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## Monthly e-Newsletter – August 2009

### What's in this edition?

Places to Go, Things to Do .....	2-4
AAIR Forum – 11-13 November .....	2
Newsletter Notes .....	3-8
It isn't over yet .....	4
It is written.....	8
For the Poddies, Voddies and Bloggies .....	9
AAIR Committee listing .....	9

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### EDITORIAL OF SORTS

Teaching is an interesting gig, isn't it? I mean, I can learn any old time, by myself, just thinking or watching. A learner doesn't need a teacher. But a teacher just can't do without a learner who is learning. To know isn't to teach. To be called a teacher isn't to teach. To have a student isn't quite enough. You have to have a student who is demonstrably learning before you can claim the mantle of teacher. Teaching is utterly, hopefully, happily, desperately dependent on a student who is learning. Efficacy is all. How your interventions produce, prod, encourage, shape learning – that's what the gig relies on. And it's probably best if you wear two hats when you teach – teacher and learner. Humble efficacy. It's a grand, funny old game.

If you are receiving a copy of this newsletter and would prefer not to, email me and I'll scrub you from the distribution list. My email address is: [rob@sharpwords.com.au](mailto:rob@sharpwords.com.au)

I welcome your contributions to the newsletter. You just have to be relaxed about when it will be distributed. I aim for 'around' the 5th of the month, but it all depends on stuff... Please feel free to contact me by email: [rob@sharpwords.com.au](mailto:rob@sharpwords.com.au)

## Load Management Special Interest Group (LM SIG)

### QUT, 26 August 2009

The first meeting of the LM SIG will be hosted by QUT at the Gardens Point campus in Brisbane.

Registration is by email to the LM SIG coordinator, Jeff Holmes: [j.holmes@qut.edu.au](mailto:j.holmes@qut.edu.au)

Best move quickly. There are already registrations from more than 15 universities. QUT will provide a light lunch and afternoon tea.

(If you can't go you can still join the LM SIG, or get more information about it. Feel free to contact Jeff: [j.holmes@qut.edu.au](mailto:j.holmes@qut.edu.au))

The draft program is:

- Who we are and what do we do?: Discussion around the results of completed LM questionnaires
- How good are we, how good should we be?: Benchmarking:
- How do we do it?: Tools and modelling
- Where do we fit?: Load management, planning and budget
- What's the future for the LM SIG?

Other possible topics include:

- Admissions – the role of LM in admissions, and the role of admissions in LM
- Government structures:
  - funding
  - rules
  - intentions
  - reporting.

*AAIR established the Load Management Special Interest Group in November 2008 following a workshop at the 2008 annual forum in Canberra.*

**NOTE: How to kill two birds with one stone**  
**The LM SIG will be held the day before the Data Warehousing SIG forum to be hosted by Griffith University on 27 and 28 August. So the tip is, go to Brissie, go to both.**

## PLACES TO GO – THINGS TO DO

### **19TH ANNUAL AAIR FORUM**

**11-13 November 2009**

**Hyatt Hotel, Adelaide**

**The theme for this year's AAIR Forum is:**

*Turning water into wine: Institutional research as an essential ingredient in strategic decision making for tertiary education.*

The Forum will focus on strategic priorities in the sector, including:

- supporting strategic planning
- adding value to measuring and predicting
- responding to skills shortages
- environmental and economic sustainability.

#### **NOTIFICATION TO ACCEPTED PRESENTERS**

The call for abstracts closed on 20 July. Accepted presenters will be notified around about now (9 August).

Full papers are required by 15 October.

#### **REGISTRATION FOR THE FORUM IS NOW OPEN**

There are just 90 days or so to go until the Forum gets underway. Early Bird Registration closes on 1 September. Registration details are here:

<http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/air2009/downloads/AAIRRegistrationV5.pdf>

#### **VENUE**

The Forum will be held at the Hyatt Regency in Adelaide. You can kip there, or at a number of other hotels offering special deals for Forum goers:

<http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/air2009/accommodation.php>

#### **KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:**

**Emeritus Professor Denise Bradley AC**

**Dr Gavin Moodie**

<http://www.griffith.edu.au/vc/ate/moodie/>

**Nick Palousis**

<http://www.sbpractices.com/nick-palousis>

#### **CONFIRMED SPONSORS/HOSTS/PARTNERS**

**UTS UniSA RMIT QUT Flinders ANU  
Adelaide Uni**

The 2009 AAIR Forum is organised via a partnership of staff from UniSA, Adelaide Uni and Flinders' Uni.

### **SkillsDMC 2009 National Conference**

**26 August 2009**

**Four Seasons Hotel, Sydney, NSW**

'Future Focused Partnerships' is the theme for the national conference of SkillsDMC, the Resources and Infrastructure Industry Skills Council. The conference brochure is available from:

<http://www.skillsdmc.com.au/2009-National-Conference/default.aspx>

### **ACPET 2009 National Conference**

**27 to 29 August 2009**

**National Convention Centre, Canberra**

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training has adopted as its theme for this year's national conference 'Leading Learning in Times of Change'. It's an extraordinarily diverse program tackling everything from apprenticeships and the regulation/quality nexus to social inclusion and whether the public/private provider distinction still has any useful meaning. Details here:

<http://www.acpetconference.info/ACPET%20program22.pdf>

### **Demand-driven government service delivery**

**3 September, 7.00am to 9.00am**

**Presidential Ballroom, Sebel & Citigate, Brisbane**

EIDOS, for those of you who have been napping over the past two or three years, is an energetic Queensland research outfit that always has something new and sparkling on the go. The EIDOS website is worth a visit in its own right:

<http://www.eidos.org.au/>

But given the shift to demand-driven higher education and VET, this early morning event might be worth taking in, even you do nap over your OJ: <http://www.eidos.org.au/events/MilburnFlyer.pdf>

### **What does 21st century learning look like?**

**11 September 2009, 9.00am to 4.00pm**

**Australian Technology Park, Sydney**

This one day seminar is being put together by education.au, which is owned by Australia's education ministers and is charged with making strong links between learning and technology. This seminar seeks to bring together teachers, instructional designers and technology companies for a bit of chinwag about what next:

<http://www.educationau.edu.au/jahia/jahia/pid/819>

## **35th International Association for Educational Assessment Annual Conference**

**13-18 September, 2009**

**Sofitel Brisbane Grand Central**

The conference is hosted by the Queensland Studies Authority and Griffith University. There are four strands to the conference theme, 'Assessment for a Creative World':

- Expectations and standards
- Reconciling the needs of individual, state and world
- Challenges for school assessment
- Uses and effects of assessment.

The conference might be a good opportunity to start rethinking how we manage tertiary entrance via the old TER – a number we may not be counting on quite so much in future:

<http://www.iaea2009.com/highlights.asp?Theme>

## **Inaugural Social Inclusion in Education**

**22-23 October, 2009**

**Swisstel, Sydney**

UniSA's newish National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education is hopping straight into one of the topics of the day with its conference theme of 'Participation and partnerships for social inclusion in education'. It's such a breath of fresh air to see a conference program that gives equal weight to the secondary, VET and higher ed sectors:

<http://www.informa.com.au/conferences/education/social-inclusion-in-education>

## **Learning Technologies Conference 2009**

**19 and 20 November 2009**

**Mooloolaba Campus of Sunshine Coast TAFE**

You could see out your conference year by swanning up to Mooloolaba and having a good think, with dozens of other reflective souls, about how technology is changing, and could usefully change, teaching practice. The conference theme is 'The power of you':

<http://www.learningtechnologies.com.au/>

If you want an idea of what's likely to be in store, you can check out the papers from the '08 conference here:

[http://www.learningtechnologies.com.au/index.cfm?action=papers\\_LT2008](http://www.learningtechnologies.com.au/index.cfm?action=papers_LT2008)

There are podcasts from 08 as well:

[http://demos.codificastream.com/ramp/MediasiteData/Presentations/learning\\_technologies\\_conference\\_2008.xml](http://demos.codificastream.com/ramp/MediasiteData/Presentations/learning_technologies_conference_2008.xml)

AAIR e-Newsletter – August 2009

## **NEWSLETTER NOTES**

### **1. Shepherding numbers into one place**

The NZ Ministry of Education produces the Tertiary Analysis Newsletter. The July 2009 newsletter introduces us to 'the 2009 monitoring reports for the Tertiary Education Strategy, a new report on the effect of economic cycles on tertiary education participation, the first report from the 2008/09 literacy and numeracy research and updates on 2009 enrolments and 2008 student allowances'. Among other things. You can subscribe for nix and it'll come along once a month:

<http://wiki.tertiary.govt.nz/~TertiaryAnalysis>

### **2. What is Victoria planning?**

Victoria's Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation, Jacinta Allan, established in April an expert panel, led by Kwong Lee Dow, to develop a Victorian Tertiary Education Plan. As the work of the panel unfolds, I guess we can expect to see more information turn up here:

<http://www.skills.vic.gov.au/corporate/providers/universities/victorias-plan-for-tertiary-education>

The Panel has a very wide brief, as you'll see from the 'Progress note on development of a Tertiary Education Plan', available at the link above.

### **3. SET for Success**

Pennsylvania's Robert Morris University, located in the engagingly named Moon Township, is launching a Student Engagement Transcript 'as a way to formally document your involvement in experiential learning – leadership activities, community service, study abroad, work experience and more.' Here's the good oil:

<http://www.rmu.edu/web/cms/academics/set/Pages/default.aspx>

### **4. Is tradition the best teacher?**

Thomas Docherty of the University of Warwick has a disparaging word or two to say about the intrusion of quality bureaucracies into higher education. His article in *The Times HE Supplement*, 'To provide teaching of quality, we must get back to our roots', suggests the old apprenticeship model is more likely to produce quality than externally driven 'excellence' frameworks:

<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=407299>

## 5. Is tradition the best teacher?

I suspect that there may not be a meeting of minds between Prof Docherty and members of the House of Commons Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Committee. The Committee's just released report, *Students and universities*, has a chapter on 'Standards and quality' – actually, that's all I've read so far. The Committee takes a dim view of the argument advanced by Universities UK that degree standards must be good because international students are flocking to enrol.

Allow me to quote, noting that the bold typeface belongs to the Committee, not to me: 'While we consider it likely that standards and quality are part of the attraction of the higher education sector in England to international students, other factors, such as the vigorous marketing undertaken by universities, and the fact that England is an Anglophone country, together with the relative current weakness of sterling, may also have an effect. **We conclude that it is simplistic and unsatisfactory for higher education institutions to be seen to rely on the fact that international students continue to apply as evidence that standards are being maintained. It is absurd and disreputable to justify academic standards with a market mechanism.**'

The report is here:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmdius/170/170i.pdf>

## 6. Life Sciences Blueprint

In July the UK government issued its *Life sciences blueprint: A statement from the Office for Life Sciences*. There is much to interest providers of bioscience degrees here in the Antipodes. Try these on for size:

- From 2010, the Society of Biology will begin to accredit undergraduate bioscience degrees to help ensure that graduates leave with the core mathematical and practical skills and competencies required by employers.
- The Government will, in partnership with the HE sector and industry, establish an industry and HE forum ... [that will, for example, enable] life sciences employers to agree with universities what specialised course content they need to address critical skills gaps and to prioritise actions to be taken.

You can access the *Blueprint* here:

[http://www.dius.gov.uk/innovation/business\\_support/~media/publications/O/ols-blueprint](http://www.dius.gov.uk/innovation/business_support/~/media/publications/O/ols-blueprint)

## IT ISN'T OVER YET

In 1821, Liverpool merchant Sir John Gladstone sent this fourth son, William Gladstone, to join his oldest brother Tom at Eton. Sir John had just removed his second son, Robertson, from the school and sent him instead to Glasgow College to soak up its commercial curriculum. Roy Jenkins writes that:

'John Gladstone's approach to education was strictly vocational. He was willing to pay to turn his sons into members of the ruling class. But if they were going to become merchants rather than rulers there was no point in paying. And the cost was surprisingly high, particularly as Eton was not well run at the time, with too few masters, and those that were there of uncertain quality. Its main advantage was the opportunity to make influential friends. For this, the total cost in Tom's case ... was £261 for a year, a figure which was somewhat above the average for the all-in expenditure of an Oxford undergraduate 120 years later.'

- Gladstone, Roy Jenkins, Macmillan, 1995.

(Sir John did a pretty good job at matching school and child, it seems. Robertson became a wealthy trader and mayor of Liverpool. Tom and William both arrived in the House of Commons in 1833. Tom lasted a decade. William lasted just over six decades and was Prime Minister on four occasions, and in early years represented Oxford University, of which he was an alumnus and which had its very own Member of Parliament. Ah, they were they days...)

## 7. A very large number

Angel Calderon from RMIT, and friend of AAIRies everywhere, sent me this very large number, from UNESCO's 2009 *Global Education Digest*. Angel notes that globally, there are now more than 152 million students in tertiary education compared to about 29 million in 1970. There are lots of other startling numbers in the *Digest*, which you can access here:

<http://www.uis.unesco.org/publications/GED2009>

## 8. Private learning

More from UNESCO. *A new dynamic: private higher education* was one of the background papers for the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education. It considers what has produced the blossoming of private provision, and its effects on learners, public universities, quality. And lots about how governments are harnessing the private provider to the cart of economic and social development. Read all about it: <http://www.unesco.org/tools/fileretrieve/1eb502a6.pdf>

## 9. What next?

And yet more from UNESCO. Another background paper for the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education. This one is called *Trends in global higher education: tracking an academic revolution*.

This is a handy little reference for a global higher ed stocktake and what the next decade might bring in higher ed. And there are some surprises revealed, like:

- 'It is possible that up to half of the world's university teachers have only earned a bachelor's degree (in China only 9% of the academic profession has doctorates, 35% in India). Many university teachers in developing countries have only a bachelor's degree, the number of part-time academics has also increased in many countries – notably in Latin America, where up to 80% of the professoriate is employed part time. In many countries universities now employ part-time professors who have full-time appointments at other institutions (China, Vietnam, Uganda).'

I couldn't find the full version, so I'm working with the Exec Summary, which crams a lot into 22 pages: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001831/183168e.pdf>

## 10. How should we decide who can practice?

That redoubt of free enterprise, the Centre for Independent Studies, published an article in the Autumn edition of its *Policy* magazine titled 'Rethinking professional regulation'. If I can paraphrase Krystian Siebert's argument, because professional bodies control entry to professions like medicine, dentistry, law, and accountancy, they can create the circumstances where consumers pay more than they should for protection against shysters. Siebert suggests we should go for

competitive regulation, since abandoning regulation altogether would be a rotten idea.

I was trying to imagine just how accreditation for academic programs would work under the competitive regulation regime that Siebert outlines, given that in some instances universities act as the outsourced gatekeepers. There are some interesting mind games to play as you read: <http://www.cis.org.au/Policy/autumn09/links/seibert.pdf>

## 11. Student services – a problem or persistence

The Cornell Higher Education Research Institute issued a draft paper called at the beginning of the month *Do expenditures other than instructional expenditures affect graduation and persistence rates in American higher education?* Douglas Webber and Ronald Ehrenberg suggest, to steal a sentence from the abstract, that '...reallocating some funding from instruction to student services may enhance persistence and graduation rates at those institutions whose rates are currently below the medians in the sample.'

Fuel for the ongoing scrap over funding for student services in Oz, accepting that the funding models here and the US are beasts of a different fur: [http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/cheri/upload/cheri\\_wp121.pdf](http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/cheri/upload/cheri_wp121.pdf)

## 12. Campus greens

The International Alliance of Research Universities, which numbers ANU among its members, has issued a Presidents' Statement on Campus Sustainability. The statement includes greenhouse reduction targets: <http://www.iaruni.org/sustainability/statement>

Perhaps of practical interest is the accompanying webpage on Strategies and Case Studies in Campus Sustainability, which links to member university sustainability programs and practices: <http://www.iaruni.org/sustainability/strategies>

## 13. Industry greens

Australia's Industry Skills Councils have produced a very useful report, *Environmental sustainability: an industry response*. It's a must read for VET folks. The report looks across industry sectors to identify common issues in grasping the sustainability nettle, and links these to training needs and the capacity of RTOs to deliver on them. The report also drills down, ISC by ISC, to look at how fit for sustainability purposes existing training packages

and training services models are. I found the screen version of the report a bit hard to read, but you can download a pdf version from the site: <http://www.pagegangster.com/p/A104O/>

#### 14. Unmazing VET governance

After issuing a governance discussion paper earlier in the year, a couple of weeks ago Skills Australia released *Foundations for the future: proposals for future governance, architecture and market design of the national training system*. Sorry to say that this is also mandatory reading for VET folks.

The paper is onside with more integrated regulation of the tertiary sector, but doesn't want to rush it. Recommendation ix (yes, the roman numeral makes a comeback!) has it that 'Australian Governments agree in principle that the national VET and higher education regulatory bodies and the Australian Qualifications Framework Council would merge as the alignment of the new regulatory arrangements mature and become more stable.' But it does recommend (numero vii) that a single national VET regulatory body is a priority.

Lots of emphasis on public access to better info about provider quality, and some blunt statements about the rank inadequacy of existing quality information in the marketplace. In a market model refinement, access to government funding would depend on an RTO meeting quality benchmarks, not just regulatory minima. Good thing, too.

As you'd expect, the centrality of the industry/ISC voice in the VET system is underlined, emphasised and advanced. Anyway, it's beyond time to sort out the incoherence of VET governance, so grab your highlighter and a big supply of Post-It flags and let's get moving:

[http://www.skillsaustralia.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/0A6795EF-8C37-447F-9236-FF12F3582B10/26184/09\\_355BSkillsAustraliaReport\\_p00f08.pdf](http://www.skillsaustralia.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/0A6795EF-8C37-447F-9236-FF12F3582B10/26184/09_355BSkillsAustraliaReport_p00f08.pdf)

#### 15. COAG's VET workplan

Despite much change in VET over recent times, more in some states than others, there are definitely great big lumps of change still to come. The Skills Australia paper just mentioned is the herald of some changes. And more heralding is contained in the 2 July Council of Australian Government's communiqué which devotes space to Vocational Education and Training Reform. COAG agreed a VET workplan that will include:

- developing models for a national regulatory body for vocational education and training;
- ensuring the Australian Apprenticeship system is responsive to the needs of individuals and enterprises, especially during the downturn and into recovery
- increasing the level of investment in nationally-accredited training
- providing timely, relevant and easy to navigate information to individuals and enterprises
- ensuring the training system, and the products of the training system, are responsive to the needs of individuals, businesses and industry.

Echoes of what Skills Australia has recommended are front and centre there. The COAG communiqué rests here:

[http://www.coag.gov.au/coag\\_meeting\\_outcomes/2009-07-02/docs/20090702\\_communique.pdf](http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2009-07-02/docs/20090702_communique.pdf)

#### 16. Spring cleaning training packages

*VET products for the 21st century* is the final report of the joint National Quality Council and COAG Skills and Workforce Development Subgroup. In broad, training packages are in good nick, but some details need close attention. It's good to see language, literacy and numeracy on centre stage – essential if non-traditional learners, especially many existing workers, are to access training in numbers. Recommendation 15 reads: 'Ensure that Language, Literacy and Numeracy requirements are made more explicit in the development of occupational and foundation qualifications.'

Of equal interest is Recommendation 14 about pathways: 'Ensure that Training Package developers include articulation arrangements in the design and development of Diploma and Advanced Diplomas where appropriate.'

[http://www.nqc.tvetaustralia.com.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/49657/VET\\_Products\\_for\\_the\\_21st\\_Century\\_-\\_FINAL\\_REPORT.pdf](http://www.nqc.tvetaustralia.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/49657/VET_Products_for_the_21st_Century_-_FINAL_REPORT.pdf)

#### 17. TAFE Queensland pathways

Just while I'm crazing on yet again about pathways, you might be interested in *TAFE Queensland pathways to university: getting credit for your TAFE study*. I wouldn't recommend reading it cover to cover, but it is worth a captain. If you wanted to know, for example, what credits you'd get from QUT for your Diploma of Marketing, page 8 gives you the headline information:

[http://www.tafe.qld.gov.au/resources/pdf/pathways\\_university/pathways\\_university.pdf](http://www.tafe.qld.gov.au/resources/pdf/pathways_university/pathways_university.pdf)

## 18. Upskilling for private RTO trainers/assessors

Speaking of QUT and pathways ... In partnership with QUT, the Australian Council for Private Education and Training has used funds made available under the Queensland Skills Plan to develop the skills of VET professionals. ACPET members now have a tailored pathway into QUT's Grad Cert in Education and /or the Master in Education. First intakes should now be underway: [http://www.acpet.edu.au/dmdocuments/NMU2009/June%2009/General\\_Info\\_for\\_Higher\\_Ed\\_doc.pdf](http://www.acpet.edu.au/dmdocuments/NMU2009/June%2009/General_Info_for_Higher_Ed_doc.pdf)

## 19. And the winners are ...

Now, for almost 20 years we've had the Australian Student Prize – a \$2,000 award for secondary school students who achieve academic excellence. You can check through the 2007 winners here: [http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school\\_education/programmes\\_funding/programme\\_categories/scholarships\\_awards\\_prizes/australian\\_students\\_prize/2007/](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/programmes_funding/programme_categories/scholarships_awards_prizes/australian_students_prize/2007/)

So it really has been a long wait for the inaugural Australian Vocational Student Prize. Also a \$2,000 award which sends out a message that VET achievement in secondary school is of equal standing. There are winners in two categories: school-based apprenticeships and VETiS. Drum roll, and then to the list of winners: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/AustralianVocationalStudentsPrize/2008/Pages/home.aspx>

## 20. A TAFE institute/enterprise interface

Australian Workforce Development Solutions is a business unit of Western Sydney TAFE Institute. I had cause to visit its website and I thought it was pretty good. It creates an accessible first port of call for enterprises who want to engage with the Institute. Just thought you might be interested: [http://www.awds.edu.au/about\\_us.html](http://www.awds.edu.au/about_us.html)

## 21. Many TAFE institute/enterprise interfaces

Partnerships are now bread and butter in education: as much between institutions in different education sectors as between VET providers and enterprises. *Building skills, securing the future: innovative partnership solutions* showcases partnerships between Victorian TAFE institutes and enterprises/agencies. The case studies include:

- the Nursing Skills Centre of Excellence at Box Hill Institute of TAFE, and public and private health care providers

- Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE and Silcar
- Swinburne University of Technology and Kennedy Trailers.

The pdf is here:

[http://www.skills.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0017/72215/5204-Skills-Tafe-Brochure\\_web.pdf](http://www.skills.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/72215/5204-Skills-Tafe-Brochure_web.pdf)

Skills Victoria produced something similar in 2008 called *Building skills, growing business: innovative partnership solutions for the future*. It's here: [http://www.skills.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/12268/SV-BuildingSkills-GrowingBusiness.pdf](http://www.skills.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/12268/SV-BuildingSkills-GrowingBusiness.pdf)

## 22. School leadership at the centre

Victoria's Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has set up The Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership. It's still in establishment phase and will kick off proper in 2010 with, as the website notes, 'a set of high quality leadership development modules designed to prepare principals for their first appointment. The basis of the leadership curriculum will focus on four themes:

- Leading Instruction
- Leading Futures
- Leading Organisations
- Leading People.'

More about the Bastow Institute here:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/proflearning/bastowinstitute/default.htm>

On a similar theme, the NSW Association of Independent Schools has established the Independent Schools Leadership Centre and is offering programs in three strands, about which there is more here:

<http://www.ainsw.edu.au/Main/LeadershipCentre/tabid/644/Default.aspx>

## 23. Sustainable schools in WA

This is a two step process. Where I'd like you to end up is looking at these Sustainability Action Plans put together by a handful of schools in WA: <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/curriculum/support/sustainableschools/detcms/navigation/aussi-wa-toolkit/review--plan-and-evaluate/sustainability-action-plans/>

They are pretty nifty in their own right, but maybe you want to follow the path these schools took in order to produce their plans. If so, start here:

<http://www.det.wa.edu.au/curriculum/support/sustainableschools/detcms/navigation/aussi-wa-toolkit/?oid=MultiPartArticle-id-1853707>

## 24. Doing more about school reform

Jack Keating from Melbourne Uni's Graduate School of Education has written *A new federalism in Australian education: a proposal for a national reform agenda*.

Published by the Education Foundation, it's a cogent argument for really getting stuck into school reform, and setting aside the piecemeal, sputtering attempts at it that have characterised the effort over too many years.

Keating writes: '... three core characteristics of Australian schooling have led to institutional rigidities: the centralised characteristics of state systems, the public-private school division, and the respective roles of the Commonwealth and state and territory governments. Together, these three characteristics have contributed towards a number of aspects of Australian schooling that are problematic ... includ[ing] funding arrangements, governance, public perceptions, market behaviours and associated student groupings, participation and outcomes, and government policy frames.'

Keating, as problem-solver, goes on to write about what we might do about all this: 'Three sets of projects stand out. They relate to early childhood education, the issue of middle school disengagement, and upper secondary pathways – especially in the area of vocational education. Between them these three sets of projects:

- Cover the broad objectives and locations of the COAG strategy;
- Provide opportunities for major initiatives;
- Invite government and nongovernment school participation;
- Can be addressed at least in part on an area basis; and
- Allow engagement with structural arrangements in funding, governance and accountability that need reform.'

Worth a slow read:

[http://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/fya\\_newfederalism\\_fullreport2.pdf](http://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/fya_newfederalism_fullreport2.pdf)

## 25. Rankings of sorts

The Princeton Review ranks US colleges in all manner of ways. You can get a read on everything from 'Class discussions encouraged' and 'Best college newspaper' to 'Party schools and 'Most politically active'. You will have to register to view: <http://www.princetonreview.com/college-rankings.aspx>

## IT IS WRITTEN

As a holder of a BA (Mon.) I read this passage with some alarm Goodness, I thought I was learning all this as I imbibed Shakespeare and political sociology ...

'We shall give an example of how the skills agenda has increasingly insinuated itself into thinking about academic curricula. Several years ago, the Arts Faculty in which we work hired the services of an outside consultant to investigate ways in which it could make its programs more attractive to international students. In the report that followed, it was concluded that the main obstacle to recruitment was a perception across the community that Arts qualifications generally are not sufficiently vocational, and 'that the financial returns that will follow from an investment in these degrees are at best uncertain.

'Many of the report's subsequent recommendations were aimed at dealing in some way with this perception difficulty. Central among these was a call for a 'core curriculum', to be made up of skill-based units that would have "clear vocational relevance" – including "Communication", "Problem-solving", "Critical thinking" and "Teamwork". The report was insistent that such subject offerings not be thought of as 'support', but be areas of study "in their own right" designed, as it suggested, "to excite, to motivate and to inspire".'

- Moore, T; Hough, B. 2007. 'The perils of skills: Towards a model of integrating graduate attributes into the disciplines'. In *Learning Discourses and the Discourses of Learning*, edited by Marriott, H; Moore, T; Spence-Brown, R. Melbourne: Monash University ePress. pp. 2.1-2.12. DOI: 10.2104/ld070002.

## FOR THE PODDIES, VODDIES AND BLOGGIES

### **Biology stand up**

Tim Lee is a population dynamicist turned comedian who uses PowerPoint in stand up routines that make biology entertaining:  
<http://www.youtube.com/txlee1>

### **Student engagement vodcasts**

La Trobe Uni's student engagement forum on 2 July has been preserved for posterity – or at least until the MP4 format goes the way of the floppy disk. If you couldn't make it, tune in to the vodcasts of the morning speakers who include Belinda Probert (La Trobe's DVC), Paul Johnson (La Trobe's VC), George Kuh (student engagement guru from Indiana Uni), and Hamish Coates (the AUSSE's midwife):  
<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/studentengagement/forum09.html>

### **Liz Coleman's call to reinvent liberal arts education**

Liz Coleman is President of Bennington College, a liberal arts college in Vermont. If ever there was a call to arms for the reinvention of liberal arts education, this is it. She gives us a quick outline of how Bennington's curriculum is changing, with the express intent of developing in its students an inquiring activism. Education set free from the limitations of economic instrumentalism:  
<http://www.bennington.edu/go/news/president-coleman-speaks-at-ted-conference>

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