Australasian Association for Institutional Research

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Monthly e-Newsletter – July, 2010

What's in this edition?

EDITORIAL OF SORTS

I'm sure you are gearing up for the 2010AAIR Forum in Geelong from 10-12 November. The Call for Papers for the Forum is open until 28 June. See page 5 for a little more detail on keynote speakers and on the three pre-conference workshops. Special Interest Group sessions are also scheduled into the Forum program. You are going to be spoiled for choice.

The Forum website is your best bet for the latest Forum news:
http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/aair2010/

I'm sorry I can't assist those who inquire about items that might have appeared in earlier newsletters. I would if I could, but I'm afraid I don't keep track of what I've dropped in or when. Eventually the newsletters will sit in the archive on the new AAIR website, which might make it easier.

Ahead of time, I just want you to know that the October Newsletter is likely to be a slim and early as I'm planning some leave. I may not be able to assist with inserting special items in that edition. That said, I really do welcome your contributions to the Newsletter. Subject to space and relevance

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

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

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

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

Call for Abstracts open until 12 July

More details about the Call for Abstracts can be found here:
http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/aair2010/downloads/FINALAAIRCallforPapers.pdf

More Forum details

General information about the Forum, including registration and venue/accommodation details, can be found here:
http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/aair2010/

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to members, the Newsletter runs job vacancies and items on upcoming events. My email address is:
rob@sharpwords.com.au

A couple of months ago I picked up an error in my draft of the Newsletter. I'd written Workplace English Languish and Literacy, rather than Workplace English Language and Literacy. Well, sad to say, I haven't had time for a hard copy proof read of the Newsletter this month, so goodness only knows what bloopers lie before you. Good luck!

PLACES TO GO – THINGS TO DO

Designing & Developing Assessment Tools
Two-day professional development workshops
May-September 2010

The Voc Ed Learning Group is running these workshops around Oz. Day 1 introduces the principles and standards for assessment in VET. Day 2 is focussed on developing assessment tools for units of competency that practitioners bring along with them. You can find the schedule of workshops on this page – just scroll down a bit:
http://www.velg.com.au/default.asp?PageID=19

New Zealand Higher Education Summit
10-11 August 2010
Langham Hotel, Auckland

The second NZ HE Summit kicks off at the front end of significant change in postsecondary education, so there's lots to talk about. The themes listed for attention include: the new tertiary education strategy; quality assurance; skilling the national workforce; student engagement; university planning; equity and access. The conference website is here:
http://www.informa.com.au/conferences/education/2nd-annual-new-zealand-higher-education-summit-P10I32

Skills DMC 6th National Conference
25 August 2010
Four Seasons Hotel, Sydney

Skills DMC is the Industry Skills Council covering drilling, mining, quarrying and civil infrastructure. As the mining industry is much on the national mind in Oz just now, it's neat timing that the dinner speaker at this year's Skills DMC conference is the Minister for Resources and Energy, Martin Ferguson. Check out the jam packed agenda here:
http://www.skillsdmc.com.au/en/News%20and%20Events/National%20Conference/~/media/A0209C781F2D4F8E8C4C8C073E803B26.ashx

EAIR Forum 2010
1-4 September 2010
Valencia, Spain

The European Higher Education Society (EAIR) is a kind of sister organisation to AAIR. Its annual forum this year is themed 'Linking society and universities: new missions for universities'. Conference details are here:
http://www.eair.nl/forum/Valencia/Welcome.asp

Australian Council of Adult Literacy Annual Conference
10-11 September, 2010
Casuarina Campus, Charles Darwin University

This year's conference is themed 'Hands up… Hands on…' As the conference website reminds us, 'adult literacy and numeracy is just as much about building communities and expanding social inclusion as it is about building a skilled workforce.' The sub-themes this year are:
- Literacy and numeracy for everyday living
- Literacy and numeracy for building strong communities
- Reclaiming quality learning and teaching.

Read all about it:
http://www.acal.edu.au/2010conf/

TDA National Conference
13-14 September, 2010
Crown Promenade, Melbourne

This year the TAFE Directors Association has adopted a pretty smart banner for itself: 'TAFE in the Year of the Tiger'. Helpfully, the website gives us a character assessment of the tiger: 'Courageous, active, self-assured, independent. Sensitive, given to deep thinking, capable of great sympathy. Unpredictable.' I like all of those.

The speakers have taken to theme with élan. For example:
- The toothless tiger; Are competency based qualifications relevant in a 21st century knowledge society? (Associate Professor Leesa Wheelahan, L H Martin Institute.)
- Tiger or pussy cat; What do we really want for TAFE in an election year? What is our attitude and approach? (Angela Hutson, CEO, East Gippsland TAFE)

All the details here:
http://www.tda.edu.au/

National Teaching and Learning Conference
29-30 September, 2010
Rendezvous Hotel, Melbourne

There's a pair of learning and teaching conferences on offer. The first is an Aussie job focussing on 'Embedding learning and teaching excellence at institutional, individual, program and unit levels':
http://www.informa.com.au/conferences/education/national-learning-and-teaching-forum

International Conference on Learning and Teaching
18-19 October
One World Hotel, Petaling Jaya

The second hand of the pair is an international job in Malaysia which is focussing on 'Emerging trends in higher education learning and teaching'. The main themes are:

- Methodologies and strategies in learning, teaching and assessment
- Technology and its impact on learning, teaching and assessment environments
- Institutional policies and professional development.

The wide and deep program is here:
http://web3.tarc.edu.my/v1/tic/t_venue.htm

Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom
25-27 Oct 2010
Melbourne

Singapore-based Sanguine Consulting is running a three day workshop for pre-school and primary school teachers on how the multiple intelligences framework can help engage all the kids in a class:
http://www.sanguineconsulting.com/WorkshopsNew/MImel.html

Education for Sustainable Development in Technical and Vocational Education and Training
November 3-5, 2010
Shangri-La Hotel, Manila, Philippines

This international conference is jointly hosted by the International Vocational Education and Training Association (IVETA), and the Manila-based Colombo Plan Staff College for Technician Education CPSC). The conference aims are listed as:

- Integrating Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in TVET platforms
- Facilitating interest and commitment towards ESD
- Cross-sharing of experiences, best practices and approaches
- Examining the potential of 'greener' TVET.

Call for papers closed on 30 June, so no program specifics yet, though the list of areas in which papers have been invited is very generous in scope. Early bird registrations are open until 31 August. The conference website is here:
http://iveta2010.cpsctech.org/

AAIR 20th Annual Forum
10-12 November, 2010
Four Points by Sheraton, Geelong

Most importantly, AAIRies and friends, the Annual AAIR Forum is getting closer. This year's forum will dig into the big strategic issues:

- the equity agenda
- supporting models for academic standards;
- improving participation and retention
- improving VET pathways and partnerships.

The call for abstracts is open until 12 July, so you've got just enough time to work out what you can share with us.

The Forum website is here:
http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/aair2010/

World Federation of Colleges and Polytechnics
14-15 November, 2010
International Convention Centre, Birmingham

Off to Brum for this one. Very early days so limited details yet, though I can tell you that the conference theme is 'Driving global recovery through education'. Here's the site:
https://www.aocmsevents.co.uk/aoc/frontend/reg/thome.csp?pageID=96731&eventID=279&mode=preview&version=future&eventID=279

HERDSA New Zealand, TERNZ Conference 2010
November 25-26
University of Otago, Dunedin

TERNZ (Tertiary Education Research in NZ) is the annual conference of HERDSA's NZ members. The closing date for proposals is 17 September:
http://herdsa.org.nz/Ternz/2010/home.html

Research excellence: competition or collaboration in today's globalised HE sector?
December 2, 2010
The Royal Society, London

The UK's Higher Education Policy Institute is hosting this one day conference. It's a long way to go for a day, I know, but sometimes you just have to put yourself out, don't you? The website notes that the rise of Asia's universities is creating a new dynamic in the economy of global HE. I assume that's up for discussion at the conference:
http://www.hepi.ac.uk/481-1844/Research-Excellence--competition-or-collaboration-in-today%E2%80%99s-globalised-HE-sector--.html

IT IS WRITTEN (1)

'When Theory writing challenges the way established disciplines have analysed or described phenomena from their respective domains, there is often more than a hint of "ontological envy" in its claims. The writers seem to want to 'own' the field, as, as Theorists themselves might say, to "colonise it discursively". We have seen many psychological-sounding proposals throughout this book that proclaim new knowledge but really offer little more than new words for older concepts. Of course, only a realist would make this criticism, for only a realist would think that the phenomena that writers seek to interpret and/or explain (yes, explain!) do actually exist *independently* of those who write about them, however lucid or obtuse their literary style.

'I have argued that Theory writers in Cultural Studies offer few or no means by which students can evaluate their proposals. No methodological criteria are available to the novice other than those already practiced within the fields that Theory rewrites, and Theory's proponents avoid making these explicit. So students are frequently intimidated into allowing methodological licence to Theory-speak because they lack the foundational knowledge that the established disciplines (especially analytical philosophy) might have fostered. They have to judge as empirical the kinds of Theory-drenched texts I have discussed throughout this book.

'… In the interests of allowing students to contest the ideas of those writing or teaching Cultural Studies, I modestly propose that *all* participants in the relevant debates (all "voices in the discourse") *explicitly define their terminologies*, including abstract and relational terms. I see this as a minimal condition for critical analysis. It would expose whether particular terms were meant to designate phenomena, (or classes of phenomena) and whether particular propositions were being used to predicate qualities of them. It would allow the theoretical status of terms to be clearly agreed before *hyperbolic* claims were made using the concepts. Relations (such as "difference") and processes (such as "becomings") would not then be used to perform magical Theoretical tricks by being invoked at will, free of all specific material reference.'

> - Phillip Bell, *Confronting theory: the psychology of cultural studies*, 2010, Bristol: Intellect.

FOR THE PODDIES, VODDIES AND BLOGGIES

An ABC of podcasts

There is a treasure trove of podcasts n the Aunty ABC website. Amongst recent nuggets I've listened to are these:

- From the *360 Documentaries* program: 'Doosra – the life and times of an Indian student in Australia'
  http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/rn/podcast/2010/03/tsy_20100320_1405.mp3
- From the always diverting *Lingua Franca* program: 'Bilingual Camberwell Primary School'
  http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/rn/podcast/2010/03/lin_20100320.mp3
- And from *The Philosopher's Zone*, for AAIRies who want to revisit the curiosities of statistical probability: 'What are the odds? Philosophy and probability'.
  http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/rn/podcast/2010/03/pze_20100327.mp3

Research podcasts

I've just discovered this little cache of podcasts on the NHMRC website. I've downloaded a couple but am yet to apply my ears to any of the offerings. There are several categories including: 2010 NHMRC Australia Fellows; NHMRC Newscasts; 10 of the Best Research Projects 2009.

The Occasional Series includes:
- Professor James Best on conflict of interest
- Young, groundbreaking and inspiring: Professor James Whisstock.

The list is here:
http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/media/podcasts/index.htm

Just a minute

ECU's Centre for Learning and Development has a lovely video on its website, comprising speakers from across the uni who filled a lunchtime with strictly limited one minute screeds on what's happening in various parts of ECU. The 60 Second Information Series is part of an exercise in improving communication across the uni:
http://www.ecu.edu.au/learning-and-development/ECU-60-Second-Info-Session.html

Columbia on YouTube

This is the gateway to lots of interesting video from Columbia University:
http://www.youtube.com/columbia

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

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS OPEN UNTIL 12 JULY

More info on how to submit your abstract, and what happens next:
http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/aair2010/abstracts.php

OUR THEME FOR 2010

Has institutional research come of age in Australasia?

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

- **Hon John Dawkins AO**, Chair, Australian Qualifications Framework Council, and recently appointed chair of the National Quality Council

Dr Carol Nicoll, CEO, Australian Teaching and Learning Council

- **Dr Rod Carr**, Vice-Chancellor, University of Canterbury

SOME EARLY PROGRAM DETAILS

The call for abstracts is still open, so a detailed program is a while away yet. However, a few things are locked into the works:

Three Pre-Forum Workshops, to be held on 9 November:

- Workshop One – Survey design, administration and analysis
- Workshop Two – Creatively Presenting Information
- Workshop Three – New AAIRies Workshop.

Special Interest Group sessions scheduled during the conference:

- The AUSSE
- Load Planning
- DEEWR Reporting
- Data Warehousing

SPONSORS

We are grateful to the 2010 AAIR Forum Sponsors:
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NEWSLETTER NOTES

1. Good graph!

South Africa's Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) has collected any amount of data on the post-apartheid journey of South Africa's universities. And now lots of the indicators, for the system and for individual unis, are online so you can graph in a trice the ratio of admin to academic staff at Wits, or student success rates at Walter Sisulu Uni:
http://chet.org.za/indicators/

2. Projecting student numbers

The latest Go8 Backgrounder is titled *Future demand for higher education in Australia*. The paper presents a couple of scenarios for growth of enrolments in higher education out to 2030, including data on projected Diploma/Advanced Diploma enrolments. The Backgrounder suggests that the staff:student ratio needs to be reduced at the same time as student numbers are set to grow, meaning more academics are needed, at the same time as the academic workforce is ageing. The question of whether we ought explore the possible contribution of teaching-only academics isn't asked – the assumption is that an academic must also be a researcher, but I'm not convinced about that 'must'. The question needs to be asked. Read up:
http://www.go8.edu.au/storage/go8statements/2010/go8backgrounder10_HE_demand.pdf

3. A check up on NSW universities

The NSW Auditor-general has delivered a report to the state's parliament which also has a bit of a dig around in the data about the age of the academic workforce in NSW. Pages 24-25 of *Universities overview* indicates that 41% of NSW academic staff are 50 years or older. Just as interesting is that only 4.6% are aged 25-29. There's much other data here of interest for example:
- 1 in 5 academic staff at UNSW are carrying leave balances of greater than 40 days, and about 10% general staff at UNE are in the same boat
- SCU recorded the highest growth in overseas student enrolments in 2008, increasing by 19.9%
- SCU had 38.0 students per academic in 2008, compared to 20.4 at UNSW.

Here 'tis:
http://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/publications/reports/financial/2010/vol02/pdfs/10_universities_overview_volume_2_2010.pdf

4. Historical standards

History is one of the demonstration disciplines for the academic standards projects which is being coordinated by the ALTC. It's fitting that history should lead the way. The draft 'threshold learning outcomes' will be unveiled at the Australian Historical Association conference, which starts tomorrow (as I write). Details on the history standards project are here:
http://www.altcexchange.edu.au/group/ltas-project-history

Details on the conference, running under the theme of 'Reviewing history', are here:
http://www.ahareviewinghistory.com/index.html

5. Creative graduates

QUT's Institute for Creative Industries and Innovation has released *From education to work in Australia's creative digital industries: comparing the opinions and practices of employers and aspiring creatives*. The Exec Summary stakes out the report's purpose:
- ' … to identify capability gaps of aspiring creatives as well as those factors that enhance or inhibit employers' views of the capabilities of aspiring creatives – both of which impact on the ability of aspiring creatives to find work in their preferred occupations in Australia's Creative Digital Industries.'

The main source of data for the report was a survey of employers who were asked, among other things, to rank the importance of 15 skills/attributes to their enterprises, and to assess the capabilities of aspiring creatives. The employers reckoned that 'the capabilities of aspiring creatives for all 15 skills and attributes were below their expectations when compared to the level of importance they place on these skills and attributes to their workplaces.' Which brings us back to the question of the link between graduate capabilities and the threshold learning outcomes (a la the ALTC standards project). The report is here:
http://eprints.qut.edu.au/29796/1/60_Sox_Volume_2_January_2010_FINAL_0.pdf

6. Graduating in leadership

Meanwhile, in the middle of another continent, the Pomerantz Career Centre at the University of Iowa offers a Certificate in Leadership Studies – all undergrads are eligible, with curriculum delivered by the Colleges of Business, Education, and Liberal Arts & Sciences:
http://www.careers.uiowa.edu/leadership_certificate/

'I had come from Delacrosse Central High, from a small farm on the old Perryville Road, to this university town of Troy, "the Athens of the Midwest", as if from a cave, like a priest-child of a Columbian tribe I'd read about in Cultural Anthropology, a boy made mystical by being kept in the dark for the bulk of his childhood and allowed only stories – no experience – of the outside world. Once brought out into the light, he would be in a perpetual, holy condition of bedazzlement and wonder; no story would ever have been equal to the thing itself. And so it was with me.

'Nothing had really prepared me. Not the college piggy bank in the dining room, the savings bonds from my grandparents, or the used set of World Book encyclopedias with their beautiful color charts of international wheat production and photographs of presidential birthplaces. The flat green world of my parents' hogless, horseless farm – its dullness, its flies, its quiet ripped open daily by the fumes and whining machinery – twisted away and left me with a brilliant city life of books and films and witty friends. Someone had turned on the lights. Someone had led me out of the cave – of Perryville Road. My brain was on fire with Chaucer, Sylvia Plath, Simone de Beauvoir. Twice a week a young professor named Thad, dressed in jeans *and* a tie, stood before a lecture hall of stunned farm kids and spoke thrillingly of Henry James's masturbation of the comma. I was riveted. I had never before seen a man wear jeans and a tie.

'The ancient cave, of course, had produced a mystic; my childhood had produced only me.

'In the corridors students argued over Bach, Beck, Balkanisation, bacterial warfare. Kids said things to me like "you're from the country. Is it true that if you eat a bear's liver you'll die?" They asked "Ever know someone who did you-know-what with a cow?' or "Is it an actual fact that pigs won't eat bananas?" What I did know was that a goat will not really consume a tin can: a goat just liked to lick the paste on the label. But no one ever asked me that.'

- Lorrie Moore, *A gate at the stairs*, 2009, London: Faber and Faber.

7. IBL resources

Sheffield Uni's Centre for Inquiry-Based Learning in the Arts and Social Sciences has a website with lots of IBL resources including case studies by discipline area, a handbook (available under a Creative Commons licence), 150 things to do in a learning space, and more:
www.shef.ac.uk/cilass

8. Grading the uni environment

People & Planet is a UK student organisation which has taken to itself the brief to 'end world poverty, defend human rights and protect the environment'. It issued its ranking of UK universities' environmental performance by way of the Green League 2009, which ranks unis by way of a grading system from First Class, Upper Second Class, Lower Second Class, Third Class, Failed, through to DNS. Nottingham Trent Uni was the stand out performer, followed by LSE and Oxford Brookes. In equal 126th place were the University of Wales (Lampeter) and the Royal College of Music. The full ranking is here:
http://peopleandplanet.org/green-league-2009/table

9. How well are we doing this?

The US Pell Institute, in conjunction with the Pathways to College Network, have launched a website called the Evaluation Toolkit. The purpose is twofold:
- 'The first goal is to develop a freely accessible, research-based Evaluation Toolkit that will enable outreach programs to more readily and systematically use data and outcome measures to improve service delivery.'
- 'The second goal is to promote research that will identify effective program models across outreach programs and document the collective impact of programs by using the evaluation data generated through the common assessment framework in the Toolkit.'

Has a ring of relevance about it as we approach the tasks of forging better links between schools and postsecondary providers, and as we look to lift lower SES participation rates.

There's an evaluation guide that contains a tips and principles approach to coming up with good evaluation designs, along with examples of completed evaluations. Worth a look:
http://toolkit.pellinstitute.org/

10. Peer-reviewed teaching resources

The American Sociological Association funds a website called TRAILS, which takes the idea of sharing good teaching practice a step further. Quoting the website:

- 'TRAILS incorporates a citation system that helps provide evidence of teaching excellence as defined through peer-review; it also facilitates faculty members' ability to update teaching materials with new empirical and theoretical advances in the discipline; and it provides access to cutting-edge innovations in teaching and learning.'

There are more than 2700 peer-reviewed resources in more than 70 subject areas. Resource types include assessment designs, lectures, use of powerpoint, and class activities. Wallow: http://trails.asanet.org/Pages/default.aspx

11. Bologna – how is it tracking?

The European Universities Association has released *Trends 2010: a decade of change in European Higher Education*. It's chockers with data about what's happened since the Bologna Process was launched in the early noughties, and has a few words to say about what still needs doing.

AAIRies will be chuffed to know that among the conclusions is this one:

- 'Data collection at institutional, national and European levels must be improved. … this concerns the data on mobility (including 'free movers' and full degree mobility), employability (students' entry in the labour market and their career development over several years), student-staff ratios at all degree levels, graduation and drop-out rates, time to degree, recognition of prior learning, and students' socio-economic backgrounds. In addition, given the demographic changes mentioned in Part I, an analysis of staff data (by age, gender and status) is crucial in order to plan for the future.'

It's interesting to note that higher education institutions were asked to identify which developments over the past three years had high importance for institutional strategy. Some 78% nominated the Bologna Process, 63% QA reforms, and 61% internationalisation. Just 23% nominated rankings/league tables. The report is here: http://www.eua.be/fileadmin/user_upload/files/Publications/Trends_2010.pdf

12. A wider exchange

UQ and Indonesia's Gadjah Mada University (UGM), based in Yogyakarta, have been doing some relationship building recently: http://www.uq.edu.au/news/index.html?article=21377

UGM's Office of International Affairs recorded the UQ visit like this: http://oia.ugm.ac.id/interface/?p=353

But neither of those media releases captured the thinking of UGM's Executive Secretary, Dr. Djoko Moerdiyanto. For AAIRies, Djoko's report from the meeting may be of particular interest. Here's how the release on UGM's general news site runs:

- 'Apart from lecturers and students exchange, administrative staff exchange will also be made possible. "Cooperation is not always in academic level. Administrative staff exchange is also possible, because advancement of a university is also supported by the work of the staff, added Djoko. … giving opportunity to administrative staff to share experience with foreign staff will be beneficial for the advancement of the respective universities.'

Should be more of that, I reckon. Here's the release: http://www.ugm.ac.id/en/?q=news/ugm-and-queensland-university-explore-staff-exchange-cooperation

13. Tenth Malaysia Plan

On 10 June, Malaysia's PM, Najib Tun Razak, tabled in the Parliament the Tenth Malaysia Plan: 2011-2015. Pages 32-38 cover the Plan's education essentials, which include:

- 'The Department of Skills Development will be the sole agency in developing and certifying the quality of the technical education and vocational training curriculum.'
- 'Expand the National Dual Training System programme, which stipulates 70% of training content is hands-on in the workplace and 30% is theoretical class at training institutions.'
- To improve the competence of graduates, their employability will be one of the KPIs of universities. Financial allocation to universities will depend on the achievement of their KPI targets.
- The quality of academic staff will be improved by increasing the number with PhDs, with a target of 75 per cent in research universities and 60 per cent in other public universities.

The PM's speech is here: http://www.smeinfo.com.my/pdf/RMK10eng.pdf

14. On their own

On 18 May, Malaysia *The Star* newspaper, reported that eight higher education institutions would become self-accrediting – four local research universities (Universiti Malaya, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia and Universiti Sains Malaysia) and four foreign branch campuses (Monash University Sunway Campus, the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus, Curtin University of Technology Sarawak Campus, and Swinburne University of Technology Sarawak Campus). The story is here:
http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2010/5/18/nation/6278617&sec=nation

15. Who knows?

I have no idea what's in the consultation paper released as I write by the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research. The paper is called *Meeting Australia's research workforce needs: a consultation paper to inform the development of the Australian government's research workforce strategy*. This is as close as I come to breaking news:
http://www.innovation.gov.au/Section/Research/Documents/ResearchWorkforceStrategyConsultationPaper.pdf

16. Building the VET evidence base (1)

There are bits and pieces of interest in the 9 June Communiqué from the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment (MCTEE) Meeting. The Communiqué accepts, under the heading of Data & Performance Management, the five key national research priorities to be pursued by the NCVER for the period 2011-2013:
- Skills and productivity: to investigate how skills contribute to economic growth.
- Structures in the tertiary education and training system: to examine the impact of policy, funding and market frameworks on the provision of education & training.
- The contribution of education and training to social inclusion: to explore the reduction of disadvantage through education and training.
- Learning and teaching: to understand how, why, where and when people learn.
- The place and role of VET: to consider VET's role in the tertiary education sector, world of work and community.

The Communiqué is here:
http://www.deewr.gov.au/Skills/Overview/Governance/Documents/MCTEEComm100610.pdf

17. Building the VET evidence base (2)

The NCVER has released a discussion paper, *Review of the AVETMIS Standard for VET providers*. The paper is seeking responses to a range of questions which bear upon on how we might fill the big holes in our data about the VET sector. The questions posed include:
- What are the benefits and challenges of measuring disadvantage at an individual level or at a more aggregated level?
- Is there a need to capture both national and jurisdiction student identifiers when the national identifier is implemented?
- Is the information specified in the Standard an appropriate collection standard for offshore delivery?
- Is there a need to capture partial recognition of prior learning where gap training was required to complete a unit of competency/module?
- What variables should be included in a core set of tertiary education data?
- Are the existing entities of training provider, student, course, unit of competency/module, and enrolment sufficient to capture VET activity? If not, what changes should be made to the data entity structure?

Good questions, eh? Here's the discussion paper:
http://www.ncver.edu.au/statistics/avetmiss60/NCVER_AVETMISSDiscussionpaper_2253.pdf

18. Two into one goes perfectly well

Dual sector status has been left unquizzed for a very long time. Maybe because it was a peculiarly Victorian thing. The policy environment has shone a light on its perils and possibilities. A discussion paper released by Ballarat Uni and Swinburne Uni – *Dual-sector university cohesion* – is an excellent start to more thoughtful inquiry. There are eight questions posed in the paper, to which you are invited to respond by 6 August. They include:
- What are the strategies to bridge the cultural gap between the sectors within dual-sector universities?
- Should there be common metrics for student load and progression in dual-sector universities, and, if so, what form might this take?

The ranks of dual-sector providers are likely to grow, CQU being the first of what I imagine will be a number of others, not to mention the idea of polytechs catching on. So getting this right at long last would make an awful lot of sense. Here 'tis:
http://www.ballarat.edu.au/projects/dscp/docs/discuss.pdf

19. Policy ideas for regional tertiary education

The Victorian government has released a policy document for regional development titled 'Ready for Tomorrow'. It contains a $103m Tertiary Education Opportunities Package which partly responds to the report provided to the government earlier this year on the development of a Victorian Tertiary Education Plan. There will no doubt be more to come on tertiary education in Victoria ahead of the November state election. While we wait on that, it's worth giving a bit of thinking time to some of the ideas in this package.

Victoria has gone beyond the Bradley targets and set a target of a 10 percentage point increase in the proportion of 25-34 year olds in regional Victoria with an undergraduate degree, by 2025. There's also a 5 percentage point increase in the proportion of higher education undergraduate enrolments by low SES people from the regions, by 2020. There are commitments to improve access to student accommodation with 700 new places planned, and $9m to 'support collaboration between regional TAFEs and universities to enhance the delivery of tertiary education in regional Victoria'. There's also $12.5m to support 1500 students to take up a provincial cadetship. More here:
http://www.rdv.vic.gov.au/about-us/news/?a=172218

20. VET students in their thousands

The NCVER has released *Australian vocational education and training statistics: students and courses, 2009*. This is always a fascinating tome to plumb.

You'll find, for example, that TAFE and other government providers recorded a fall of 1.3% in the number of students from 2008 to 2009, while other registered training providers recorded a leap of 12.8%. (Other registered providers is an eclectic group: secondary schools, non-government enterprises, education/training businesses or centres, professional associations, industry associations, equipment/product manufacturers and suppliers, and our old friend miscellaneous.)

Interesting that the number of VET students was up nationally by 0.4%, but wide variations– down 6.5% in Tassie, up 0.9% in Victoria, and up 5.4% in WA. Part-time students accounted for almost nine in every ten students (85.9%). Read on:
http://www.ncver.edu.au/statistics/vet/ann09/Students_and_courses_2009.pdf

21. Good question

The Productivity Commission's issues paper, *Vocational education and training workforce*, is a ripper. You've got until 30 July to respond to the issues raised – and there are many great questions to ponder, some challenging, some knotty. Try a response of 25 words or less to any of these:

- What sorts of policy, governance and regulatory measures relating to workforce planning might enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the VET workforce?
- What are the implications, for VET workforce planning, of the growing role of internal VET competition and contestability and student choice in the VET sector?
- What factors drive the types of employment arrangement adopted by VET providers? Are there systematic differences between public and private providers? If so, why?
- Do performance management systems within the VET sector adequately support improvements in workforce efficiency and effectiveness?
- Can you identify any other changes to industrial instruments that might contribute to higher workforce efficiency and effectiveness?
- What are the demographic challenges emerging around the supply of VET workers over the next five to ten years? How might these challenges affect the VET sector's capacity to attract the right number and mix of suitably qualified workers?

That's just a sample. Go the full hog here:
http://www.pc.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/98598/vocational-education-issues.pdf

22. Apprenticeships crib sheet

This is just handy: *Summary of the Australian Government Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Program – from 12 May 2010*:
http://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/documents/publications/2010/SummaryOfIncentives12May.pdf

23. Creative kids in clever schools

The UK's Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) released earlier this year *Learning: creative approaches that raise standards*. The report tells us about the characteristics of success in 44 schools that have gone about nurturing confident independent learners using creative approaches to learning.
http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/content/download/10675/127552/file/Learning%20creative%20approaches%20that%20raise%20standards.pdf

24. Keeping kids engaged

Legislative change is afoot in NZ so that kids who find school a bit irrelevant to their needs will have alternatives through secondary/tertiary partnerships that offer programs that are more responsive. Background info here:
http://www.minedu.govt.nz/theMinistry/PublicationsAndResources/RIS/EducationAmendmentBillNo2/SecondaryTertiaryEducationInterface.aspx

25. Melbourne Uni Tertiary Ed Policy Seminars

The Tertiary Education Policy Seminars (jointly run by the LH Martin Institute and the Centre for the Study of Higher Education, at Melbourne Uni) are on again. They were terrific last year. The series is called 'Realising the national vision for tertiary education'. The first is on 14 July. Here's the flyer:
http://www.mihelm.unimelb.edu.au/conference_events/2010seminarseries.html

26. This is a space filler – bet you couldn't tell…

Apropos of nothing, here's a suite of newsletters you may want to subscribe to:

- The US Association of Institutional Research
  http://eair.airweb.org/May2010/Default.aspx
- European University Association
  http://www.eua.be/news-letter/
- LH Martin Institute
  http://www.mihelm.unimelb.edu.au/about_mi/newsletter.html
- NCVER Newsletter
  http://www.ncver.edu.au/newsevents/insight.html