



Monthly e-Newsletter – September 2007

What's in this edition?

AAIR 2007 FORUM1
 'YOUTH IS TO ALL THE GLAD REASON OF LIFE'2
 NATBES UPDATE.....3
 PODDIE'S CORNER.....3
 PLACES TO GO – THINGS TO DO3
 JOB VACANCY: SENIOR INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH
 ANALYST - AUQA.....3
 IT IS WRITTEN.....4
 NEWSLETTER NOTES..... 4-6

EDITORIAL

Hope you have all survived, or will survive, the annual round of Open Days. I accompanied my daughter to a couple. There's a lot of walking involved when you aren't sure what you want to do!

I'll be out of Australia from mid-September until early October, so apologies ahead of time for a small and late October newsletter. No laptop and no mobile. All pleasure. It may take me a while to catch up with emails when I return.

The AAIR website was on leave as well for a week or so during August. It's now back in all its glory, having transited to a new host. Apologies for any inconvenience caused.

As always, ideas and content for the newsletter are welcome, as is your feedback. Please take the opportunity to share with your colleagues.

Subject to space and relevance to members, the newsletter can run notices about job vacancies and upcoming events.

The newsletters eventually find their way to the AAIR website. Back copies here:
<http://www.aair.org.au/Pages/Newsletters.html>

AAIR 2007 FORUM

**CHANGE, EVIDENCE & IMPLEMENTATION:
 IMPROVING HIGHER EDUCATION
 IN UNCERTAIN TIMES**

28-30 NOVEMBER

CROWN PLAZA, DARLING HARBOUR, SYDNEY

It's getting closer and closer and looking better and better.

Early bird registration closes on 28 September:
<http://www.aair.org.au/Forum2007/Register.html>

If you have any questions about the Forum please contact Helen Angelakis or Ivan Skaines at UWS on 02 9678 7808.

**The 2007 AAIR Forum is hosted by the
 University of Western Sydney.**

**The 2007 AAIR Forum is sponsored by
 Graduate Careers Australia**

AAIR Committee members

- President:** Ivan Skaines, University of Western Sydney
Immediate Past President: Wendy Marchment, Griffith University
Vice President: Josephine Palermo, Deakin University
Hon Secretary: Dean Ward, Edith Cowan University
Hon Treasurer and Membership Secretary:
 Marian Mahat, Monash University

General Committee:

- Bruce Guthrie, Graduate Careers Australia
 Don Johnston, Southern Cross University
 Dave Marr, Australian National University
 Andrea Matulick, University of South Australia
 Rob Sheehan, Sharp Words Editing & Writing Services (Victoria)
AAIR website: <http://www.aair.org.au/>

'YOUTH IS TO ALL THE GLAD REASON OF LIFE'

The sooner the better

If you are a follower of early childhood education and you've got a long memory, you'll know about Competent Children, Competent Learners. As for me, this was a nice little surprise. It's a NZ longitudinal study, started in 1993, tracking the impact of early childhood education on competency levels as kids grow. It's a bit like Seven Up, though more frequent. Data analyses and reports have appeared when the kinder turned 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14 and, most recently, 16. The exciting news is that the impact on competence remains all these years along. The evidence keeps rolling in – a dollar spent on early childhood education comes back five times or more over a lifetime. I've only read a smidgin of the most recent material, but you can get it all here:

<http://www.educationcounts.edcentre.govt.nz/publications/homepages/competent-children/index.html>

Never too late

Skipping right along from early childhood education and care, what about older young people?

Let's start with the Business Council of Australia. At the end of August it released *Restoring our Edge in Education: Making Australia's Education System its Next Competitive Advantage*. It covers early years, primary and secondary education. There's a passionate call – yep, passionate – to ensure that no-one falls through the cracks. For everyone's sake. One para from the introduction reads: 'Business must work cooperatively with the governments responsible for education and with schools to make sure that they are finding and adapting new and better ways to provide a high-quality education to every student'. Just 25 pages – go on, have a look. I don't warm to some of the recommendations, but you can't ignore the analysis and it's not a perspective the business lobby often puts out there:

<http://www.bca.com.au/DisplayFile.aspx?FileID=224>

Then there's the Australian Industry Group and one of my old favourites – the Dusseldorf Skills Forum. They got together to produce *It's Crunch Time: Raising youth engagement and attainment*. It dabbles in primary and secondary schooling, and the post-school world of many young people who have fallen thorough the cracks. They needn't have, the report argues, if we'd just tweak what we do. No revolution necessary in order to create a revolution for these young folk. You can download here, and you get some terrific video clips too via DSF's spot on MySpace – a couple of them will just make you feel good about the education game: <http://www.dsf.org.au/papers/198.html>

Generation Y

And finally we come to a report put together by AMP and the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling at Canberra Uni. It's called *Generation whY?* Now, here's my prejudice: I don't care for all this Gen X, Gen Y, Baby Boomer stuff – people are people. I suspect that marketing concepts have crowded out quotidian commonsense. I wavered just a little on that line as I worked through this report – part of the message was 'cut 'em some slack'. Fair enough, too. If you want to know a bit more about the 15-30 year olds, and you don't mind a bit of generational homogenising, check it out:

<http://www.amp.com.au/group/3column/0,2449,CH5273%255FNI74070%255FSI3,00.html>

NATBES UPDATE

Dean Ward, AAIR's Honorary and Right Honourable Secretary – and ECU's Manager, Strategic Information Services – has NatBes news for us all. (NatBes is shorthand for the National Benchmarking System for DEST Student Data).

Dean advises that progress on the development of NatBes has progressed slowly but with certainty. The table structure is complete. Work will commence shortly on the reference tables. You can follow the process as it unfolds on the AAIR website where NatBes has its own webpage: <http://www.aair.org.au/Pages/NatBes.html>

PODDIE'S CORNER

This goes way further than the humble podcast, my friends. Mobile Technology in TAFE is a site maintained by Sue Waters, a teacher at Challenger TAFE in Perth. It's really good. TAFE, school, uni – applies to all.

There's a Mobile Technology in TAFE wiki that explains how to make a learning experience out of a Blackberry or a PDA or a pod: <http://aquaculturepda.wikispaces.com/>

There's a Mobile Technology in TAFE blog here: <http://aquaculturepda.edublogs.org/>

There's a Mobile Technology in TAFE podcast too: http://aquaculturepda.podomatic.com/entry/2007-07-06T01_43_39-07_00

Give that Waters woman a medal.

PLACES TO GO – THINGS TO DO

Learning spaces

A repeat from the last newsletter. A reminder that the Carrick Institute is doing a roadshow called 'Places and spaces for learning'. Between 17 & 28 September it will be Adelaide, Perth, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. Purpose is 'to identify, consolidate and disseminate good practice in the refurbishment and development of innovative learning and teaching environments'. Seminars and site visits. Some events are already booked out. All the details are here:

<http://www.carrickinstitute.edu.au/carrick/go/home/grants/pid/398>

AAIR e-Newsletter – September 2007

JOB VACANCY

Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) Senior Institutional Research Analyst

AUQA is the principal national quality assurance agency in higher education. It carries out quality audits of universities, other higher education institutions and accrediting agencies. AUQA reports on performance and outcomes, assists in quality enhancement, advises on quality assurance, and liaises internationally with quality agencies, for the benefit of Australian higher education.

AUQA interprets data provided by institutions and agencies as evidence of performance. The Senior Institutional Research Analyst is responsible for analysing this data and advising audit panels. The Analyst undertakes data extraction and analysis tasks and projects to provide information and advice on performance of universities, other higher education institutions and accrediting agencies.

The successful applicant is expected to have qualifications and experience including:

- A degree in a quantitative discipline, business or planning, or extensive relevant experience
- Significant experience in data collection, matching, analysis and presentation in a public sector or educational environment
- Experience of working in the higher education environment
- Administrative and organisational skills including planning and management of projects
- Knowledge of strategic and corporate planning, including benchmarking and the development and calculation of performance indicators, and the nature and scope of data needed for such measures
- High level of computer literacy including programming ability using statistical analysis, database management, spreadsheet and word processing software
- Well-developed written and oral communication skills including an ability to communicate with staff in higher education Institutes.

Closing date for applications: Friday 7 September.

The position description is available from:

Ms Jenny Bastas, PA to the Executive Director,
Australian Universities Quality Agency
Level 10, 123 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000 Australia
PH: (03) 9664 1000

IT IS WRITTEN

Scrivening at Melbourne Uni

Writing is one of the fundamental jobs that undergrads, postgrads and academics do. Melbourne Uni is giving the writing game some focus.

Way back when – like, gee, 18 months ago – I mentioned Melbourne University's Writing Centre for Scholars and Researchers, located in the School of Graduate Studies. It grew from the restless enthusiasms of then Vice Chancellor's Fellow, and publishing doyenne, Hilary McPhee. It's going gangbusters, offering researchers, postgrads and students the opportunity to sharpen their writing skills for diverse audiences, and providing support to develop publishable manuscripts. More here: <http://gsserv.registrar.unimelb.edu.au/writingcentre/events/w4r.html>

There's The Writing Space, too, organised by Melbourne's Language and Learning Skills Unit. Postgrad students who happen to be capable writers work in the Space as tutors on a casual basis. Struggling writers, and good writers with a technical writing problem, can all pitch up for some support: <http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/lisu/thewriting/space/>

And for postgrads who need online support with writing, there's a nice little section on the Melbourne's CourseWorks website called 'Research and writing'. Worth a visit: <http://www.courseworks.unimelb.edu.au/researchandwriting/>

NEWSLETTER NOTES

1. A Common Book

Now here's a nifty notion. As I understand it, new students at the University of Washington all read the same book. Discipline and inclination are set to one side. Then you hear and talk about it, with other new starters, in lectures and tutes. The Common Book seems to change each year. Anyways, over to you: <http://www.washington.edu/uaa/commonbook/index.html>

2. I say, I say, I say – what's the difference between a TAFE institute and a university?

You might have seen an article in *The Oz* reporting that Holmesglen TAFE and Box Hill TAFE, both in Victoria, are saddling up for delivery of undergrad degrees in nursing. Recently registered under HESA, Holmesglen is targeting national priority places and a slice of HEEF. The VET sector is on the move, folks. And the trickiest thing is you can't tell where it's going because just at the moment, it has no edges. News story is here: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,2130328-23289,00.html>

You may have noticed an interview with new Universities Australia CEO, Glenn Withers, in the Financial Review Education supplement on 20 August. Amongst many direct observations, he underlined the importance of pathways between universities and VET. He is quoted as saying: 'My colleagues will find it a little heretical but I think we need closer links to TAFE'. Too right. There a few dual sector universities that have been in the business for a while and can show the way. The boundaries are blurring between the sectors – co-operation is the new dogma, like it or not.

3. Things we don't know we don't know, and other mysteries of VET statistics

UNESCO has released a fat report: *Participation in Formal Technical and Vocational Education and Training Programmes Worldwide: An Initial Statistical Study*. It sort out what stats are available, what kind of analyses they support, where the gaps are, how to improve the stock of numbers. I haven't read it all by any means, but what I've read is darned good. Policy people, planners and stats folk will all find something of value in here: http://www.unevoc.net/fileadmin/user_upload/pubs/UNEVOC UIS Report.pdf

4. Nine country audit of vocational education

City and Guilds is a centrepiece of the UK vocational education and training system. A sort of qualifications authority writ large. In 2008 C&G will launch the C&G Institute. Amongst its first projects is an audit of vocational education in nine countries, including Australia. This work has already started. There's not much detail to offer on this – I've only seen secondhand press reports that come from a press release. I'd like to know more. But in the meantime, here's a scant overview: <http://www.fenews.co.uk/newsview.asp?n=2548>

5. Hanging on

One way and another, lots of you worry about student retention. It ends up on the books in the guise of it ugly companion – attrition. You can worry in good company at the International Centre for Student Retention where the resources list is growing – it's only been around since 2005. I've held on to this for a while because the expected launch date of the Effective Practices in Student Success database was March 2007. But I can't wait any longer, so I'll leave the monitoring to you. It's a bit confusing because the Centre is part of the Education Policy Institute. The Centre is in charge of the database, but the Institute ... Actually, I'm going to leave it to you work this out, too. To get started, you need two addresses:

International Centre for Student Retention
<http://www.studentretention.org/default.htm>

and

Effective Practices in Student Success
<http://www.educationalpolicy.org/epss.html>

6. Bishop offers chair to Ozlit

Call me a jingoist, or a textual protectionist, or a literary nationalist. Tell me literature is so second order it's third order. Be as rude as you bloody well like. I did a jig and hummed merrily when I read that Minister Bishop would establish a chair in Australian literature, at a university yet to be selected. Might have something to do with an election. Definitely has something to do with telling our own stories. Almost no detail here:
<http://www.dest.gov.au/Ministers/Media/Bishop/2007/08/B001070807.asp>

7. ATN maps out a HE skills strategy

The Australian Technology Network comprises Curtin, UniSA, RMIT, UTS and QUT. Set up at the end of last century, the ATN was once upon a time a pretty low key grouping. No more. It's downright noisy these days. Its foray into the role of the technology-inclined universities in getting some control over skills shortages is titled *Skill Build – Nation Build: Constructing our Future*. It won't detain you long – just nine pages short. But it's not short on policy ideas. Here you go:
<http://www.atn.edu.au/newsroom/Docs/Skill%20Build%20Nation%20Build%20An%20ATN%20Position%20Paper.pdf>

8. JCU joins the Innovative Unis club

Another part of the higher education Balkans is Innovative Research Universities of Australia. Its membership has expanded to include JCU, which joins the club with the founding members: Flinders, Griffith, Latrobe, Murdoch, Newcastle and Macquarie. The IRUA website doesn't reflect the expansion yet, but JCU announced it like this:
http://www.jcu.edu.au/top/JCUPRD_014750.html

9. Rank you very much

I suppose it's possible that you haven't checked out the Times Higher Education Supplement's World University Rankings, or even that you didn't know they existed. So just in case:
<http://www.thes.co.uk/worldrankings/>

The Good Universities Guide – Australia's very own – is now in all good news agencies. It's online, too, but only if you pay up:
<http://ratings.thegoodguides.com.au/>

You can climb a different university league ladder every week, it seems. The US News and World Report rankings came out in August. The Report claims to identify the best US colleges in 2008. So much for truth in advertising. These rankings offer variation – schools are ranked by diversity, discipline performance, socio-economic diversity, extent of return business from alumni. Fyi:
http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/usnews/edu/college/rankings/rankindex_brief.php

10. Rice for all

There's a lot going on in Rice University's Connexions website. Here, the learning commons offers access to parts of, or complete, learning modules, posted by academics from all corners of the world. There are discussion threads about modules and related issues. You can quiz the repository by subject, language, popularity or title/author – I found the key word search easiest. New postings are encouraged and easy as pie to put in place.

A good resource if you need a starting point on designing an approach to a topic. Some if it is slight, some of it is both extensive and very good, so you need to filter. You can go from Grilling a Good/Better Steak to Form in Music (there's a lot of music stuff) to Galileo's Telescope:
<http://campustechnology.com/articles/48874/>

11. The morphing academic

Universities UK has released a Research Report that goes by the name of *The changing academic profession in the UK: setting the scene*. It reads pretty well of the Antipodes too, tracking changes in the nature of academic work and noting the increasing diversity of that work, which obviously has significant impacts on the work of other professionals in the sector. There's a very handy bibliography. Just for you:

<http://bookshop.universitiesuk.ac.uk/downloads/changing%20academic.pdf>

12. Turning R&D around

The idea of Development and Research, as opposed to R&D, is moving from conceptual and experimental to structured and directed. The Innovation Unit in the UK has produced a tidy report on D&R which ends up with a 'how to' list of recommendations for deploying D&R in education itself. It's only 40 pages long, there's lots of white space, and big font so I reckon you could knock it over in 20 minutes: http://www.innovation-unit.co.uk/images/stories/files/pdf/d_and_r_system_for_education.pdf

13. Before you retire, try teaching

There's this Department in South Australia called the Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology (DFEEST). It needs its own sentence because its title is so long. DFEEST has pulled together a bunch of government, education and industry players to work on the Mature Age Project. One aspect of the project is to recruit mature workers into the VET sector as teachers. Good thinking, 99. Read more: <http://www.matureworkers.com.au/cgi-bin/index.cgi>

14. Where will the West's teachers come from?

In February this year the Western Australian government set up a taskforce to look at ways to ensure a continued supply of quality teachers and in schools and TAFE Institutes. The taskforce has wandered the western third of the continent over the past two months in consultation phase. The Discussion Paper, available on the website, is full of good data and asks lots of good, testing questions. All here:

<http://www.educationworkforce.wa.gov.au/>

15. Science briefs

Okay, hands up everyone who thought this was about a breakthrough in underwear design. Sorry, it's about a suite of brochures and fact sheets DEST released early in August. It goes under the moniker of *Australian Science & Innovation: Partnerships for the Future*. Covers the policy framework, something called (amusingly) Australia's science system, research strengths. Useful promotional material, I guess. Informative enough. You can download all the bits here:

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/science_innovation/publications_resources/profiles/asi_partnerships_future.htm

16. A kind of hospital

Last newsletter went on a rave about learning spaces. Here's cyber learning space that goes to show how learning, teaching and imagining belong together. Charles Darwin Uni has an online hospital. CDU reckons it's a first. It won't be the last. Take the temperature here:

<http://www.cdu.edu.au/newsroom/story.php?nID=2005>

17. BAFROP newsletter

I know – I complained about this last time I listed it. But it's actually called the Backing Australia's Potential Realising Our Potential Newsletter. BAFROP. Whatever happened to titles like 'In Print' or 'DEST Newsletter' or 'Higher Education News'? Anyway, the August issue of BAFROP is out: <http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/A9DC3DA6-46A7-4C3A-A2BF-4A5A4F7793EE/17971/NewsletterIssueNo2710August07FINAL.pdf>