doubled in size in faculties and grown by 66 per cent in central units, with overall growth of 83 per cent.

The picture for senior managers (above HEW10) differs greatly between institutions, with one having static numbers at this level, another where the above HEW10 numbers have grown by 50 per cent and the other where the numbers have doubled, although from a low base. It is likely that this shows the different degree of importance each institution places on corporate-style management of the institution. A number of people who provided feedback on this paper suggested that much of this growth at higher levels is the result of bringing in 'star recruits' from outside the sector and consequently some respondents bemoaned the lack of structured career development that exists for professional staff in universities.

These apparent changes in staff profile are reflected to some degree in changes in the literature about universities.

THE LITERATURE SINCE 2004

The literature related to the management and operations of higher education institutions has grown substantially since 2004. Related to this is a growing collection focused on the work of professional staff (Allen-Collinson, 2006, 2007, 2009; Bassnett, 2005; Blümel, 2008; Brown, 2008; Clegg & McAuley, 2005; Graham, 2009, 2010; Lauwerys, 2002; Leicht & Fennell, 2008; McNay, 2005; Santiago, Carvalho, Amaral, & Meek, 2006; Szekeres, 2004, 2006; Whitchurch, 2009; Wohlmuther, 2008). These works build on very few earlier examples which focused on professional staff (Castleman & Allen, 1995; Dobson, 2000; Dobson & Conway, 2003; McLean, 1996; Moodie, 1995). There is also a body of work which considers both academic and professional work together (Clegg & McAuley, 2005; de Boer, Enders, & Leisyte, 2007; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Eveline, 2004; Gordon & Whitchurch, 2007; Middlehurst, 2004; Rosser, 2004; Stewart, 2004; Tsai & Beverton, 2007; Winter, 2009). Despite this growing literature, many professional staff still bemoan the ‘invisibility of their work’ (Allen-Collinson, 2007, p306) and there is still evidence of disquiet about the place of professional staff in their institutions as will be seen.

In addition, there some other discrete themes are discussed below – in particular:

- communities and culture (Bassnett, 2005; Cain & Hewitt, 2004; Churchman, 2006; Clegg & McAuley, 2005; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Eveline, 2004; Leicht & Fennell, 2008; McNay, 2005; Middlehurst, 2004; Morris, 2003; Rosser, 2004; Sharrock, 2004; Stewart, 2004; Szekeres, 2006; Welsh, 2009; Yelder & Codling, 2004);
- the fragility of relationships between academic and professional staff (Allen-Collinson, 2006, 2009; Eveline, 2004; Fulton, 2003; Gillette, 2004; Gordon & Whitchurch, 2007; Kuo, 2009; Leicht & Fennell, 2008; McNay, 2005; Rosser, 2004; Santiago, et al., 2006; Small, 2008; Szekeres, 2004, 2006; Winter, 2009; Wohlmuther, 2008);
- the role of senior and middle management in universities (Bassnett, 2005; Blümel, 2008; Cain & Hewitt, 2004; Clegg & McAuley, 2005; de Boer, et al., 2007; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Fulton, 2003; Graham, 2009; Heywood, 2004; Lauwerys, 2002; McNay, 2005; Middlehurst, 2004; Santiago, et al., 2006; Shore & Groen, 2009; Smith & Hughey, 2006; Tsai & Beverton, 2007; Welsh, 2009; Whitchurch, 2008; Winter, 2009; Yelder & Codling, 2004);
- discussions of particular roles and functions in higher education (Allen-Collinson, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2009; Brown, 2008; Eveline, 2004; Graham, 2009, 2010; Heywood, 2004; Janosik, 2007; McMaster, 2002; Reybold, Halx, & Jimenez, 2008; Sebalj & Holbrook, 2006; Shelley, 2010; Small, 2008; Smith & Hughey, 2006); and
- professionalisation of administrative work and workers (Bassnett, 2005; Blümel, 2008; Gordon & Whitchurch, 2007; Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004; Lauwerys, 2002; Reybold, et al., 2008).

The rest of this paper is a meta-analysis of this literature using these five themes.

COMMUNITIES AND CULTURE

‘Culture’ in the workplace can be seen as the everyday common ‘accepted’ practice in institutions. It is created by both symbolic acts such as graduations, promotion, structures

and technologies, and practices such as who socialises with who, the use of jargon, the conduct of staff meetings and how staff interact with students (Eveline, 2004). Communities in universities also take many forms and are approached in different ways by different writers. The most common discussion is about the effects of managerial and corporate culture on the community of the university. The debate about this, so prevalent at the turn of the century, has not died down. Contradictory views are evident: one which sees the Oxbridge model of a community of scholars as having run its course, with the growth of technology making knowledge available to all and contributing to fundamental changes in institutional form (Sharrock, 2004). Another asks whether structures developed for universities of a few thousand students, all young and studying full time, still fit the purpose for current universities which have tens of thousands of students from all walks of life and circumstances (Bassnett, 2005). Another suggests that in the newer universities, 'the administrative staff are relatively more powerful' (Stewart, 2004, p. 54) than in older institutions.

The standard faculty structure can be seen as a 'constellation of communities' (McNay, 2005, p42). It would appear that community identity is more easily achieved in small units (McNay, 2005), so staff often feel more attached to their school or research unit, than their institution (Szekeres, 2006). In a study of mid-level leaders in higher education (Rosser, 2004) it was found that morale amongst professional staff varied considerably. The more people felt able to 'contribute to the organization's overall common purpose' (Rosser, 2004, p. 329), the higher their morale, and it can be argued that this is more likely in smaller units. However, according to some, 'universities are changing from being faculty and student-centred to being administratively centred' (Leicht & Fennell, 2008, p. 89), following in corporate footsteps and becoming 'fat and mean'. Interestingly, while in universities middle management is growing, in the corporate world it is reducing (thin and lean).

The very thing that has resulted in the growth of mid-level professional staff – government regulations, accountability and reporting – is the greatest source of frustration to that group as these are largely seen as unproductive activities (Rosser, 2004). 'The time spent dealing with the same material, the same information, the same paperwork, several times' (Bassnett, 2005, p99) drives professionals and academics alike to distraction and every university has developed its own complex structure, systems and processes to deal with the demands.

Focus has moved in many institutions to students as customers, particularly as pressure increases through competition for good quality students and by the subsequent demands of students who are often paying high fees. It is often the managers who use their power to change the focus of the institution from 'students' to 'customers' (Deem & Brehony, 2005) and the corresponding service requirements with this change of focus cannot be ignored. More generally there has been a shift of language to being concerned about products, corporate image, marketing, finances, targets, best practice, process engineering, chief executives, stakeholders and line managers, rather than the traditional humanistic ideals of education, where we might have talked about retention and helping less able students (Bassnett, 2005; Deem & Brehony, 2005). Interestingly, despite the necessary focus on the 'bottom line' (or possibly because of it) in private provider organisations, academic success and retention are often more keenly pursued than in traditional universities. One author suggests that an example of a shift in culture is grievance processes which, he contends, now largely exist to protect the institution rather than to achieve equity and justice (Welsh, 2009).

There is a view that the academy has always been shaped by 'hierarchical relationships, competition for resources, and shifting policies' (Reybold, et al., 2008, p110) and the shift

from a collegial academic culture to academics being seen as ‘mere knowledge workers’ (Cain & Hewitt, 2004, p89) is symptomatic of current changes. Knowledge has become a commodity to be marketed and as students spend more time in paid employment, their participation in the life of the university as a community is waning (Cain & Hewitt, 2004, p103). And in the massified system, where going to university becomes commonplace, ‘the ivory tower has lost much of its mystique’ (Stewart, 2004, p59).

All of this makes for a much more complex organisation than in the past. Running these large complex organisations requires a mixed set of specific skills, so most Vice-Chancellors ‘surround themselves with teams of “true” professionals’ (comment from a respondent). Despite some general shifts in culture, it is still so that most authors perceive that ‘administrators.....portray separate occupational cultures and values’ (Allen-Collinson, 2007, p307) from academic staff. However, there are some opposing views to this, with an amalgam of administration and teaching forging new cultural practices where professional staff become central to the work of collaboration across institutions (Shore & Groen, 2009).

FRAGILITY OF RELATIONSHIPS

The relationship between academics and professionals has been of interest in a number of studies. McNay (2005) identifies fault-lines in universities, including ‘between teachers and managers and administrators, ...the last two as agents of external forces in a culture of compliance’ (p41). In his view, it is only senior managers and those with cross-institutional functions who identify with the whole institution. Professionals are the ‘keepers of community memory’ (McNay, 2005, p42) and are often the ones left supporting the student experience when academics have left the scene. Previously, the university administrator was seen as ‘the bridging connection between the inner workings of the academy and the outside world’ (Leicht & Fennell, 2008, p91), but this outside world now seems to include the parts of the university separate from faculty or research structures. There are some European, UK and NZ studies which show that the size of administration has grown at a much faster rate than faculty (Leicht & Fennell, 2008; Wohlmuther, 2008), although I would suggest this needs validation with data.

The senior administrative group is seen as making many of the key resource and policy decisions, and academics are now operating in an environment where they are being managed by professional managers who have little understanding of their roles or career trajectories. In one view, the role of academics is thereby diminished but this is also a contested view. It could be argued that this leaves academic staff to concentrate on teaching and research - that ‘a professional cadre of managers allows [academics] to return to their millennia-old tradition’ (quote from a respondent). The view that academics and professionals have contrasting purposes needs to be challenged (Conway, 2008), particularly given the negative views of the relationship between them expressed in Conway’s and other research.

In the view of some authors, the naming issue related to professional staff is still a source of frustration for them. The ‘non-academic’, ‘support’, ‘allied’, and ‘assistant’ nomenclatures still abound and many staff in these positions feel denigrated by these terms, particularly when they are sometimes more highly credentialed than the academics they work with. In some cases they are treated as ‘wallpaper’ and boundary lines exist, not only between professionals and academics, but also between different categories of professional staff

(Allen-Collinson, 2009). These boundaries are often ‘covert and tacit....given the rhetoric of collegiality and egalitarianism’ (Allen-Collinson, 2007, p300).

Professionals and academics traditionally seem to inhabit separate worlds – academic work being solitary, independent and self-directed, where individualism and independence are rewarded compared with administrative work which is about finding the most efficient and effective methods that benefit the institution, where cooperation, compliance, professionalism and corporate values are rewarded (Gillette, 2004). The ‘sense of disconnection between academic staff and administrators’ (Kuo, 2009, p. 52) makes it difficult for professional and academic staff to work collaboratively. Professional staff often undertake ‘interpretive roles at the boundaries between academic work, internal constituencies and external partners, forging links between them and undertaking what might be described as quasi-academic work’ (Gordon & Whitchurch, 2007, p12). It is interesting to note that in some cases, professionals spend as much time on academic tasks as academics spend on administrative tasks (Wohlmuther, 2008). However, they still find themselves treated as the poor relations of the university system, representing an underclass in terms of pay, conditions and flexibility (Allen-Collinson, 2007; Wohlmuther, 2008).

Despite all these difficulties, it is relationships with students and faculty which are critical to the levels of satisfaction for professional staff (Rosser, 2004). There is now quite a bit of literature related particularly to research administrators, and this group seems to ‘straddle the supposed academic-administrative divide’ (Allen-Collinson, 2007, p. 295). However, no matter how close professionals work with academics, they are still often seen as the ‘minions of management’ (Allen-Collinson, 2009). In 2004, despite progress being made in knocking down the ivory tower, ‘the lines between academic and general staff remain[ed] firmly drawn’ (Eveline, 2004, p. 143). Equal representation in university decision-making was far from a reality, however the statistics I quoted earlier in this paper show a slowly changing picture now. Some respondents felt that the picture is very different in faculties from the central administration. This is yet to be tested and may well be an avenue for further research.

SENIOR AND MIDDLE MANAGEMENT AND STRUCTURES

While managerialism, ‘a style of management through which a manager plays a crucial, determining and central role in implementing and measuring the necessary improvement of products’ (Tsai & Beverton, 2007, p. 7) seems to have taken hold in many institutions, it is still felt by some that ‘devolution and diversity characterise the best universities’ (McNay, 2005, p42). Administrative systems and structures need to tolerate, and better still, encourage diversity, particularly as centralising services often results in a decline in service (McNay, 2005). Higher Education systems in various countries have operated very differently from each other in the past, but the changes evident in the UK and Australia are now also evident in other European countries (Blümel, 2008; de Boer, et al., 2007; Deem & Brehony, 2005). While universities have increasing autonomy in organisational structure, in most institutions there are new functional areas being established with specialised administrative services. Some higher education systems are shifting towards a ‘managed professional public organisation model’ (Blümel, 2008, p. 13), with increased hierarchies and staff at middle management level, and a shift to a service culture. These new layers of management, the introduction of performance management, league tables, targets, performance-based funding, activity-based costing, and rationalisation of administration are all evidence of the impact of corporatisation (de Boer, et al., 2007; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Shore & Groen, 2009). The

changed environment means there is a need for 'strong strategic capacity, integrated management systems, swift and flexible decision making capabilities and dispersed leadership' (Middlehurst, 2004, p270).

The literature generally agrees with my proposition that numbers of professional staff at middle and higher management levels have indeed increased, while those at lower operational levels, have declined, with staffing increases largest in the areas of student services, planning and marketing. There are opposing views about the value of this growth in management. Some suggest that bottom-up management, 'pilot efforts at the bottom level, developing into institutional practice through osmosis and imitation' (Tsai & Beverton, 2007, p8), can provide more flexibility and may lead to better educational outcomes, although it can be chaotic and expensive. But others recognise the need for corporate management of what are now multi-million dollar enterprises, particularly as the traditional committee structures can be cumbersome, slow and wasteful (Bassnett, 2005). Some staff now 'accept the move to corporatisation and central control as simply a reflection of what is happening in society' (Cain & Hewitt, 2004, p75).

The most extreme view is that management structures of universities exist to impose the will of the state and private capital on the university community and to meet the needs of managers, not those engaged in teaching or learning (Welsh, 2009). Management just expands to fill whatever void exists, as Russell (2004) claims, 'to support a corporate culture, university bureaucracies have become gigantic. Campuses are filled with layer upon layer of administrators' (p48). However, this view is not supported by data and is an emotive response to the increased accountability for use of public money. A more moderate view is that the binary division of universities into the academic and administrative has been 'superseded by more complex, multi-dimensional models' (Whitchurch, 2004, p296) which include people who work across boundaries in a range of activities and contexts.

In the past, the senior managers were selected from the ranks of the faculty. Some contend this is changing and they increasingly come from outside the sector (Bassnett, 2005; Leicht & Fennell, 2008). In the US, they are 'hiring new administrators, more administrators from outside the university, hiring them for shorter terms, and paying them much higher salaries than they could ever command as college faculty' (Leicht & Fennell, 2008, p99). Management roles for academics have shifted from being largely symbolic to being responsible for large budgets, performance management and quality control of teaching and research. They are perceived as a 'distinctive social group with interests quite different to those of other staff' (Deem & Brehony, 2005, p231) and are often 'caught between the conflicting interests of faculty members and administration' (Smith & Hughey, 2006, p160), having to adopt a consultative approach with academics and a more authoritative style with professionals.

Graham (2009) proposes that initial salaries for professional staff are favourable in comparison to other professions, but as prospects for advancement in the university are poor, this competitive edge falls away. This means that attracting staff is quite easy, but retaining them is harder. While universities are good at providing career development for early-career academics, there has been little in the way of career management for professional staff (Graham, 2009). Again this view was contested by some of the academics who responded. I can only surmise that no-one is happy with their lot and most people expect the institution to do more for them in their career trajectory.

PARTICULAR ROLES AND FUNCTIONS

Most universities over the last 10 years have seen the establishment of new functional areas and project-oriented service units, mostly staffed by professionals.

Research administration is one area which seems to command quite a bit of interest (Allen-Collinson, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2009; Sebalj & Holbrook, 2006; Shelley, 2010). Allen-Collinson (2009) suggests that there appears to be more harmonious relationships between academics and professional in this field than in others. She hypothesises that this is because they work more closely together in managing projects. In addition, research administrators are often attracted to the discipline they are working in, and are usually highly qualified – stretching across the barriers that often exist. However, as with other administrative functions in universities, there is ‘no one simple or standard occupational definition of what a research administrator does’ (Allen-Collinson, 2007, p297). In her research, one of the interviewees commented that they were pigeon-holed into roles ‘akin to people who organise the exams’ (Allen-Collinson, 2007, p301). It is interesting that, while barriers exist between professionals and academics, they also exist between professionals in different parts of the institution. This person’s implied assessment of the skill required to organise exams is demeaning and lack of valuing of the work of others. Similarly, Small (2008) identifies schisms between groups of professional staff who ‘compete for power with each other’ (p178).

Another functional area specific to higher education which attracts some research attention is that of people working in student affairs – both in student administration and student support services which includes activities such as academic and career counselling, campus activities, financial aid and admissions (Janosik, 2007; Janosik, Creamer, & Humphrey, 2004; Reybold, et al., 2008; Small, 2008; Smith & Hughey, 2006). These roles require particular skills and a strong set of operating frameworks which cannot be drawn from other industries and people in these positions tend to lead a student-centred approach in the institution (Smith & Hughey, 2006). There is some study of ethics for people in these roles because it is such a critical issue for them. They are faced with problems which are often beset with conflicts of interest and need frameworks with which to resolve them (Janosik, 2007; Reybold, et al., 2008). These frameworks would form the basis for professionalisation of these roles and there is still some work to do to codify, disseminate and create accreditation around them.

Another group which has been paid some attention is Faculty Managers (Heywood, 2004; McMaster, 2002). This is a group which operates often as ‘general managers’ of their faculty, looking after a wide range of functions. In Heywood’s study (2004), it was found that nearly all Faculty Managers were members of the faculty’s management group and took an active part in decision making for the faculty. Faculty management is a role peculiar to universities and could also benefit from some framework and codification of its activities.

In some cases, the work of professional staff can be considered ‘glue’ work – it is considered to be done best when it is not noticed (Eveline, 2004). But not being noticed means you can be seriously undervalued. There are a number of ways in which this happens, including the provision of physical spaces, crediting of expertise, lack of encouragement for staff development opportunities and relative lack of career opportunities (Eveline, 2004, p143). There is still quite some way to go in addressing these deficiencies in many universities.

PROFESSIONALISATION

One of the impacts of ‘new managerialism in higher education is the professionalisation of university administration and administrators’ (Santiago, et al., 2006, p223). While, according to Santiago et al. (2006), the US has traditionally had strong executive management of institutions, Australia, the UK and the Netherlands have moved firmly in this direction. But the rest of Europe has been slower to shift. Despite changes in numbers of staff and the roles in university administration ‘it is still far from being a closed and coherent profession’ (Blümel, 2008, p4). There is growing recognition of the link between institutional performance and the ability to attract and retain the right staff. Managers in higher education increasingly have responsibility for staff across a range of functions, including teaching, research, business, projects and administration, so universities can be considered to be in transition from ‘a community of scholars to a community of professionals’ (Gordon & Whitchurch, 2007, p4).

There are frameworks for considering the professionalisation of administration. Blümel (2008) suggests four dimensions to serve as a base:

1. The development of a specialist body of practical and problem-solving knowledge which becomes systematised
2. The establishment of an academic program of study, qualification and training
3. A professional association or occupational network which regulates entrance into the profession and provides forums for knowledge exchange
4. Increased status and autonomy in decision-making.

Blümel also suggests there would be some effects evident in the sector if university administration was becoming a profession:

1. Increased numbers and qualifications of administrative staff
2. Increased number of professional units and specialised staff
3. Stronger emphasis on professional qualifications in recruitment
4. Change in self-conception of administrative staff, with greater autonomy and power
5. Development of specialist networks and professional associations.

Some of these effects are already evident in Australia. A number of professional associations have developed – Association for Tertiary Education Management (ATEM), Tertiary Education Facilities Management Association (TEFMA), Heads of Student Administration (HOSA), Australasian Association for Institutional Research (AAIR), Australasian Research Management Society (ARMS), Australasian Research Training Administrators (ARTA) and there are some quite strong networks between the various university groupings such as Australian Technology Network (ATN), Innovative Research Universities (IRU) and Group of Eight (GO8). While these associations do not regulate entrance into the profession, they do provide forums for knowledge creation and exchange and professional training. There has also been an increase in the numbers of both professional units and specialised staff, and, I would suggest, the qualifications of administrative staff. It could be that employing administrators whose qualifications match those of academics encourages mutual respect and collegiality (Bassnett, 2005) and in many institutions professional staff are encouraged to gain higher qualifications. There are now ‘whole areas of university life that are run by administrators’ (Bassnett, 2005, p.100) and they are now shifting into areas previously inhabited by academics – admissions, careers, academic integrity and orientation. It is interesting that at the same time that administrative work is becoming professionalised,

academic roles are being un-bundled and apparently becoming less professional (or self managing).

While professional qualifications and controlled entrance to the profession might be a future goal, at the moment one of the ways staff are inducted is through 'professional socialization' (Reybold, et al., 2008). But it could be argued that this is not enough. For instance, people in positions dealing with students are dealing with complex problems and balancing conflicting principles. There are bound to be a number of people working in the field who do not know the 'standards' and rely on their own judgements and personal moralities to make decisions.

So it would appear that, while we are some way down the track to there being a profession, 'higher education worker', there is still some way to go. We are not yet at the stage where young people set out with this career goal in mind. While it is clear that professional staff have carved out a new space, it is not quite clear the exact nature and size of that space, both of which are contested values.

RESPONSES TO DRAFT PAPER

A draft of this paper was sent to a number of colleagues, professional and academic, across the sector as a way of triangulating the initial analysis. In general their comments supported the proposition that professional staff are moving into a new space, largely due to the increased complexity of the institutions themselves and the regulatory environment. Some suggested that the gap between academics and professionals is closing, one stating 'often it is left to the individual parties to forge a working relationship, hopefully with the view that we are all working for the same organisation to achieve the same goal'. I would suggest this is much clearer in the private institutions where goals are clearly stated for the organisation and in some cases salaries and performance plans are linked to financial outcomes. Universities may also slowly drift into this space.

CONCLUSION

Despite some changes to professional staff over the last ten years, some things have not shifted. There is still an uneasy relationship between academic and professional staff and there are still a number of professional staff who see their work as being 'invisible' in the university. Like Clegg and McAuley (2005), I advocate 'imagining more productive relationships in higher education' (p31). Universities have become extremely complex organisations, and simple structures such as machine bureaucracies, divisionalised forms or adhocracies are not necessarily suited as structures (Smith & Hughey, 2006).

In a customer-driven fee-paying environment, we need to ensure our systems are in order and that the quality of the educational experience meets expectations. To achieve this, academics and professionals 'must work more closely together' (Bassnett, 2005, p101). Having professionals behave like traffic wardens and academics see them in this light is a poor scenario. Rather a cooperative community based on trust and respect for each others' roles is needed. How to achieve this respectful cooperative space is yet to be resolved and it may happen over time as universities shift into a new space where professional staff become

increasingly more credentialed and more professional. While no longer the 'invisible workers', professionals still have some way to go to claim their space in universities.

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