

Commentaries: “The Golden Age”

Once upon a time academics were well-paid, respected and left alone. A Golden Age. Or was it? *AUR* asked three scholars to reflect.

“A Golden Age”: A personal reflection, 1970s and now Jill Roe	2
The Myth of the “Golden Age” Paul Rodan	4
The view from the west - Dawkins and the University of Western Sydney Michael Symonds	5

Articles

Academic freedom and organisational identity William G. Tierney	7
The unfettered search for truth has been butchered by rampant managerialism. Or has it? William Tierney casts a critical eye over the ideal of academic freedom.	
Economics: From emperor to vassal? Steven Keen	15
Economics is losing its turf-war with its ‘real-world’ rivals. Steve Keen argues that the moribund character of economic theory is a key factor in the decline.	
A new approach to non-traditional student recruitment and retention Nadine Pelling	18
Current approaches to non-traditional student retention have limited, ad hoc objectives. Nadine Pelling argues for a comprehensive and integrated approach.	
Educating and organising globally: perspectives on the internet and higher education Carolyn Allport	21
E-learning and the globalisation of higher education are viewed by academics chiefly as threats. Carolyn Allport argues that we need to remain alive to both their benefits and dangers.	

Reviews

An elegant morality tale - <i>Facing the Music</i> David Burchell	28
Are academics all really <i>Facing the Music</i> ?	
Keen vision; short sight - <i>The Enterprise University: Power, Governance and Reinvention in Australia</i> Don Aitken	30
An important new book on the sector overestimates the novelty of our present discontents.	
The policy parabola - <i>Social policy, public policy: from problem to practice</i> Jane Nicholls	32
The inside story of an era of turbulent policy change.	
Keenesian economics, anyone? - <i>Debunking Economics: The Naked Emperor of the Social Sciences</i> Alex Millmow	35
Dark times for the dismal science.	
Are doctorates worthwhile? - <i>The Ph.D. Trap Revisited</i> Brian Martin	37
Was your monastic ordeal really necessary.	
Universities survive? - <i>Adaptive University Structures: An Analysis of Adaptation to Socioeconomic Environments of US and European Universities</i> Deanna de Zilwa	38
Too much brain, not enough agility?	

Commentaries: The Golden Age

The university sector seems mired in perpetual crisis. The working week has lengthened; the piles of paper have risen. Academics now administer first, teach second, and research tenth. Ah, for the good old days, when scholars were well-paid, respected, and of course left alone to do exactly what they wanted. That was the Golden Age. Or was it? AUR asked three diverse scholars to reflect on the ups and downs of two decades of radical change.

“A Golden Age”: A personal reflection, 1970s and now

JILL ROE

Macquarie University

‘But what do you actually do?’, they would ask. I was the first member of my family to attend university and am still the only one to be employed in one. It was not easy to answer their question back in the Seventies. The nearest meaningful analogy was with the church: I gave lectures and met with students in small groups, a bit like sermons and Bible study - except that for some mysterious reason I was better paid than most clergy.

At that stage, with few journal articles to my credit and absorbed in the drama of establishing a new university whose motto was ‘and gladly teche’ (from Chaucer, now thought by some inappropriate to the research age), the cultural distance between university and community was great, and only a minority traversed it. Moreover of the few women who did, an even smaller minority remained within the walls of academe, and even fewer of that small minority were Australian-born women like me. As later research clarified, I was a bit of an anomaly: there was a *de facto* hierarchy of employment prospects for women in universities at that time, with Australians with local qualifications the least favoured (Cass *et al*, 1983).

The gulf between university and community was wider still, due to the times. These were the Vietnam war years, and the Whitlam years, when the legacy of the Swinging Sixties meant that for a larger than usual number of people duly-constituted authority and received wisdom were suspect to start with. As might be expected, much of the dissenting dynamic came from within the universities; but this proved a disagreeable novelty to the wider community, long accustomed to the apparently effortless political

dominance of Robert Gordon Menzies. I was often in the streets and at the copier during those years, but I didn’t think it wise to mention that aspect. I didn’t even mention being Secretary of the local Staff Association (as it was then), still a tricky thing in some quarters.

Thirty years on, the distance between university and community is greatly foreshortened. There is no problem now about explaining to the family what I do, not least because quite a few of the next generation are themselves graduates, also because a great deal of effort has gone into articulating the national importance of research. Part of my difficulty back in the Seventies was that I hadn’t yet done much; but the rationale had not yet been developed either, especially for the Humanities (and incidentally is still pretty much skew-wiff). The family decided I must be that jokey figure ‘a perpetual student’, and that what I really did was read books.

They weren’t wrong, though there was more to it then and lots more now. And I now see their question as a sign of the times. Of fundamental importance, the Commonwealth took over the tertiary education sector from the impecunious States in 1974. This meant that not only did people in the States have a more direct interest in what was happening in universities elsewhere, like my South Australian siblings wondering what I was up to in New South Wales, but universities themselves became more prominent. Under the new dispensation, for a while, the money tree flowered most marvellously. To the likes of me, Australia seemed to be getting on with the job at last in

these 'days of hope', of growth, of apparently endless educational innovation.

Nowhere was this ethos more apparent than at Macquarie, which introduced to Australia the credit point, the semester, and 'Studies', and to this day presents itself as 'the innovative university'. Students came, and the founding professors made the most of abundance. My own Department became the largest history department in the country, and ancient history flourished within it, so that by the late 1970s, some fifty historians were on the job at North Ryde. Now that number has been cut by considerably more than half (nineteen continuing positions), two separate departments have been created in the course of a wider restructuring, and, largely due to successful ARC grant applications, there are more ancient than modern historians employed in continuing positions. Moreover the appropriate size for a Humanities Department is now deemed to be about eight; and so far as I know no new continuing positions in the modern area have been approved since 1979. Under such circumstances, nostalgia is understandable, if inappropriate.

It couldn't last, at least not for us. Research conducted under the auspices of the Australian Historical Association has shown that although the new pipeline for the delivery of academic jobs was built in the 1970s, only those already inside it were likely to survive the withering of the money tree in the 1980s. The 1970s appointees were the lucky ones - and interestingly, in history, they were mostly young men. The number of brilliant young women historians employed as casual staff and subsequently lost to us in the 1980s scarcely bears thinking about; and it sometimes seems amazing that two decades on, the young still show willing; but they are the best and the brightest, and they too hope. (By now they outnumber continuing staff, and it is of no concern higher up that having been trained, they may leave if not offered permanent positions in due course).

Money isn't the whole story, of course. After all, history is not a very expensive subject, except for libraries; and arguably intellectual factors matter even more. I do not say this just in hindsight: I felt it at the time. And I was lucky with my youthful initiatives. As I have written elsewhere (*Australian Historical Studies*, May 1996), in those days curriculum development was largely the prerogative of the professoriat, and it was considered bad form for the lower orders to mention money; but units on Women in History (with Janet Ramsay) and Fiction and Social History (with Virginia Blain) proved welcome in their respective disciplinary sites of History and English, and students enrolled in goodly numbers.

Probably such opportunities were exceptional across the system. Certainly, however, many were lost. In this regard Nicholas Brown's study of the Fifties, *Governing Prosperity* (1995) offers a valuable insight: with prosperity during the Cold War years, traditional and highly self-

regarding disciplinary and institutional values received a great boost; and a broader intellectual 'service' approach was deemed best left to the then Colleges of Advanced Education. Another interpretation might be that even in the good times, in Australia the cultural cringe is a powerful factor: the Oxbridge dream was just then being replaced by the Harvard dream, at least in New South Wales, where Macquarie was in some crucial respects shaped by the latter. On reflection, it seems reasonable to suggest that despite expansion and apparent democratisation, Australian universities remained arcane and unresponsive institutions in the Seventies, ill-equipped to respond to Barry Jones' still timely call to adapt to the new economy: *Sleepers, Wake!* (1982).

But change came nonetheless. My experience suggests that even if specialisation suited (men in) the era of growth, it soon grew old and stubborn. Experience also suggests that no more than nature does the intellect tolerate a vacuum: many new claimants rushed into the areas laid waste by over-specialisation, and it is only now that new linkages are being tried by historians. As well, higher education may now be an industry rather than a vocation, but low pay must surely strengthen the latter and more appropriate version of things; and it does seem unlikely that there could be another Orr case. At my own university, even the bullying which I and others suffered in silence in past times is being tackled under enterprise bargaining.

As for the problem of equality and authority in universities, this seems a perennial one. My generation really worked at this. Now instead of god professors, we have budget managers and we all wonder what is to be done about the loss of academic autonomy and authority. Many are nostalgic for the god professor, but he has in reality gone for good, to be replaced, if at all, by the celebrity prof., who may or may not be around much. Meanwhile, enrolments have soared and stress is everywhere, and our leaders seem unable to protect us adequately from the vagaries of public policy or, to be candid, the consequences of well-meaning attempts to cope with it, for example by over- and under-enrolment.

Keeping the faith is not enough under such circumstances, important as that is. The fact is universities have changed so much, that most of the old order has gone. There is no clerisy; we are all brainworkers now. In a small country this means more women. Some people can't hack that still. And there are no churchy spires: for the time being at least we work in an important export industry. Lets hope it helps. Resources are a real issue still. And of course there are just many more students.

In principle I think this is good, but unfortunately not enough of them are doing history. In absolute numbers alone, we had more students in the Seventies than now: let's not worry about the proportions. But it does mean we can more or less cope with these lean times and plan

realistically for renewal. And so far as the students are concerned, we must be grateful for their patience and goodwill. Having taught undergraduates over the entire period, I don't find them greatly changed. As I often say, Australian parents must be doing something right.

Overall my sense is that both the comforters and the constraints of the past have by and large been swept away in the mass university. I also think that although the forms have changed, the substance has not. Arguably what we actually do is worse rather than better understood than it was thirty years ago. At least it was understood then, even by people who had never set foot in a university, that a primary task of a humanities scholar is to read books. Now that I have had to function as a tutor, lecturer, administrator and professor all at once, reading books is a privilege, and sometimes I fear I won't be able to take things in unless they appear on A4 sheets.

No wonder people are nostalgic for the old days. They have a point. It is important to defend the values which underpinned the older version of the academic life, and to insist that there is a yet-to-achieved optimal relation between university and community. For those who think it's not worth the candle, as labour historian Ian Turner taught, there are always two options, both equally honour-

able, to struggle from within and to struggle from without. I would say both are needed if real recovery is to occur in the Humanities in Australia where the significance of scholarship is still deeply misunderstood, and anti-intellectualism is endemic.

As I see young women staff setting out on a comparable path of intellectual outreach that I essayed thirty years back, and with more chance of success as they can get the money direct, I feel confident that the rising generation will stand firm on essential values, and that they will insist that some distance between university and community is both necessary and beneficial. They will probably have to. After all, there is only a certain amount of work that any one person can actually do.

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The Myth of the "Golden Age"

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I commenced my brief academic career in 1974, a time which I think the nostalgists would include as part of the "golden age". In at least one important sense, they were right. I got the first job I ever applied for, an unlikely outcome for a BA(Hons) graduate of today.

That said, the job application process was less than world's best practice in equal opportunity. On the official UQ form, there was a section inviting details of military service and I regret lacking the nerve to insert action in the Vietnam moratorium under that heading. Applicants were also required to attach a photograph: I wonder what some of our younger equal opportunity activists would make of that today.

Working at a sandstone university, one found the quality of students pretty impressive and the teaching experience was, I think, more mutually satisfying than what I endured on later brief forays back into the system when it had become, madly and simultaneously, underfunded and mass. At UQ, I was fortunate enough to find myself in a department which was collegial in temperament and structure: even humble tutors could attend staff meetings and participate. And, we could be in staff groups "waiting"

on the vice-chancellor while he was apprised of the department's view on a controversial vacant chair. Naturally, he ignored our views and did what he wanted anyway, but in such a charming, old world way.

What was not part of any golden age was the way in which sub-lecturing staff were exploited by the system. Although there were conventions and expectations about a three year appointment at UQ, formal renewal of contract was an annual requirement and financial exigency could always intervene. And, increasingly after the Hayden federal budget of 1975, it did, so for many in the non-tenured ranks, academic life became a year-to-year existence, with less job security than the vast bulk of the work force: good for neither peace of mind nor relations with bank managers.

Moving to La Trobe in 1977, I encountered more of the uncertainty about reappointment, as funding got worse, and not even the consolation of a convivial collegial atmosphere. My department was wracked with internal strife, and victimisation and threats by senior people who should have known better were commonplace. There was

little recourse for those on the receiving end of the bullying - not much of a golden age in that regard.

At the end of 1979, with mandatory non-renewal of contract taking effect, (HECE still a long way away) and given a choice of a tenured administrative appointment, or more uncertainty on fixed term academic contracts (if available anywhere), there really was no choice at all.

At the risk of being provocative, it must be observed that FAUSA at the time didn't seem to be doing too much for non-tenured staff, many of whom were women. Maybe the image of the staff association as an old boys' club drinking sherries with the VC was a caricature, maybe not.

By comparison with today's academic existence, the 70s were vastly superior in at least two ways. First, there were reasonable contact hours and, concomitantly, decent opportunities for research and even a bit of funding for a humble tutor. Secondly, class sizes were also reasonable: I can remember a consensus that a tutorial of twelve or so was an absolute maximum, beyond which no real education could take place. Of course, these positives were destroyed over time by the squeeze on funding which continues to this day.

Also on the plus side, there were eccentrics, personalities and characters who were often brilliant teachers, but whose types seem very thin on the ground in today's world of engagement profiles, tutorials of twenty-plus and a relentless pressure to conform. Speaking out against university management (for offences which now seem trivial) used to be a virtual obligation. Academics doing that today are putting their careers at risk. Even professors

are reluctant to profess, which may help explain why the title is thrown around like confetti.

On the debit side, yes, there were sexual harassers among the staff and yes, there were indolent academics and drunks vulnerable to easy caricature. There were people who were all three! There were academics who couldn't teach a fish to swim, who should never have been hired, but they, and those who appointed them, benefited from the relative lack of accountability which went with the times. Selection was sometimes fast and loose with procedures slack or not strictly enforced.

There was little or nothing in the way of academic mentoring. Junior staff were left to their own devices: sink or swim.

I started this small piece with a bias against glorifying a "golden age" because its benefits were so unevenly distributed, and my own feelings, as a then non-tenured academic, are obvious. It is almost certain that the prevalence of collegiality has been overstated by the nostalgists, although for a predominantly male elite, tenured and senior, life was obviously rewarding and satisfying.

But, ultimately, we are not comparing like and like: it's the economy, stupid. There is just no comparison between a decently funded system educating elite students and the underfunded mass education system of today. When there are adequate resources, access to decision-making matters less, but we feel the pinch today because the decision-making processes, to which we don't have access, matter so much more.

The view from the west - Dawkins and the University of Western Sydney

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The sandstone of Sydney University, where I completed my degrees and first taught, was an imitation of Oxbridge, however poor the match between original and copy might have been. The Nepean College of Advanced Education, the second-tier tertiary institution where I began my now long tenure of teaching in Sydney's western suburbs, was an imitation of a government high school. (The College was, after all, primarily interested in teacher-training). In this case the resemblance between original and copy was uncomfortably close. So much so that going to see the Principal of the College made me break out in a nervous

sweat, just as when I had been summoned to my school Principal's office for talking in assembly.

Our origins were also local and grim. One of our first expansions as a newly proclaimed university was into the buildings of the old Boys' Home at Werrington. Despite some false panels and a new coat of paint, the sense of teaching in ghost-filled dormitories was inescapable. Our classrooms were redolent with the western suburbs' underprivileged and delinquent reputation.

To teach philosophy in a new BA in communications out here was full of ambivalence. Not being a university meant

that although most of the students responded positively to the course, they also assumed that it had to be a bit second-rate. After one introductory first year lecture, early on, a group of students commented that they had really liked what they had just heard; but they also, somewhat wistfully, agreed with the view that if that was good how much better it must be at Sydney.

Their own self-understanding was similarly affected. After I had marked some essays for a large subject I told the lecture that I thought that the overall standard was just the same as at the University of Sydney. This statement was met with a deal of shock and outrage. Of course they were as good as those up-themselves city smart arses. What did I expect?

On the other hand the first student (originally from Blacktown High) who went right through to complete an Honours degree and then a PhD from the newly constituted University of Western Sydney, said that until he finally received the highly complimentary comments from his doctoral examiners he doubted his own ability because he had done it all from the western suburbs. (He is now a successful academic in Adelaide).

The Dawkins reforms, in changing to a mass university system and dispensing with the formal distinctions of the old two-tier tertiary model, have done a number of things. Most obviously and generally they allow more students an opportunity to go to uni. More specifically they also mean that the western suburbs has its own university. This helps to break the educational cycle prevalent in this area of leaving school early and going to TAFE, with the idea of university a distant image of privilege. Most of our students are the first in their family to go to uni. Graduation ceremonies are packed houses, with nearly every graduating

student in attendance, and huge numbers of family cheering their loved ones onto the stage.

But it also changes the university. The Dawkins era has meant that a new form of university has been made possible. The recent arrivals, like the University of Western Sydney, still suffer from an inferiority complex when they compare themselves with the imitations of England in the city centre. They sense their home-grown roots. But this is also the great virtue. In my case, here is a university in the western suburbs, not the city or wealthier suburbs; and whose very buildings still often bear the marks of a local and perhaps less exalted origin. Its students, on the whole, come from the area and do not bring with them a lineage of highly educated cultural weariness. Because of the Dawkins reforms, the university can and has started to become part of ordinary Australia. At least this is my feeling about the University of Western Sydney.

Other universities might have similar tales of creation. The local stories, the areas and institutions from which they have sprung, should be understood and regarded as just as valuable a source as the European tradition. If Australia is to follow something akin to the political catchcry of 'the knowledge nation' then it will not do so just by looking to the international tables of university excellence. It also needs to bring more ordinary Australian culture and the culture of universities together. But this is a two-way street. Universities need to change, not just the traditional anti-intellectualism of the old bush and suburban identities. The Dawkins reforms of higher education have given this a real chance of happening, if only the sandstone perception could adopt something of the view from Sydney's west.

Articles

Academic freedom and organisational identity*

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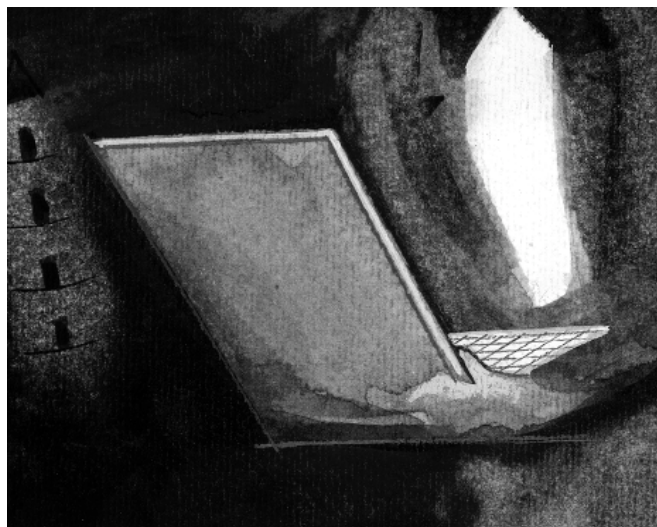
The ideal academic is an autonomus figure engaged in the unfettered search for truth. Yet academic freedom is attacked on all sides by bureaucracy and managerialism. That's the accepted wisdom in academic circles. But did this paradise of truth-seeking ever exist? And what does academic freedom mean in a world of contested truths and limited resources?

Introduction

Throughout the twentieth century the core ideal of university life was the unfettered search for truth. Whether teaching in the classroom or conducting research, the *raison d'être* of academic life was the ability for academic scholars to pursue lines of inquiry without external or internal interference. The assumption that academics should be able to conduct research and teaching without influence from anyone has been defined as academic freedom. In large part, the creation of tenure came about to ensure that academic freedom could exist, which in turn enabled the search for truth.

Over the last decade there has been an increasing concern voiced that the commercialisation of Australian universities has put academic freedom at risk. In research I conducted between December 2000 and June 2001 numerous interviewees cited examples of what some might say are flagrant violations of academic freedom. Many individuals pointed out that they felt a chilly climate had been created on campus and they no longer felt they were free to speak out. In large part the reason that individuals gave for the chilly climate was the changing condition of academic work in Australia due to the necessity of relying on the marketplace for fiscal survival.

In what follows I first summarise the most prominent current arguments on academic freedom, and discuss the limitations of some of those perspectives. I then go on to define how we might think afresh about academic freedom from a perspective that is informed by recent thinking about globalisation. I present findings from the interviews



I have done with 126 academic and administrative staff about their perceptions of academic freedom at the start of the twenty-first century. To think more concretely about the nature of the problem I frame these findings in five ways, and I discuss how we might ensure that academic freedom remains protected, if not enhanced, in Australian academic life.

Academic freedom and organisational identity

As one might expect, most writing about academic freedom is a mixture of research on the topic and philosophical investigations about the nature of Truth. The most extensive empirical study of academic freedom in Austral-

ia is a recent project undertaken by Carole Kayrooz, Pamela Kinnear and Paul Preston published in 2001. They concluded that:

Academic freedom now operates within a financial environment characterized by increasing reliance on industry research funding, fee-based courses and consulting services. These trends, in turn, involve closer attention to the needs of 'consumers' and 'markets'. The impact of this environment on social scientists' experience of academic freedom is a matter of some concern for the quality of public debate and the health of democratic pluralism (2001, p. viii).

The publication of the study created something of a brouhaha in the national press. Two higher education reporters pointed to the universities' need to make money as a key concern for the health of universities. They outlined how an increased reliance on full fee-paying international students had jeopardised the independence of academics to give a student a grade based on what the student earned, rather than on what the student had paid. (Noonan and Contractor 2001, p. 5). *The Sydney Morning Herald* editorialised that the loss of academic freedom, ranging from the manner in which courses were graded to research funding methods, jeopardised the health and well being of all of tertiary education and called for a government inquiry (2001, p. 14). Clive Hamilton, Director of the Australia Institute, which sponsored the initial study, asked: "The question the universities must answer is why a large number of academics, at considerable risk to their careers, would make the claims they have. Why would they lie?" (2001, p. A15). Thus, there has been an increasing crescendo of criticism to the effect that academic freedom is at risk in Australian universities, and the culprit is commercialisation.

From these perspectives, academic freedom is an understood quality, a virtue of the academy, and it is at risk. The teacher is no longer free in the classroom to provide the correct grade to a student; the researcher is no longer able to pursue research that he or she desires to do, and the scholar has become a managed professional (Rhoades, 1998) without autonomy, working under what Slaughter and Leslie have coined "academic capitalism" (1999). The implicit assumption is that academic freedom was not threatened until the universities needed to become responsive to the marketplace. The marketplace is seen as an unsuitable arena for academic freedom to thrive, and individual autonomy is assumed to be the necessary condition for academic freedom to exist.

Philosophical analyses of academic freedom have followed a similar path. Raimond Gaita, in a thoughtful treatise about the decline of academic freedom, claimed that the reconceptualisation of the university as engaged in little more than job training had diminished the search for truth. "The universities are now marked by a pervasive mendacity" he wrote, "in their descriptions of what they

have done to save subjects and jobs" (1997, p. 18). The central "lie" that Gaita refers to is the debasement of the search for truth. The crux of the matter lies in the lessening of government support for tertiary education and the increased reliance on the marketplace.

In a more nuanced argument about academic freedom, Simon Marginson points out how academics pursue a form of regulated freedom within institutions in a state of regulated autonomy (1997, p. 360). His point is that academic freedom is not a timeless absolute, but instead is historically defined. Accordingly, when a university's autonomy is lessened and it becomes more of a "managed university," then it stands to reason that academic freedom will be reconceptualised, if not lessened. He writes, "In the globally-competitive university, whose purposes would be controlled by the most powerful market actors in conjunction with governments, the ideal of social equality ... and the ideal of free creative exchange are placed out of reach" (1997, p. 368). He calls for a counter model that enables difference, rather than homogenisation, which in turn would enable an unregulated academic freedom.

Although there is much with which I am in agreement in Marginson's analysis, I turn now to a significantly different interpretation of academic freedom, which shall serve as a framework for analyzing the data from the interviews.

An alternative conception of academic freedom

Academic freedom is most often defined by a violation or an abridgment of a particular right. In other words, academic freedom is often defined by its absence. In the United States, for example, the historical exemplars that scholars point to highlight my point. Much has been made of the liberal economics professor at Stanford University who spoke out against private ownership of railroads and immigration and ended up being fired by the sole member of the Board of Trustees, Mrs. Leland Stanford (Tierney, 1993). Sheila Slaughter (1980) has written about how Scott Nearing was fired at the University of Pennsylvania in 1915 because he opposed the use of child labor in coalmines. Walter Metzger (1955) wrote of John Mecklin, an outspoken liberal professor at Lafayette College, who was forced to resign in 1913 because of his philosophical relativism, interest in pragmatism, and the teaching of evolution. More recently, we have seen the case of Joel Samoff, a well-respected political science professor who was denied tenure because he employed a Marxist approach to his subject matter (Ollman, 1983). Bruce Franklin lost his tenure at Stanford University in the United States because of his vociferous, some would say violent, opposition to the University's involvement with activities concerned with the Vietnam War (Tierney, 1993). Slaughter pointed out how George Murray and Staughton Lynd also had to face attacks on their academic freedom (1980).

All of these examples fit within the general characterisation of academic freedom I have just discussed. They are clear violations of one's academic freedom, albeit not all of them are due to the commercialisation of the institution. It is in good measure as a result of these experiences that we tend to define academic freedom in the manner we do - as the right of the professorate to a significant degree of autonomy in the manner in which they conduct their work in order to have the freedom of thought and expression that is seen as necessary to advance knowledge and learning. Burton Clark has noted that academic freedom is a "totem" - the *sine qua non* of academic life (1987a). Although one may certainly agree with the liberal presuppositions attached to the basic belief of academic freedom, I am concerned about the epistemological suppositions that underlie the idea.

Hofstadter and Meteger have pointed out how our beliefs about academic freedom dovetail with our belief in modern science and the assumption that knowledge exists as a free market where we desire the "free competition among ideas" (1955, p. 61). Marginson's call for an unregulated academic freedom works within a similar framework. From this perspective, knowledge is a social product that scholars study and investigate. The modernist concept of science assumes that facts exist and scholars function to uncover meanings and patterns of those facts. The objects of knowledge exist independently of the efforts of the researcher to discover them; likewise, the advancement of knowledge occurs irrespective of the methods of the scientist conducting the work. In essence, throughout the twentieth century social scientists tried to ape the objectivity of the natural scientist's laboratory. Objectivity was what was honored. I previously have noted that this portrait is one that presents knowledge as a "jigsaw puzzle that can be shaped into multiple [images]; even though different representations can be drawn, the pieces of the puzzle are the same to all" (Tierney, 1989, p. 73). The implications for academic freedom are that we need to protect the manner in which someone studies the puzzle. The battle of opposing ideas must occur so that an objective analysis and persuasive solution can be found for whatever puzzle is being studied.

And yet, the course of social and cultural theory over the last few decades suggests that such beliefs are no longer well founded. The production of knowledge is socially constructed and incorporates the manifold perspectives that account for the common good. Participants define knowledge according to their social and historical contexts. In this light, how we have come to think about gender, for example, is not simply a result of the accretionary advances in knowledge, but is specifically tied to the social and cultural contexts in which we have lived. Instead, following Foucault's well-worn path, I am arguing that institutions, individuals and the constantly shifting

social forces of society combine to determine what accounts for knowledge at a particular moment in history.

What I am suggesting is an alternative conception of knowledge production more in tune with contemporary trends in social and cultural theory. In doing so, I reject Professor Miller's over-the-top depiction of postmodernism as being 'contemptuous of academic values such as truth, reason, knowledge, and individual academic autonomy' (2000, p. 114). I agree that ideas such as academic freedom are indeed central to the life of the academy. At the same time, we must acknowledge that the idea of the university as a hermetically sealed monastery where scientists develop knowledge without external interference or internal prejudice has always been mistaken. In one way or another, knowledge production has always been informed by, constrained by, and enhanced by external agents and internal belief systems. One need merely look at new forms of knowledge over the last thirty years to find examples of what I am suggesting. Is it merely coincidence that a primarily male professorate had created histories where the study of gender was absent until the last generation? If academic freedom existed irrespective of outside influence, then how free was someone a half century ago to conduct work on gay or lesbian studies? How is it possible to say that the professorate was free to advance knowledge according to liberal humanist notions at the start of the twentieth century, but there were no Aboriginal scholars in the universities to advance understanding about traditional societies?

My point here is neither to disdain liberal humanist ideals such as the search for Truth, nor to suggest that today's scholars are more enlightened than yesterday's. However, at a time when globalisation is upon us and tertiary education is undergoing a sea change in focus and funding, it behoves us to understand the dynamics of knowledge production. We ought not bemoan a paradise that never existed - or at least it did not exist for those of us on the margins. We ought not assume that the unfettered discovery of knowledge existed in a romanticised version of the past. Instead, we need to come to grips with the changing nature of the university in a globalised economy, and with the kinds of notions of civic democracy that can ensure that central ideals are protected not according to outmoded notions of knowledge production, but through an understanding of how knowledge gets created.

Huppaufer has usefully pointed out that "the autonomy of the modern university was never an absolute one, but determined by a delicate ambivalence based on a careful balancing of dependence on, and a simultaneous critical distance from, society" (1988, p. 150). The assumption was that such a tightrope act was for the betterment of society in general. Such an assertion is fundamentally different from one that believes academics have an absolute freedom to explore or that it is possible to develop contexts

where unregulated academic freedom could actually exist. It strikes me as a fundamental misreading of academic life to argue that the resuscitation of academic freedom in Australian universities turns on a return to individual autonomy. One cannot return to that which one never had.

By way of analysis, I now turn to a discussion of the interviews I conducted.

The interpretation of academic freedom by Australian academics

Methodology

Between December 2000 and June 2001 I conducted 126 individual interviews at six universities in Australia. All of the individuals were guaranteed anonymity. The interviews lasted no less than a half hour and no longer than two hours. In addition, I held four focus groups that ranged in size from five to fifteen. I chose individuals according to a pre-arranged framework that was then aided by snowball sampling, where one suggestion led to another, and so on. I sought individuals according to the following general categories: academic staff, senior administrative staff, deans and department heads, and union leaders and leaders of academic councils/senates. Within the academic staff I interviewed individuals according to the following categories: senior/junior, humanities-social science/professions, men/women. Although the study is not a case study, I focused my attention on institutions that were, according to the typology advanced by Marginson and Considine (2000): Sandstones, Gumtree, or Unitech. My point in choosing these sites turned on how current changes had affected academic work with regard to teaching and research.

As with any qualitative study, one cannot attempt to do everything. I did not, for example, look at either the former colleges of advanced education that had become universities, or any aspect of TAFE. I did not take into account issues pertaining to race, sexual orientation or disability and how such characteristics impacted academic identity and the nature of one's work. The project is also a study that occurred over a six-month time horizon, so I am able to provide thick description of a particular moment in time rather than a history of how people's perceptions have changed over time.

Findings

One ought not be surprised that different individuals conceptualised academic freedom in a variety of ways. Although over 80% of the interviewees expressed some concern about a particular aspect of academic freedom, some individuals also maintained that academic freedom was not an issue: "I don't see it," said one person. "I am free to say what I like, and no one has ever interfered with me. Some people natter on about problems, but they just lack guts." A second person agreed by saying, "You always

need courage to speak out. When people say academic freedom is at risk they're just saying they lack courage."

Other individuals were more focused on their own work and did not generalise to others. One scientist, for example, commented that she did not see any limits on her work, and she was not involved in issues on campus, so it was not a concern. Another person commented, "I've been a vocal critic here, especially with the previous VC. Never had a problem. And in my work it's just not an issue." A third person made a similar point, "I don't think about it, to tell you the truth. I go about my business and do my work. It's not something that affects me."

Nevertheless, the vast majority of individuals did have something to say. Based on an analysis of the data, I have developed a provisional typology of five categories that structures the different comments individuals made. As with any typology, comments at times overlap with one another, and to a certain extent, the typology posits ideal types when daily life is more complex. At the same time, such a typology that derives from the data helps make sense of the comments that the interviewees made.

Criticising the university

"I'd tell a young person to keep his head down," said one person. "If you criticise the VC, you'll get in trouble. Don't speak out," said another. A third commented, "In a way I sympathise with them [administrators]. It's an impossible job right now, and when we point out disagreements they just don't want to hear it. They don't have time to hear it. There's a climate that you had better keep quiet or else."

The "or else" referred to frequently discussed examples that many individuals knew about, even if it occurred on another campus and they had not experienced it. "So the next day he gets a letter telling him to get out of his office by the end of the day because he had been discourteous," summarised one individual. He had been speaking about an example where a respected emeritus professor had attended a meeting and spoken against a particular action that had been proposed. "What signal does it send when you throw someone out, someone who has served the university, because he disagrees with you," asked one person. "It was an iconic moment," explained another individual. "I don't know if he [the VC] meant it that way, but he sent a signal to all of us: Keep your mouth shut."

A second frequently-discussed example had to do with the removal of someone's email account because he had used email to broadcast his criticism of the university. "How bloody stupid!" commented one person. "When you take away someone's email all they need to do is get another account. But it puts a chill on dialogue. They certainly don't want debate." "I hear examples of taking people's email away and it sends shivers through me," explained another person. "That's not what a university is supposed to be."

Another academic had an example of what she felt was the result of such actions:

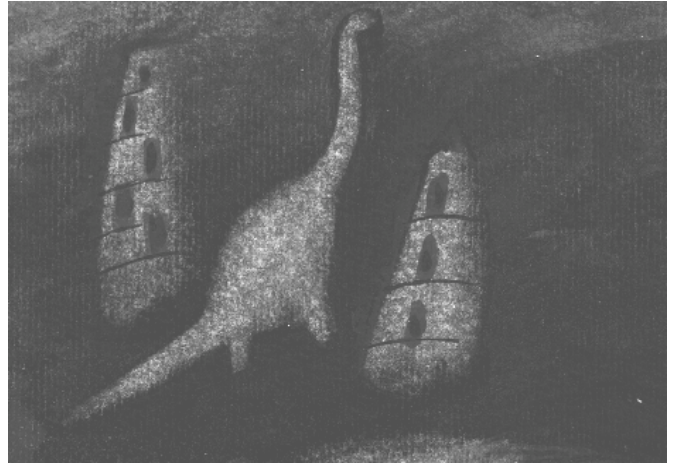
A year or two ago, soon after I'd become full-time – I'd switched from casual to full-time – they [the administration] did something that was just off. Just stupid. Everybody around here was angry and we decided to protest, to let them know how we felt the next week. Later that day I asked a senior prof what he was going to do, how he was going to handle it, and he said, 'Well I'm going to wait and see what the others do. I don't want to be out front.' I don't know if he knew how that affected me. You hear things about people getting kicked out or removed or having things done to them, and the result is that people are afraid to speak up. Is that what we want from our senior academic staff? Wait and see? That's what I mean when I say academic freedom has been threatened.

Some people agreed that academic freedom had changed, or evaporated, but they had a different interpretation: "There needs to be more loyalty to the institution, and I have a problem when people speak against the university. That may have worked once, but we're different now. We should support one another." Another person explained, "Academic freedom is one of those things that's in the past. It was for a different kind of institution. It took up people's time. Don't get me wrong, we have legal protections now, whistle blower things, but things are just streamlined, more efficient." "People are too busy for academic freedom, actually. We want high performance and that takes extraordinary energy," she explained. She concluded by laughing: "I can't really say it, but we operate around here by the FIFO principle: Fit in or – off."

Doing research

Unlike critics of the institution who get in trouble because of what they say about where they work, few individuals commented that anyone had told them not to engage in a particular research topic. Instead, the problem pertained to the commercialisation of the university. As one social scientist explained, "I'm a feminist who does research that is critical of conservative policies and this government. The way I deal with it is that I simply will not apply for any government funding because if I did, I'd either have to bend my research or I'd not get funded. So I stay away from government grants, which means external funds."

Not everyone had made such a decision and they worried about it. "The changes in funding of course impact the work you do. They won't fund basic research; they want applied research. Of course that affects what I want to do." "We have a scheme that rewards bringing in money. Everything is set up now toward external economies, toward being international. They want me to get involved with my peers internationally, to present at conferences, they want me to get an ARC [Australian Research Council] grant. To do those things, I of course shape my research agenda." Another person added, "We all have just gone crazy around here submitting ARC proposals. In a competition where there's a 25% chance you'll get funded you try to fit what they want to do, which



is not necessarily what you want to do." And one additional person summarised, "It's benign interference. Before Dawkins, before the cutbacks began, no one ever tried to tell me what to do. Being a good academic meant doing good work. Now there are definitions to that, and it's tied to meeting what will bring in money."

Doing teaching

The area of teaching had a mixture of the problems associated with two categories just discussed. On the one hand, the topic of marking had become a recent *cause celebre*, and on the other, individuals mentioned the implicit changes involved with full fee-paying students.

The case of Ted Steele at the University of Wollongong had received a great deal of attention. He claimed that he had been instructed to increase the marks of his honour students. The Vice-Chancellor dismissed him, and the NTEU worked to defend him against being arbitrarily sacked. In his letter to Professor Steele, the Vice-Chancellor claimed the dismissal came about because he had made the matter public, and in doing so, had harmed the university.

Another well-publicised example pertained to a student at Curtin University who supposedly had plagiarised her essays three times; she had been caught each time, but she was still not punished and received her degree. The newspaper reports suggested that she received her degree because she was paying a full fee. Clive Hamilton, director of the Australia Institute, felt strongly that preferential treatment for fee-paying students was a serious issue, and in the course of his work he had become aware of some appalling cases (2001). Usually, the charge had to do with full fee-paying international students.

Although I have no reason to doubt the sincerity of these claims, no individual with whom I spoke mentioned they had ever been asked or told to provide a student with a particular mark. The issue is more complex than the portrait of a heavy-handed administrator watching over the shoulders of the academic staff. "No one would ever do that here," explained one individual. "But when

students are customers you also have a different mind-set.” “International students are told that we’re flexible, and we need to be” conceded a second person. A third added, “It’s not a causal relationship but we’re all aware of the need to have bums in seats. I have to be aware of marking.” “It’s delicate,” reflected a fourth person. “Very delicate. Formula funding is what pays my salary, and that formula depends on students in classes. Are students affected by the marks they get? Do you need an answer?” A fifth person said, “Who wants to kill the goose that lays the golden egg? We’re short of funds. International students provide those funds. Of course we’ll bend marking.”

And finally, one person pointed out: “Don’t put this on the international students. It’s almost racist the way this is being discussed. My HECS students say they want good marks too because they’re paying too. I just tell ‘em, ‘look mate, do the work and you’ll do ok.’ But of course marks made a difference.” A final person who had taught at the university for over twenty years rationalised, “Soft marking is the current hot topic. It comes and goes. The real problem is not soft marking, but our inability to police ourselves. Academic staff need to stand together and say this is what we think is excellent work and this is unacceptable work. They’ve got us doing so much right now, there’s no time for that kind of discussion anymore. I barely have time to see anyone except in the corridor.”

Lack of Reflexivity

“Maybe this won’t make sense,” reflected one person, “But I don’t have time to think. If you mean by academic freedom the traditional things, I’ve never had a problem. No one has ever told me what to do. But doesn’t academic freedom have as much to do with the ability to go down unexplored paths? That’s impossible with all the administrative work, all the teaching, all the students today.”

“Academic freedom is a thing of the past,” added a second person. “It refers to the tenor of one’s work. There has to be a climate that is conducive to dialogue and debate and we’ve lost that. There’s no going back.” “Who has time for academic freedom,” lamented one professor. “People think we’re joking, but I’d like someone to follow me around for a couple of days. I have no time. To have academic freedom there are some prerequisites. Time is one of them.” Another person added, “They’ll say we have academic freedom, but it’s a charade. Academic freedom is based on fundamental agreements across groups, across people. It’s not a legal thing, it’s a belief. I don’t think the government’s reforms meant to destroy it, but by filling up our time on proving that we’re doing our job and running after grants, there’s nothing left.”

Lack of Engagement

The final category pertains to another implicit side effect of the reformation of the university. Most of the respondents in this category were younger academic staff who said they wanted to be involved in some of the issues before

the university, but they had neither the time nor the sense that it was possible. “I think going into distance learning in a big way is a big mistake,” said one person, “I don’t feel anyone wants to hear it, especially from me, and really, I’m too busy, so I stay out of things.” A second person had a similar comment, “I didn’t get my PhD to work in a business. I like universities, so this privatisation is all wrong in my opinion, but I’ve not said anything publicly. I’m not afraid, mind you, I just don’t know where to do it.”

Another person pointed out that he had no idea how decisions were made and an additional person felt that communication was abysmal: “They put out a newspaper the goal of which seems to be how many times the VC can get his picture in the paper. I know things are happening, but I just don’t know if they’re debated. I know I’m not in the debate.” “I’m not complaining,” added another. “I’ve got too much work as it is already, but businesses seem to be getting flatter and we’re more hierarchical. You hear decisions are made and I guess we’re supposed to fall in line.”

Discussion

In the first section of this paper I discussed different frames with which to view academic freedom and I suggested an alternative conception based on the changing contexts in which universities now exist. My concern is that most discussions about academic freedom tend to turn on the more celebrated cases that come to light; they ignore the cultural issues that permeate organisational life; and they romanticise the past from a liberal humanist perspective. To be sure, the removal of a professor from his or her office simply because he criticised the administration is wrong. The refusal to let someone log-on to his or her email – if the individual has abided by the established code of conduct – is similarly foolish. The sacking of Professor Steele, regardless of the legitimacy of his claims about marking, is emblematic of an administration’s misunderstanding of the basic protection that an academic has to have. However, such actions delude us into thinking of academic freedom by way of grand actions and narratives. The story is one of heroic individual academics locked in struggle with individual administrators.

Academic life, however, as the comments above have shown, is much more nuanced and complex. One ought not to define academic freedom solely by the presence or absence of overt interference in the conduct of one’s research. Likewise, being left alone to determine one’s own students’ marks in peace is not a reliable marker of academic freedom. And perhaps most importantly, when one’s actions are so consumed by daily trivialities that there is no longer any outlet for input and participation, we ought not be deluded in the assumption that academic freedom remains robust.

At the same time, one ought neither romanticise the past nor assume that in some previous era academic freedom

had its golden age. I received numerous comments from individuals who pointed out that the professors of previous generations also had their own foibles and prejudices. Others commented how those individuals were overwhelming white men who actively tried to keep women out of academic positions.

My point here is neither to paint previous professors nor current administrators as villains in an academic melodrama. Instead, I am suggesting that academic freedom is constantly reconsecrated. New socio-cultural conditions demand new formulations and protections. To offer a simple-minded suggestion that the commercialisation of the university abnegates the ability of the professorate to protect academic freedom because one must secure external funding is, by inference, to suggest that all private universities are without academic freedom, and that academic freedom was untroubled in the fully-funded public university of yesteryear. And yet, some of the most vocal protests that took place in the United States over the Vietnam War occurred by academic staff at private universities. There are numerous instances today where professors at private universities use their academic freedom to speak out either about a campus policy with which they disagree or conduct research that requires basic protections. Indeed, tenure came about in the United States because of violations of academic freedom on private – as well as public – campuses.

Academic freedom has always been circumscribed. The male priesthood that once accounted for the professoriate in public universities, for example, viewed some work as worthy of accomplishment and other work as not. One can point to any number of examples where senior academic staff were not persuaded that a junior colleague's work was worthy of tenure or promotion and the new lecturer would shift his or her work toward an area that held greater promise for tenure. Paradigm shifts have frequently come about not because of an entrenched faculty's desire to enable someone to test questionable hypotheses, but in spite of it. What, then, might one do with regard to the issues raised by the interviews? I offer two suggestions that lead to a scaffolding for reform:

Structure and power The tendency in using seemingly universal terms such as academic freedom is to attach meanings that are supposedly trans-organisational. The liberal humanist ideal, after all, subscribes to the notion of Truth as an absolute. From this perspective, academic freedom means the same from institution to institution regardless of mission, country, era or context. Although there certainly need to be some broad agreements about the meaning of an idea such as academic freedom, from the perspective I am arguing for here concrete definitions get worked out in local contexts. In this light, we must resist the tendency to see globalisation as a version of Foucault's "regime of truth" that predetermines patterns and meanings (Porter and Vidovich, 2000), and instead

work to create meanings within our own localised organisations.

Such work needs to occur through structured relationships with internal units such as the administration of an institution, and with external agents such as unions and the federal government. I have written elsewhere about the crisis in academic decision-making (Tierney, 2001a; Tierney, 2001b). This current project has only reaffirmed a concern about the ineffective governance structures that currently exist for academic staff to participate in the decision-making of the university. On the one hand we heard from new academic staff who felt they had no avenue with which to voice their concerns. On the other hand, we heard from academics who voiced concern about marking, about institutional movements toward distance learning, privatisation, and the like. While funding arrangements for public universities will determine certain parameters, each institution actually has broad leeway to define the mission that will guide its future. Such a mission must be debated, defined and redefined by the academic staff. When the structures of decision-making are inadequate, ill conceived, antiquated or in ill repute, there is little chance that the professorate will be able to define and protect academic freedom.

Culture and power Structures are useless if they are not embedded in academic cultures that support a conception of community tied to essential values such as the advancement of academic freedom. I have reported elsewhere (Tierney, forthcoming) on academic staff perceptions about how the changes in Australian universities took place. My question had been how was it possible that there was not organised resistance to the changes that have occurred, if those whom I interviewed viewed the changes as bleakly as they did. The common response from the vast majority of interviewees was that academic staff were not well organised, involved, or committed in this respect. In effect, academic staff are more committed to their disciplinary culture than their collegial one (Clark, 1987b; Beecher, 1998; Tierney, 1989).

The paradox exists that however much we may speak of academic community, the tendency of the academic intellectual is basically to work on his or her own. "My life is one of lonely splendour," one individual commented. Indeed, the work of the intellectual often requires long hours by oneself to investigate one or another phenomena. Numerous individuals pointed out that they had gotten into academic life because it did not require a 9-5 mentality and one was able to come and go at one's will. Such a culture is an individualistic one that works against active involvement: as long as I am not disturbed, the thinking goes, then things must be OK.

Obviously, such a notion is inadequate. There needs to be active on-going dialogues about the responsibility of the academic to his or her institution. The point here is not merely pleasant words conveyed at the start of the

academic year. If mentoring means anything, then it ought to suggest not merely aiding someone in figuring out how to submit a grant proposal that will be successful. It also means an understanding of the obligations one has to one another. If deans and department heads, for example, are seen exclusively as managers, a culture will be developed where academic freedom is irrelevant and may not even be discussed. We need to think of them more as symbolic analysts who tend to the interpretive side of the academic enterprise and ensure that the organisation's culture remains true to basic academic ideals.

While the problems that exist with regard to academic freedom today are significant, such problems might be overcome if the structure and culture of the organisation is framed in a way that enables discussions and debate to exist about the identity of the university. The life of the academic is a calling, a vocation, in the best sense of the word. Throughout our lives that calling has had as its core a concern for academic freedom. Yet it is important neither to assume that universities are now businesses, and hence academic freedom is no longer important, nor to romanticise the past as if the professorial landscape that preceded governmental reforms was an academic utopia. Vigorous dialogues are called for about how to ensure that the core of academic life remains stable and protected, if not enhanced. There is no organisational magic wand that will magically make these things happen; instead, we need to concentrate once again on how to create academic decision-making structures that are more in tune with the changed context of today, and work on re-creating an academic culture that ensures community.

Note

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Economics: From emperor to vassal?

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For years economics has been engaged in a bitter turf-war with its disciplinary rivals in marketing and management. Its war-cry has been its command of science and theory. Steve Keen argues that the exodus of students to the more pragmatic rival disciplines is more than a coincidence. Economic theory is moribund, and in comparison the 'real-world' disciplines inevitably look attractive.

Thirty years ago, economics saw itself as the emperor of the social sciences, and believed that it was on the verge of subsuming all other disciplines under its mantle. Today, it is so seriously in decline that many academic economists feel like members of an endangered species. What on earth happened?

There are many causes, some of which are not unique to economics. The Dawkins reforms, the shift of universities towards vocational training—and of students towards credentialism—all reduced the appeal of “hard” subjects like economics.

But most losses by the economics team were the product of own goals.

Firstly, the discipline deliberately turned away from the broad social science it once was in an attempt to recast itself as a science akin to physics. Regardless of whether this was or could be successful, it made economics far less appealing to the majority of potential students. The damage was not limited to a failure to attract students in the first place: the emphasis upon mathematical formalism also caused an even more drastic failure to stop commencing students decamping to other disciplines.

Secondly, this narrowing of focus virtually forced the formation of other specialist disciplines, to teach the issues economics could not or would not consider. Thirty years ago, the only other flatmate in the Commerce household was Accounting. Now, there are Marketing, Management, and many others, and relations between these newcomers and the once dominant resident are far from cordial.

While economists rarely express these sentiments out loud, the truth is that they think most of these other disciplines shouldn't exist. Economic theory tells economists that marketing is unnecessary—consumers already know their preferences, just put the stuff on the shelves and let them shop. Nor is management training necessary: just equate marginal cost to marginal revenue, and “Bob's your uncle”.

Marketing and Management academics beg to differ, and this has cost Economics dearly in terms of student bums on seats. Economists argue vehemently at Faculty meetings that students need more training in economics, and therefore that any commerce degree should contain several units of micro and macroeconomics. The other members of the household listen politely, and then vote for less compulsory economics, not more. In 1987, UNSW required six economics units in any Commerce degree. Now there are three—and that is still a very strong position compared to the situation at most other universities today. In many Australian universities, it is possible to get a degree in, say, Accounting, with just one unit of economics—and economists are now revising textbooks to take account of this predicament.

The stealth war against economics isn't limited to business faculties. Since economists willingly tossed out Marx, Veblen, Schumpeter, and all manner of other woolly thinkers and woolly topics, they were in no position to stop departments of Sociology, Political Science—even Architecture—occupying the space they vacated. Many such departments now run courses which have “economics” in their titles—though they often teach concepts that conventionally trained economists would not recognise as “economics”.

How have academic economists responded to this crisis? Apart from getting personally and collectively depressed, in general they have stuck to “business as usual”.

This lack of innovation from an academic sect which normally champions the innovative spirit would be rather puzzling, except for one thing: economists feel that they shouldn't change because they are right and everyone else is wrong. Why change when you know the eternal truths, and everyone else is misinformed?

Unfortunately, it is the economists who are misinformed, not their critics. Their faith in the ultimate truth of economic theory reflects a lack of knowledge of their own discipline. This allegedly scientific social science practices

not science but, as Hugh Stretton put it in his recent book, “scientism”, in which the appearance of scientific behaviour masks a crucially unscientific approach.

Many economists would regard that statement as sheer hyperbole. But it is easily substantiated, as I have done recently in *Debunking economics: the naked emperor of the social sciences* (Pluto Press, Sydney 2001). The problems with economic theory begin at the very beginning: the manner in which they characterise the behaviour of the fundamental components of a market economy, consumers, corporations, and the market mechanism itself.

A conventional education in economics teaches that a competitive market economy achieves the highest possible social welfare, because it allows “utility-maximising individuals” and “profit maximising firms” to determine an equilibrium set of prices and quantities of all commodities. This belief makes economists aggressive proponents of “market fundamentalism”, in which market is put forward, not only as the superior mechanism for every social purpose, but as the *only* mechanism that should exist except where “market failures” can be clearly identified. But ironically, this belief is *not* supported by economic theory: each element of this argument has been shown to be unsound.

Starting with the theory of utility-maximising behaviour by consumers, economists derive a single individual consumer’s “demand curve” for a particular commodity, and then add up all these individual demand curves to generate a market demand curve. Undergraduate students are taught this procedure as if it were both logical, and empirically sound.

It is neither.

Almost fifty years ago, it was shown that this “adding up” of individual demand curves could only work if two conditions applied. Firstly, all consumers had to have identical tastes. Secondly, these “clones” could never alter the ratio in which they consumed different commodities: if at a poverty income level, thirty per cent of income was spent on sausages, then at a profligate level, 30 per cent *still* had to be spent on sausages.

Clearly these conditions are absurd. But the economist who first worked them out commented that “The necessary and sufficient condition quoted above is intuitively reasonable. It says, in effect, that an extra unit of purchasing power should be spent in the same way no matter to whom it is given” (Gorman 1953).

The theory of consumer behaviour hasn’t fared well empirically either, even at the level of a single individual: both times the model was tested empirically, it failed. The majority of test subjects didn’t behave as economists predicted, instead behaving in a way that economists classified as “irrational”.

In a true science, such a result would eventually lead to questioning of the underlying notion of what is rational behaviour—since it hardly helps to have a theory of rational behaviour which classifies the entire human race

as irrational (this indeed was the fate of a related model of human behaviour in psychology, behaviourism—see Bond 2000). But economists in general refuse to consider the possibility that the economic definition of rationality is flawed, because they prefer their *a priori* notions of rationality to anything they might deduce from experimental results.

The experimenters themselves were not so dismissive, concluding that “we should pay closer attention to the limits of this theory as a description of how people actually behave” and “we economists should perhaps be a little more modest in our ‘imperialist ambitions’ of explaining non-market behaviour by economic principles” (Sippel 1997: 1443). Indeed!

The theory of corporate behaviour fares little better. Economists believe that competitive markets are superior to monopolised ones, because their theory tells them that competitive markets will produce a larger output at a lower price. But as I show in *Debunking Economics*, their analysis is based on a simple but profound mathematical error (the technical details are explained verbally in Chapter 4 of the book “Size does matter”, and mathematically on my webpage www.debunking-economics.com). The source of their error is their desire to argue that the demand price falls as output rises at the market level, but that each firm faces a “horizontal” demand curve. Unfortunately for economists, these two assumptions are incompatible: they amount to believing that a long downward sloping line can be broken in to many perfectly flat lines, or that lots of perfectly flat lines can be added up to yield one downward sloping line. Either alternative is mathematically impossible.

When this error is corrected, the equilibrium for a competitive market turns out to be exactly the same as the equilibrium for a monopoly—which implies on theoretical grounds that the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission’s crusade to promote competition is a waste of time. What economists describe as the “deadweight loss of monopoly” is more correctly described as “the deadweight loss of profit maximising behaviour”.

Many other errors abound in economic theory: the welfare comparison of competitive firms to monopolies contradicts the economic concept of diminishing returns (even if we ignore the mathematical problem outlined above); the “U-shaped cost curves” that economists love drawing are feasible only for trivially small levels of output; the meritocratic model of income distribution can’t explain the distribution of income, the theory of finance is only valid in a world where everyone knows the future and can borrow limitless amounts of money, and so on.

These and many other technical errors in economic theory have been pointed out by all manner of economists—both supporters and critics—over the past 80 years, and these are detailed in *Debunking Economics*. But still mainstream economics is taught as if it is an unassailable truth.

This is scientism, not science. It is high time that economics abandoned its pre-Galilean approach, and got its hands dirty finding out how the real world actually works.

Fortunately, there are some isolated minorities of economists who have split ranks with the mainstream, and are trying to develop approaches to economics that are dominated by realism rather than *a priori* theorising. The main realist alternatives are post-Keynesian Economics, Evolutionary Economics, and Econophysics.

Post-Keynesians, as their name implies, believe that the work of John Maynard Keynes in the 1930s provides a more realistic foundation for economic theory. Their theories work at a more aggregative level than neoclassical economics, and they emphasise the essential role of money and the impact of an uncertain future on economic behaviour.

Evolutionary economists believe that the appropriate foundation for economic theory is not the mechanical statics that underpins neoclassical economics, but evolutionary biology. While their technical repertoire is still underdeveloped, practitioners tend to be highly skilled in modern mathematics and computing—with a knowledge of differential equations, complexity theory and computer simulations which easily exceeds the mathematical knowledge of conventional economists. They are also slowly subsuming the pre-existing school of Institutional Economics in a peaceful takeover.

Econophysics is a recent phenomenon, as physicists who have developed an interest in economic issues have started to apply their formidable analytic skills to economic issues. This school promises to bring substantial change from outside the mainstream economics profession—something which, many years ago, Thomas Kuhn commented was often necessary to achieve a “paradigm shift” in a discipline which had reached an intellectual impasse that its current practitioners were unable to surmount.

While these schools are infants when compared to the dominant mainstream, there is some hope that they could become meaningful schools of thought if sufficient intellectual and financial resources were devoted to their development. But that is highly unlikely to occur from within economics departments themselves, given their continuing dominance by neoclassical economists. It may take a complete reversal of the “economic imperialism” that economists once envisaged for the new schools of thought to gain the ascendancy: other disciplines may have to invade the economic domain to bring realism to the fore, and to return those “woolly topics and woolly thinkers” to legitimacy within economic discourse. Such an external reformation would not be necessary if economics could develop the ability to keep its own room in order, but past behaviour gives little room for confidence.

There are, fortunately, some signs of change. Some economics departments are embracing, albeit tentatively,

a more pluralistic approach to economic instruction—and several Australian departments figure prominently here. Non-orthodox economists—and again Australia has an active minority who fit this description—have formed associations to try to bring about change, and there is now even an umbrella organisation ICAPE (The International Confederation of Associations for Pluralism in Economics, <http://www.econ.tcu.edu/econ/icare/main.html>). Some students of economics—notably PAECON, the “Protest Against Autistic Economics” movement that originated in France (<http://www.paecon.net>), and the group of 27 Cambridge UK PhD students who recently published an anonymous call for pluralism in economics. Reform groups have been formed in several countries, including the New Economic Foundation in England (<http://www.neweconomics.org>), and Economic Reform Australia (<http://dove.net.au/~hermann/erahome.htm>)—though these tend to stand outside academic economics, and have little contact with it.

These movements for reform are important, because while conventional economic analysis is, in my opinion, dangerously irrelevant, society cannot afford to leave economics in this state. Economic analysis matters, both because our views on how the economy operates influence our behaviour, and because the operation of something as complex as a market economy is not obvious, and does require deep analysis to understand. The problem with conventional economics is that it has taken the easy option—making outrageous assumptions to simplify difficult problems, perverting its own development in its desire to prove that the unfettered market economy represents pinnacle of human civilisation, hanging on to outmoded equilibrium modes of thinking when all true sciences long ago abandoned this fixation.

But reform will not come easily, given how resistant economic theory has proven to change over the years. A reverse imperialism may well be necessary: sociologists, political scientists, applied mathematicians and physicists may need to make inroads into economic instruction to bring about true change. The would-be emperor of the social sciences may one day find his empire subjugated, and proper economics—analysis of the evolutionary dynamics of the complex social system in which we actually live—may ultimately be the winner.

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A new approach to non-traditional student recruitment and retention

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Most current approaches to the retention of Indigenous and other non-traditional students have limited, ad hoc aims and objectives. Nadine Pelling argues for a comprehensive and integrated approach to the problems involved.

In the April 2001 edition of the NTEU *Advocate* it was reported that Indigenous student numbers have fallen below 1995 levels. This fact leads one to wonder what can be done to recruit and retain Indigenous students and what the literature and recent research say about recruiting and retaining nontraditional students. What follows is a review of the literature on nontraditional student recruitment and retention. It is recommended that if we are serious about recruiting and retaining Indigenous students that comprehensive programs be put into place to achieve this goal.

Past Retention Attempts

Many programs have attempted to help nontraditional students remain in university programs and withstand prejudice and discrimination. Previously, efforts were aimed at helping nontraditional students improve their academic performance with academic support, tutoring, and compensatory education (Simmons, 1979; Cervantes, 1988). However, more recent efforts have been focused upon more social and societal barriers to nontraditional retention, because studies have shown that these factors are more related to attrition than low academic performance (Kalsner, 1991).

Retention programs have generally implemented one or two general approaches at increasing nontraditional student retention and could be said to be primarily "band-aid" efforts (Muller, Pavone, & Wetterhahn, 1994). Whereas these programs have shown some short term and limited effects, comprehensive and wide reaching change is needed if widespread and substantial change is to be created. Consequently, a need exists for a comprehensive retention strategy to be created, implemented, and examined for effect. A comprehensive retention strategy will implement a wide range of programs shown to help increase student retention. What follows is a brief overview of some past supported or proposed retention strategies, and their rationale which may be combined in

some fashion to create such a comprehensive retention strategy.

Common Components of Retention Strategies

Role Models

As there is currently an under-representation of Indigenous people in various professions and in the university community, there is a consequent lack of role models for nontraditional students within academe. Lacking clear examples of success in any field may lead one to erroneously conclude that success in that area is unlikely. Consequently, a lack of visible proof of possible success results and myths regarding nontraditional workers and students (Parrish & Lea, 1991).

As a result, many have found the visibility of women, and other nontraditional workers, within certain fields key to the future participation of nontraditional people in a field (Baty, 1995; Felder, Felder, Mauney, Jamrin, & Dietz, 1994). As stated by Wittstruck, (1991, p. 16) "Significant increases in the recruitment and retention of black students are not likely to occur unless there is a noticeable increase in the hiring and retention of black faculty". One way in which past retention programs have tried to increase the visibility of nontraditional role models has been to advocate a strong nontraditional faculty recruitment policy to provide students with nontraditional role models. This effort may be coupled with an introductory class designed to give a brief history of nontraditional successes that appropriately highlights nontraditional student and worker achievements. This could help students identify relevant role models, both current and historical, and the special difficulties faced by many nontraditional workers (Turner, Pinon, & Robbins, 1994).

Support Systems

A lack of current nontraditional role models within training programs may make it less likely that a nontraditional

student will find and utilise a mentor within the field. Moreover, since cross-race relationships take longer to initiate and are less likely to end in a friendly fashion and cross-sex relationships often result in sexual innuendo, successful mentoring relationships seem less likely (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990). This is a shame as mentors have been shown to be helpful in later work adjustment since they can provide practical and experience based activities, as well as provide opportunity for mutual enhancement and growth (Barnett, 1990; Krueger, Blackwell, & Knight, 1992; Waller, 1994). Couple this information with the fact that nontraditional students are numerical minorities within many programs, feelings of isolation can result (Pruitt & Isaac, 1985).

To offset these feelings of isolation and a resulting decrease in academic performance, actual mentorship programs have been instituted by institutions of higher learning to aid in the pairing of mentors with students new to different fields (Wittstruck, 1988; Kalsner, 1991). However, training on how to be a mentor and to be mentored may be required to deal with the before mentioned problems with cross-gender and cross-racial mentoring (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990). In order for this to be a positive interaction the program may also need to be voluntary and thus a lack of mentors may result. This lack of mentors may be alleviated with the use of professionals currently in various fields versus having a mentoring program relying on university personnel. If a lack of mentors remains it may also be possible to institute a peer mentoring relationship, pairing more advanced students with newer students (Muller, Pavone, & Wetterhahn, 1994). The use of Internet email discussion groups may also aid in forming connections between students in a safe manner. This may help nontraditional students to blend new experiences with their traditional cultures and values by allowing for discussion of the contradictions and special difficulties nontraditional students find with university education (Chavez, 1986).

Moreover, actual nontraditional student support groups and student interaction programs may also help as such groups have been shown to be helpful in the workplace (Morrison & von Glinow, 1990; Parrish & Lea, 1991). Such peer support groups have also been identified as critical for success in some education programs (Anderson, 1994; Barnicki & Stein, 1994; Hood, 1992). As stated by, Bsarnicki and Stein (1994, p. 2465) "the early establishment of personal connections is crucial in helping women become comfortable". Students could be aided in the creation of specific support groups, encouraged to join existing student support groups, or encouraged to participate in existing professional groups as student members (Felder, Felder, Mauney, Jamrin, & Dietz, 1994). A multicultural center could also be developed as a resource for students and faculty (Johnson, 1991).

Financial Support

Many students require financial assistance to complete their education and the issue of institutional support for nontraditional students is especially important (Wittstruck, 1988; Lassiter, 1983). Financial support could be provided to nontraditional students to work within their programs under their faculty's supervision and thus help reduce dependency on funding sources outside the university that may interfere with one's academic studies (Adams, 1986). This could possibly provide a number of positive effects. First, students would be provided with some type of stipend or work study funding to pay for their education and living expenses. Second, students would have increased contact with their departments and faculty thus possibly increasing feelings of involvement with same and the creation of positive mentoring relationships. Third, as stated by Muller, Pavone, and Wetterhahn (1994, p. 1448) "the mere existence of the [women in science] project on campus makes them feel supported and encouraged" by the department and faculty. Programs such as this have been suggested for engineering programs and it is possible that such programs will have a similar effect in other fields that need to increase their nontraditional student retention rates (Adams, 1988).

Multicultural Training - Faculty

Felder, Felder, Mauney, Jamrin, & Dietz (1994, p. 1255) indicate that "All faculty members should be made aware of the difficulties faced by women engineering students and of the resources on campus - support groups, mentorship programs, and trained counsellors, etc. - available to help the women cope with and overcome these difficulties". The same could be said to be true for Indigenous students. It is possible that other nontraditional students within the university environment would also benefit from such faculty education. Moreover, traditional faculty members may also benefit from some training on the contributions of nontraditional workers within the university environment and various fields, as well as some of the unique difficulties Indigenous populations may face, such as how misunderstandings may arise from differing communication styles (Lassiter, 1983; Waller, 1994). This may be important as some studies suggest that differences in professorial attitudes and behaviours have contributed to attrition rates in some programs (McDade, 1988; Cervantes, 1988). Thus, multicultural training may lead to a greater acceptance of nontraditional students who might be seen as less of a novelty once the history of nontraditional participation in the field is illuminated .

Multicultural Training - Students

The larger student body may also benefit from multicultural training. A brief history that appropriately highlights Indigenous achievements may also serve to increase the multicultural awareness of the larger student body. More-

over, multicultural instruction may serve to help students recognize and appreciate cultural diversity issues as they relate to their field (Johnson, 1991).

Introductory Class

Many programs have suggested that an initial hands-on experience in the various fields can help in nontraditional retention efforts. During such a course interest in the field as well as study tools for success can be solidified. Where as the focus is generally on aspects of the program that students find most interesting, information on support services, study skill development, and tutoring services may also be provided (Hood, 1992). Specifically, students can be provided with information regarding the general college experience, common adjustment problems, financial support, and academic help if needed (Kalsner, 1991). Having the logistics of campus life clearly explained may serve to lower student stress and increase comfortableness and thus eventual student retention (Christoffel, 1986).

Moreover, entering students could be encouraged to create supportive networks that may help them survive more difficult times in their program of study (Turner, Pinon, & Robbins, 1994). This may be particularly important during the beginning of one's studies as half of all attrition appears to occur within the first three semesters of training, presumably as education fails to respond one initial interest in the field (Gonzalez, 1995).

Conclusion

Whereas the traditional approach to Indigenous student recruitment and retention may have been to support students via financial assistance, past research indicates that a more comprehensive approach is needed and should include social, structural, and financial support which includes efforts by all students, administration, and faculty. If we are serious about the retention and recruitment of Indigenous students then a comprehensive approach is needed.

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Educating and organising globally: perspectives on the internet and higher education

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Electronic learning and the globalisation of higher education are often viewed by academics chiefly as threats to their independence and autonomy. Carolyn Allport argues that we need to remain alive to both the benefits and the dangers of this new educational world.

The arrival of the 'internet' or 'e' university has coincided with media, communication and information technology convergence, increased commercialisation and corporatisation of universities, and the rise of 'for-profit' education, particularly in the vocational training area. The new 'borderless' environments, facilitated by new technologies, channel the ways in which higher education institutions respond to internationalisation and globalisation. Together with a seeming lack of legal regulation in cyberspace, these global developments have created real dilemmas for higher education institutions and faculty facing falling public investment and increased public and community expectations of their role in lifelong learning.

For some the e-university is seen primarily as a threat. In the Australian context it is sometimes presented as perhaps the greatest weapon of economic rationalists in their battle to market the provisions of higher education. In the international context the same writers sometimes depict this convergence of new technologies as a 'new colonialism', particularly in relation to international agreements such as the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). To others, it is a pure technology, unsullied by traditional power relations, with potential to democratise education and enhance cultural and social understanding in a borderless world. Both these views are excessively reliant upon different versions of technological determinism, one of the most pervasive habits of thought in the West over the last two centuries.

In my view we will be in a stronger position if we move away from these two extreme positions, and concentrate instead on the linkages between the educational issues surrounding e-learning and the economic structures that are being used to promote greater international delivery of e-courses. Important here is the role of international cartels in partnership arrangements that cross national

boundaries and which involve 'for profit' media or Information Technology (IT) companies in curriculum development and delivery. And so I am less concerned here with the pedagogic arguments around technology-based learning and delivery – though there is a large and interesting literature on that subject – than with promoting active discussion on the nature of our strategic response.

Part one: Rules of the game

Higher education staff are amongst the most 'wired' people in the world. The origin of the Internet in US military-related scientific research based in universities, and its rapid diffusion across university departments meant that higher education personnel were at the edge of the new technology, often playing leading roles in constructing the new forms of communication, and providing user-friendly access to the Web. Why is it then that the champions of the virtual university position staff as a conservative force, holding back the limitless gains from Internet and Web-based learning? Why is it that the virtual university is posited as student-centred, when evidence tells us that students overwhelmingly prefer a campus-based experience?

At one level, the virtual university is an outgrowth of distance education, or external education. It separates the student from their peers and from the campus, but retaining some component of interactive learning with a teacher. Learning materials are packaged, allowing the student to sample material largely within their own time frame, and are marketed to those who are unable to access a campus-based experience. Initial data also suggest that the take-up and drop out rates in 'virtual' programs are similar to those in traditional distance education. Like distance education, e-education is capable of enhancing the participation of disadvantaged groups – across space,

across home and work, and across all age groups. In this sense, we could expect the 'virtual university' to simply be one of a number of learning environments within universities, perhaps catering for between ten and thirty percent of total student demand.

What is agreed is its unsuitability for undergraduate education for school leavers, who are seen not to have the independent self-directed study skills and motivation required. Nor, it seems do they or their families desire it. The evidence is clear: parents value the residential/campus based experience as an essential part of the educative processes of early adulthood. It is not just an information-based experience – it is one where networks and associations are formed, often ones important for student's later careers. Even older students prefer face-to-face or mixed modes of education, and retention levels are higher where the campus-based program is being used to upgrade or extend existing qualifications. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) education is more popular among those corporate universities in the US that deliver training on site to their employees. Even here, though, some institutions - such as Motorola University - still use classroom training as the main pedagogical instrument. While Motorola does make use of the new technologies, it has no ambition to deliver more than 30% of its training to the desktop. At the University of Phoenix the majority of students still attend face-to-face classes at smaller decentralised campuses, while Western Governors University, an Internet-based university in the US, has faced difficulties in attracting students.

Just as in traditional distance education, success with ICT or web-based learning depends upon acquiring adequate levels of staff support and overcoming student isolation. Putting a course on the web does not guarantee that learning takes place, any more than does the presence of a library on campus. There have been concerns raised as to the instrumentalist nature of ICT learning, and the need to keep human agency central to the pedagogical process. Previous experience of computer based learning materials have made teaching staff cautious about the impact on critical thinking and the discursive nature of higher education. The accessibility and vast storage resources of the Web also raise important issues for assessment procedures – a number of sites now offer student essays and notes for purchase, and there is concern about a perceived tendency towards 'cut and paste' techniques in student work. Unfortunately, this has meant that there are now increased calls for a return to a supervised examination assessment system, undermining some of the more innovative assessment developments of past decades. Generating materials is also costly. One Australian university estimated that the production of 12 high quality CD-ROMs for language training consumed 36,000 project team hours and cost A\$3.3 million. This does not include the need to update material in order to provide 'state of the art' learning. Finally, there is continuing debate about the

differences between information and knowledge. As one writer aptly warned: "Will the wise person of the future be someone who knows nothing but can find anything?"

It is in primary and secondary education, adult education and in workplace training that the marketing of ICT materials is making the most striking progress. In these sectors some 'for-profit' education companies are moving beyond simply providing 'carrier' platform and IT infrastructure, and directly hiring staff to develop 'content'. Given the pre-eminence of the life-long learning model in public policy, universities need to reposition themselves in relation to these developments, so as not to find themselves confined to a shrinking and more elite market in the future. This raises new questions about the need to employ business or corporate models of efficiency and productivity in repositioning higher education, and of the influence of such models on the complex cultural and social matrix of education. Such arrangements also advance the cause of user-pays financing in higher education because the complexity of funding arrangements across political boundaries make this kind of financing attractive.

At a global level, there is reason for concern that increased use of ICT education packages may exacerbate existing economic and social disparities between regions. E-learning and the 'virtual' university depend upon high levels of connectivity among students and staff, and on the ability of institutions and companies to sustain high investment and maintenance expenditure. The digital divide is a real one – both across geographic boundaries, and within national borders. Currently access to the Internet is highly concentrated. Less than 2% of the world's population is connected. Industrialised countries with only 15% of the world's population are home to 88% of all Internet users. Less than 1% of people in South Asia are online, though one-fifth of the world's population lives in this region. The situation is even worse in Africa – with 739 million people, there are only 14 million phone lines. That is fewer than Tokyo or Manhattan. Eighty percent of those lines are in six countries, with only 1 million Internet users compared to 10.5 million in the UK. 80% of the world's web sites are in English, a language understood by only 1 in 10 of the world's population.

Even within nations with high levels of Internet access and home computers, such as the US, a real digital divide remains. This is not only a division between the educated and the rest: it runs through the education system itself. A recent US national survey report, *Historically Black Colleges and Universities: An Assessment of Networking and Connectivity* suggests that these institutions are lagging behind in offering students access to computing resources and in taking advantage of high-bandwidth technologies. There is also a wider concern in first world countries more generally about the high costs associated with purchasing equipment, maintaining it and paying for connection costs, all of which are expected to be the student's responsibility. In Australia, income and geography are still

powerful forces in determining the information rich and the information poor. In Asia, seen to be a key market for the export of education, concern is rising that exporting students and importing courses also present a very real threat to student's sense of identity, culture and family values.

As we discuss how to overcome these divides, we must remind ourselves that as educators we have a moral responsibility to ensure that old barriers to access are not replicated in cyberspace. If we are to utilise new communications and information based technologies, then we need to develop ways of globalising without colonising.

Among existing higher education institutions, especially public institutions, the model for transnational Internet education is a consortium involving partnerships with private communications or media companies. The key issues for staff arise in two distinct areas: the ICT mechanisms through which courses are delivered, and the role that corporate interests play in the new consortia. These intersect in specific questions around new employment relationships, intellectual property, changing university identity and governance structures, and quality assurance.

New employment relationships

One of the main reasons for the lack of enthusiasm among some staff to engage with online delivery is concern about the 'unbundling' of the academic role. Most ICT-based courses are developed within team structures that separate curriculum development, materials design, learning support and assessment. All of which leads to increases in the employment of contingent labour with little if any connection to research. In cases where online providers are tendering for teaching content from academics who may never have contact with the student using these materials, there is further disaggregation of the academic role. Similarly the role of general or support staff is changing as more become involved in online education as facilitators, and in some cases developers of curriculum. As the lines between faculty and other staff blur, we need to be vigilant that the contribution of all staff to scholarly enterprises are recognised and rewarded appropriately. Unions also need to get smarter about using these same technologies in order to organise and represent the new types of academic labour.

Of equal concern is the impact that these new technologies have on staff workloads and student:staff ratios. Many staff report that while it is increasingly expected that their courses will have online components, little if any training accompanies the imposition of such expectations. Time and space differentials attached to global Internet delivery has raised student demands for more immediate responses from staff. In some instances, staff are expected to be available all the time, as well as responding to an ever-growing email correspondence. Staff at one Austral-

ian institution cite the example of students in Dubai who expect to speak with staff at 2am or 3am Australian time. Unions need to monitor this work intensification.

Intellectual property

In the commercial environment, universities and associated public entities such as libraries are moving away from established conventions on ownership and use of intellectual property. A dispute in Canada during 2000 on the placing of PhD and Masters theses on a for-profit web site, without the permission of the originators of the works, is a case in point. There, the National Library, where theses have traditionally been deposited on the basis of use by researchers and scholars, contracted-out to a private operator who then charged to make the work available. While the authors were entitled to royalties from the firm that marketed their theses, none were received. The theses have since been withdrawn pending further negotiations.

In many universities staff own the copyright attached to their course materials. In the online environment, these are easy to turn into saleable products once translated into packaged materials. At some institutions, university administrations assert that copyright should now be shared, given that university infrastructure and skills have been added to the product. At others, staff are encouraged to sell or otherwise assign their copyright. Having bought it, the university can do what it likes to the content, and it can also determine the level of royalties paid to the academic. The University of Phoenix pays staff a flat fee for each video class with no royalties for a repeat or relayed broadcast. This contrasts with contract conditions for non-educational stars in other industries.

Changing university identity and governance structures

The ability of any institution or consortium to capitalise on the online market will depend largely upon the balance between recognition and price. Not all will be able to survive the high costs of providing and supporting online education. One high-profile consortium is Universitas 21 (or U21 - an alliance of 18 universities), which has tried to attract international institutions that have recognisable and acknowledged quality 'brands'. Similarly consortia that involve well-established and high ranking universities in Europe and North America would largely be trading on their brand. This makes it difficult for new entrants, even if they aim at a lower cost market, as the Open University in the UK found out in its initial stages. As part of establishing U21, 'brand name' valuations were commissioned to measure the universities' respective contribution to any joint venture, and university leaders at one prominent U21 site speak about their work as 'brand equity managers'.

The most interesting issues associated with U21 are the nature of their partnerships with communications and

media transnationals, and the fact that students will graduate from the U21 sponsored institution, not from any of the participating institutions. Initially, U21 sought partnerships with News Corporation and Microsoft, finally signing a deal in July 2001 with Thomson Learning, a subsidiary of Thomson Corporation. Universitas 21, the company that brings together all the participating institutions, is incorporated in Guernsey, a known 'tax haven'.

Public information about the deal was sparse; most of what we knew came through the mass media, or via press release. There was little discussion at the participating institutions – conversations about such an important venture seemed to be taking place only in the inner sanctum of university Vice-Chancellors and Presidents. This much was evident: the deal would involve the creation of an on-line for profit university with content commissioned from around the world. The potential to earn valuable income has been attractive to participating institutions, many of which face diminishing national public funding.

The U21 venture raises important issues about the new models of global delivery and brings into focus the sharp end of the corporatisation of higher education. Under the proposed deal Thomson Corporation will be responsible for course design, content development, testing and assessment and student database management and translation. The universities will license their 'brand names', receiving money for allowing the crests of their institutions to be used by the new international institution. The universities are not selling their courses; rather it is their reputation that seems up for sale.

A Thomson spokesperson stated that U21's structure 'enabled it to take a powerful international brand, credible quality assurance and multi-jurisdictional certification, and add Thomson Learning's expansive content and course development experience', predicting a market of 97 million students by 2010. Thomson has shifted its resources from newspaper holdings to education, purchasing recently Prometric, an IT assessment company for US\$4.2 billion, Petersons, a student admissions company for US\$2 billion, and acquiring the higher education area of Harcourt Publishing for another US\$2 billion.

Little detail of the deliberations governing relationships with private companies is available through records of university governing bodies, and debate over these deals is often interpreted as attacks upon them. The relative dearth of information suggests that university governance structures are seen as an impediment to the kind of commercial venture envisaged by the U21/Thomson proposal. However, the fact remains that university governing bodies are charged with the good governance of the institution and, in Australia, are legally responsible for the proper conduct of its financial affairs. Commercial agreements usually require a degree of confidentiality, but when public universities are underwriting such ventures,

we need more effective participation by the university community.

In the case of U21 all the start-up costs for the joint venture were met by the University of Melbourne, and the other Australian partners, University of New South Wales and the University of Queensland, also invested in the venture. Yet how can we be assured that this is a good use of public money – particularly after the collapse of the News Corp deal? And will the university be able to recover any of its expenditure to date? It is in the interest of maintaining executive power that such information is not broadly available – but it is not necessarily in the interests of the university or the community that it serves. On a cost-benefit basis, the public university may be losing out.

Quality Assurance

There is a powerful tension between the provision of tailored courses to meet the needs of niche markets and the broader teaching, scholarship and research undertaken in our universities. The latter is underpinned by the advancement of knowledge, the former by a more utilitarian perspective on education. If the balance tips too far in favour of educational services tailored for global markets, we could well see a narrowing of the knowledge base within our universities, and the growth of a more instrumentalist pedagogy or, at best, significant discrepancies between the nature and quality of educational provision and scholarly activity within the university and the quality of on-line courses to which the institution's name is attached. If the universities' accreditation processes are effectively 'sold' to a global provider, what is the role of the universities' academic board in this respect? Will accreditation processes come under pressure from commercial concerns? This has long-term implications, not just for the quality of on-line provision through the new university, but for the reputation and quality assurance procedures within each of the participating public universities.

Part two: Entering the game – strategies for the future

Any strategies that academic staff and their unions develop to meet these challenges must involve both local and global interventions. Further, such interventions will be most effective if they are consistent across local and global frameworks, and if they arise from a dialogue at the global level.

Industrial and legal regulation

This is a new area for many academic unions, who for most of their history have depended upon national or regional regulation, accreditation and identity. Academic staff have had a long history of working within international networks, but this has reflected commitment to discipline or knowledge area, rather than to employment and profes-

sional concerns. At present there is little international regulation of academic work beyond the level of convention and normative instruments such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel. Academic unions need to investigate the ways in which they can strengthen involvement in international forums such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO). They need also to formulate advice for direct negotiations with the International Association of Universities and the International Association of University Presidents. As education goes global, and university employers seek global consortia arrangements, university staff unions must also begin to negotiate at a global level as well as at a local level. Given that the International Association of University Presidents publicly signed up to the UNESCO World Declaration and Framework for Action, this and the reporting facility under the UNESCO recommendation cited above make obvious starting points, GATS and other bilateral or multilateral trade agreements are also important points of intervention. Unions need an international industrial and organising strategy, as well as a policy response.

Organise around the cartels

While there are a number of cartels attempting to establish in the international e-learning environment, it was the U21 proposal that attracted the attention of academic unions in Australia and New Zealand. Partly this arose because of the leading role played by the Vice-Chancellor at the University of Melbourne in establishing U21, and the particular problems of governance and accountability that had already arisen with other commercial ventures of that institution, and the real academic concerns that came from the contracting out to Thomson of what were seen as the core academic functions of curriculum development and delivery, assessment and quality assurance through academic boards. There were also concerns from student and staff associations that students would graduate from U21, with the crests of individual institutions surrounding the testamur, yet there seemed no institutional assurance process for the courses developed by Thomson. Staff and students did value the reputation of their universities and wanted assurance that this new online venture would not compromise that reputation.

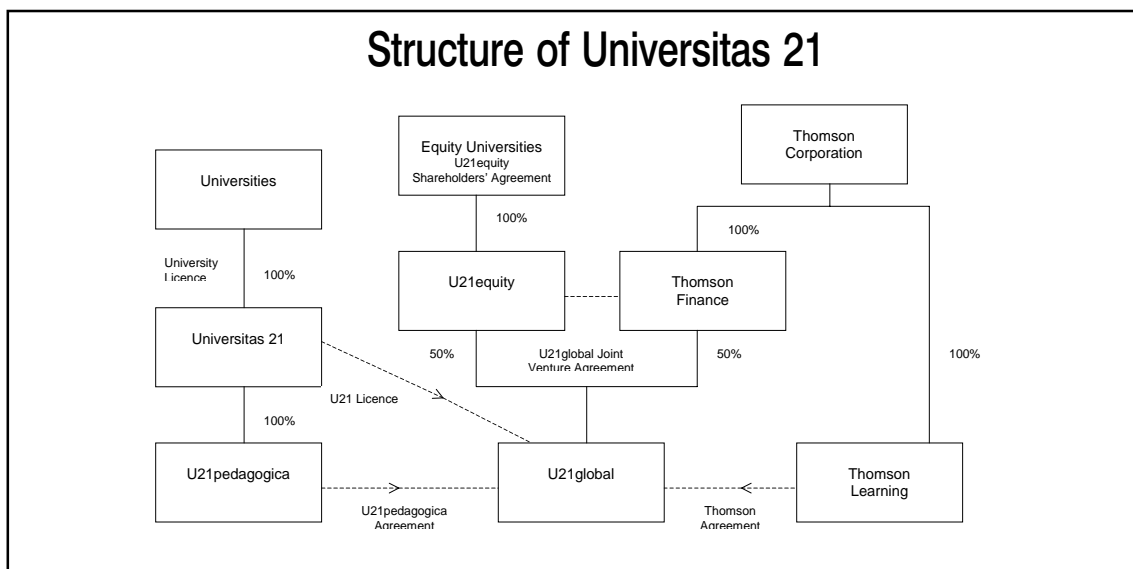
Our first response was to form email networks with other staff and student organisations in many of the U21 institutions and to encourage staff and students to utilise their international meetings to develop strategies for engagement with U21. These mechanisms facilitated exchange of information about the activities of the initial set-up of U21 and fostered discussion around governance structures for the new e-university, and the way in which staff and students would be involved. At this early stage, staff and students were extremely concerned at the failure of the university to discuss the proposed venture openly

at the governing board, and more broadly with staff and students. Through staff and student representatives on such boards, we developed a common set of questions to assist network participants to question their own institutions in the public interest. Institutional responses were then distributed to all on the confidential email list.

In an environment where we are seeing a shift in universities' assets from the public institution into commercial ventures, the questions asked went to corporate and financial arrangements, including methods for staff appointments and under which jurisdiction those employment arrangements are made. Financial due diligence is an important feature of the transfer from public to private identity, and full disclosure under such processes is essential. Staff and student representatives on governing boards also asked questions associated with academic due diligence and governance. In particular the questions were about how quality assurance and accreditation was to operate in the consortium, and what processes were to be put in place for report back to the governing boards of the public institutions. These questions then became the basis of a joint letter to the U21 Secretariat from faculty unions from Australia, New Zealand, UK, Europe and North America. Our letter was written from the perspective of public responsibility – as university unions and staff associations we held it to be important to protect the interests of our members and defend the integrity and reputation of our institutions, and the educational programs offered through partnership arrangements with other institutions.

Utilising the UNESCO Recommendation on the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel, signed by our national governments, the signatories of the letter drew attention to the key issues of accountability of universities, duties and responsibility of teaching personnel, intellectual property, quality assurance, academic freedom, governance, representation and employment protection established under the normative instrument. We also informed U21 that we would forward to the consortium a log of claims in respect of the Thomson Learning arrangement, and Universitas 21 activities more generally.

It must be said that the staff and student associations are not inherently opposed to collaborative projects between universities across the globe. There are other alliances that operate which retain quality assurance and academic oversight at the participating institution, and utilise their international alliances to offer greater course choice for students, and enhance staff exchanges between partners. Such ventures do usually have a private sector partner to maintain the technical platform essential for high quality distribution on the net. Others, such as MIT, are keen to use the web to offer open access learning, and to use this to encourage further study. Our concerns were clearly focused on the implications of e-learning becoming a for-profit venture where educational standards may be at risk from the commercial bottom-line, where governance



structures could be compromised, and working conditions and collegiality sacrificed.

U21 is interesting because it uses the business technique of establishing a number of associated companies to further remove the operating company from its actual owners. This acts to formally separate the universities from the 'business' end of U21. We now have quite a clear picture of the way U21 is to operate.

The key operating company will be U21global – jointly owned by U21 (through U21equity) and Thomson. It will appoint staff and operate the business. Academics are to be renamed as course developers, instructors and assessors and will be contracted by U21global through a tender process. U21global was established in September 2001, and registered in Singapore where activities of trade unions are highly circumscribed. The joint venture capital between the partners is said to be S\$90 million. The interim chair of U21global, Professor Alan Gilbert, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, confidently asserts the academic integrity and commercial viability of the new venture in words that speak more to the profit motive than to educational quality:

[because] the fundamental business architecture, brand value and market demand are right, and because Thomson is a superb partner, with the resources, skills, experience, infrastructure and focus in on-line learning to leverage the brand value accreditation capability of Universitas 21

The difficulty here is the lack of independent quality assurance mechanisms in the international arena. Universitas 21 has developed its own assurance company, U21pedagogica, which seemingly will assure U21 learning products, as well as attempting to establish itself as an assurance agency for other transnational ventures.

Little is known of the way intellectual property will be protected, nor can we be guaranteed that information about the activities of U21global will be reported back to

the university communities that are subsidising this for-profit venture. Ultimately the participating institutions derive money from the sale of their brand name and any profits that accrue as an equity partner, while faculty will experience an unbundling of their work – separating course design and curriculum development from the learning and assessment processes creates educational difficulties, as well as encouraging increases in contingent labour, and there are no guarantees that those employed will be from the participating institutions.

There has been an acceptance of the need for student representation within the U21 governance structures (which the student network has taken over and is reshaping). There are no plans to include staff in any of the governance structures of the new global university.

Intellectual Property Rights

As the commercial value of copyright increases, it is not clear that academics can expect the same protection for intellectual property that they have historically enjoyed. Some institutions are already arguing that the employer owns all intellectual property generated in the course of employment. We will have to be vigilant that our own rights to ownership and control of intellectual property are not eroded within our own institutions if we are to defend them in an international on-line environment.

International agreements on intellectual property will be increasingly significant. The trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPS) agreement binds World Trade Organisation nations to ensure some standardisation of intellectual property rights to facilitate trade in knowledge. Interestingly, while it calls upon member nations to observe the defence of copyright in literary and artistic works contained in the Bern convention, it makes an exception in the case of moral rights. Moral rights exist separate from ownership, and include the rights of the originator to be attributed, and to object to any distortion

of his or her work that may have a detrimental impact on his or her honour and reputation. In an on-line environment, where teaching and learning materials are packaged and re-packaged for sale and their use is difficult to track, industry unions may need to seek some international agreement on the moral rights of originators within the e-university.

Quality Assurance and Accreditation

Most accreditation processes for new providers in higher education lie with governments or government agencies. In some cases, this is supplemented by regional agreements for cross-accreditation. The new global online environment will attract new ventures aiming to cash in on the latest 'for-profit' industry, with, at times, questionable commitment to educational standards or to public accountability. In Australia there have been quite spectacular failures of firms involved in the English teaching and postgraduate business administration areas. The same is true of the US. Early 'virtual' universities such as the California Virtual University failed, and have now only recently been reconstituted largely through support from state funds and the community college sector. In 2000 the *Chronicle of Higher Education* in the US raised concerns about the volatility of online education companies and their attempts to raise capital on the stockmarket. In this volatile environment it is critical that any local accreditation regulations are amended to seek quality assurance control over all the operations of institutions incorporated in their jurisdiction, including international operations. In the first instance, quality and accountability standards expected in the domestic arena should also be translated into standards for international provision.

There is emerging evidence that national agencies will have to deal with global accreditation procedures. In Australia, the new 'National Protocols' signed by all States and Territories, as well as our national Government, specifically include international companies associated with Australian universities. The purpose of the protocols is to guide all levels of Government with accreditation and quality assurance responsibilities in drafting new legislation in their respective jurisdictions. Yet this is not the case in other countries where there is considerable variation. In some countries, these processes have been influenced by broader public sector reform with elements of contestability across public and private institutions. In others, there is a long investigation period before new entrants are certified. Some countries ensure that fees for registering a course in a national jurisdiction are high enough to ensure only serious stable candidates need apply. For example in Hong Kong, USQ paid A\$106,000 to register seventeen distance education courses. While some online providers see limitless potential in the Asian region, many local commentators believe that countries such as China will guard its accreditation systems against the onslaught from Western sellers of higher education.

As consortia are further developed, there clearly needs to be some international academic accreditation, or cross-linking processes to national or regional standards. One of the strongest proponents of online learning, the American Glenn R Jones, attempted to establish his own international accreditation agency, called Global Alliance for Transnational Education (GATE). Initially GATE attracted the attention of many universities and academics seeking some sort of international quality control. It was run by a well known Washington-based non-profit group, the Centre for Quality Assurance in International Education, and had an international board of accreditors and educators. Yet GATE has since come under fire from critics who say that it has become a corporate entity riddled with conflicts of interest, and no longer viable as a quality agency. In 2000 Jones removed many of the internationally recognised accrediting experts from the company, and replaced them with members of other Jones Enterprise companies. GATE has since focussed on its distance education programs. Those universities who backed the GATE venture have subsequently disassociated themselves from both Jones and GATE.

This experience underlines the importance of developing some intergovernmental or international non-government agency to develop quality assurance processes, as well as accreditation and student complaints mechanisms. There is an opportunity here for academic unions to develop international standards, and to seek to play a major role in international accreditation, including encouraging their national governments to be conscious of the need to deal with the outcomes of international delivery of educational services.

Seek alliances with Students

Students have demonstrated concern about maintaining the quality of their educational experience at a time when some universities apparently see online learning as simply a source of 'quick-fix' cash. They have the right to expect that staff involved in the teaching-learning process will have high levels of competency and experience. There are also limited complaints mechanisms or consumer protections for students in global delivery, or for that matter against private institutions that fail in the market. There are very good reasons why students are cautious of the promises of the brave online environment even though they are often strong users of the web. Students and staff can also assist to mobilise community opinion on educational issues when institutions privatise and move away from the public identity. Here it is useful to consider the work of other unions and community organisations in calling firms to stand by their commitment to corporate citizenship, to accept that they have responsibility and accountability in the broader public world, and that this matters to their shareholders.

Reviews

An elegant morality tale

DAVID BURCHELL

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***Facing the Music*, Produced and Directed by Bob Connolly and Robin Anderson, Film Australia, 2001, 85 minutes**

Bob Connolly and Robin Anderson's *Facing the Music* has been widely, and rightly, celebrated as a classic piece of fly-on-the-wall film-making about the state of Australian academia. Indeed, it may be more highly esteemed in the arts community than in the academic community. The *Sydney Herald*, no doubt with the ad-men in mind, described it as 'a devastating critique' (though the reviewer was less eloquent in describing what it was that the film was a critique of). Technically it is almost a master-class in the ancient rhetorical dictum, beloved of the Renaissance humanists, that the highest form of art is that which conceals itself. The film is lovingly crafted to appear naive and spontaneous, rather like the characters who inhabit it. At the same time, in its substance it is an elegant morality tale - inspired innocence faces wicked worldliness, idealism faces accountancy, collegiality faces individual despair.

And yet I doubt I am the only broadly sympathetic academic who left after the screening feeling more than a little ambivalent. Like many others, no doubt, my heart ached for the death of a university department - the now-defunct Department of Music at Sydney University - staffed by a group of extraordinarily talented artists and mentors (I am choosing these words carefully), and peopled by some of the most committed, serious-minded and almost painfully talented students any one of us is ever likely to see. Nor could anyone who subsists in an Australian university at present fail to recognise the frayed tempers, the perpetual edgy anxiety, the profound if unfocussed anger which nowadays haunts so many of our corridors and tea-rooms. Even the heart-attacks and emotional breakdowns which bring down the curtain are not entirely unfamiliar.

At the same time, I found my sense of empathy constantly running up against and bouncing off a series of unseen walls, rather like a dodgem-car in the local fairground. In part, perhaps, this may say as much about me as the

subjects of the film. Like other teachers in what many staff at Sydney University would no doubt view in private as third-rate campuses in the outer-suburban badlands, I always tend to find the self-focussed angst of the older sandstone academics a little hard to swallow. The loss of subjects in medieval Celtic or Icelandic literature, sadly, tends to leave me cold. Likewise, a history department reduced from seventy staff to thirty necessarily seems a smaller tragedy from the vantage-point of a university which has never been able to afford a history department at all.

But I doubt that *ressentiment provençal* altogether explains my discomfort with Professor Anne Boyd and her highly talented, if decidedly difficult, colleagues. Many viewers have offered the opinion that the film is a kind of tract for the times, and have portrayed Anne Boyd as a kind of everywoman, expressing the typical reactions and emotions of any beleaguered head of school in a time of general crisis. I'm not so sure. Like the rest of us, I have observed a gallery of Deans and heads of department in my time, and some have been decidedly more effective than others. But none that I have known or seen would have endured a decade's worth of annual cuts to their jurisdiction before finally realising, too late, that there was a funding crisis. Nor would any of them have responded at last to such a crisis with the pitch of furious ineffectiveness exhibited by the characters in the film - heaping ever larger teaching loads upon themselves in a purely ad hoc way, writing impassioned but unfocussed letters of bitter protest to their superiors, gazing blankly at the ever-shrinking budget-figures like Franciscan friars in a harem. To be perfectly blunt, Professor Boyd and her colleagues occupy a plane of concerted scholarly unworldliness which is simply beyond my compass.

And here, for me at least, is the rub. If *Facing the Music* is to be interpreted as a 'scathing critique' of anything, that something would have to be that venerable bugbear of academe, Economic Rationalism. Yet if critiques are supposed to strike at their opponents' very hearts, this arrow surely whistles well past the mark. Indeed, it may even develop boomerang tendencies.

Surely even the least hard-hearted Rationalist of myth and legend, having sat through *Facing the Music*, would be bound to see it precisely as a scathing commentary on the irrationalism of the traditional scholarly ethos, at least as it might be viewed from the vantage-point of public policy. How, they might well ask, can one responsibly offer up sizeable chunks of public money to the say-so of individuals who have a sublime disinterest in money itself, let alone in regular accounting practices? How can one place the departments of public institutions in the hands of individuals apparently incapable of distinguishing between private time and work time, friends (and enemies) and subordinates, teaching and the inculcation of inspiration? Are not these, they might well ask, all excellent arguments for subordinating the tremulous scholarly sensibility to the cold lucidity of the bottom line, or at least for providing impossible-to-ignore reminders of the finite practical resources of the *mundus* beyond the sheltering walls of the quadrangle?

And, sad to say, I think the demon Rationalist would have a point. Indeed, viewed from outside the perspective of humanistic sympathy (that lilting choral music, those impassioned if idiosyncratic lectures) *Facing the Music* might savour as much of comedy as tragedy. The stand-out comic scene, of course (and no doubt the producers were well aware of this) is the informal meeting between Professor Boyd and her friend (and sometime nemesis) Winsome Evans, where the professor attempts to persuade her colleague to take over the headship. The two colleagues sit apart in the professorial office, each with eyes fixed on the floor, stumbling through the possible implications of such a decision. Evans observes that she is unable to use a computer. That's all right, the head reassures her: the department administrator will read (and presumably respond to) your email for you. There's another long pause, a bit more fumbling around on either side, and then Evans adds, with finality: 'And of course I wouldn't attend meetings'. To this Professor Boyd can find no reassuring response. When I watched the movie with a collection of union colleagues, all of us broke into spontaneous, if slightly uneasy, laughter at this point, trying to imagine the purpose of a school chair who refused to attend meetings. And yet of course there's a larger joke here. Why on earth would Professor Boyd, in paving the way for her intended departure from the headship, choose to approach as her preferred successor the only individual in the movie less worldly than herself?

But there are a range of other, albeit less broad, comic moments. Professor Boyd's enthusiastic if ill-starred attempts to persuade the Commonwealth Bank (of all people) to help fund her department's shortfall have more than a little black humour. 'I asked them first', she tells the camera, hopefully. 'And they should like that, since they were Australia's first bank!' Unfortunately, the film doesn't show who was *numero duo* on Professor Boyd's list of

potential sponsors: one suspects there was no *numero duo*. When Professor Boyd has her belated conversion from old-style professionalism (or is it amateurism?) to unionism, she tells a staff meeting that she is taking a stand on issues of quality, not on wages, since she could never strike on what she has previously called the 'tacky' matter of her salary. We then see her enthusiastically and resourcefully turning away truck-drivers at the picket-line, gloriously oblivious to the fact that the industrial action she is involved in is in good measure precisely a pay-dispute. When the other members of the department insist that enough is enough, and they cannot continue to teach 20 hours face-to-face a week in order to make the budget work, Evans and Boyd emphatically insist that they at least will persist with the regimen. Winsome Evans is in high dudgeon. Surely, she asks, that precious inheritance of Western culture, individual freedom, is not dead? Surely her colleagues are not trying to rob her of her right to teach more hours than anybody else? The moment loses its humour, however, when we discover at the end of the movie that Evans was subsequently hospitalised by a heart-attack.

I recite these moments not - I hope - out of malice or ill-will, but because to me they suggest how precisely tragicomic is the dilemma of individuals like Boyd and Evans, and collectivities like Sydney University's Music Department, in our present grimly uncomic times. Australia needs musicians such as this department has trained, not only for the alleged good of our souls, but in order to develop the kind of vibrant and pluralistic public culture which may in time shape us into a nation of consequence. And we need composers and musicians of the high calibre of Anne Boyd and Winsome Evans to teach them. And yet, apparently, the characteristics which make these particular individuals so good at their respective arts, and even such driven (if at times worryingly hectoring) teachers, seem also - in a grimly comic irony - to render them constitutionally incapable of effectively managing a department in times of crisis. At the same time, the very nature of their teaching is such that it cannot, and will not ever, seem like a good financial proposition, either to government bureaucrats or deans of faculty in a regime of grimly straitened circumstances. (I leave aside here the technical question of whether or not music departments are properly located in universities.)

For the reasons I have already hinted at, Professor Boyd and her colleagues are hardly typical of department heads, and university staff, more broadly. They are perhaps the limit-case. And yet their particularly spectacular malaise signals in larger-than-life form a less dramatic but widespread dilemma. We all know some especially talented colleague or colleagues who persist stubbornly in their incapacity to deal with the photocopier, their email and voice-mail, or any of the routine calendar-items of contemporary academic life. We probably know a number of

others who have reacted to the turbulent times in the academy by withdrawing to their offices and 'the life of the mind'. (Well, yes, some of them may have been there already.) In the past all of these behaviours may have been viewed as tokens of a loveable eccentricity, or even as some kind of 'subversive' riposte to authority. And they may have gone hand-in-hand with moments of inspired teaching, collegial generosity or genuine scholarly insight. Yet in the current hard times such colleagues must necessarily be viewed as dysfunctional individuals. And with their dysfunctionality will be lost their insight.

I see no easy answer to these dilemmas - at least short of a sudden and highly unexpected increase in funding across the system. But I am certain that it will require some sort of unwelcome re-thinking on both sides. Scholars cannot afford to maintain their traditional aesthetic disdain for the humble departmental budget, and all it implies: there is too much of importance to be lost. Being a head of department, for instance, requires specific skills which have to be learned (and taught). It also requires a certain attitude towards the task which is simply incompatible with the traditional rosy image of a first-among-equals in the fabled Community of Scholars. Finally, it demands that the colleagues of heads of school who are thrust into these unaccustomed roles at a time of systemic crisis acknowledge that they are there to be managed, and that rigorous management and leadership skills are necessary and even laudable traits.

In the case of individuals like Professor Boyd, I suspect these are hurdles too high to be jumped. But their successors (where they exist) will have to close their eyes and take the leap, while they still have the chance. At the same time, administrators great and small cannot pretend that the iron law of budgets can somehow lessen or obviate the simple bastardry of axing departments such as Professor Boyd's. At some point they all have to acknowledge, publicly, that more can not be done with less, and that the crisis has become systemic. To fail to do so is simply to fail to manage well.

Robin Anderson died on 8 March, 2002.

Keen vision, short sight

The Enterprise University. Power, Governance and Reinvention in Australia,
Simon Marginson and Mark Considine,
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge,
xiv + 272 pp, \$34.95 paperback, \$99.00
hardback

DON AITKEN

This is a very good book indeed, penetrating in its analysis, firmly based on recent empirical work and measured in its tone, which makes it a refreshing change from some of the recent books on our world of higher education. Anyone who works in a university will find the book full of interesting and enlightening material. Although the empirical work – a series of interviews of senior university people from 17 Australian universities – was carried out in the mid 1990s, the general thrust of the argument has only been strengthened by what has happened since.

In summary, Marginson and Considine argue that all Australian universities are now 'Enterprise Universities', concerned to find money out in the world so that they can survive. This process has involved greater or lesser amounts of institutional reinvention, the adoption of many practices that are common in business enterprises, and the decline in power of the 'traditional' academic disciplines. Vice-chancellors and those who surround them are now more powerful figures, Councils are becoming more like the boards of corporations, and academic boards have shrunk in size and power. There is a present and growing need to find new meanings for identity, culture and autonomy within the contemporary university.

I think they have got it about right, and while what follows in this review is largely argumentative (because I don't think they have it completely right!), I should emphasise that their analysis had me nodding my head in agreement again and again. They seem to me to have placed John Dawkins properly in the story of the last fifteen years, to understand the nature and limitations of executive power, and to know how to compare and contrast these awkward and slippery things we call universities. Although my own place was not part of the 17, and I was not interviewed for it (in fact, I think I was an Australian Research Council assessor for the grant application which funded the empirical work), many of the verbatim quotes could have been things I have said.

Since all of us know our university best, to read a book like this one, which scans a dozen and a half at the same time, is a sobering experience. I am deeply impressed by the evidence about how far and how fast the move toward the Enterprise University has gone.

My principal concern with the book is its uncertain sense of history. What I see as deficiencies here do not invalidate the central argument, but point towards a rather different explanation for what has certainly occurred. The weakness is a familiar methodological one. The two authors would no doubt like to have provided us with a kind of panel study, in which they interviewed essentially the same office-holders at two points in time ten or fifteen years apart. Alas, as so often in the social sciences, they were able to do the second but not the first. So we know what all these people thought was the case in 1996 or 1997, but not what they or their predecessors thought was the case in the early or mid 1980s.

Now there's no doubt that things have changed a lot, but when did the changes start? When you have a couple of unmistakably powerful events, like the Green and White Papers of 1987/88 and the Howard Government's Budget of 1996, it is tempting to see these events as having had almost universal effect. But since I not only lived through all of that, but started my preparation for university not quite 50 years ago, I often see continuity and change in different terms to those employed by Marginson and Considine. The last half-century, for universities no less than our nation, has been a time of continuing change; it didn't start with John Dawkins.

Let me give some examples. 'Once universities were able to temper the effects of sudden changes and deflect many of its pressures (p. 96)'. When was that? I can't think of such a time myself. The first Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee paper to talk of a 'crisis' in the university system was back in the 1940s, and we've gone from one 'crisis' to another ever since. Since we've survived them all, perhaps the word 'crisis' is too strong (it's certainly been over-used and not just by universities). And to talk of 'mass enrolment' in the late 1950s (p. 108) is to extend present conditions back much too far. University enrolments in 1957 were less than 40,000, compared with more than 700,000 today. The 1980s and 1990s saw a 'reduced capacity to carry out...community service (p. 13)'. Really? Compared to when? In my judgement, universities are vastly more involved in community service now than they have ever been; indeed, community service (which irritates quite a few academics, who feel it is irrelevant to their real work) is part of the reinvention that the authors rightly comment on. And when did university Councils have a 'community-forming role' from which they are now retreating (p. 243)? I have been a member of the Councils of three universities at different times for much of the past 40 years, and community-forming, either internally or externally, has not been to the fore in any of them. It is

certainly true, however, that today's Councils think and act in much more businesslike ways than was true in the 1960s and 1970s.

My unease with the history was the greatest in the authors' treatment of research. Now I think that the authors' assessment of our present reality is spot on. But when they compare today with the past I often shook my head. Public funding of the research that academics want to do has been in existence for barely 35 years, although the first injection of money to support research infrastructure came a very few years before that. Universities developed a strong research culture quickly, nonetheless, and that spread into the colleges of advanced education, even though they were explicitly not funded for that activity. Had it not been so RMIT could not have won a Special Research Centre in open competition in the mid 1980s and the Co-operative Research Centres which dot the landscape would not be where they currently are (my own university is the HQ of one and a senior academic partner in another). In contrast to the authors, who see all this as quite recent, I would argue that since the mid 1960s research grants have always been ends in themselves, grants have always begotten new grants, research has always been the principal path to honour, and we never did value research for its outcomes – grants have always been proxies for real value. Indeed, I gave a speech in England in 1990 saying just this. The three biases which the authors discern as outcomes of the Enterprise University's worry about how to manage risk in research – biases towards quantity rather than quality, towards short-term rather than long-term, and towards track record rather than potential – were all things that the members of the Australian Research Grants Committee (ARGC) of the early 1980s worried about. No doubt members of even earlier ARGCs worried about them too.

This uncertainty about the past bobs up continually when the authors consider 'autonomy'. They think (p. 20) that the paradox of deregulation is that universities have less autonomy, meaning that they have to compete with one another, and therefore all have to operate as market-orientated organisations. But that isn't what autonomy is about: it means independence of government, and there is no doubt that in this sense we are more independent than we used to be. I don't think the authors ever quite decide what they mean by autonomy. How independent should universities be, anyway? How much should the people who pay the piper be entitled to name the tune? When did universities have 'a broad role in public culture' (p. 37)? What's the evidence? These are all important questions if you are going to talk about autonomy. Every now and then a grim picture emerges of a government determined to control universities at every level. While government has stopped overt regulation of universities and pulled out some of its money 'at the same time it is using more subtle and severe methods to shape their inner

life' (p. 175). Really? Who is doing this? David Kemp? Mike Gallagher? Come off it! Surely the reality is that universities are now much freer to do what they like, freer to make mistakes, and freer to write their own scripts. People who think otherwise have forgotten the sort of control that the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission used to have.

So where does all this get us? I think Marginson and Considine have portrayed the present in an accurate and enlightening way, and they are right to argue that the 1990s have been a period of great change. But I think they attribute too much of what they see to political changes in the late 1980s and mid 1990s. I think that a lot of this would have happened anyway, whether or not Dawkins and Vanstone and Howard had pulled the levers. Much of what Australian higher education has experienced in this time has happened elsewhere, at much the same time. I think that they need to add the increasing scale of the system into their analysis. Very generally, the present higher education system is some 30 times larger than it was when I was an undergraduate in the early 1950s (15 or so times larger if we correct for the doubling of our population). The system is also twice as large as it was in the mid 1980s.

The universities have had to change, everywhere. The 'traditional' academic disciplines, most of them creations of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, have given way to newer bodies of thought, creations of the second half of the 20th century. I have no doubt that there is a flock of even newer ones coming in the early 21st century. There has been at least a doubling of higher education enrolments throughout the world in the last decade. University presidents, rectors, vice-chancellors have grown in power and responsibility everywhere. Australia is not at all unique in its experience, though we parochially and habitually attribute a great deal to the actions or inaction of our governments. I know that the authors will feel as though they are being criticised for not having written a different book. But judgements involve comparisons, and comparisons involve (in this case) a sound knowledge of the past. No one has written a good history of Australian higher education, and I'm not suggesting that these authors should have done so as part of their brief. Yet the lack of one has been a real problem for them.

Let me finish with a few scattered comments. As those who have read his earlier work will know, Simon Marginson is fond of classifications. Those who have the same liking will enjoy this book, for it presents three, of universities, academic leaders, and models of devolution and integration in research management. That I didn't find them very useful probably says more about me than about the various schema. For what it's worth, I find about as much variation within universities as I do between them, which the authors also say somewhere. But I did like their accurate and somewhat sardonic view of the 'Sandstone'

universities. They see the present pattern of privilege as being there for the long haul, and I might agree, but I can see that my 'long term' is a good deal longer than theirs is. I can remember when there wasn't a UNSW, and its predecessor was called 'Kenso Tech' by those who thought that there was only one real university in Sydney. So my sense of what is likely to happen is that there will be a spreading out of value and reputation. The 'Sandstones' will not be dislodged; they will just have to make room, as they have done progressively since the first postwar foundations.

The Enterprise University is a good read, even if the authors use the polysyllabic brush too much (I did get tired of 'isomorphistic' and just shook my head at 'simulacra exposed'). If you want to understand the university you work in, and why it is that way, and what you can do about it, and why you should bother, this well-researched, well-written and well-produced book is a great place to start.

The policy parabola

***Social policy, public policy: from problem to practice*, Meredith Edwards, with Cosmo Howard and Robin Miller (Allen and Unwin, Sydney 2000), \$35**

JANE NICHOLLS

In some countries governments introduce new policies by decree - without fanfare, consultation or controversy. On my first day as an adviser to the Ministry of Education in the Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in 2001, I was asked which organisations and agencies I would like to meet. In response I submitted a list of government departments and officials - approved without question - and also of industry representatives, banks, private companies, academic experts, unions and student organisations. "But why do you want to speak to these people?" asked the Head of the Higher Education Office. He sounded genuinely puzzled.

"Because I want to consult them about the new education financing proposals, of course!"

"What does it matter what they think?" He glared at me as if I was an idiot. "We have already decided to implement the new arrangements. Whether they like it or not is irrelevant!"

But isn't the Government concerned about the possibility of losing popular support?"

"No. Of course it isn't. The ruling party holds well over 90 per cent of the vote, and will continue to do so, whatever policies it adopts." He looked at me coldly.

"I see."

In reviewing Meredith Edwards' revealing and highly personal account of policy development in Australia under the Hawke and Keating Governments, I have begun with a personal story of my own. Fortunately perhaps, things in Australia are a little different, although Edwards, possibly unwittingly, demonstrates in her informative and readable book that policy processes in a democracy such as ours can sometimes lack transparency and genuine involvement on the part of those potentially affected by the changes proposed: the public. Some of the processes she describes are short on genuine consultation, conducted within relatively closed circles of agencies and individuals in Canberra's rarefied atmosphere.

How is policy made by governments? How can unions, lobby groups, academic experts and others contribute effectively to public policy? Meredith Edwards was a key player in policy development during the Hawke-Keating years, ending her career in the Public Service as Deputy Secretary in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Currently she is Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Canberra.

For those outside government who seek to influence policy development, Meredith Edwards' book provides a gripping series of insights on these questions by means of storytelling: a series of case studies outlining several major attempts at policy innovation in the years 1983-1995. Of the four cases described, in all of which Edwards herself had a senior role, two were broadly successful while the remaining two were not, and Edwards' analysis may have benefited from a more comprehensive discussion of why this was so. All, however, yield important lessons. Edwards draws on her own personal journal and the informal reminiscences of other key players – public servants and academics – to bring life to her account. Edwards says that her book was given impetus by the appearance in 1999 of the *Australian Policy Handbook* by Peter Bridgman and Glyn Davis (2000). Her contribution is designed to provide concrete examples to complement the “how-to” of Bridgman and Davis' guide through the Australian policy maze.

Two aspects of Edwards' book are of particular interest to those, including academics, involved with the Australian university system: first, the fact that the cases described in close detail include the development and implementation of the system of student financing known as HECS and the Hawke Government changes to the former AUSTUDY scheme and related youth allowances. The remaining cases are the establishment of the Child Support Agency and payment regime, and the Keating basket of partially-implemented reforms encapsulated in the *Working Nation* report of 1994. (Of these four, HECS and the Child Support reforms are identified as successful.) Secondly, Edwards highlights the role that academics can play in policy-making. This is something that she particularly values and appreciates.

As someone also closely, and sometimes painfully, involved in the process that led to the introduction of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme, HECS, I read Meredith Edwards' account with great interest, anticipating, however, that our perceptions would diverge. After all, as Edwards herself points out, the education lobby and the union movement (with notable exceptions mentioned by Edwards) bitterly opposed the new scheme on the basis that it would deter access to higher education. Many of us also believed fervently in the principle that higher education, like all public education, should be free of tuition fees. While surprisingly little was actually new, to this player, in Edwards' account, her detailed rendition of a turbulent birth for the new policy is an interesting, fair and accurate contribution.

History has shown the opponents of HECS to be both right and wrong. We were wrong in our prediction that the scheme, as originally implemented by Labor, would cause wholesale boycotting of universities by potential students. Only comparatively small, specific groups (mature-aged students already in the workforce) were affected to a discernible degree, and then not particularly significantly. We were right, however, in our dire warnings that, once the HECS mechanism was established and took hold, it would enable successive, less benign, governments to increase the impost on students without attracting too much unwelcome comment. The Howard Government did just that in 1996, by massively increasing HECS charges and, most damaging, dropping the HECS repayment threshold from a level equivalent to average weekly earnings (about \$30,000 p.a.) to only \$ 20,000 p.a. The full effects of these changes are yet to be felt. Application rates for higher education, dropped significantly after these changes were introduced. Nevertheless, this point should not be taken to heart in a general way: if policy-makers were too mindful of the potential for their policies to be corrupted and misused by future miscreant governments, very little change in public policy would be implemented at all.

On one matter connected with the HECS saga I beg to differ with the assumptions made by Meredith Edwards. She mentions the High Court challenge instigated, she says, by students. This aimed to test the Constitutional powers on which the Commonwealth had based the HECS legislation. In fact this challenge involved the higher education unions, at least at the early stages. The unions and the national student organisations questioned the legal power of the Commonwealth Government to impose a charge for education – this area of policy belonging, according to the Australian Constitution, to the States. The Commonwealth relied on a section allowing it to confer “benefits” on students – a power originally designed to enable assistance measures to be introduced following the Second World War, financing university study for returned service personnel. HECS, effectively a loan to finance a

tuition charge formally inflicted by universities themselves, was, according to the Commonwealth, a “benefit”. Meredith Edwards asserts that, if this power had been adjudged by the High Court not to be adequate, then “the Commonwealth would turn to its tax power” (Edwards, 2000; p. 132). In fact, this would most likely have been less winnable than the Commonwealth’s initial position: HECS is a fixed charge, not a tax, even though it is collected via the tax system.

One highly amusing incident is omitted from Edwards’ account on HECS. On the day before Education Minister John Dawkins was to unveil his wonderful new “benefit” to students, HECS, he provided the education stakeholder groups with a preview of his planned presentation. The scheme, as Edwards indicates in passing, was to be known not as “HECS” but as “ACCESS”: “Australian Contribution to the Cost of Education for Students Scheme”. The Minister, crammed with his palpably hostile audience into a tiny room in Old Canberra House, was availing himself of a flip chart. When he turned, to culminate his presentation, to the page showing this disingenuous acronym, his audience broke up in hysterical, derisive laughter. The following day, when the “real” unveiling took place, the name had been replaced with something a little less ridiculous.

In her discussion of the development of HECS, Edwards details the key roles played by a number of academic economists, in particular Bob Gregory and Bruce Chapman from the Australian National University. Chapman was seconded as a consultant to Minister Dawkins virtually full time for an extended period, to work on the theoretical base for the scheme. Edwards points out that the strong theoretical basis underpinning HECS, and underlying also the work of the Wran Committee which formally proposed the new policy, was crucial. The scheme’s soundness as a policy and its successful, relatively smooth, implementation relied largely on the work of these academics who were drawn into the policy process.

Edwards brings her extensive experience to bear in this analytical work. Her case studies illustrate the crucial role and value of a clearly articulated policy development framework, involving:

- identification of issues and definition of the problem;
- policy analysis, including collection of data, clarification of objectives, resolution of key questions and development of proposals;
- consultation;
- decision;
- implementation; and finally
- evaluation.

Nevertheless, she says, however important such a framework may be, “it can be rather sterile, if not simplistic, if used on its own” (3). Other essential factors for successful

policy-making include the careful consideration and, where appropriate, crafting of the organisational structures to be used, and, equally important, the selection of the players in the process. Here, Edwards lists public servants, ministers and their advisers and academics. The cases show clearly that all of these people can contribute in crucial ways, but that this works only when players of all categories operate as a team where mutual respect for each others’ skills and knowledge is a central feature of their iterations. All must recognise that they will inevitably learn from each other. This point is well illustrated in a contribution by Bruce Chapman, architect of HECS, where he discusses his experience in dealing with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). He, an academic then relatively inexperienced in the policy process, was despatched (“curiously”, as Edwards notes) to persuade the ATO that it ought to welcome an involvement in the collection of the new student charge.

It was a salutary experience, one of those things in your career that turns out to be a turning point in an understanding of how things work. I now laugh at my image: a wet-behind-the-ears academic strolling cheerfully to the ATO with the unquestioned conviction that if a policy was good, bureaucrats would naturally jump at the chance of implementing it. (Chapman quoted in Edwards, 2000; p.128)

But, alas, Chapman’s reception was far from enthusiastic: the ATO put forward all manner of obstacles and objections. Eventually, however, they became strong supporters of HECS, and their role in its administration:

I consider that the ATO acted perfectly reasonably, indeed rationally, both in the barriers they erected, and their eventual acceptance and ownership of HECS. This institution showed itself to be a model of cautious and progressive administration, and we should acknowledge gratefully their professionalism. (Chapman quoted in Edwards, 2000; p.131)

Edwards emphasises and acknowledges the roles of all categories of players in the policy processes she describes. Michael Keating, Peter Grant and Derek Volker are identified as central to the development of *Working Nation* alongside the theoretical input of academics involved. At the same time, she notes the rise, in the eighties, of the influence of ministerial advisers – David Phillips and Mary Ann O’Loughlin on Keating’s staff and *Working Nation*; Allen Mawer, Dawkins’ senior adviser, on HECS.

The book concentrates, however, on examples where it is a minister who actually instigates policy change. There are, of course, many other primary origins for new policy. The crucial contributions to our nation of committed visionaries such as H.C. (Nugget) Coombs show that public servants, creative in approach and dedicated to the public good, can leave a mark at least as memorable and worthy on a country’s public life. Public pressure, expressed via lobby groups, unions and the like, can also

play a key role in initiating change, and this book will provide invaluable insight for many outside the political process into how they might be more effective in their policy interventions.

The role of the Parliament and its processes in instigating new policy is another path left untraced by Edwards in her book. Opposition parties, particularly taking advantage of the Senate and its processes - Senate Inquiries and the interrogations of government made possible by Senate Estimates, can, if tenacious and thorough, force major change in the direction taken by the Government. An example where I was personally involved in forcing new policy in this way was the total rewriting of the regulatory regime surrounding Australia's education export industry. This culminated in the Government's new *ESOS Act 2000* and associated amendments to the *Migration Act 1959*, which replaced the outdated and, by then, discredited former framework. The relentless exposure of immigration rorts and severe quality assurance problems that were features of the private sector of the international education industry was pursued over three years by then Shadow Senate Spokesperson for Education (now Shadow Minister for Science and Research), Senator Kim Carr. To this end he utilised the Senate Estimates Committee process and a series of inquiries to bring these problems to light and to interrogate government ministers and departmental officers about the actions they had taken to stamp out illegal and questionable practices. He was assisted by the many responsible operators in international education who wanted their industry cleaned up. In this way, the inadequacy of the current regulatory regime to deal with a new international environment was highlighted, and eventually the Coalition Government was backed into a corner. The only credible way out for the Howard Government was to announce and legislate a new, revamped policy that had greater integrity and strength.

Meredith Edwards draws compellingly and informatively from her own experience in her book, which, for others involved in the development and implementation of policy, in whatever capacity, is fascinating and enlightening. Her accounts of four cases of major policy change are also interesting from the perspective of those interested in Australian political history: Edwards emphasises the centrality of politics and political processes in public policy development.

Her account is one of how things actually occurred. As she says,

It is inevitable in the assessment of policy processes that there is no counterfactual. We cannot answer whether a lesser process would have done as well, or whether a different process could have done better. (Edwards, 2000; p. 174)

We can look critically and analytically at how broadly similar policies are introduced and implemented in various jurisdictions or countries. Lessons can be drawn from

such an examination but, as the Ethiopian example quoted at the beginning of this piece illustrates starkly, cultural, social and political contexts can vary in unexpected ways. There are thus limits to the extent that such comparisons can be enlightening, although these studies are also crucially important in a converging, globalised environment (Chapman and Nicholls, forthcoming).

In the final analysis we learn and advance our theoretical ideas only from lived experience – our own and that of others. As Meredith Edwards says of her book,

It is hoped that these case studies will advance theoretical and conceptual constructs about what does constitute good policy development processes and, perhaps, clarify the factors that can prevent policy initiatives from stalling. (Edwards 2000; p. 189)

A sound and practical goal, well achieved by this book.

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Keenesian economics, anyone?

***Debunking Economics: The Naked Emperor of the Social Sciences* by Steve Keen, Pluto Press, 335pp \$38.95**

ALEX MILLMOW
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Sometimes when a first-year economics lecturer looks around at all the vacant faces while he delineates upon the pareto optimal conditions necessary for achieving a perfectly competitive equilibrium for it give cause for him to reflect afterwards about what old Adam Smith said about giving a sham lecture in economics:

If the teacher happens to be a man of sense, it must be an unpleasant thing to him to be conscious, while he is lecturing his students, that he is either speaking or reading nonsense, or what is very little better than

nonsense. It must too be unpleasant to him to observe that the greater part of his students desert his lectures; or perhaps attend upon them with plain enough marks of neglect, contempt, and derision...

Smith was attacking, of course, the indolence of the masters in letting their lecturing and teaching prowess slip because they were kept on the public purse. Another interpretation, however, was that Smith felt the professors were also peddling abstruse nonsense quite useless as a guide to understanding the real world. And it is that later aspect that Steve Keen's new book takes up.

While at times hard going, this book is dedicated to the cognoscenti and to those social science academics who have long felt intimidated, if not bamboozled, by the authority of those in the economics building. Keen and his publishers have hit the right nerve since the book's first print run has sold out. One group that won't be reading it, however, will be mainstream economists who suffer from a curious affliction of theoretical autism. In their minds they have raised the drawbridge and flooded the moat. In some ways it is a fair enough reaction since books decrying orthodox economics come out with every year. Orthodox economists are not in the mood for introspection even when, as Keen makes clear, it is the venerated elders of the priesthood who, after dedicating their life to the profession, recant and cast doubts upon the foundations upon which the citadel of orthodox economists rests. Keen, a mathematical economist and historian of economic thought, to boot, takes the reader upon a fairly exacting tour of the tattered palace of conventional economics.

We see a cold discipline, replete with error, non sequitur, heroic assumptions and rickety methodology and increasingly disengaged from the world. As Alan Kirwan puts it, so long as economists maintain "the fundamentally individualistic approach to constructing economic models, no amount of attention to the walls will prevent the citadel from being empty".

The high theorists of the profession knew this all along but have papered the cracks over. Non-economists, if they can overcome an avalanche of diagrams and the tedium of first-year economics that Keen, in passing, has to serve up, will blush at the discipline's Gerry-built architecture.

After announcing his own personal affiliations, Keen begins his assault upon the citadel of economics by reconstructing it, starting with the foundation stones of demand and supply, through to the lofty heights of general equilibrium theory. Keen shows, in accessible language, how even fundamental concepts such as a downward sloping market demand and upward sloping market supply diagrams, are invalid, more a matter of faith than empirically proven. Even cornerstone theoretical methodological concepts like marginal productivity, comparative statics and equilibrium are found to be flaky. Many

sympathetic economists sometimes find this too hard to take. It reminds me how two graduate students attending Keynes' lectures where he enunciated his new theoretical structure and, in doing so, trashing the house of neoclassical economics turned to the other and whispered 'This is too much.'

With the discipline in some disarray, economists are partly to blame by refusing to engage in some spring-cleaning. The oppressive power of ideology and inertia that pervades modern economics is brought about by an education that is more akin to indoctrination than inquiry. The renowned use of highfalutin mathematics and obscure jargon helps to cover up the fault lines in the edifice. The whole superstructure of orthodox economics therefore rests upon rotten foundations.

Essentially Keen picks up where John Maynard Keynes, Piero Sraffa, Joan Robinson and a galaxy of dissidents left off. And while he invokes Keynes in encouraging his readers to escape from 'habitual modes of thought and expression', mainstream economics has always been strong enough to ignore every critique thrown at it. Whether it can withstand the new threat of falling popularity at university is another question.

Since 1870 every revolution in economics, including the Keynesian one, has never really succeeded in fashioning new garments for the emperor - even when the pioneers of economic science expected those who came after them to devise a theory of economic dynamics that would chart the process from one equilibrium to another. Rather economics became stultified if not retrogressive.

Keynes' warning in the *General Theory* (1936) that much of economic theory was so unworldly that it is dangerous to apply it to the real world finds recurring validation in Keen's critique of current economics. In that regard, the, at times, quixotic campaign for economic reform in this country is basically all about re-configuring Australia's institutional framework to that stylised in textbooks. Knowing his territory Keen is one of the few critics to show, using conventional economic theory, how rampant self-interest and notions, such as perfect competition detract from the social good. He shows how the discipline is suspended in deep freeze by theoretic charms such as equilibrium theory and marginal productivity. Consequently it has and has proven incredibly inert to, if not dismissive of, new paradigms, new blueprints, in economic thought, which are briefly surveyed in the last chapter. One road Keen will not contemplate in the odyssey to find a saner economic paradigm is the Marxist approach where all things revolve around the labour theory of value. Rather Keen shows the reader how rich and pluralistic economics can be by drawing upon the best parts of the five or so paradigms within the body economic.

Are doctorates worthwhile?

The Ph.D. Trap Revisited, Wilfred Cude, Dundurn, Toronto, 2001, 333 pp., Price C\$22.99

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The PhD is the accepted apprenticeship into research and has become a prerequisite for academic jobs in most fields. But is it a good idea? The negative view is that studying for doctorates wastes vast amounts of time and effort, produces narrow-minded scholars and discourages recognition of good teaching. Far from promoting research, according to this critical view the doctorate is a serious brake on intellectual creativity.

These sentiments are seldom voiced publicly by academics, most of whom have a vested interest in the doctoral system, having themselves obtained PhDs and trained a succession of graduate students. So it is not surprising that Wilfred Cude, author of this powerful exposé, is not a tenured academic. A Canadian literary scholar, Cude has personal experience of bias in the academic system. Being denied a PhD and a permanent job, he has eked out a precarious career as a casual teacher, yet continuing to do research. He self-published *The Ph.D. Trap* in 1987 and eventually found a mainstream publisher for *The Ph.D. Trap Revisited*, which is updated and double the size.

Cude opens his attack with some alarming statistics. In 1995 in the United States, the average physical scientist PhD graduate had been enrolled in graduate school for 6.9 years and chronologically had spent a total of 8.4 years from beginning to end. For social sciences the figures were 7.5 and 10.5 years and for humanities 8.4 and 12.0 years. Over the previous several decades, these figures had grown considerably. Cude notes that in some fields, the average PhD graduate is nearly middle-aged, having spent what should have been some of the most creative and productive years in pursuit of a qualification of marginal intellectual value.

In Canada and the US, PhD candidates spend years in coursework and preparation for qualifying examinations before undertaking a dissertation, making the process longer than in Australia. Yet many Australian readers will recognise the syndrome of the seemingly perpetual research student.

The waste involved in slow progress is one thing, but pales by comparison with the wasted effort and disillusionment of those who drop out along the way. Is there a better way?

Cude takes a broad view in examining the problems with the PhD. He surveys the evolution of universities over the past couple of centuries, noting how changes in training reflected economic, political and cultural influences. He quotes eminent commentators, such as William James and Thorstein Veblen, who were critical of the PhD in its very early days. He then turns his attention to shortcomings among tenured academics, describing various types of unethical behaviour. The most striking case is that of engineering professor Valery Fabrikant of Concordia University who murdered four colleagues in 1992. A subsequent investigation revealed various forms of inappropriate behaviour and poor policy in the department and university. Fabrikant was guilty but he operated in an environment of dubious ethics. Cude also describes methodological conflicts in universities, such as Yale mathematician Serge Lang's attack on prominent Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington (Lang, 1998).

What does all this have to do with the PhD? Cude is trying to show that the route to the doctorate is not just a matter of careful and conscientious scholarship, but also involves traversing a political and ethical swamp, due to improper behaviour and methodological confusion among academics, who have enormous power over PhD students. Indeed, those intrepid graduate students who challenge the decisions of their supervisors are in for a rough ride indeed, as evidenced by the legal travails of University of Toronto philosophy student Eric P. Polten, who possibly learned more law than philosophy through his challenges to his advisory committee. Despite the fact that Polten's dissertation had already been published in the Netherlands to laudatory reviews, the committee refused to pass it. Other frustrated PhD students have taken more drastic action, in a few cases murdering their supervisors.

On the positive side, Cude gives examples of scholars, such as economist Kenneth Boulding, who have made seminal contributions despite never having undertaken a PhD. Cude argues that, in terms of developing oneself intellectually, a second master's degree may be better than a PhD. He is severely critical of tenure as protecting non-productive time-servers, and favours internships to support gifted teachers without doctorates.

The Ph.D. Trap Revisited is engagingly written and draws on a wide range of relevant literature, such as Randall Collins' *The Credential Society* (1979) and Bill Readings' *The University in Ruins* (1996), indeed serving as a useful introduction to both classic and more recent works in the genre of university criticism, especially criticism oriented to the humanities.

What does Cude recommend? Here he can but offer advice, given the lack of any movement for fundamental reform of higher education along his preferred lines. To prospective PhD students, he advises caution and careful consideration of alternatives, lest years be wasted on a futile and soul-destroying quest. To those very few tenured academics who are willing to scrutinise the PhD system, he recommends supporting reforms. To people outside the university, he advocates action, because universities won't change on their own: "while the best students shun the doctorate in the humanities and social sciences, while many other good students are lured into frustration and failure in those disciplines, and while the formal analysis of our most urgent social, cultural and ethical problems passes more and more into the hands of conformist and doctrinaire thinkers, the universities will for the most part remain silent" (p. 310).

Cude goes easy on the sciences, accepting the PhD there as comparatively benign. Yet a powerful critique can also be mounted against research degrees in the sciences, as shown by Jeff Schmidt in *Disciplined Minds* (2000).

The Ph.D. Trap Revisited deserves attention because Cude, unlike most of the other thousands of failed aspirants who are spat out by the higher education system each year, retains his voice, and an eloquent and measured one at that, with scarcely a hint of his personal struggles. His critical commentary will be uncomfortable reading for many academics who do not want to imagine that, except for good fortune, they might have ended up in the academic scrap heap. It would be both courageous and honourable to give a copy of the book to beginning PhD students. If they then decide to proceed, at least they will do so with open eyes.

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Universities survive?

Adaptive University Structures: An Analysis of Adaptation to Socioeconomic Environments of US and European Universities, Barbara Sporn

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University managers, academic staff and students will find Barbara Sporn's *Adaptive University Structures* a valuable text as it provides a useful insight into a question which is of paramount importance for today's universities, how can they survive and thrive in changing operational contexts? This text provides an analysis of existing theories of adaptation within organisations, with specific reference to adaptation within universities. The strength of this work is its broad empirical basis, an investigation of adaptation processes in six universities, three European and three in the United States. Data from this study is then used to formulate a theory of adaptation in universities.

Adaptive University Structures commences with an outline of environmental changes that have impacted on universities, many of these factors such as declining public spending, government regulatory mechanisms for quality assurance of academic programs, changing demographics of student cohorts and the expansion of interactive telecommunication networks across national boundaries are evident in higher education systems throughout the globe. Sporn's study proceeds from the assumption that given these sorts of environmental changes universities must adapt in order to survive and thrive (Sporn 1999, pp. 20-21). Rather than proceeding on the basis of this a priori assumption which is in effect assuming a conclusion before conducting the enquiry, it would have been preferable to proceed by first identifying the key environmental factors impacting the particular university and then investigating whether adaptive responses did occur, and if so to what extent, and where in the university structure or processes they occurred. Instead Sporn relies on Balridge's contention that 'in a university setting structure which includes, management, leadership and a set of governance procedures is the prime administrative handle to provide leverage both for producing and adjusting to educational innovation'. (Sporn 1999, p.20)

I find Burton Clark's view more convincing. He argues that whilst a strengthened steering core plays a vital role in setting the strategic directions, and providing resources

and infrastructure which can facilitate processes of transformation and adaptation, the executive management of university's can not attain successful change and ensure the university's survival without the active involvement and support of those in the 'academic heartland' –the academics working in the faculties, departments and research centers because that is where the substance of the adaptive changes will be manifest. (Clark 1998, p.7). Clark defines this synergy between the steering core and the academic heartland of universities as an integrated entrepreneurial culture arguing that it is the unified nature of the commitment to entrepreneurial strategic goals by the strengthened steering core, the academic heartland and the expanded development periphery plus a diversified funding base that ensures that universities can successfully adapt and survive. (Clark 1998, pp.7-8). Whist Clark's view that all universities should become entrepreneurial and that they have the means to do so is open to question, his work unlike Sporn's correctly identifies the significance of an integrated organisational culture and values to the attainment of successful adaptation.

There are two key questions that shaped this work: firstly, what are the sources of adaptation?; and secondly what are the processes through which adaptation occurs? Sporn defines organisational adaptation as a process of modification and alterations in the organisation or its components in order to adapt to changes in the external environment. She makes the point that adaptation does not imply reactivity on the part of an organisation but can indeed be proactive and anticipatory.

The major portion of the work is devoted to the presentation of empirical data, case studies of how six universities adapted to their changing operational contexts. The sample of European universities only includes specialised institutions of economics and business administration; a private Italian university in Milan initiating a strategic planning process, Università Commerciale – Luigi Bocconi, a public Swiss university with strong entrepreneurial characteristics, Universität St Gallen and a public Austrian university in Vienna undergoing restructuring to cope with the demands imposed by mass higher education, Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien. The United States sample includes a private university, New York University, a public university with strong autonomy and diversified funding, University of Michigan and a public multi-campus university, University of California at Berkeley. The sample is paradoxically both extremely broad and narrow. Its breadth lies in the number of universities and the range of diverse national environments in which they operate. The narrowness of the sample is evident in the selection of European universities that specialise in teaching economics and business administration, given that the data on adaptive processes found in these institutions is to be compared to that found in the large United States universities teaching and researching a comprehensive range of disciplines there is some concern that comparing

such dissimilar entities may render those comparisons relatively meaningless.

Sporn's field work was designed to test the validity of her assumptions: firstly that universities need a crisis caused by change in their environment in order to adapt; secondly that collegial forms of decision making enhance successful adaptation; thirdly, universities need professional management for successful adaptation and lastly, that change-oriented leadership that recognises the disparate needs of interest groups facilitates adaptation. (Sporn 1999, p.76).

In the final chapter of *Adaptive University Structures*, "Towards a Theory of Adaptation in Higher Education" Sporn provides a useful summary of her case study findings, describing each case study according to the challenge it faced and the response that it made. Sporn provides a number of methods of interpreting her findings, identifying common elements of adaptation as well as different elements of adaptation, factors that enhanced and impeded adaptation, a comparison of the comprehensive United States universities against the specialised European universities, comparisons of factors of adaptation at large and small universities, comparisons of factors of adaptation at public and private universities and comparisons of universities facing crisis versus those defining opportunities.

Sporn concludes her work by outlining a theory of adaptation in universities which is based on seven propositions. One: Adaptation at universities is triggered by environmental demands which can be defined as crisis or opportunity by the institution. Two: In order to adapt universities need to develop clear mission statements and goals. Three: An entrepreneurial culture enhances the adaptive capacity of universities. Four: A differentiated structure enhances adaptation at universities. Five: Professionalised university management helps adaptation. Six: Shared governance is necessary to implement strategies of adaptation. Seven: Committed leadership is an essential element for successful adaptation.

These propositions may well be empirically well-founded. Yet readers are bound to be disappointed that Sporn's conclusion has so little to say about the central issues of her book: how adaptive strategies are decided upon, how such strategies are implemented, and the criteria used to measure their level of success. Whereas this investigation's response to its other key question what are the sources of adaptation is more comprehensive and informative. Nevertheless, despite these limitations this study makes a worthwhile contribution to our collective knowledge of the challenges universities face and the methods of adaptation and transformation that some institutions have used to adjust to their changing operating environments.

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