



Monthly e-Newsletter – May, 2010

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EDITORIAL OF SORTS

Okay, someone was alert enough to point out a serious error in the last Newsletter – it's true that I wrote about a Joint Information Systems Committee seminary at the House of Commons, instead of a seminar. If it was a slip of the Freudian variety, I shudder to think what it may mean. In any case, the political high priests in the Commons are now working on a new electoral theology.

You'll see, by shifting your eyes to the right, that the Call for Papers for the 2010 AAIR Forum is now open, so you'd better start thinking about what you'd like to share with us all.

As always, your contributions to the newsletter are always welcome, as are your corrections to my many errors! Subject to space and relevance to members, the Newsletter can run job vacancies and items on upcoming events. I aim to get the newsletter out 'around' the 5th of the month, though I've slipped behind this month as I did last month. The element of surprise is mine.

Please feel free to contact me. My email address is: rob@sharpwords.com.au

**AAIR Annual Forum
10-12 November 2010
Four Points by Sheraton Hotel,
Geelong, Victoria**

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS NOW OPEN

**Our theme for 2010 is:
Has institutional research come of age in
Australasia?**

The theme invites us to focus on strategic priorities in the HE sector. Sub-streams will focus on:

- the equity agenda in HE, 2010 and beyond
- supporting models for academic standards
- improving participation and retention
- improving VET pathways and partnerships.

The theme of this year's Forum also invites discussion about the maturity of institutional research in our region. For long standing AAIR members, this will provide an opportunity to consider the changes that have occurred over time and to assess how far institutional research has come. It might also provide an opportunity to re-learn some of the lessons for surviving and prospering in times of government-led reform. As well as encouraging reflection, this theme is intended to encourage participants to showcase examples of current day 'best practice' and to consider likely developments for the future.

More details about the Call for Abstracts can be found here:

<http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/air2010/downloads/FINALAAIRCallforPapers.pdf>

General information about the Forum, including registration and venue/accommodation details, can be found here:

<http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/air2010/>

PLACES TO GO – THINGS TO DO

Education and Information Systems, Technologies and Applications: EISTA 2010

29 June-2 July, 2010

Rosen Centre Hotel, Orlando, Florida

Imagine it's the middle of winter, and you are confronting the end of the financial year. You might say to yourself, I'd rather be in Florida. While you're there, how about taking in a conference to get out of the sunshine for a bit. EISTA 2010 provides an opportunity for educators and ICT professionals to swap ideas and bring the two domains closer together.

The conference's major themes are:

- education & training systems & technologies
- application of education technologies
- education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics
- educational research, theories, practice and methodologies.

SP15+ recommended:

<http://www.iiis2010.org/imsci/website/default.asp?vc=5>

2010 National Student Engagement Forum

5 July, 2010

La Trobe University

Hosted for the second year by La Trobe and ACER, the Forum carries the broad title of 'Promoting student engagement for learning: improving practice with AUSSE data'.

There will be a keynote presentation from Associate Professor Alexander McCormick, Director of the National Survey of Student Engagement, Indiana University. Amidst the planned workshops and facilitated discussions, Hamish Coates, the ACER's AUSSE Director, will step us through the key messages from the AUSSE results.

I got along last year and it was a top turn. And at \$110 per registration, blimey, you'd be pretty happy even before you turned up for your day out.

Registration and program details are here – looks like you need to put your name down before 28 May:

http://ausse.acer.edu.au./index.php?option=com_content&view=categy&layout=blog&id=15&Itemid=9

VET business intelligence: using the data

1.30pm-4.30pm, 23 July

Holmesglen Institute of TAFE

An International Education Association of Australia workshop for 'VET senior management, & staff responsible for planning, business development, marketing, recruitment & development of VET programs for international students.' The workshop will tackle:

- consideration of publicly available data sources including DEEWR, AEI, NCVER, ABS and DIAC
- review of recent data and research undertaken via AEI, English Australia, TDA, ACPET & others
- international data sources including Open Doors, OECD, UNESCO, IMF and UN
- use of business intelligence to improve institutional decision making in marketing and development
- review of policy & how impact can be traced.

You might need to spend a bit of time brushing up on your acronyms before you go:

http://www.ieaa.org.au/Events/ShowEvent_IEAA.asp?id=202&page=1

Data Warehousing

Data Management

Business Intelligence

I thought that triple header would catch the attention of a certain kind of AAIRie. Altis Consulting is running a number of three and four day courses, mostly in Sydney – there's one in Auckland. The workshops include:

- Information quality improvement: processes and best practices for business performance excellence
- ETL architecture in depth
- Dimensional modeling in depth
- Visual business intelligence workshop.

I'll leave you to get the details you need here:

<http://altis.com.au/index.php>

Institutional Management in Higher Education (IMHE) 2010 General Conference

13-15 September, 2010

OECD Conference Centre, Paris

The theme is 'Higher education in a world changed utterly: doing more with less'. I've listed this gig before. Just thought you'd like to know that a provisional program is available, and what's more, it will be automne á Paris, mes amis:

http://www.oecd.org/document/0/0,3343,en_21571361_43541789_43546496_1_1_1_1,00.html

Manufacturing Skills Australia Conference 2010
18 August, 2010
Sebel Citigate, Brisbane

This is just a heads up – no conference program yet. The theme is ‘Growing for sustainability’:
<http://www.mskills.com.au/Info.aspx?TAG=MSA.Info.Conf10>

**International Conference on the Liberal Arts:
Looking Back and Moving Forward. The Next
100 Years of Liberal Arts – Confronting the
Challenge**
Sep 30-Oct 2, 2010
St. Thomas University, Fredericton, Canada

It’s not often I send you to New Brunswick, is it? I think this may be a first. I have an affection for the liberal arts tradition, and if you share it perhaps you ought drop in. Among the topics for your delectation are these:

- exploring the role and influence of Catholic feminism on the liberal arts campus
- facebook, performance and pedagogy
- liberal arts, generic skills and the aims of education
- diversity, retention & the first year curriculum.

Details at the click of a mouse:
<http://stualumni.isetevents.com/eventDetail.aspx?id=14046>

Tertiary Education Management Conference
3-6 October 2010
**Crown Conference Centre, Crown Promenade
Hotel, Melbourne**

The conference is a joint enterprise of ATEM (Association for Tertiary Education Management) and TEFMA (Tertiary Education Facilities Management Association).

With its theme of ‘Future directions’, this year’s conference will ponder what’s in prospect for:

- education services
- facilities management
- privatisation, commercialisation, internationalisation and post-Bradley review
- technology.

It’s a tad too early for program details – the call for abstracts has only just closed. I’d just note that the theme for the conference dinner is ‘Unibelly: It’s a jungle out there’:

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



Head, Planning Unit
Deakin University

Deakin University invites applications for the position of Head, Planning Unit.

The Head of the Planning Unit is responsible for providing strategic advice to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International and Development) on University planning, performance and business intelligence. This includes: developing and reporting on the University enrolment plan; delivering statistical and institutional research services; managing the conduct of surveys; providing statistical analysis to support the University’s quality assurance and performance reporting processes; and managing the University’s statistical compliance reporting to government.

The successful applicant must demonstrate expertise in strategic planning and data analysis in addition to excellent statistical reporting skills. The capacity to undertake research on policy or strategic issues will also be required.

A relevant postgraduate qualification is necessary, along with high level organisational and interpersonal communication skills.

Potential applicants should consult the position documentation on Deakin’s website:
www.deakin.edu.au/jobs

Further information is available from Ms Robin Buckham, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, on 03 9246 8071.

Applications close on 23rd May 2010.

EE-Oz Training Standards Annual Conference
12-13 October, 2010
Sofitel Hotel, Broadbeach, Gold Coast

Another quick heads up – no conference program as yet. The theme is ‘Workforce development and productivity: the training challenge’:
<http://www.ee-oz.com.au/content/view/12/26/>

SEAIR Annual Conference

19-21 October

Tagaytay City, Philippines

Another mention for the SEAIR conference, and there will be more in the months to come. The theme this year is 'Towards global-Asian institutional research strategic alliances'. The conference poster is at this link:

http://www.seairweb.info/Conference/Conference2010_Poster.pdf

3rd International Pedagogical Research in Higher Education Conferences

25-26 October, 2010

Foresight Centre, Liverpool Hope University

The theme is 'Research-teaching linkages to enhance student learning'. Keith Trigwell from Sydney Uni is a keynote. The conference immediately follows the 2010 conference of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning, also in Liverpool. Details:

<http://www.hope.ac.uk/learningandteaching/lat.php?page=prhe&curr=prhe>

AAIR 20th Annual Forum

10-12 November, 2010

Four Points by Sheraton, Geelong

Just a gentle reminder that the AAIR Forum should be in your diary.

Our theme is a question: 'Has Institutional Research come of age in Australasia?'

Check out the call for abstracts on the front page of the Newsletter. The Forum website is here:

<http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/air2010/>

Second Annual Asian Conference on Education

December 2-5, 2010

Ramada Osaka, Osaka, Japan

I haven't sent you to Osaka before either, but I don't want you to get settled in your ways. The website says: 'Academics working in Japan and Asia will be encouraged to forge working relationships with each other, as well as with colleagues from Europe and the US, facilitating partnerships across borders.'

This is a long way off, so you've got plenty of time to get your visa sorted:

<http://ace.iafor.org/>

IT ISN'T OVER YET

The disappeared is a novel set in Phnom Penh in the early 1990s, as Cambodia was readying itself for its first elections after the raging idiocy of the Khmer Rouge regime. This is a Phnom Penh street scene.

'One day we watched a young boy trying to sell postcards to a European tourist wearing leather shoes. The boy followed the big man and thrust the cards in front of him. The man took a card and looked at it and handed it back shaking his head. The boy kept following him. Three times the man turned away and finally he reached into his pocket and gave him some crumpled riel to get rid of him. The boy angrily threw it on the ground and said in English, I am not begging. I am selling. I want to go to school.'

- Kim Echlin, *The disappeared*, 2009, London: Abacus.

NEWSLETTER NOTES

1. The ethics behind your numbers

Some time ago the US National Forum on Education Statistics set up a Data Ethics Task Force to consider the ethical stance in relation to use of data originating in student records, and the presentation and use of publicly accessible data.

The Task Force, mostly experienced data managers from US school systems, has produced the *Forum guide to data ethics*. It identifies nine canons on integrity, data quality and security. In many ways, the text articulates what you sort of reckon would be the abiding ethical standards. But going beyond sort of reckon is no bad thing. Recommended practices and training are proposed, including:

- Be willing to challenge commonly held assumptions and prejudices related to descriptive data ... Do not automatically equate school success with life success. Academic success is important ... but people can find happiness, prosperity, and success in life without being the highest achiever in school.

There's a list of Forum resources at Appendix A you might find useful:

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010801.pdf>

2. Productivity in the education sectors

Now this is potentially a bit of a tangle, but the common thread is productivity in education.

In April, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Assistant Treasurer jointly announced they had commissioned the Productivity Commission (PC) (to quote the Terms of Reference) 'to examine issues impacting on the workforces in the early childhood development, schooling and vocational education and training sectors, including the supply of and demand for these workforces, and provide advice on workforce planning, development and structure in the short, medium and long-term.' If you haven't caught up with this, you might spare it a glance, especially if your interest is VET – the first cab off the PC's rank.

The ministers' media release says the study will:

- consider factors that impact on each sector's workforce, such as remuneration, working conditions, retention, training and support structures
- look at what level of skills and knowledge these workforces need to deliver quality education in these sectors.

So, before you lose this thread, the ministers' media release is here:

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_100422_123003.aspx

... and the PC web page that gives you more detail is here:

<http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/study/education-workforce>

Okay, stay with me now. A week before the ministers' announcement, PC Chair, Gary Banks, gave the Ian Little Lecture at Monash. His address was titled 'Advancing Australia's Human capital agenda', and dwelt at length on productivity in education, but especially in school education which, he rightly observes, is the foundation for post-school education. You might find in his lecture a hint or two about the frameworks the PC might apply to its education studies. On school education, Banks notes that over the past couple of decades, 'Arguably the most costly mistake has been to spend scarce budgetary resources on smaller class sizes instead of better teachers, notwithstanding steadily accumulating evidence that smaller classes, in the ranges contemplated, were unlikely to achieve improved learning outcomes.' Here's Banks' lecture:

http://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/97046/advancing-human-capital.pdf

AAIR e-Newsletter – May 2010

Not quite finished. This may be my longest Newsletter Note yet. In early May, The Deputy PM spoke in Adelaide to the Committee for Economic Development of Australia. Her address was titled 'Australia's productivity agenda towards 2050'. Just so we're clear where education fits in that agenda, here's what Ms Gillard had to say:

- At the same time as maximising jobs we will continue to deliver ambitious productivity reforms:
 - Starting with the early years to give children the best start in life.
 - Delivering the Education Revolution in our schools.
 - Developing and implementing a 21st century reform agenda in universities and vocational education.

She also made a strong statement about workplace language, literacy and numeracy, saying:

- Boosting the language, literacy and numeracy capacity of the workforce is perhaps the single most constructive step that can be taken to make Australia more productive over the long term. In the short to medium term the Rudd Government is continuing to invest in significant programs that are helping Australians on the ground right now – the national Language, Literacy and Numeracy program (LLNP) and the Workplace English Language and Literacy program.

The DPM's speech is here:

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Speeches/Pages/Article_100505_100247.aspx

Okey dokey, team, nearly there. One more thread to make my knot. I toddled off to a Grattan Institute seminar last Thursday. It was great, and I say that while acknowledging that the three speakers were economists. In their favour was that they were generously self-effacing and clear about what their data says in terms of what education expenditure gets the best outcomes. The hands down winner is early childhood education for kids from lower SES backgrounds.

The panel was clear about the signal importance of quality teachers, good teacher preparation and improved school retention. And the cat got out of the bag again – there's no evidence that small class sizes improve learning outcomes. We'd be better off adding two or three kids to each class and paying good teachers more. You can listen to the podcast of the seminar here:

http://www.grattan.edu.au/podcasts/colm_harmon.m4a

IT IS WRITTEN

'As a former Chief Economist at the [UK] Department for Education and Skills explained, "trying to reduce educational inequality in the UK is like squeezing a long balloon – if you squeeze down in one place, it simply bulges out at the next". Sure enough, even as the government managed to reduce educational inequalities in say, the proportion of children getting basic qualifications at 16, the gap generally grew in terms of numbers getting the next level of qualification. Similarly in Higher Education, new and expanding markets have emerged in post-degree qualifications as the more affluent seek additional ways to differentiate themselves from the incoming numbers of young people getting "ordinary" degrees.

'The differentiation in education and skills is not limited to formal educational qualifications. Social and emotional skills – or "soft" skills – are a key differentiator in the labour market, and one that the best schools work hard to cultivate. Yet it is not a factor that has, to date, been measured by exams or the performance frameworks of local and national government. Empathy; an ability to read the intentions of others; and the ability to get on with other people are "people skills" that are valued by many employers and society as a whole. There is some evidence that one of the reasons why middle class kids were better able to take advantage of the expansions of Higher Education of the late 1980s was the effects of inequalities in such soft skills.

'Surprisingly, given the growing understanding of their importance, there are very few systematic studies of class differentials in soft skills, though psychologists have long since developed measures to capture them. This means we have little idea whether the inequalities in soft skills are growing, though we do have evidence that the financial returns to such skills are growing.'

- David Halpern, *The hidden wealth of nations*, 2010, Cambridge: Polity Press.

PS. AAIRies who reckon a good read is based around a scatter chart may find this book to their liking. Lots of data and graphs aimed at showing that the levels of happiness in a society have sources other than wealth and economic growth. It does have a UK/EU focus, reflective of Halpern's time in the UK's Prime Minister's Strategy Unit.

3. Learning stats

UQ's Michael Bulmer is a statistician and teaching stats to undergrads isn't always a doddle. Bulmer's ALTC Fellowship Report – *Technology for nurture in large classes* – was posted on the web recently. It's short (only 36 pages) but big-hearted: students never leave centre stage. There are lots of valuable observations about teaching, philosophical leanings are tickled out, learning designs explained, practice reflected on. I loved the stuff about the part reflective writing can play, and how it can promote student engagement if the reflective writing is a shared reflective enterprise between student and teacher. I commend it to you:

<http://www.altc.edu.au/resource-technology-nurture-large-classes-uq-2010>

4. Undergrad bioscience research

The Centre for Applied Undergraduate Research Skills, at Reading Uni in the UK, has a website that goes by the name of 'Engage – the interactive research resource for bioscience students'. The target group is undergrads, and the idea is to support them as they go about the research tasks that fall to them as they mosey through the curriculum. It looks pretty good to me, though you have to accept that's a judgement from a former humanities undergrad.

There's a step-by-step guide to the mysteries of stats, lots of downloads if you need them, and the site is packed with links to resources lying around the World Wide Web. The website is here:

www.engageinresearch.ac.uk

AAIRies might like the section on Common mistakes in presenting your data – take the test: http://www.engageinresearch.ac.uk/section_4/common_mistakes_with_figures.shtml

5. eLearning resources from Curtin

There's a terrific suite of resources available from eLearning at Curtin. The link below takes you to the welcome page which outlines a bundle of workshops for teachers, but for those of us at a distance, there are other tabs worth exploring: case studies; online teaching; tools, tips and training.

You might like, in particular, to follow the teacher training videos hyperlink, accessed via the tools, tips and training tab:

<http://cel.curtin.edu.au/>

6. Feedback technology

This is oh so old in online terms, but I'll embarrass myself in the service. In September 2009, the UK's Higher Education Academy released *Technology, feedback, action!: impact of learning technology on students' engagement with feedback*. Another shortie but goodie at 22 cyber-leaves. The study was done by three academics from Sheffield Hallam Uni, and I'll leave you to burrow into the details. Here's one of my highlights:

- Students expressed a strong preference for the publishing of feedback and grades online. It provides greater flexibility of access to feedback, enabling students to read & respond to feedback when they are emotionally ready and in relative privacy. The prompt return of feedback & grades also means students will be more inclined to act on it because it is current, relevant and meaningful in terms of the original assessment. The storage of feedback alongside their learning offers a sense of permanence and students are more likely to refer back to it when working on future assignments. Access to grades in a single place enables students to monitor their progression and see how their performance on different assessment tasks contributes to the overall assessment profile. The use of technology pushes the feedback to the students removing the burden to seek out feedback from tutors and makes it easier for students to engage with their feedback as they have ultimate control over how, where and when they receive their feedback.

Here 'tis:

http://evidencenet.pbworks.com/f/TFA_Final_Report.pdf

7. A national Grad Cert in Tertiary Education

This is a terrific idea – a national Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Education. Funded through ALTC, five unis developed it and will offer different bits of it to each other's staff. Units and responsible unis go like this:

- Tertiary teaching & learning – core unit, delivered by each uni
- Curriculum design for tertiary contexts, UNE
- Promotion & professional practice, Ballarat Uni
- Education technology, CQU
- Assessment & evaluation in tertiary education, Canberra Uni
- Action learning project, delivered by ECU.

More details here:

<http://www.une.edu.au/education/postgraduate/gcte.php>

8. Learning resources from Adelaide Uni

Adelaide Uni's Centre for Learning and Professional Development provides a suite of learning and teaching resources, from case studies in a variety of disciplines, to guides for getting started in things like PBL and student-centred learning:

<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/clpd/resources/leap/>

9. Pathways aplenty

I have here a swag of goodies to do with pathways between VET and HE.

Swinburne Uni recently announced its Guaranteed Entry Scheme (GES) which gives students guaranteed entry, with credit, into an undergrad program when they enrol in a Swinburne TAFE diploma or advanced diploma. The credit equates to a year for a Diploma and 18 months for an Advanced Diploma. Here's the overview – just a tip to follow the link to the Guide to the Guaranteed Entry Scheme for more details:

<http://www.future.swinburne.edu.au/pathways/ges/>

Dual sector universities are well-placed to come up with pathways programs like this, but there aren't many dual sectors so the innovations will be mostly between institutions in different sectors. Charles Sturt Uni and North Sydney Institute of TAFE have been innovating and come up with an arrangement which allows NSI business and IT students to complete a CSU degree in those areas. The neat thing is that students don't have to leave NSI because NSI will deliver the CSU subjects. NSI Advanced Diploma students pick up 60% credit towards the CSU degree. Here's the deal, as explained by NSI:

<http://news.csu.edu.au/director/latestnews/education.cfm?itemID=0292FB0C90FDA9CE3FA449311E55D883&printtemplate=release>

Kangan Batman Institute of TAFE in Melbourne has been establishing pathways from its Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas to undergrad programs at La Trobe Uni, Monash Uni and Victoria Uni – that's been happening for a while. Kangan has come up with a nice way of navigating through the pathways options:

<http://www.kangan.edu.au/pathways/>

La Trobe Uni has also been busy concluding pathways for VET students from a raft of VET providers (both in Victoria and NSW/ACT) into undergrad programs, and into Grad Certs and Diplomas. Here's the listing:

<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/study/tafe>

10. Sydney Uni's Green Paper

Sydney Uni is in the throes of preparing its 2011-2015 strategic plan, expected to circulate in July in a White Paper. *The University of Sydney: 2011–2015 Green Paper* released in March was a discussion paper that considered the strategic environment and, in general terms, the options Sydney might pursue. The Green Paper emerges from an extensive internal consultation process.

While consultation is closed, you can still read the *Green Paper*, which has loads of interesting thoughts about what kind of future the Uni could make for itself. Here are a couple of excerpts:

- ... there is substantial evidence to support the view of staff and students that duplication and overlap, in academic programs, organisational structures, degrees, and administrative services, is a crucial impediment to the University achieving its potential. A major causal factor would appear to be the strong faculty structure, with many faculties of varying size, supported by a heavily decentralised administrative system. This has created rigid silos that inhibit collaboration and cooperation, promote internal competition and replicate processes, procedures and administrative structures. Overcoming these problems, reinvesting potential savings and unleashing the creative spirit of staff and students, is a critical challenge for the University's strategic planning process.
- ... our efforts to improve teaching quality are at present disparate and do not easily facilitate the spread of good practice from one part of the University to another, even in contexts in which disciplinary specificity is no bar to doing so ... The solution to this may rest in part with more coordinated activity in the promotion of best practice through the office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) and the Education Committee of the Senior Executive Group, working with the Academic Board in its recently reformed role.
- A strong set of cross-disciplinary graduate training offerings might well be a means to attract new student cohorts which, if coordinated with infrastructure and research plans, could be an important component to sound, forward-thinking academic and financial planning.

It's worth a read:

http://www.usyd.edu.au/about/strategy/green_paper/green-paper-whole.pdf

Seminar special for AAIRies

Building Creative Business Strategy: Intersections between design thinking and strategic foresight

In her other life, ATEM's Executive Director and long time friend of AAIR, Maree Conway, runs a strategic foresight practice. She is co-founder of Pensito which is running an event in Melbourne (27 May) and Brisbane (25 May) entitled 'Building creative business strategy: intersections between design thinking and strategic foresight.'

The seminar is aimed at planners, strategists, marketing people, innovation managers and anyone who wants to learn more about what design thinking is and how it can help us think about and plan for the future more effectively.

Maree's providing a special discount rate for AAIR and ATEM members. AAIRies can access either:

- a big discount for individuals who want to attend (making the fee \$795 for the day), or
- a two for one offer (two people attend for the full registration rate of \$1295).

More info and registration is available at: http://www.pensito.com.au/next_event

If you are interested in an individual registration, use the discount code AAIRMAY to get your discount.

If you want to use the two for one offer, register and pay for one person, and then get in touch with Maree with details of the second person. Maree's contact details are:

- Phone: (03) 9016 9506
- Email: maree.conway@thinkingfutures.net

11. Data in the bank

The World Bank has opened up its data vaults to the world via its Open Data Initiative. There is any amount of data – on education, science and technology, for example – by topic. An interactive map will get you to country data. There's also a long list of, and access to, databases in a variety of file formats:

<http://data.worldbank.org/?cid=EXTEAPMonth1>

12. Australian Policy & History

Historians, like engineers, are at the bedrock of any civilisation which wants to last. So says me. The establishment of Australian Policy & History (AP&H) can only be good thing. AP&H is a network of historians and the idea is to promote the engagement of historians in the formulation of public policy. Its home is the Alfred Deakin Research Institute at Deakin University, which has partnered with UNE, ANU and the History Council of New South Wales to bring AP&H to life.

There's just one paper on the site at this stage:

- 'National security and immigration in Australia's twentieth century history' – Mark Finnane from the ARC Centre of Excellence in Policing and Security at Griffith Uni.

There are a dozen or so opinion pieces, which give a tantalising indication of the kinds of public policy areas in which history can illuminate our policy choices. A few examples:

- 'Fuel mandates have a history of success and a lesson for bio fuels implementation' – Troy Whitford, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, CSU
- 'Prison escapes and correctional policy: an historical perspective' – Benedict Taylor, School of History and Philosophy, UNSW
- 'Volunteering – the "blind spot" of economic and taxation policy' – Melanie Oppenheimer, A/Professor, School of Humanities, UNE.

Back to the future here:

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

13. Transitions in Victoria

Two Victorian government departments – the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, and the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development – have joined forces to produce *Stronger futures for all young Victorians: discussion paper on the youth transitions system*. It focuses on key study/work transitions from ages 15-24, and in consequence traverses territory of interest for the school, VET and HE systems. The bottom lines are greater flexibility, better career advice, better information about study options and providers, more WIL and more WELL. There's a consultation process running until 11 June, which is outlined on page 37. I think you probably need to read this one, Victorian or not: <http://www.skills.vic.gov.au/corporate/programs-and-initiatives/youth-transitions>

Florida State University

Certificate in Institutional Research Online Summer Courses

Summer 2010 Certificate in Institutional Research

The Certificate in Institutional Research at Florida State University is an online graduate-level certificate program, consisting of 18 credits of graduate-level course work, designed to provide academic and professional development opportunities for institutional researchers, administrators, graduate students, and faculty from all areas of higher education.

Participants will enhance their knowledge and understanding of Institutional Research, have the opportunity to explore national databases, and apply their knowledge to practical applications.

All courses can be taken individually, or as part of the Certificate.

Courses are completely online.

Course offerings:

- Introduction to Institutional Research: June 28-August 6
- Student Success in College: May 10-June 18
- Data-Driven Decision Making for Institutional Research: June 28-August 6

For more information:

- Visit: <http://www.fsu.edu/~elps/he/certresearch.htm>
- Email: ircertificate@mail.coe.fsu.edu

14. Will I go to uni?

Jenny Chesters from ANU's Centre for Economic Policy Research has written a discussion paper titled 'Has the effect of parents' education on child's education changed over time?'

This is another contribution to understanding the nature of the challenge in achieving a mix of university graduates that better reflects the socio-economic structure of Australian society. And yes, if your parents went to uni, it's much more likely that you will too:

<http://cepr.anu.edu.au/pdf/DP637.pdf>

15. Will I be happy if I go to uni?

I haven't worked my way beyond the Executive Summary of, and Introduction to, *Education and happiness in the school-to-work transition*, by Alfred Dockery of the Centre for Labour Market Research at Curtin. But I suspect that you and I will need to. The data come from that consistently wonderful source, the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth.

Dockery throws in his lot in with the notion of subjective wellbeing as one important way of assessing economic success. Something I notice even Ben Bernanke, Chairman of the US Federal Reserve, pointed out on 8 May to a graduating group of students from the University of South Carolina:

<http://www.federalreserve.gov/newsevents/speech/bernanke20100508a.htm>

These two passages from the Exec Summary of Dockery's report might whet your whistle:

- It is upon completion of their degree that the happiness of university graduates declines. This is despite the fact that they do generally achieve better labour market outcomes upon entering the labour force. The inclusion of controls for labour market outcomes in the panel models only accentuates the lower level of happiness reported by university graduates, relative to those with intermediate vocational qualifications. By comparison, apprenticeships stand out as a pathway associated with a pronounced positive impact upon happiness during the training indenture.
- ... the time in school and while studying at university are particularly happy times for those who go on to gain a university degree, with their subsequent work and life experiences seeming to be not quite as good in relative terms ... Post-university, they may be likely to indicate that they are somewhat less than 'very happy', because these good times set the benchmark for their evaluation. In contrast, their peers who left school early or gained intermediate-level qualifications were not so happy at school and may find the years following their transition from school to work to be relatively good times, and hence are more likely to report high levels of happiness.

You can download the full report here:

http://www.lsay.edu.au/lsay_pubs/research/LSAY_2239.pdf

16. Will everyone go to uni?

In the May/June number of *Foreign Affairs* magazine is an essay by Richard Levin, President of Yale, titled 'Top of the class: the rise of Asia's universities'. AARies may warm to some of Levin's big numbers. He writes that in 1998, Chinese President Jiang Zemin outlined a higher education expansion program and that: 'By 2006, China was spending 1.5 percent of GDP on higher education, nearly triple what it had spent a year earlier.

'The results of Beijing's investment have been staggering. Over the decade following Jian's declaration, the number of institutions of higher education in China more than doubled, from 1,022 to 2,263. Meanwhile, the number of Chinese who enrol in a university each year has quintupled – rising from one million students in 1997 to more than 5.5 million in 2007.'

On India, Levin notes that 'human resources development minister, Kapil Sibal, aims to increase his country's gross enrolment ratio in postsecondary education from 12 percent to 30 percent by 2020. This goal translates to an increase of 40 million students in Indian universities over the next decade – and ambitious target, to be sure, but even half that number would be a remarkable accomplishment.'

Usually I list only items you can access in full and for nix. Not this time – sorry. You can read the first few paras here, but if you want to read the full monty, I'm afraid you'll have to go to the library or buy your own copy of the mag:

<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/66216/richard-c-levin/top-of-the-class>

17. Case studies in government skills

Government Skills Australia has posted half a dozen case studies on its website which explain very briefly how public and private VET providers have customised design and delivery of a range of quals for a variety of clients. They include:

- SA Department for Families & Communities which set up its own RTO to deliver the Cert III in Government
- Swinburne Uni's models of delivery for local government clients
- The ACT Public Service Graduate Program.

You can access the case studies here:

http://www.governmentskills.com.au/qualify/case_studies.php

18. WA's Workforce Development Plan

The WA Department of Training and Workforce Development has set up a stand alone web presence to keep everyone up to date with its work on workforce development planning. Soon enough, we'll have a WA Workforce Development Plan, but in the meantime from here you can access briefing and research papers, regional and industry profiles:

<http://www.dtwd.wa.gov.au/dtwd/detcms/portal/>

19. Is a school a market?

From the OECD comes 'Do quasi-markets foster innovation in education? A comparative perspective'. I'm embarrassing myself again because this one goes all the way back to August, 2009. Times of yore.

A quasi-market emerges, according to Christopher Lubienski, from policy schemes that:

- ... draw on market mechanisms such as consumer choice and competition for clients, yet typically maintain a substantial role for the state in areas such as funding, compelling consumption of school services, and – to varying degrees – curriculum, assessment, or regulation of employees and institutions. Therefore, despite efforts by some to move schooling into more of a purer, laissez-faire market model, market mechanisms in education in many cases is best thought of as a 'second best' or 'quasi-market'.

Lubienski surprised me by saying, in looking at the evidence from around 20 countries, that 'In many ways, Australia and New Zealand have led the policy movement by embarking on more concerted efforts to adopt comprehensive quasi-market systems.'

Does it work? You could go straight to the end, I suppose:

- Based on evidence reviewed in this analysis, it appears there is no direct causal relationship between leveraging quasi-market mechanisms of choice and competition in education and inducing educational innovation in the classroom. In fact, the very causal direction is in question [because] government intervention, rather than market forces, has often led to pedagogical and curricular innovation.

The full paper is here:

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/41/6/43415929.pdf>

20. School-based apprenticeships in Qld

I missed this one, which was released in 2009: *Working towards a more supportive SATS system: the Training Ombudsman's review of the Queensland school-based apprenticeship and trainee system*. SATS being the School-based Apprenticeship and Trainee System. The report gets right into the nitty gritty of how to improve the system and ramp it up quickly, requiring better linkages between employers, schools, and the Department of Education and Training.

My hunch is that we are on the cusp of much greater focus on VET in Schools than we've managed to put together so far. I found this report helpful in giving me a framework to think about how it might all need to work. The report offers a good insight into the difficulties employers strike when it comes to making school-based apprenticeships and traineeships work for them – and in so doing reveals some stark differences between the cultural settings of schools, employers and training providers when it comes to engaging successfully with each other in the interests of kids.

In its conclusion, the report sums up client views like this:

- They are asking for the SAT program to be valued more highly within the wider VET system and school communities as a legitimate pathway for lifelong learning and employment success.
- They are asking for cultural change within school communities and training providers based on strong client services, a commitment to collaboration and innovative problem-solving.
- They are asking for widespread implementation of well-regarded stakeholder support strategies.

More to come, methinks:

http://trainingombudsman.qld.gov.au/docs/sats_review_report.pdf

21. School in Qld

Also from Queensland is *A flying start for Queensland children: education Green Paper for public consultation*. And here, too, you'll find quite a focus on key transitions within the school system and between school, work and further study. The consultation process runs until 30 June. You can get details about it, and download the *Green Paper*, here:

<http://deta.qld.gov.au/aflyingstart/community.html>

22. My Word

There is a plethora of My websites in the offing, following the advent of the My School website. My University is on the way. Something like it seems to be in the offing for VET. We're going to get a My Superannuation website, too. Focussing on the one we have, Chris Bonnor has written an interesting article for *Inside Story*, titled 'What My School really says about our schools'.

Bonnor has his doubts that the data on My School supports any valid conclusions about school effectiveness. That's probably right, but I still reckon it's a start for building a picture – I'm the optimist who thinks we'll get to a point when we can identify the value add that individual schools make. Despite his misgivings about the data for saying anything useful about school effectiveness, Bonnor has taken a dive into the data and come up with some interesting observations. Try these on for size:

- We have long known that independent schools have the best staff–student ratios, followed by government schools and then Catholic schools. But according to the categories of schools derived for this article there are considerable differences between different types of non-government school. The high-fee schools enrol around 10.4 students for each teacher. Anglican schools are almost as well resourced, with 11.4 students per teacher. Next come government schools with 12.5 students per teacher. Catholic schools trail with 13.5, followed by Christian schools at 14.6 students per teacher. In effect, the best-staffed schools are 40 per cent better off than the worst, and both are categorised as independent schools.
- ... high-fee and Anglican schools have the most non-teaching staff, one for every twenty or twenty-two students respectively. Next are the Christian schools with one non-teaching staff member for every 30.7 students, followed by the Catholic schools with one for every forty-four students. The schools with the lowest ratio of non-teaching staff to students are government schools, where each non-teaching staff member serves 57.2 students ... it appears that every non-teacher in a supporting role in high-fee, Anglican and Christian schools has just two teachers to support, while the ratio is over one to three in Catholic schools and over one to four in government schools.

Bonnor's article is here:

<http://inside.org.au/what-my-school-really-says-about-our-schools/>

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FOR THE PODDIES, VODDIES AND BLOGGIES

Pitching to international students

Here's a short video, a promo, from BrisTV called *A student's day in Brisbane*, told from the perspective of a couple of international students. Worth reading the comments as well:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NrR2XqCGBWA>

The CIHE Podcast Initiative

The Center for International Higher Education at the Lynch School of Education, Boston College, is posting lots of podcasts on HE matters. Fr'instance:

- Clifford Adelman: Tuning USA & the Bologna Process: lessons from Europe for the US
- Robert Quinn: Scholars at risk and the world academic freedom survey
- Dewayne Matthews – US higher education attainment in a global context.

All the pods are here:

http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe/podcast/

School funding review

Julia Gillard's address to the Sydney Institute, 'A future fair for all – school funding in Australia' is on the Institute's website. It's a good set of inklings for how the promised review of school funding arrangements will focus its efforts. Click on the podcast tab and scroll down to 16 April:

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