

***Lessons for and from Down Under:
Issues in Enhancing Learning and Teaching
in Australian Universities in the 21st Century***

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OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATION

- **Background information about Central Queensland University (CQU)**
- **Conceptual framework: competing discourses and multiple subjectivities**

- **The commercialisation and internationalisation of university teaching and learning**

- **Changes and constants in students' attrition and retention**
- **Changes and constants in academics' working lives and identities**

- **The application and impact of online learning management systems in and on universities**

- **The promotion of the scholarship of university teaching and learning**
- **Policy formation by the Australian Government and CQU**

- **Implications for enhancing university learning and teaching (down under and elsewhere as well)**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT CQU

- **A richly diverse and organisationally complex institution**
- **Former college of advanced education; a university since 1992**
- **Five Central Queensland campuses for domestic students (Bundaberg, Emerald, Gladstone, Mackay, Rockhampton)**
- **Four east coast campuses for international students (Brisbane, Gold Coast, Melbourne, Sydney)**
- **Overseas teaching sites for international students (China, Fiji, Malaysia, Singapore)**

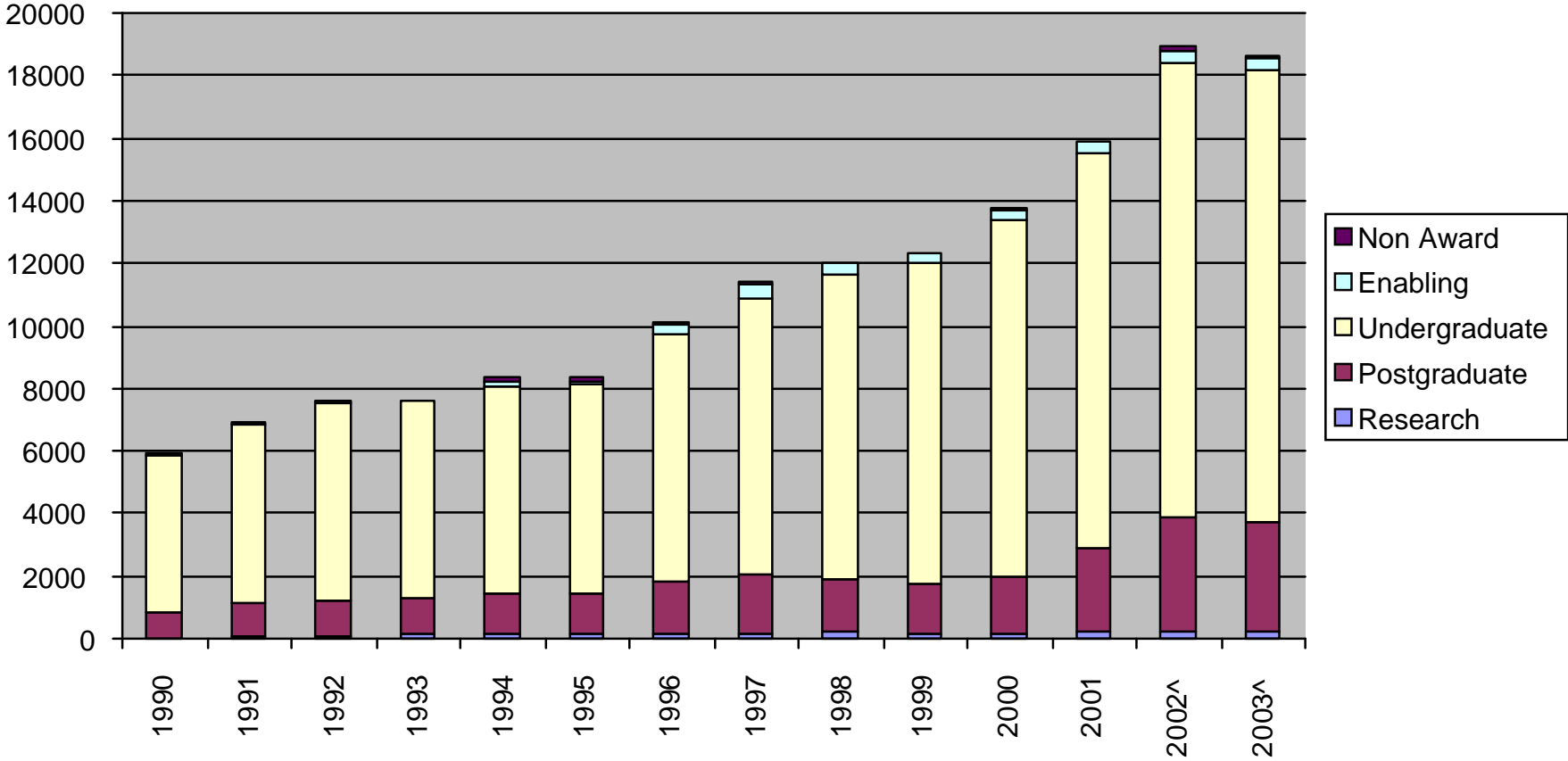
CQU's Australian campuses (Luck, Jones, McConachie & Danaher, 2004, p. 3)



CQU's overseas teaching sites (Luck, Jones, McConachie & Danaher, 2004, p. 4)



CQU's growing and shifting student cohorts (McConachie, Danaher, Luck & Jones, under review, p. 4)



- **In 2001, CQU's students were:**

- **49.8% mature age; 50.2% school leavers**
[in 2003 commencing undergraduates were respectively 83% mature age and 17% school leavers]
- **2.3% Indigenous**
- **34.1% international [nearly 50% in 2002]**
[international programs managed by a commercial agent; staff members have different working conditions and circumstances]
- **42.2% distance education**
- **79.5% undergraduate; 18.1% postgraduate**
- **37.7% low socio-economic background**

- **Two positioning statements about CQU:**

- **“CQU supports the principles developed by the emerging group of New Generation Universities” (Hancock, 2002, p. 7)**
- **“CQU’s...vision is to be a unified university, acknowledged universally as a leader in flexible teaching and learning and well-focused research, contributing strongly to the sustainable development of the regions and communities in which it operates” (Hancock, 2002, p. 4)**

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: COMPETING DISCOURSES AND MULTIPLE SUBJECTIVITIES

- One conceptual framework (adapted from Winter & Sarros, 2002, p. 243):

Independent Variables:

Demographic Variables:

- **Personal characteristics**
- **Professional characteristics**

Work Environment Perceptions:

- **Role stress**
- **Job characteristics**
- **Supervisory style**
- **Organisation structure**

Dependent Variables:

Work Attitudes:

- **Job Involvement**
- **Organisational
Commitment**

- **Another conceptual framework:**

Competing discourses and multiple subjectivities (hence ‘dynamic dons’)

- **[D]iscourse is understood not simply as a form of language or as language in use, but [also] as a social practice through which people are inducted into ways of valuing, stances and points of view which reflect and produce the interests of a group. By these means, discourses construct particular forms of social identities, or subjectivities – and any one person may inhabit a number of discourses, taking up therefore a range of subject positions and ways of being. (Morgan, 2002, n.p.; cited in Elsdon, 2004, p. 68)**

THE COMMERCIALISATION AND INTERNATIONALISATION OF UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND LEARNING

- **Five Central Queensland campuses for domestic students (Bundaberg, Emerald, Gladstone, Mackay, Rockhampton)**
- **Four east coast campuses for international students (Brisbane, Gold Coast, Melbourne, Sydney)**
- **Overseas teaching sites for international students (China, Fiji, Malaysia, Singapore)**
- **Different enterprise bargaining agreements for the Central Queensland and east coast campuses:**
 - **tenure/single contracts vs. multiple parallel contracts with other universities**
 - **campus life vs. shopfront facilities**

- **research vs. tutoring and marking**
- **difficulties of access, communication and coordination**
- **mutual uncertainty about the other's roles and responsibilities**
- **Good intentions and practical outcomes re: the internationalisation of the curriculum:**
 - **The Language Centre's study tours**
 - **Online student teams across national groups**
 - **Introduction to Communication and Culture**
- **Fundamental questions about CQU's communities and constituencies, and which of those are reciprocal and sustainable**

CHANGES AND CONSTANTS IN STUDENTS' ATTRITION AND RETENTION

- **CQU's complexity and diversity matched by conceptions of and attitudes towards student attrition and retention**
- **Some see student attrition as a systemic and institutional 'failure'; others see it as a form of quality assurance and control**
- **Distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' failing grades**
- **Several 'at risk' student categories, with associated programs and strategies**
- **Perceived rise in cases of plagiarism and concerns to promote academic integrity**
- **Perceived rise in student appeals against particular grades**
- **Tension between shared responsibility for enhancing and maximising teaching and learning quality and scholarship and a 'one size fits all' solution to a multifaceted phenomenon**

CHANGES AND CONSTANTS IN ACADEMICS' WORKING LIVES AND IDENTITIES

- **Tensions between academic autonomy and university governance**
- **Tensions between individual/group and institutional identities**
- **Casualisation and intensification of academic (and other) work**
- **Pressures – and sometimes ‘critical incidents’ – in universities and academics steering between the state and the market (eg, in Australian teacher education [Danaher, Gale & Erben, 2000])**
- **Equivalent pressures in (re)negotiating professionalisms in such contexts**
- **“Professionalism figures as a means of resistance or a means of control or both’ (Lawn & Ozga, 1988, p. 82)**

THE APPLICATION AND IMPACT OF ONLINE LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IN AND ON UNIVERSITIES

- **Distinction between enterprise resource planning systems (ERPs) and shadow systems**
- **Distinction between teleological and ateleological approaches to systems development (Introna, 1996)**
- **Distinction between course and learning management systems**
- **Move from WebCT to Blackboard, with Webfuse still operating**
- **Many academics have embraced online learning's potential for promoting interaction and 'authentic' assessment**
- **Some concern about inflexibility, standardisation and lack of 'just in time' training of institutional systems associated with Blackboard**
- **Competing discourses about academic autonomy and quality assurance**

THE PROMOTION OF THE SCHOLARSHIP OF UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The goal of promoting:
...[university] teaching as a reflective and informed act of engaging students and teachers in learning [that] is supportive of the aims central to the project of developing a scholarship of teaching. (Trigwell & Shale, 2004, p. 523)
- CQU's Reflective Teachers Group
- CQU's Teaching Scholars
- CQU's Teaching and Learning Showcase
- *Studies in Learning, Evaluation, Innovation and Development* (<http://sleid.cqu.edu.au/>), including the peer-mentored REACT section
- Persistence of perception that research and publishing, rather than teaching, are valued and rewarded by universities
- Potential risks associated with untheorised 'evidence-based practice'; hence my colleagues' and my focus on 'strategic scholarship' (Danaher, Harreveld, Luck & Nouwens, 2004)

POLICY FORMATION BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT AND CQU

The Australian Government

- **Commonwealth Government's 'steering at a distance' (Marcuse, 1993)**
- **The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) (established in 2000; CQU's external audit in 2005)**

AUQA is responsible for:

- **conducting quality audits of self-accrediting Australian higher education institutions and State and Territory Government higher education accreditation authorities on a five yearly cycle;**
- **providing public reports on the outcomes of these audits;**
- **commenting on the criteria for the recognition of new universities and accreditation of non-university higher education awards, as a result of information obtained during the audits of institutions and State and Territory accreditation processes; and**
- **reporting on the relative standards and international standing of the Australian higher education system and its quality assurance processes, as a result of information obtained during the audit process.**

(<http://www.auqa.edu.au/aboutauqa/auqainfo/index.shtml>)

- **The Learning and Teaching Performance Fund**

The Commonwealth will establish a Learning and Teaching Performance Fund in 2006 as a means of promoting excellence in learning and teaching in higher education institutions. Funds will be allocated on a performance basis to reward institutions which best demonstrate excellence in learning and teaching of undergraduates.

Institutions will be assessed on their performance in learning and teaching using a range of methodologies which may include indicators such as student progress and graduate employment outcomes. The Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) will be working with the sector on developing the indicators over 2003-2004.

(http://www.backingaustraliasfuture.gov.au/implementation/learning_teaching.htm#2)

Allocation of the Fund will be determined in two stages.

***Stage 1 will determine an institution's eligibility for funds.* Institutions will be required to demonstrate a strong strategic commitment to learning and teaching through: a current institutional learning and teaching plan or strategy; evidence of systematic support for professional development in learning and teaching for sessional and full-time academic staff; evidence of probation and promotion**

practices and policies which include effectiveness as a teacher; and systematic student evaluation of teaching and subjects that inform probation and promotion decisions for academic positions. Strategies, practices, policies and student evaluation results would be made publicly available on an institution's website. *Stage 2 will assess institutional performance in learning and teaching using a range of measures.* DEST will draft an issues paper forms to inform consultations with the sector over the next 12-18 months. An advisory group of academics and other experts has been formed to provide advice on development of the Fund.

http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/learning_teaching/p_fund_default.htm

- Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education

“The Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education has been established to provide a national focus for the enhancement of learning and teaching in Australian higher education. It will build on the work of previous programs designed to support teaching and learning in Australian higher education.”

<http://www.autc.gov.au/institute/information.htm>

“The Carrick Institute will provide a national focus for the enhancement of learning and teaching in Australian higher education institutions and will be a flagship for acknowledging excellence in learning and teaching.”

(<http://www.autc.gov.au/institute.htm>)

\$22 million per year from 2006

CQU

- **Multiple communities and constituencies (regional Central Queensland, Australian metropolitan cities, overseas centres)**
- **Potential tensions between engaging with these communities and constituencies and implementing government policy**
- **Potential tensions between ‘public’ and ‘private’ dimensions of CQU’s status as an ‘enterprise’ university**
- **Teaching and Learning Management Plan “the master document”**
- **Student Retention Action Plan**

IMPLICATIONS FOR ENHANCING UNIVERSITY LEARNING AND TEACHING (DOWN UNDER AND ELSEWHERE AS WELL)

- **Onus on universities (and individuals within them):**
 - **To engage proactively with globalised forces and government policies**
 - **To develop and extend mutually respectful reciprocity with their multiple communities**
 - **To reenergise and regenerate knowledge production and dissemination around ethically responsive and socially attentive scholarships**

- **Onus on other stakeholders (students, communities, employers, governments):**
 - **To communicate their aspirations and needs and work collaboratively in fulfilling them**
 - **To engage actively in new forms of knowledge production and dissemination**
 - **To contribute strongly to creating alternative futures and counternarratives to contemporary inequities**

- **These are potentially effective strategies for enhancing university learning and teaching; can also provide the agenda for ongoing and useful conversations and collaborations between Australian and British universities**

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