

Towards Pedagogical Consensus:
The Early Chapters in a Faculty of Education Strategic Review

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Abstract

Higher education communities are not immune from the demands of the knowledge age. New technologies, rapidly evolving knowledge and policies promoting standards, outcomes and graduate attributes exhort pedagogical revision and renewal. Faculties are pressured by downsizing, global market competition and increased accountability to the public (Pierce, 1998). Consumer demands exhort educational institutions to renew their programs and processes to develop unique identities and approaches to educational provision.

This paper aims to describe the procedures, processes and protocols exercised by staff engaged in a strategic review of their Faculty of Education. It commences with an exploration of educational reform and the reconceptualising of pedagogy in one learning organisation. The paper is written from the perspective of the author-participants. Outcomes to date are shared in the context of discussion about organisational learning.

INTRODUCTION

The Australian higher education system, like many other organizations, has been grappling with the consequences of rapid changes and reforms significantly changing the face of core business. For a while, government spending favoured investment in education. Funding cuts and decentralization has pressured educational institutions toward entrepreneurialism for capital growth as opposed to education for knowledge growth. Both must be achieved for organizational survival and development.

Many authors recognize the unprecedented changes to higher education and the subsequent impacts on the work of educators (e.g. Hargreaves, 1995). A variety of consequent responsibilities of academia are examined such as increased political activity (Milliken, 2001; Pennington, 1991), changing roles of management (McClenaghan, 1998), and impact on the nature and productivity of academic work (Lee Hiu hong, 2000; Walvoord et al, 2000). While current economic decisions suggest that competition and external pressure will force an increase in academic outputs, collegiality and creativity are under threat and productivity and quality may in fact diminish (Brett, 2000; Lee Hiu hong, 2000; McClenaghan, 1998).

In learning organisations, the collaborative team is the basic unit of work rather than the individual (Hough, 1997). Organisational structures based on team work foreground social equity in organisational missions and exhort democratic principles such as shared values, inclusivity, collaboration and social responsibility. Addressing changes to organisational and management structures while improving outcomes is one of the challenges for educational institutions.

Leadership in Educational Reform

In teacher education, universities must respond to emerging societal trends and expectations of the preservice and inservice education of teachers. The role of leadership for change is being reconceptualised as a shared function of the whole learning community. Shared leadership and collaboration are emerging as valuable attributes of educators and subsequently teacher education programs must consider how to model and develop such competencies but also must, “defend values, question societal norms and freely pursue knowledge. In fulfilling their complex missions, departments must focus not only on what to do but also on what to be” (Walvoord et al, 2000). Reid reinforces the need for clear communications and collaboration to promote the national innovation agenda as “innovative

processes depend on the capacity of a community of learners to put ideas to work and rigorously evaluate them” (Reid, 2001:6).

Learning for Educational Reform

In this knowledge age, equity of educational outcomes relies on reducing the gap between the information rich and the information poor. The rate of change in what-we-know and what-we-need-to-know puts pressure on educators to focus on the construction of knowledge – teaching skills for investigation, interpretation and communication of understanding. Just as the role of leadership is being reconceptualised so too are the roles of ‘teaching and learning’ as a shared function of students, staff and members of the wider education community. At the tertiary level there is recognition of the need to strengthen the interaction and integration of teaching and research (Zubrick et al, 2001 and FASTS, 1999 cited in (Reid, 2001:12)).

Traditional teaching practices are being examined in light of the emerging learning theories such as the constructivist emphasis on learning which “defines knowledge as , contemporary, developmental, socially and culturally mediated and non-objective” (Brooks & Brooks, 1997). Educational leaders should consider the implications of emergent educational theory in light of their own educative functions.. Learning communities with an emphasis on collegiality are emerging as one response to organizational reform (Outcalt, 2000; Macdonald, 1999; Lilly, 1996). Drawing on school improvement literature, significant evidence supporting the notions of shared leadership, shared learning and emerging sense of community have recently been documented by Cuttance (2001) who suggests that efficacy may be dependent on factors other than the learning process – such as curriculum design and school organisation.

The Innovation and Best Practice Project (IBPP) is one of the first large scale research and development projects that has specifically focused on innovation in schools and one of the largest educational research projects ever undertaken in Australia. The study supports innovations leading to new knowledge about the nature of school-based innovations and factors that support and constrain learning growth. The research identifies the need for constructive pressure together with external and internal supports to facilitate innovation and evaluation (Cuttance, 2001:xxvii). Teacher educators have a responsibility not only to prepare teachers for the changing face of schooling but also to model these new constructions of pedagogy and shared leadership within their Faculty. Faculties of education are also under

pressure from registering bodies, Higher Education review and graduate employers..In order to do this, teacher educators need to re-examine their own pedagogical and organisational structures. The following paper demonstrates how one Faculty is engaging in pedagogical renewal as a shared leadership function of the Faculty.

BACKGROUND TO STRATEGIC REVIEW

The Faculty of Education at this institution recently engaged in a cross-department re-accreditation of its undergraduate Bachelor of Education Programs. It became apparent during this process that there was a need for a faculty-wide review. Faculty comprises of 75 full time academic and general staff within three departments, across two campuses that are geographically distanced from one another. Factors cited as contributing to the need for a review of the faculty were:

- the way in which Departments had evolved had left one department as a non-cohesive group of staff 'left-overs' from the two new departments,
- changes in staff as the post seventies expansion staff retired,
- influx of new staff and growth in part-time staff,
- expansion and change in courses and clientele,
- growth and changes in areas of strength in research,
- changes to modes of course delivery, and
- changes in the field of teacher education and education generally.

Procedures, Processes and Protocols

Procedures

Faculty Board, the key decision-making body in the Faculty, endorsed an adapted version of the Research Based Framework (RBF) model developed by the Leadership Research Institute (LRI) - a Faculty-based funded research consultancy designed to generate models for renewal in schools. This model is grounded in the theory and research on leadership and pedagogy which informed the IBPP (Cuttance, 2001). The adapted RBF is a model for faculty-wide learning, culture building, creation of shared pedagogy and leadership through a process of continual renewal as demonstrated by schools involved in the IBPP (Crowther, Hann & McMaster, 2001, cited in (Cuttance, 2001:41).

The Research Based Framework (RBF) provides an holistic approach to the Faculty Review and incorporates five key elements for review and renewal appropriate to the central pivot – Faculty Outcomes (see appendix two).

Processes

A Management Team comprising representatives of senior administration, each department, the student body and external community was established as a steering committee to work with the Project Team from LRI to facilitate the implementation of the proposal.

The conceptual phases of the RBF were implemented with the 4D's Review Process, which is a four-phase cyclic process featuring:

- **Discovery** – assessment of the health of the organisation, via administration of validated diagnostic survey to stakeholder groups
- **Dreaming** – using outcomes of discovery to create preferred vision for the organisation and a preferred, organisation-wide approach to pedagogy
- **Designing** – creation of strategic plans and implementation activities
- **Destiny** – evaluation of progress toward new goals and adjustments as necessary

The strategic review process is outlined in Table One below.

TABLE ONE: OVERVIEW OF PRACTICE PROCESS TIMELINE

June 2000	B Ed re-accreditation committee recommended consideration of facility restructure
October 2000	Faculty Assembly concluded need for a review prior to restructure with LRI to facilitate
September 2000	Faculty Board endorsed LRI proposal
December 2000	Establishment of Project Team and Management Team
December 2001	Survey (Diagnostic Inventory) was used to collect data from Faculty staff both academic and general.
February 2001	Half-day faculty retreat to review outcomes of diagnostic survey.
March 2001	Final year education students were surveyed using a modified version of the staff diagnostic inventory.
March 2001	Working parties were established to address the 3 core areas of Vision, Pedagogy and Leadership.
March 2001	Draft statements released for faculty discussion.
May 2001	Progress reports from all working parties.
June 2001	The working parties presented their revised statements to the Faculty for discussion.
July 2001	Faculty half-day retreat discussing Visioning statements and Pedagogy statements.
September 2001	Strategic Review Report presented to the Faculty and ratified
November 2001	Impact of Pedagogical Framework on Teaching, Learning, Scholarship and Research
Jan – June 2002	Faculty-wide process stalled due to change of focus to possible merger with Faculty of Arts and change of Dean, however some staff engaged in pilot pedagogical innovations based on the Framework.
August	Sharing of pilot experiences
September 2002	Unpacking the 8 major elements of the framework
October 2002	Workshops to discuss Generation of New Knowledge, conceptual map of framework

The diagnostic inventory gathered baseline data about the five elements of the RBF. It was designed to indicate the overall organisational health of the Faculty, as well as the Faculty's most successful recent practices and perceived concerns. The results indicated:

- * that the Faculty was aware of significant room for improvement,

- * a close association between staff and student responses,
- * a willingness to move forward,
- * a desire to prioritise the needs of the Faculty and
- * a wide range of staff aspired to lead aspects of the review.

The results provided a starting point for discussion at the retreat. At the conclusion of the retreat three tasks were identified: reconceptualising the Faculty's vision, conceptualising core business of the Faculty (pedagogy) and clarification of strategic leadership within the Faculty.

Dreaming and Designing

Three working parties were established (Vision, Pedagogy and Leadership) and a senior member of staff was asked to chair each working party. The project team provided the following Guiding Principles to each chair to facilitate the process:

1. The chair called for members to form a small facilitation/working group.
2. That group instigated processes to invite input from all members of Faculty.
3. That group facilitated synthesis of Faculty input into a draft report to be available for Faculty discussion in the first week of April 2001.

Working parties used a variety of processes to implement the dreaming and designing phases. These included small face-to-face meetings, email, electronic discussion groups and Faculty meetings. A number of draft statements were created in each of the three areas in response to the input of Faculty members.

Destiny

This phase continues to evolve. Working parties have completed their tasks and worked with the Project and Management Teams to produce a Report on the Strategic Review. Current benefits to the Faculty have been in terms of professional dialogue across departments and creation of shared vision and pedagogy statements and reports. Faculty staff have had the opportunity to engage in further workshops which involved:

- sharing successful pedagogical episodes,
- engaging with new staff,
- deconstructing the framework,
- developing shared understandings
- actioning the framework.

Protocols

The underlying premise of the review was that regardless of the processes used, every Faculty member had the opportunity for input and response to draft documents produced, and maximum involvement was encouraged at all times. Furthermore, during input and response the staff was encouraged to engage in positive and constructive ways, rather than focusing on deficits. There was also an emphasis on the need for alignment between major components of the Faculty as an organisation, and an emphasis on shared leadership Role of the Authors

It is important to outline the role of the authors in the review, as we were participants in the broad review process. As active members of the pedagogy working party, we initiated documentation of the work of this working party, and subsequently of the whole review process, including the evolution of the pedagogical framework. Part of this responsibility includes initiation, co-ordination and organisation of meetings and discussion forums to take the Faculty to the next step of this process, and keep them up-to-date with current directions.

PEDAGOGY WORKING PARTY: Seeking Outcomes Through Consensus

The processes undertaken by the Pedagogy Working Party demonstrate the outcomes of professional collaboration.

It is interesting to note that there were more volunteers for this working party than the Vision Statement and Leadership Working Parties. Furthermore, the volunteers came from all Departments and comprised experienced and novice members of staff. This working party continues to drive engagement in this process of pedagogical renewal. In consultation with the Strategic Review Committee the parameters for investigation were identified as:

- *The pros and cons of faculty-wide pedagogy.*
- *What is pedagogy?*
- *Identification of successful or 'best' practice.*

To facilitate participation across the Faculty, the parameters for investigation were presented as three electronic discussion groups. In this way each staff member had an opportunity to input, reflect and participate in the discussion. Members of the Working Party took roles of facilitating, leading, and provoking discussion or, in the case of the third topic, gathering examples.

The electronic discussion continued for a month. At that point the Working Party collated responses and prepared a draft statement that was circulated to the Faculty. The staff was

asked to consider the draft statement and a Faculty Discussion time was scheduled for response.

Emerging Points of Consensus

The Faculty of Education views pedagogy as encompassing the creation of new forms of knowledge/understandings that reflect the range of cultural and socio-political contexts in which educators work. This is achieved through a shared vision of best practice and a commitment to world-class performance. Therefore the Faculty will:

- Engage in co-operative and collaborative pedagogies within and between departments
- Model the use of flexible strategies and technologies
- Recognise, reflect and act upon change as part of a cycle of continuous improvement, and
- Provide opportunities and experiences that will enable our students to develop the attributes of a graduate, and the Professional standards for teachers.

This statement was circulated electronically to the Faculty for consideration, and some questions were posed to stimulate thought before the Faculty Review Workshop. Such questions continue to ground the discussions. For example:

1. Are the principles clear and unambiguous: do they need clarification?
2. Are there other points, which need to be added?
3. Is our statement sufficiently focused on this Faculty as opposed to any generic Faculty?
4. What do we need to do to transpose this into action through a curriculum or KLA focus?

A Faculty Review Workshop was held and participants were asked to engage in a task which required them to describe a successful pedagogical episode that they had recently engaged in, to deconstruct that episode in terms of what its objectives were and what they were trying to achieve, and to reconstruct it by describing what made it successful and how it could have been more successful.

By engaging in this task, the focus was on celebrating success in the Faculty. Responses to the task were positive, although some found initial engagement difficult. When this task had been completed, participants had the opportunity to compare and discuss the responses. The Pedagogy Working Party later identified and clustered features of successful pedagogical episodes. They:

1. inspire, motivate, create dynamic learning environments,
2. view teaching as the key of all professions, leaders in communities,

3. are committed to lifelong learning,
4. value collaboration/partnerships between teaching and learning,
5. engage in reflective practice leading to change in practice,
6. are flexible, change-oriented, adaptable,
7. are committed to inclusivity, justice, access, sustainable world,
8. engage students through learner-centredness and responsibility for their own learning,
9. enable intellectual professionalism, able to create new knowledge, integrate theory and practice, construct knowledge.

Following further workshops the Pedagogical Framework was accepted by the Faculty as a working model to frame the practices of the Faculty. A further activity required staff to explain a pedagogical episode. This time however, the focus was on how one might engage in one of the elements from the Pedagogy Framework in futuristic terms (2005). This futuristic focus encouraged participants to focus on a positive future, rather than on past practices, so a climate of change and development could be maintained. An additional activity required the participants, in Department and/or course groups, to identify:

- successes that they were involved in or had witnessed, which are currently helping to achieve the proposed futuristic vision of the Faculty
- external forces of change that would impact on our work in the future
- internal constraints that may need to be addressed if the futuristic Pedagogy Framework is to be achieved.

Discussion

The Importance of Shared Responsibility for Leadership

An awareness of the professional excitement engendered by the focus of the activity was noted. Despite pressures of work and the immense size and scope of the projected reforms, individual Faculty members appreciated the need for change and improvement. This led to some unanticipated consequences. For example, there was an observably fluid enrolment into working parties. Both experienced and inexperienced members contributed flexibly at different times where they felt they wanted to add value to the process. The leadership was moveable and flexible also. This acceptance of short-term help, and flexible entry to working parties was

both a factor in maintaining momentum and an interesting lived experience of the contributors. People felt comfortable with this approach and tolerant of others' contributions. The traditional 'ownership' of business had changed to one where responsibility was accepted by the many. It was clear that Faculty structures would be changing and people needed to be involved and have their voice heard to move the process on. If they chose to not be involved then they would lock themselves effectively out of the discussion while having to accept any decisions taken by others. Participation was seen to be worthwhile, valuable and in the interest of the participants and their clients.

There were several profound learnings for the Faculty as outcomes from the process, which demonstrated the significance that faculty educators placed on collaboration. These included:

Celebrating the Value of Diverse Perspectives

There was realisation that colleagues could reach a shared understanding about their vision, focus and outcomes for their profession. Difference of contribution was celebrated for its richness and value to the whole. Faculty members valued the opportunity to engage in professional dialogue with colleagues who normally only nodded in passing. This created a synergy to the evolving ideas and to the quality of the discussion. Growing respect for colleagues and their viewpoints has been nurtured as members found more in common to link than to separate.

Importance of Dialogue Above Organisational Structures

It became evident that professional dialogues need not be fraught with point scoring argument or rhetoric that results in no change to the reality of the current situation. As the focus was clarified, and members became increasingly aware of the profound importance of the project and of the opportunity to make real and relevant changes to student outcomes, discussion at a high conceptual level became the model. This was achieved by listening to each other's real conversation to glean the intended meaning and to build on it at meetings and electronically. The level of positive energy was observed and contributors showed willingness to extend the time scheduled for meetings as they believed the discussions were productive and held the potential for innovation compared with the earlier review of the BEd which resulted in 'business as usual'.

Personal Practices Informing Knowledge Construction

Faculty wide pedagogy is informed by improved personal pedagogical development. Despite the initial hesitancy of some Faculty members to recall and construct exemplary personal pedagogical incidents, it became obvious that the discussion needed to be informed by personal and practical pedagogical beliefs in order to come to common understandings and shared knowledge. This pedagogical development is in the process of evolving, as contributors are gaining the real experience of modelling what they try to theorise to students. New knowledge is being generated slowly. Once the initial descriptors of pedagogical practice were offered, participants noted that contributing further examples became less difficult, and they felt less threatened working in groups. Further, working from the viewpoint of building on our successes and celebrating these, reminded all contributors of the general goodwill and professionalism of all involved in the process.

Creating New Paradigms

There has been a realisation that the Faculty was creating a new paradigm with no clear mapping routes in order to generate new understandings about pedagogy. These experiences, it was acknowledged, would have implications for the work of teacher education professionals, and also for the structures and processes within the Faculty. This awareness of the creativity of the project has contributed to the excitement and to the willingness or preparedness to think and practise in innovative ways.

As previously mentioned, several factors may have contributed to the positive and productive nature of this Faculty review. Changing staff membership brought new ideas, energy, and the absence of past knowledge to constrain action. Also, the clear diagnostic survey data confirmed the absolute necessity for review and improvement. The accessibility of the LRI personnel facilitated the change process. Strategic planning and leadership practices facilitated these agents for change. Underpinning these was the belief that members of the Faculty could create the changes that they believed were necessary to the future improvement of the Faculty. The constraints both internal and external were to be acknowledged and there was a sense that efforts would be made to remove entrenched and irrelevant processes and practices.

The Next Chapter...

One obvious notion that has emerged from this process is a clear understanding of the importance of the contributions of shared leadership in both the *strategic* and *pedagogical* sense. The Faculty accepts the role of developing leadership in pedagogy as fundamental to whom??. It has been noted that there are several challenges to be addressed strategically to revitalise the Faculty. Roles, responsibilities, processes and suitable structural implementation will be key considerations in the next stage of the review process. Is they key to the paper? Or should we leave it out?

Another area of great interest to the Faculty is leading the Pedagogical Framework to a holistic shared approach, within the Faculty, the university and beyond, to inform programs and practices ensuring they are aligned with the shared Pedagogical Vision “Educators Empowering Educators”. Should we ask readers to watch for the next chapter??

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Appendix One: Faculty of Education – A Pedagogical Framework

Our Pedagogical vision: ***“Educators empowering educators”***

The pedagogical framework is achieved through a shared vision of best practice and a commitment to world class performance. We value and we practise:

Inspired teaching and learning

- Designing creative learning environments
- Motivated learning
- Celebrating successes

Professional leadership

- Lifelong learning
- Ethics
- Mentoring
- Graduate attributes
- Modeling pedagogy across university
- Continuous enhancement of the pedagogical framework
- Influence on educational policy

Collaborative teaching and learning

- Partnerships
- Collegiality
- Networking (Internal/External)

Critical reflection

- Personal theorising
- Authentic dialogue
- Advocacy

Inclusivity and justice

- Pastoral care
- Equity and access
- Diversity
- Reconciliation
- Sustainable world

The generation of new knowledge

- Research
- Technology
- Professional learning
- Multiliteracies
- “Literate futures”
- Sustaining, enhancing and enriching our faculty pedagogical framework
- Integration of theory and practice
- Transferability of learning, knowledge and skills

Learner centredness

- Student engagement
- Responsibility
- Facilitation
- Empowerment

Responsive and responsible change

- Adaptability
- Flexibility
- Agents of change
- Innovation

Appendix two Research Based Framework (modified)

I don't have this in a clean format!!

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