

THE ACPET JOURNAL FOR PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION

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Over the last few years, the private higher education system in Australia has experienced a period of continuous change and growth. With over 120 independent institutions around Australia, private higher education is making its mark by its innovative, flexible and responsive contribution to the changing needs of our economy and society. ACPET members promote quality, choice and diversity, and provide a productive and dynamic perspective that contributes to the education of our future leaders.

As the private education sector grows, the time is ripe for fostering a research culture which supports its educational profile and mission, its teaching profile, and makes a valuable contribution to the evolving global higher education sector.

The ACPET Journal for Private Higher Education is a new and important platform which brings together research now carried on in pockets of the private education sector, as well as attracting university scholars into current debates on the theory and practice of higher education in the context of the private sector.

This inaugural edition showcases the institutional diversity, the breadth of interest and expertise in private higher education, and displays the quality of scholarship of researchers in Australia and beyond interested in the myriad of issues relevant to private higher education.

It is with great pleasure and pride that I launch the inaugural edition of *The ACPET Journal for Private Higher Education*. This issue would not be possible without the combined efforts of the Editor, Dr Laura Hougaz, the Journal Editorial Board, and of all the Reviewers who so willingly donated their time and energy. Thank you for your invaluable insights, your enthusiasm and dedication to the establishment of a high quality journal.



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Many thanks to our Journal Editor, **Dr Laura Hougaz**.

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Our thanks are also extended to one of our founding Board members, **Dr Maria Fiocco**, Curtin International College, Perth.

The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) is Australia's national industry association for independent providers of tertiary education and training. ACPET's members offer a diverse range of higher education, vocational education, English language and foundation studies courses to Australian and overseas students across all states and territories, and increasingly across the globe.

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I would like to congratulate ACPET on its initiative in developing this new online journal, The ACPET Journal for Private Higher Education, focussed on Australian private higher education. At a time of significant market and regulatory change, it is timely and appropriate for the journal to provide a new opportunity to develop and enhance the scholarly understanding of this growing sector. This journal provides a key outlet for the sharing of good practice and the development of a culture of scholarship, particularly for ACPET members.

This first edition contains five papers which showcase just some of the breadth of interest and the scope of the journal. The article by Ryan sets the scene, outlining the growth of the private sector and aspects of its development, including the origins of many institutions in the vocational sector. His paper focuses also on new entrants to the market and new developments including the formation of significant and distinctive brands through merger and consolidation.

The paper by Shah also contains some interesting statistics on the growth of the sector but its main focus is on the effectiveness of external quality audit for a private higher education provider. The paper reports that the process of self-review provided an external lever for internal quality improvements. The success of the quality audit approach is attributed to a number of factors including leadership, an effective strategic planning and quality management framework, and staff and student engagement. This case-study comes at a crucial moment as the sector awaits the impact of the shift of the regulatory framework away from the quality audits of AUQA to the standards-based approach of TEQSA.

The three further papers each adopt a case-study approach but are set within broader conceptual frameworks. One is focussed on the student experience, while two examine curriculum issues. Mendan's paper examines the experience of international students, using the concept of student engagement. Her work at a pathways college used focus groups and qualitative methods to understand the complex lived experience of students and the dimensions and life-cycle of student engagement. She suggests that student engagement, in its many forms, can be developed as a strategic capability for institutions.

The paper by Ogle, Liu, Zorn and Williams develops a case-study of a new business curriculum which aims to reconnect the academic curriculum with practitioners. The paper situates the curriculum development in the history of business teaching and ranges from the broad external context to the details of curriculum structure, exit points and capstone subjects. The paper by Carruthers and Paxton also focuses on curriculum but in the more specialised context of Natural Medicine. This paper reviews the curriculum of a Bachelor of Natural Medicine to examine both contextual and conceptual knowledge.

The papers in this first edition bring a scholarly approach to the analysis of the activities of the Australian private higher education sector and provide a platform for discussion and further development. There are many more topics and approaches which can be developed including comparative studies, policy changes and their implications, and issues of governance and management. I invite members and readers to contribute further to these debates and to assist the journal to develop into a significant scholarly outlet for analysis of the private higher education sector in Australia. Finally, I would like to thank all reviewers, members of the Higher Education Committee of ACPET and members of the ACPET Journal Editorial Board, and in particular the Editor, Laura Hougaz, for bringing this idea to fruition.



Emeritus Professor Hilary Winchester
Journal Editorial Board

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Growth and Consolidation of the Australian Private Higher Education Sector



Peter Ryan

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Abstract

The past few decades have seen increasing massification and privatisation of higher education in Australia, with new providers emerging that challenge the traditional universities. In this paper I analyse the make-up of the non-university higher education sector in Australia. I also describe the effect of FEE-HELP funding as a catalyst for change in the Australian private higher education sector and how this compares with the American experience. The final section of the paper presents an analysis of recent growth and consolidation of the Australian private higher education sector.

Keywords

massification, FEE-HELP, growth, consolidation, merger

Introduction

Globally, the widening of access to higher education for post-secondary students has been apparent during the last three decades. This phenomenon, described by Scott (1995) as the massification of higher education, has created ever-increasing demands on the capacity of the higher education sector. Neave (1998) and Hough (2005) have both recognised the drive towards mass higher education in the European context, and the statistical evidence of this phenomenon shows that the proportion of adults with higher educational qualifications in OECD countries almost doubled between 1975 and 2000, from 22% to 41% (Wooldridge, 2005). According to Gibbons et al. (1994, p. 11) "massification is now a strongly entrenched phenomenon, it is international in scope and is unlikely ever to be reversed."

In line with the move from an elite to a mass system of higher education (TAFE Directors Australia, 2008, p. 5), and in order to meet the increasing demand for higher education places driven by the larger population of university-going age (Davis, 2004, p. 3), the Australian higher education sector has experienced substantial growth. Not only was a tranche of new Australian universities created during the last two decades of the 20th century (Ronayne, 1997) as a result of the Dawkins reforms, but there has also been a notable increase in the number of non-university higher education institutions approved to offer higher education qualifications in the last ten years (Davis, 2004, p. 5).

Part of the response to meet the growing demand for Australian higher education places has been an increasing number of private providers approved to deliver higher education courses outside the traditional university sector.

Current Make-Up of the Higher Education Sector

The Australian higher education sector is made up of 174 unique legal entities that can be broken down according to the Provider Categories Standards that form part of the Higher Education Standards Framework (Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education, 2011). Table 1 below shows all higher education providers broken down by category type and the nature of their ownership.

Table 1:

Overview of Institutions that Make Up the Australian Higher Education Sector

Type of institution	Australian university	Overseas university	University of specialisation	Higher education provider	Total
Government-owned institutions	36			22	59
Church-owned institutions	2		1	24	28
Privately owned institutions	1	2		86	90
Total	39	2	1	132	174

Source: TEQSA National Register, Retrieved 5 April 2012 from <http://www.teqsa.gov.au/national-register>

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The Provider Categories Standards effectively determine the institutions that are permitted to use the term university to describe themselves and those that are not. Along with privately owned universities, all 132 providers that make up the non-university higher education sector are often collectively referred to as the private sector, even though 24 of these are owned by churches of various faiths, 17 are government-owned instrumentalities, and a further five are wholly-owned subsidiaries of publicly owned universities. The most important distinction, however, is that the majority of these 132 non-university providers do not receive recurrent public funding to provide higher education (the notable exceptions being the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and the Australian Film, Television and Radio School).

This is especially relevant when considering the higher education operations of the various technical and further education (TAFE) institutes, which are government-owned and receive recurrent funding for the provision of vocational education but must run their higher education courses on a full-fee for service basis (Scott, 2002). However, for the purpose of this paper the terms private providers and private sector will refer to the 86 privately owned non-university higher education providers.

Based on an analysis of non-university higher education providers, some interesting statistics emerge:

- 17% (23) operate campuses in more than one state or territory,
- 61% (80) have gained approval to offer government provided income contingent loans (FEE-HELP support) to their students since March 2005,
- 61% (80) are also vocational training providers,
- 52% (69) offer courses at postgraduate level,
- 10% (13) offer research degrees, and
- 68% (90) are approved to deliver courses to overseas students.

The number of non-university higher education providers that are also vocational training providers is a function of many of these institutions' origins in the vocational training sector and accounts for many of the recent entrants in the private entity category. Their transition to higher education has represented an option for vocational training providers seeking to avoid the constraints of mandatory national curricula (Australian Council for Private Education and Training [ACPET], 2008, p. 18) and those wanting to offer higher-level qualifications, especially postgraduate qualifications. Of the 69 institutions offering postgraduate courses, 32 are also vocational training providers.

It is worth noting that non-university higher education providers are embracing research, with 13 offering research degrees at master's or doctoral level. Also, not unlike the university sector, non-university higher education providers rely on the international market to supplement enrolments, with 90 institutions being approved to offer courses to overseas students.

New Providers

An accelerating level of change in the size and make-up of the Australian non-university higher education sector has been clearly evident in the past decade, with 54 of the total 132 currently registered non-university higher education providers (41%) being approved in the six years from 2005 to 2011. This is in stark comparison to the generally slow-moving nature of the sector previously.

The majority of the new entrants to the higher education sector are private entities (78%), demonstrating the interest of the private sector in delivering higher education courses. The second largest number of new providers was in the category of government instrumentalities (15%), predominantly government-owned vocational training (TAFE) colleges

transitioning to the higher education sector driven by changes in government policy, particularly in Victoria.

The majority of the new entrants to the higher education sector are private entities...

However, it was not all one-way traffic over this period, with the influx of new providers being more than offset by 58

previously approved institutions choosing to leave the sector, failing to achieve re-registration, or being amalgamated into other higher education providers. Included in these 58 departing institutions were nine providers that exited either during or at the end of their initial 5-year period of approval. The specific higher education providers included in the 58 that ceased to exist as their own distinct legal entities were Finsia Education and Murdoch Institute of Education (subsumed by Kaplan Higher Education), Qantm College (combined with SAE Institute) and the Southern School of Natural Therapies (subsumed by Think:Colleges).

The predominance of private providers as recent entrants to the higher education sector has had a significant impact on the overall make-up of the sector and has resulted in a notable increase in for-profit provision of higher education in Australia. From a figure of 3.5% of total equivalent full-time higher education students proposed by Watson (2000, p. 12) and the "anecdotal estimate" of between 5 and 6% suggested

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by ACPET (2002, p. 2) the current figure of around 10% of the total number of equivalent full-time higher education students (Australian Universities Quality Agency [AUQA], 2011, p. 2; Ryan, 2011, p. 47) shows considerable growth during the past decade, albeit from a low base.

Government Support for the Payment of Tuition Fees

A major catalyst for this increased interest from the private sector has come as a result of the passing of the Higher Education Support Act by the federal government in 2003. This Act, among other things, includes a provision for extending government sponsored income contingent loans (FEE-HELP) to students of non-university higher education providers, including private providers. This single change in government policy has been a significant catalyst for growth since its implementation in 2005. As noted previously, to-date 80 non-university higher education providers have gained approval to offer FEE-HELP loans to their eligible students.

An analysis of FEE-HELP funding during the period 2005-2011 has been undertaken to assess the impact of the extension of government loan support to the non-university higher education sector. A summary of this analysis appears in Table 2.

Table 2 shows the rapid growth of FEE-HELP funding received by non-university higher education providers, increasing more than ninefold from \$30M in 2005 to \$290M in 2011. In addition, the table reveals that the proportion of FEE-HELP funding flowing to non-university higher education providers increased from 9% of total FEE-HELP funding in 2005 to 28% of total FEE-HELP funding in 2009, where it has remained fairly steady.

Comparisons with the American Experience

This trend of growth in the Australian private higher education sector appears to be following a pattern evident in the US private higher education sector over the past 14 years. The Australian FEE-HELP loans scheme is not unlike a similar scheme operating in the US, known colloquially as "Title IV" funding. This term derives from Title IV of the US Higher Education Act of 1965 which provides financial aid for students to undertake higher education study.

The year 1996 was a watershed year for private providers of higher education in the US when the definition of higher education was changed to include accredited private for-profit institutions for the purposes of Title IV funding. This made those institutions' students eligible for the same government

Table 2:

Analysis of FEE-HELP Funding 2005-2011

YEAR	UNIVERSITIES % of total		NON-UNIVERSITY PROVIDERS % of total		TOTAL FEE-HELP FUNDING
2005	\$310,426,930	91%	\$30,595,990	9%	\$341,022,920
% increase	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2006	\$361,566,082	84%	\$68,371,177	16%	\$429,937,259
% increase	16%		123%		26%
2007	\$433,269,284	80%	\$105,484,178	20%	\$538,753,462
% increase	20%		54%		25%
2008	\$485,335,958	78%	\$140,016,022	22%	\$625,351,980
% increase	12%		33%		16%
2009	\$540,596,107	72%	\$207,230,844	28%	\$747,826,951
% increase	11%		48%		20%
2010	\$632,037,373	71%	\$252,827,711	29%	\$884,865,084
% increase	17%		22%		18%
2011	\$711,084,912	71%	\$290,645,420	29%	\$1,001,730,332
% increase	13%		15%		13%

Source: DEEWR Determinations

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sponsored financial aid as students in public and private non-profit higher education institutions. It was stated at the time that Title IV was expanded to help overcome the barriers to accessing higher education—in the American lexicon, “to help people go to college” (Wolanin, 2003, p. 4).

This caused a sea-change in the US private higher education sector by stimulating substantial growth. From only a few Title IV-eligible for-profit institutions in 1996, the number rose to 669 by 1999. In 1991 there was only one publicly listed higher education provider (DeVry, Inc), but by 2001 there were 40 such providers (Robison, 2006). The University of Phoenix (Apollo Group) went public, bringing a huge influx of investment capital into the sector. The pace of growth and consolidation increased, with a few market leaders quickly emerging. These included Quest Education, Corinthian, and Laureate Education.

Following the expansion of Title IV funding, for-profit higher education providers steadily captured a larger share of the student market (Ruch, 2003). By 2003, approximately 6,400 institutions of higher education in the US were classified as Title IV-eligible institutions. Of these, 4,300 were private and accounted for approximately one quarter of the total student population (Wolanin, 2003, p. 7).

By 2012, the Australian private higher education sector was eight years past its own “watershed” following the introduction of the FEE-HELP loans scheme, and similar trends to those exhibited over the last thirteen years in the US were beginning to emerge.

Consolidation of the Australian Private Higher Education Sector

As well as a significant number of new private higher education providers being approved in the period 2005-2011 there has been considerable merger and takeover activity of existing private providers accompanied by the introduction of substantial amounts of equity capital into the private higher education sector.

IBT Education (IBT) successfully listed on the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX) in December 2004 by merging a number of smaller entities, including six private higher education providers, into a larger conglomerate suitable for public listing. These included the Sydney Institute of Business and Technology (SIBT) in association with Macquarie University, Melbourne Institute of Business and Technology (MIBT) in association with Deakin University, Queensland Institute of Business and Technology (QIBT) in association with Griffith University, South Australian Institute of Business and

Technology (SAIBT) in association with the University of South Australia, Perth Institute of Business and Technology (PIBT) in association with Edith Cowan University, and the Eynesbury Institute of Business and Technology (Adelaide).

IBT followed its listing with an aggressive program of strategic acquisitions, as detailed in the company’s ASX announcements. The first of these acquisitions was the Australian College of Applied Psychology in August 2006 [AUD\$13.1M subject to working capital and other adjustments]. IBT also set up a new private higher education provider, Curtin College, operating in conjunction with Curtin University of Technology, taking to eight the number of private higher education providers under the IBT banner.

In November 2007, IBT Education changed its name to Navitas to reflect the broader range of courses, other than business, offered by the diverse group of education institutions then under its control. In his address to the 2007 Annual General Meeting, Navitas CEO, Rod Jones, committed the company to pursuing further opportunities for expansion. In July 2008 Navitas acquired 75% of the Australian Institute of Public Safety (now renamed Navitas College of Public

Safety) [AUD\$2.2M] and in December 2010 announced that it had purchased the SAE Group, consisting of two higher education brands: SAE Institute and Qantm College [up to AUD\$289M]. During 2011, Navitas established two more higher education diploma pathway colleges: Newcastle International College and La Trobe Melbourne.

In 1991 there was only one publicly listed higher education provider, but by 2001 there were 40 such providers.

Of the 86 private higher education providers currently registered, Navitas now accounts for 12 of these (14%). Of the \$290M of FEE-HELP funding advanced to non-university higher education providers in 2011, Navitas owned institutions accounted for one quarter (25%) of total funding.

A second education company, Red Hill Education, went public by listing on the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX) in September 2010. Immediately following listing it amalgamated the Academy of Information Technology, which had only recently been approved as a private higher education provider, into its stable of education institutions.

In December 2010, a third listed education company, Academies Australasia Group Limited (formerly Garratt’s Limited), announced it had entered into an arrangement to acquire a majority stake (51%) of the newly approved private

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higher education provider, AMI Education [AUD\$562K]. This announcement came less than 3 months after AMI's approval as a higher education provider. Academies Australasia has since purchased an additional 24% of AMI in April 2011 [AUD\$264K].

In May 2006, Kaplan Inc., a US-based education provider owned by the Washington Post Company, was successful in its takeover bid for Tribeca, a publicly listed education provider based in New South Wales [AUD\$56M]. Tribeca Learning has since been delisted, re-branded Kaplan Higher Education, and has achieved higher education approval to supplement its vocational training arm. The Kaplan Group continued on an acquisition path in 2007 by purchasing Bradford College and Grange Business School, as well as the education arm of the financial services professional association—Financial Services Institute of Australasia (FINSIA) [AUD\$36M]. In September 2009, Kaplan purchased Murdoch Institute of Technology in Western Australia from the Alexander Education Group. It is possible that these strategic acquisitions may be a conduit for Kaplan to bring its large suite of educational assets, including Kaplan University, to Australia. However, the initial attempt to establish a campus of Kaplan University in South Australia appears not to have been successful (Trounson, 2011).

Other acquisitions of private higher education providers during the past few years include the purchase of the Institute of Technology Australia (IOTA) by Kip McGrath Education Centres in April 2007 and the purchase of Kranz International College by Careers Australia Group in August 2008. Both providers have subsequently been deregistered, with IOTA (renamed Kip McGrath Institute of Business Australia) being placed in liquidation after it failed in its application for re-registration and re-accreditation (Business Spectator, 2010).

In November 2008, Laureate International Universities acquired the Blue Mountains International Hotel School and its sister college the Australian International Hotel School. In 2011 Laureate gained regulatory approval as a private university in South Australia under the name Torrens University Australia and is expected to commence operations in 2013.

The past five years have also been a busy time for venture capitalists. In September 2006, Champ Private Equity, in partnership with Petersen Investments, purchased Study Group International from the UK Daily Mail Group for AUD\$176.4M. Study Group purchased the long established Australian College of Physical Education (established in 1917) in October 2009. In July 2010 Study Group was sold to Providence Equity Partners for AUD\$660M.

In 2006, Amadeus Education was set up as an investment company to acquire and develop education businesses. Amadeus backers and management included Sam Linz (former

chairman of Barbeques Galore and Rebel Sports), Robert Gavshon (former deputy chairman, Barbeques Galore), Anthony Bohm (former vice president, Kaplan International UK), Milton Levine (chairman, Chester Holdings UK), and Mark Rohald (former executive director, Educor South Africa).

In its first purchase Amadeus acquired the Billy Blue Group from its private owners in November 2006. This was followed in quick succession by APM Training Institute in May 2007, and the Australasian College of Natural Therapies (ACNT) and Jansen Newman Institute (JNI) in October 2007. In the same month Seek Limited, Australia's largest online employment and recruitment site operator, purchased a 50% interest in Amadeus Education for AUD\$37.5M. Part of the purchase price was a subscription for AUD\$20M of new shares to fund future acquisitions (Carter, 2007, p. 3). In May 2008, Amadeus re-branded its education operations as Think:Education. Think:Education purchased the Commercial Arts Training College in February 2009 and the Southern School of Natural Therapies in February 2010. SEEK acquired the remaining 50% of Think:Education during 2009 by buying out the minority shareholders.

The past five years have also been a busy time for venture capitalists.

In October 2006, Thomson Learning, including Thomson Education Direct (vocational training) and Thomson Education (higher education) in Australia, was offered for sale by the Thomson Corporation.

In May 2007, the company was purchased by a private equity consortium consisting of Apax Partners and OMERS Capital Partners for a reported USD\$7.75 billion. In July 2007 the name was changed to Cengage Learning (an amalgamation of the words "Centre of Engagement"). The Australian education division of Cengage was acquired in December 2010 by a new education consolidator, Nexus Education Group, backed by substantially the same individuals as Amadeus Education. The new owners made a strategic decision not to renew the entity's higher education approval which lapsed on 31 December 2011.

In February 2007, Endeavour Learning Group (ELG), backed by Hastings Private Equity and a consortium of management shareholders, acquired the Australian College of Natural Medicine (ACNM). ACNM has since been re-branded Endeavour College of Natural Health. ELG's stated strategy is to "expand its footprint in high growth sectors within the for-profit education sector through a mix of organic growth initiatives and targeted acquisitions" (Hastings, 2008).

In March 2008, the US investment group Tiger Global acquired a 30% stake in the Carrick Education Group which includes its vocational training arm, Carrick Institute of Education, and

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its higher education arm, Carrick Higher Education. Carrick's managing director stated at the time that the cash injection would be used primarily for mergers and acquisitions (Business Spectator, 2008). After facing significant financial pressures during 2010/2011, Carrick was acquired by Kaplan in May 2011.

In 2010 Cambridge International College, a long-time player in the vocational training sector but recently approved as a private higher education provider, sold a controlling 60% stake to Hong Kong-based private equity firm Baring Private Equity Asia.

In 2006 two overseas universities also established a foothold in the Australian higher education marketplace. Carnegie Mellon University (Pittsburgh, USA) and Heriot-Watt University (Edinburgh, UK) gained regulatory approval for operations in South Australia and New South Wales respectively. This represented the first foray of overseas universities into higher education in Australia. The success, or otherwise, of their Australian operations is yet to be seen. University College London established a campus in South Australia in June 2009

Future Effects of Continuing Change

Lauchlan Chipman, speaking in 2001 shortly after retiring as the vice-chancellor of Central Queensland University, advocated that the best thing any government could do to equip Australia for more rapid advance into the age of the knowledge economy would be to facilitate the massification of higher education through the continued deregulation of the higher education industry and the expansion of for-profit institutions.

Changes in government policy that have supported the massification of higher education and fuelled the growth in demand for higher education places have also facilitated a confluence of events that has created unprecedented volatility in the Australian private higher education sector. This has resulted in a phase of intense growth and consolidation.

If the nature and extent of change within the Australian non-university higher education sector as detailed above continues in a similar way, a number of scenarios are possible over the next 2-5 years in the Australian higher education marketplace:

- Based on current trends and general interest within the sector, the number of private higher education providers approved to operate within the sector will continue to increase (Davis, as cited in Macnamara, 2007), mirroring the growth experienced in the US higher education sector over the past 10 years.
- The consolidation of ownership of private higher education providers will continue to form ever larger private education conglomerates.

- The number of students choosing to study with non-university higher education providers will continue to increase.
- Depending on the success of Carnegie Mellon, Heriot-Watt, University College London, and Laureate's Torrens University, other foreign universities may be encouraged to enter the Australian higher education marketplace and compete directly with Australian-based universities and non-university higher education providers.

Notwithstanding the above possibilities, the future will be to some extent determined by any further changes in government policy. The election of a Labor federal government in November 2007 resulted in certain changes to government policy regarding FEE-HELP funding (Macklin, 2006, pp. 62, 68). While the government determined that FEE-HELP support would remain for all eligible students of private providers, it was restricted for new enrolments in undergraduate courses in public universities from 2009. This change in policy was not complemented by sufficient additional Commonwealth-supported places within the university sector to offset the withdrawal of FEE-HELP for commencing undergraduate students, thereby providing additional opportunities for private

The consolidation of ownership will continue to form ever larger private education conglomerates.

higher education providers offering undergraduate courses. However, the uncapping of government subsidised undergraduate places from 2012 may negatively impact upon private higher education providers, which under current policy settings can deliver only full-fee for service places (with limited exceptions in teaching and nursing under the National Priority Places program¹).

As indicated in Table 1, there are currently only 86 non-university higher education providers that can be categorised as private institutions. The takeover and merger activity detailed above has served to lessen competition by reducing the number of independent institutions within this category of providers. In turn, this has impacted on private providers operating, or seeking to operate, in the non-university higher education sector, as they must be equipped to compete in a less-competitive marketplace against other higher education providers with considerable economies of scale. Therefore, to remain competitive it is essential that private higher education providers keep abreast of and understand the extent of change in the size and make-up of non-university higher education sector as well as the new competitive dynamic brought about by the amalgamation and consolidation of the sector.

1 The National Priority Places Program consists of Commonwealth supported places in national priority areas such as nursing and education.

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Was It Worth It? The Effectiveness of External Quality Audit in a Private Higher Education Institution



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Abstract

External quality audits of universities have been in place for many years in various countries. External quality agencies funded by the government have been established to undertake audits of universities, private providers (both vocational and higher education), TAFEs, community colleges, and other types of institutions. While such audits have been in place for several decades in some countries, there is generally a lack of research on the extent to which external quality audits have been effective in enhancing systems, processes, external compliance and, more importantly, the outcomes in core areas such as learning and teaching, research, and engagement. This paper makes an important contribution by providing a case study on the effectiveness of external quality audits in a private higher education institution in Australia. I argue that external quality auditing has acted as a driver for many changes and improvements within that institution. Such improvements may have taken place in due course; however, the external lever has resulted in rapid changes driven by senior management with the view of using the peer review process as reflection and ongoing improvement. These improvements are attributed to the commitment and engagement of senior management team, the role of quality unit in engaging staff across the institution, the alignment of internal processes with external review methodology, and the use of evidence based decision making in tracking and improving quality outcomes.

Keywords

external quality audit, private higher education, quality assurance, peer review, outcomes evaluation

Introduction

Governments have introduced external quality audits in various countries as part of reforms in tertiary education that include both vocational and higher education sectors. In countries such as the United Kingdom, various European countries, and New Zealand, external quality audits have been in place for the last two decades. In countries such as India, South Africa, Australia, some Middle Eastern countries, Hong Kong, and Malaysia, such audits have been in place for a decade. The social and economic imperatives in various countries have resulted in the use of different audit approaches. For example, a *fitness for purpose* approach is used in the Australian context compared to a *fitness for purpose* approach in the South African context. In the UK, increased focus is on monitoring academic standards. While the audit approach differs in various contexts, it is clear that governments are increasingly expecting tertiary education providers to contribute to social and economic development. The renewal of quality in tertiary education is increasingly focussed on transparency and accountability of all providers and it provides a signal for increased regulation

and scrutiny on various kinds of providers and increased emphasis on performance assessment, external compliance, performance-based funding (particularly in the Australian context), and use of rankings and league tables for public access to assess institutional performance.

Although external quality audits have been in place for many years in different contexts, there has been limited research on the impact or effectiveness of such audits at national, institutional, or faculty levels. Most research on this topic (Asking, 1997; Dano & Stensaker, 2007; Dill, 2000; Harvey, 2002; Harvey & Newton, 2004; Kristensen, 1997; Massy, 1999; Newton, 2000; Wahlen, 2004; Weusthof, 1995) is based on opinions and predictions of the likely impact of audits but without systematic research using qualitative and quantitative data. The research so far is based on universities rather than on private colleges or providers.

This paper provides a case study on the effectiveness of external quality audit in a private tertiary education provider

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in Australia. I argue that an external driver, if effectively used and aligned with internal processes, could improve quality assurance processes. The improvement in various processes and the effective engagement of staff may also lead to improved outcomes in various measures if there is a systematic approach to reviews and improvement.

Evidence of Effectiveness: Global Perspective

Most of the literature on the effectiveness of external quality audits is based on universities, is anecdotal, and reflects two opposing viewpoints. The first view is that audits have not transformed higher education and do not contribute to institutional improvement and the enhancement of student experience. Instead, change is regarded as taking place in institutions through internal reviews, and through internal and external operating environments (Barrows, 1999; Jackson, 1997; Kogan, Bauer, Bleilie, & Henkel, 2000). The opposing view is that audits, if managed effectively and aligned well with internal systems and processes, motivate universities to self-assess and improve their core business and services (Laughton, 2003; Newton, 2000). Most of the literature has also critiqued the processes used by the auditing agencies (Barrows, 1999; Jackson, 1997; Kogan et al., 2000; Newton, 2000). External audits with an improvement-led culture have had positive results in terms of self-assessment, external peer review, improvements, and follow-up, while audits with a compliance-driven regime have failed to engage academics in quality and improvement (Newton, 2000; Shah, 2011). Williams (2009) argued that the tendency of individuals to resist is higher when something is forced or imposed on them than when choosing to do it themselves. Ramsden in his book, *Learning to Lead in Higher Education*, argued that the conventional view of outcomes and productivity is shaped by the idea of excellence and high standards, with many academic staff perceiving themselves to be guardians of quality in teaching and research, and most being sceptical of attempts by those outside higher education to assess aspects of quality outcomes (Ramsden, 2003, p. 39).

Harvey (2005) and Cheng (2011) argued that quality monitoring in the UK has been beset by overlapping and burdensome processes (see also Kogan et al., 2000; Laughton, 2003), as well as competing notions of quality, failure to engage in learning and transformation, and a focus on accountability and compliance with lack of trust. The UK experience suggests that academics perceive external reviews as indicating a distrust of their own work, and costly and bureaucratic exercises (Cheng, 2009). In general, quality assurance activities have prompted a culture of compliance (Barrows, 1999; Jackson, 1997; Newton, 2000) and have discouraged the engagement of ideas around quality improvement. Despite

this opposition, studies with 12 universities in the UK indicated that two-thirds of external review panel recommendations had been acted upon (Brennan, 1997). Brennan found that actions involved formalised procedures and improved documentation, and that recommendations were more likely to be instigated at the faculty level.

In Sweden, Wahlen (2004) found that although external audits together with other elements impacted at the management and faculty levels, it took a long time to build accepted systematic quality assurance and development measures in universities. Research by Stensaker (1997) with 24 heads of departments in a Swedish university suggested that quality audits have led to enhanced management of quality processes and staff development. Research in a Norwegian university suggested that external quality audits have played a key role in strengthening the use of student evaluation data to improve the student learning experience (Gynnild, 2007). A recent study undertaken by Stensaker, Langfeldt, Harvey, Huisman, and Westerheijden (2010) in Norway suggested that national quality monitoring of higher education institutions by the external agency had a positive impact, with 77% of participants

...quality audits have played a key role in improving the student learning experience.

agreeing that national evaluations of quality had a high or moderate positive impact.

In New Zealand, quality reviews have led universities to examine and monitor processes in ways they have not done previously.

Under such examination, defects were identified and addressed rather than lingering to face public exposure (Meade & Woodhouse, 2000).

A recent study by the Council on Higher Education in South Africa with three South African universities measured staff perception of external quality audits. Face-to-face interviews with staff in the universities revealed that not all ideas for improvement were implemented before audits. However, public external quality audit reports played a key role or were used as leverage in bringing about change and improvements. Some of the improvements in the universities included changes in policies and procedures, centralised administrative and record keeping practices, new program development and assessment procedures, and sharing good practice within the institutions (Wickham, Coetzee, Jones, & Metcalfe, 2007). Fourie and Alt (2000) found that quality audits in South Africa fostered an improvement-led culture but that there was a lack of integration of quality in core activities such as program planning and professional development.

Scott and Hawke (2003) argue that, for universities, a unique benefit of the external quality audit is the extrinsic motivation

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to document, critique, and enhance their internal capabilities for continuous quality assurance, improvement, and innovation. A study by Shah and Grebennikov (2008) in a large public university in Australia indicated that the external quality audit was used as a driver for change and improvement in the university. They suggest that, while changes and improvements would happen as part of internal review processes, the effective use of the external driver led to improvement as a direct result of the review outcomes. A follow-up study of the same university by Shah and Nair (2011) suggested evidence of improvement in various learning and teaching measures such as first year retention rates, progression rates, and trend improvement in all student, employer, and staff surveys. According to Baldwin (1997), external reviews in Australia have been instrumental in ensuring rigorous course approval procedures, increasing awareness of the student perspective in learning and teaching, and a perceptible shift in the climate, with renewed attention to teaching issues.

Brief Overview of Private Higher Education Providers in Australia

According to the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) national register, the Australian higher education sector comprises 36 public universities, three private universities, two foreign universities, one university of specialisation, and 132 non-university higher education providers that are authorised to offer and confer higher education qualifications within the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

These qualifications hold a legal status equivalent to that of university degrees based on the new provider standards which outline the criteria for the registration and accreditation of all types of higher education providers and qualification standards (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011). The higher education sector also includes many publicly funded Technical And Further Education (TAFE) institutes, which have traditionally offered only vocational courses and are now also providing higher education courses. The vocational training sector has more than 4,800 private and community-based registered training organisations offering vocational qualifications, with some also authorised to offer higher education courses. The private higher education sector has consistently experienced growth, with increases of 2.5% in 2010, 20.5% in 2009, and 21.7% in 2008. By comparison, the commencing student growth in Australian public universities was 3.8% in 2010, 8.6% in 2009, and 3.9% in 2008. The growth in 2010 in the private higher education sector was low compared with the average growth of 20% in the previous two years. This was primarily due to the decline in international student enrolments (Commonwealth of Australia, 2010).

External Quality Audits of Private Higher Education Providers

The external quality audit of Australian universities commenced in 2001 and was performed by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA). The first cycle of audit using a fitness for purpose approach was completed in 2007. The fitness for purpose audit approach reviews the extent to which the institutional mission and objectives are aligned with the resources to achieve the mission. In 2007, AUQA commenced cycle one audits of private higher education providers that received the government's subsidised loan scheme. AUQA's audit of private providers was aligned with the four quality audit factors (QAFs), namely institutional governance, learning and teaching, enabling support services, and overall quality management and enhancements. AUQA's audit methodology and reporting of the outcome were significantly different from those traditionally used with private providers. Vocational education and training providers are audited against the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF), and in higher education, non self-accrediting institutions (NSAIs) were audited, until 2012, by the state governments' registration and accreditation authorities against the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes 2007 (now replaced by the Higher Education Standards Framework). All these audits were heavily driven by a compliance auditing regime. The compliance driven quality approach previously used with vocational providers and NSAIs by state governments and the improvement-led audit culture used by AUQA is discussed in detail by Shah and Lewis (2010). By way of example, the AQTF and state governments' registration of NSAIs was focused on the presence of a policy that could be developed at the last minute before the registration and accreditation, compared to AUQA's approach which examined such things as the presence of a policy, awareness of that policy across the institution among staff and students, and the extent to which the policy was consistently implemented in faculties and campuses. The inconsistency in the use and interpretations of AQTF and national protocols in various state and territory governments was highlighted in the 2008 Review of Higher Education (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008, pp. 117, 118) which resulted in the formation of two national regulators: the TEQSA and the Australian Skills and Quality Authority (ASQA). Winchester (2011) analysed 20 NSAI audit reports, and suggested that there was an inadequate and inconsistent state and territory government agencies approach to the registration and accreditation of private higher education providers.

Quality Audit Approach

AUQA's audit methodology, which included self-review and a focus on closing the loop on recommendations, development

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of self-review portfolio, evidence of claims, use of various stakeholders in the audit process, scrutiny of various processes and performance outcomes, public reporting, sharing exemplars of good practice in a good practice database, and monitoring progress on affirmations and recommendations, was a new phenomenon for NSAs. The public release of audit reports and media scrutiny with headlines about NSA audit outcomes were also new for many NSAs. Media headlines such as “Audit faults therapy school” (Hare, 2010a) and “College fails student experience test” (Hare, 2010b) were some of the many that were closely monitored by various stakeholders who had an interest in tertiary education. These stakeholders included commonwealth and state/territory governments, professional accrediting bodies, and higher education providers.

Various initiatives were taken by AUQA to improve quality assurance and capacity-building in NSAs. They included the thematic analysis of NSA audit reports (Winchester, 2010) to analyse the recurring themes, professional development in a wide range of areas explicitly for NSAs, ongoing annual forums to foster debate on issues concerning a wide range of areas (in many cases issues of national and international interest) via the Australian Quality Forum (AQF), promotion of best practices in universities and NSAs via the good practice database, and the inclusion of NSA practitioners as AUQA auditors which was traditionally dominated by university practitioners. AUQA’s improvement-led audit approach, rather than the compliance approach used by state and territory governments, was seen as an important step in engaging NSAs and changing the quality culture from one of compliance to one of quality enhancement.

Effectiveness of the External Quality Audit

In this section of the paper I consider the extent to which government policy on the external quality audit of NSAs has been effective in one private higher education institution. The views in this section are based on my experience in leading quality and improvement in the college.

Appointment of Senior Staff

Various scholars (Fullan & Scott, 2009; Scott, Coates, & Anderson, 2008) have argued that change does not take place in institutions by itself, and that change needs to be led with clear strategy, communication, and staff engagement. The private college used as a case study in this paper made a significant investment in the appointment of a senior staff member to lead quality and improvement initiatives across all campuses. The senior appointment was autonomous, with membership in key governing committees, and an adequate budget to enable effective implementation of changes related

to quality and improvement. The appointment also had direct operational reporting to the chair of the academic board, the chief executive officer, the academic director, the college’s director, heads of schools, and divisional heads. While the college may have appointed senior staff in due course, the external quality audit of the institution and its rapid expansion hastened the appointment of a dedicated senior staff member to lead quality. According to Shah, Wilson, and Nair (2010) external quality audits between 2001-2011 have resulted in the appointment of senior staff across many Australian universities to lead quality and the renewal of the functions performed by planning and quality units.

Genuine Self-Review

The literature on the impact of external quality audits in various contexts suggests that the alignment of the internal review process with external review methodology has been productive in the enhancement of processes and outcomes (Caroll, 1997; Dill, 2000; Weusthof, 1995). One of the key steps in the AUQA audit process is the initiation of self-review by the institution. Such a strategy, if effectively managed, enables the institution to identify areas of good practice (which should be rewarded and maintained), identify of areas

...audits promote opportunities for internal self-reviews.

needing improvement (which requires ongoing tracking and monitoring), and prioritise improvements and action on the recommendations in a timely manner. The college in this study initiated an internal self-review that involved the engagement of staff at all levels, internal and external members of governing committees, and a representative sample of students. The self-review process was performed against the four QAFs and external compliance requirements such as the National Protocols and National Code. The self-review enabled the preparation of the institutional performance portfolio almost eight months before the external quality audit. Historically, the college’s approach to quality assurance was based on the external AQTF and NSA registration and accreditation compliance rather than a systematic internally initiated review process. The external quality audit preparations prompted the college to develop policies and guidelines related to the five yearly cyclical review of the whole institution which was affirmed by AUQA. The findings of the self-review, including the action plan to address the recommendations, were tabled in various forums and committees for discussion and endorsement.

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Strengthening the Governance of Quality

The self-review initiated by the college involved the review of the governance structure including the terms of reference of each governing committee. The key outcome of the review was the introduction of a new structure with revised terms of reference and renewal of internal and external membership in committees. In addition, the academic board's terms of reference included responsibilities related to monitoring academic quality and standards. The college also strengthened the role of its quality and risk committee to provide leadership on all aspects of quality assurance. The new academic structure included the requirement to undertake an annual self-review of all committees against their terms of reference. New committee members were required to undergo an induction by the chair of the academic board. One of the standing agenda items on all academic committees now includes quality and improvement, with papers and briefing provided by the quality unit.

Quality Framework

One of the key successes of the college in preparing for the external quality audit was the introduction of the strategic planning and quality management framework. The framework embedded strategic planning, resourcing, risk management, and quality assurance into a single framework with accountability at various levels for ongoing improvements. The framework was developed in consultation with key groups and endorsed by the academic board and the senior management team. The framework is currently a key document that is used across the organisation and it is used in both the vocational and higher education areas of the college to ensure academic and non-academic quality.

Improvements

A key outcome of the self-review process was the implementation of improvement across various areas. Some areas required improving various systems and processes without any implications on the budget, while other areas required resourcing. Examples of improvements that required resourcing included the professional development of sessional teaching staff, realignment of various student support functions, upgrading the library, and investment in learning and teaching facilities. These improvements were timely based on the review outcome and the growth of the college in recent years. Examples of improvements in systems and processes included the induction of new teachers/lecturers, more efficient course review processes, greater stakeholder feedback, and implementing and communicating improvement with students and staff, staff performance reviews, introduction of key performance measures and reporting

mechanisms, and the introduction of systematic reviews and improvements.

Staff and Student Engagement

A number of quality and improvement initiatives were communicated to key committees, staff, and students using various mechanisms. Papers and briefings were regularly provided to the academic board and other academic committees. Staff forums were organised on a regular basis to communicate various initiatives aimed at engaging staff. Regular newsletters and emails were also used to communicate improvements with students. On an annual basis, the college organised "compliance cup" as a means of encouraging staff to discuss and debate issues around quality, improvement, and compliance. Up to 100 staff at all levels participate in this informal event, which involves networking and a team quiz on quality and compliance issues. The college also made significant investments in the formation of a student representative council (SRC) to listen and act on the student voice in a systematic manner.

Students were also given the opportunity to provide 24/7 qualitative feedback...

Stakeholder feedback

Various initiatives were undertaken to enhance the approach taken by the college to improve student feedback. A new stakeholder survey and an improvement policy were introduced with new instruments and accountability in order to improve the student experience of teaching and support services. Student experience is measured at three levels: the total student experience, the course experience, and the end of semester teacher and subject evaluations. Reporting of the results was enhanced to enable easy interpretation, with benchmarking of results against the overall college results across each faculty and campus. Students were also given the opportunity to provide 24/7 qualitative feedback using online and paper-based feedback forms. Qualitative student feedback was analysed, and recurring themes and detailed reports were provided to each faculty. As part of closing the feedback loop, each faculty and student support unit was required to review the student survey results in consultation with the Director of Quality and Improvement. A brief report summarising the key findings and actions was tabled at the Quality and Risk Committee for discussion and endorsement. The Quality and Risk Committee provides oversight on projects related to each improvement, with ongoing reviews and updates by the quality unit. The college undertakes student surveys in a systematic manner in order to track the impact of the previous year's improvements on the current year's results.

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Assessment Moderation and Benchmarking

The college actively engaged two public universities and two comparable private providers to undertake the moderation of assessments and benchmarking in various areas. Marked assignments and tests were randomly selected to be moderated. This enabled dialogue with teachers from various institutions and the outcome was also linked to academic staff professional development and quality management of student assessments. A memorandum of understanding was established to undertake benchmarking on a range of performance measures, processes such as student complaints management, and the resourcing of support services and online learning.

Performance Assessment

The introduction of the new strategic planning and quality management framework required the development of measures to track and improve quality outcomes. The college introduced educational key performance indicators (EKPIs) with 15 measures to monitor performance in areas including enrolments; staff-student ratios; student retention, progression, and completions; student experience, and graduate outcomes. The EKPIs provide three years of trend performance data of the college which is benchmarked with each faculty and, where relevant, with public universities. The introduction of performance measures was an important step in monitoring quality outcomes and also in tracking the progress on the strategic plan and other lower level plans including annual staff performance reviews.

From Compliance to Improvement

Some private higher education providers commenced as vocational education providers meeting the requirements of the AQTF or its predecessors. The compliance-driven AQTF quality assurance framework has resulted in a compliance culture in some institutions rather than a sustainable quality assurance approach that is more focused on building internal quality assurance and capacity building (Shah & Lewis, 2010). The range of initiatives undertaken by the college as a direct result of a self-review process enabled evidence-based decision making with effective use of performance data such as EKPIs, student survey results, qualitative feedback, and student complaints. Such measures have played a key role in changing the institutional culture from a short term fix compliance culture to a longer term sustainable approach to quality management based on reflection and ongoing improvements.

As part of external quality audits, the college collected post-audit feedback from all participants. The results of the feedback show a very high level of satisfaction (see Shah, Nair,

& Stanford, 2011) with the external quality audit preparations strategy used by the college and the audit process.

Conclusion

The external quality audit of a FEE-HELP HEP was a new quality assurance process for many private higher education providers. The improvement-led audit approach with publicly available audit reports is a significant shift compared to the AQTF and the state/territory registration and accreditation process. The case study in this paper of a large NSAI shows that external quality audits, if effectively used with the engagement of stakeholders, could improve systems and processes for quality assurance in core (for example learning and teaching) and support areas of the institution. The AUQA audit of the college commended it on various aspects such as the self-review process, stakeholder feedback, and the quality management framework and benchmarking initiatives. The improvement-led audit approach with a follow-up post-audit to ensure effective implementation of affirmation(s) and recommendation(s) places the onus on the institution to continuously monitor and improve quality assurance processes and outcomes.

The formation of TEQSA will significantly streamline the reporting requirements of all NSAs...

The formation of TEQSA will significantly streamline the reporting requirements of all NSAs with opportunity to compare key academic outcomes such as student retention rates as the data collection will be managed by a single national regulator rather than state and territory

governments. However, it will also increase the accountability of all higher education providers to improve quality assurance and ensure comparable standards. NSAs and universities are faced with significant challenges to ensure compliance and quality requirements using the new Higher Education Standards Framework. On the positive side, the use of a single registration and accreditation process for all higher education providers will improve the legitimacy of all NSAs, with single criteria for registration and accreditation of all providers, including compliance with the AQF, national code, and other requirements.

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Developing a Strategic Capability for Student Engagement Using Social Capital: A Case Study at a Pathways College



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Abstract

The importance of international education to Australia's economy has led to a strong interest in the international student experience. To conceptualise the student experience, student engagement is used. Although the student engagement literature identifies the multi-dimensionality of student engagement, it provides limited guidance on how student engagement can be managed. In this article, I propose that student engagement, defined as an institutional capacity, can be developed as a strategic capability. This capability can be developed through social capital—networks of relationships that allow coordination and cooperation to address social issues. By using social capital an institution can connect students with the broad social support structures recommended to deal with the complexity of student engagement. I examine the above propositions in a real context using data from the initial stages of a research project on student engagement at a pathways college. The data confirm the complexity of student engagement. The data also demonstrate that the case study college has knowledge of the multiple factors influencing student engagement. I therefore maintain that educational institutions need to develop the capability to deal with that complexity. However, the data do not support the use of social capital to embed student engagement as a strategic capability. The next stages of the research need to be completed to determine how initiatives introduced over the next 12 months at the case study college can develop this capability.

Keywords

student engagement, social capital, pathways, ELICOS, strategic capability

Introduction

The importance of international education to Australia's economy (Australian Education International, 2011; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2010, 2011) has led to an intense interest in the international student experience (Brett, 2009; English Australia, 2010). This interest has been enforced with the introduction of the Good Practice Principles from the Australian Universities Quality Agency and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (Australian Universities Quality Agency, 2008) and a continued focus on the student experience by the government and governance bodies (English Australia, 2010; Krause, Hartley, James, & McInnis, 2005). The overt link between the student experience and retention and progression, two key performance indicators for educational institutions (Roberts & McNeese, 2010), has kept the student experience at the strategic forefront of the industry.

Student engagement is a conceptual representation of the student experience (Kuh, 2001, 2003; Tinto, 2005a, 2005b).

Various research reports and publications have examined *student engagement* (Brett, 2009; English Australia, 2010; Krause et al., 2005) considering a spectrum of issues from practicalities (Mitchell & Carbone, 2011; Rowe & Savelsberg, 2010; Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition, 2009) to theoretical dimensions (Krause & Coates, 2008; Kuh, 2003; Tinto, 2005b).

Tinto (2005a, 2005b) approached *student engagement* as an institutional capacity since *student engagement* occurs within the context of an educational institution. Drawing from the resource theory of organisations (Barney, 1991; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003; Prahalad & Hamel, 1990; Wernerfelt, 1984, 1995), this article contributes to the *student engagement* literature by extending Tinto's idea. In this article, I contend that educational institutions must develop *student engagement* as an embedded strategic capability—an ability to influence *student engagement* positively through the core operations of the organisation—to manage the complexity of *student engagement*. This is an area that remains a gap in the *student*

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engagement literature. Although Tinto (2005a, 2005b) and Kuh (2001, 2003) have discussed institutional factors that influence *student engagement*, the *student engagement* literature provides limited guidance on how educational institutions can develop the capability for implementing these factors. Thus, I also argue in this article that *student engagement*, as a strategic capability, can be developed through social capital.

Social capital is suggested as an approach for two reasons. First, social capital can build the networks and relationships (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995) required to connect students to broad social support structures needed for managing the complexity of *student engagement* (Roberts & McNeese, 2010; Rowe & Savelsberg, 2010; Suárez-Orozco, Onaga, & Lardemelle, 2010). Second, social capital can be developed as an organisational strategic capability as explicated by the social enterprise model (Frances, 2008; Mendan, 2011).

It is not within the scope of this article to produce a formulaic approach to developing *student engagement*. An educational institution must meet the needs of its own students. Although I suggest in this article that the *student engagement* capability is grown through social capital for the reasons outlined in the paragraph above, in reality this could be achieved through a different approach. That is why, in part, a case study design was chosen for the present research. A case study provides an opportunity to learn about the individual journey of a particular organisation as it develops its *student engagement* capability.

The applicability of my contentions was examined in a real context using qualitative, focus group data from a pathways college in Victoria. The data were extracted from the first stage of a longitudinal study on developing *student engagement* at the college. The college was chosen because of its provision of education to international students, particularly to ELICOS (English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students) and pathways students. Since *student engagement* of ELICOS and pathways students has not been extensively studied in the Australian context (English Australia, 2010), this provided a further reason to use the college for the case study. Finally, the college is keen to develop *student engagement* as a strategic capability, but has not yet implemented new *student engagement* initiatives. This provides a context to examine the *student engagement* capability as new initiatives are introduced.

In the following section, I briefly review the *student engagement* literature, examining how *student engagement* has been defined and the usefulness of various approaches for guiding educational institutions when developing the *student engagement* capability. In the second half of the article I present the research method, and progress to a discussion of the results and a conclusion.

Defining Student Engagement

In this article I examine the development of *student engagement* as a strategic capability. This examination must be drawn from a definition of *student engagement*. Definitions operationalise the concept and thus inform an approach to manage *student engagement*. The following paragraphs outline some definitions from the *student engagement* literature, concluding with the definition used in this article.

Student engagement is a multi-dimensional, complex concept (Coates, 2007; Krause & Coates, 2008; Krause et al., 2005; Tinto, 2005b). Coates (2005, p. 26; 2007, p. 122) has argued that *student engagement* is predicated on the assumption that an individual's learning is influenced by that individual's participation in educational activities. Such activities can include active and collaborative learning (Owens, 2011), communication with peers and academic staff (McCourt & Carr, 2010), connection with broader support structures (Roberts & McNeese, 2010; Rowe & Savelsberg, 2010; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010), and inclusion in an academic community (Matthews, Andrews, & Adams, 2011).

Student engagement is a multi-dimensional, complex concept.

Wefald and Downey (2009) have suggested a correlation between satisfaction and engagement in that a satisfied individual is more likely to be engaged. This builds on Schaufeli, Martínez, Pinto, Salanova, and Bakker's (2002, p. 465) earlier work, defining engagement as a positive cognitive state, characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2010, p. 20) have defined the components of *student engagement* as cognitive, relational, and behavioural.

Finally, Tinto (2005a, 2005b) has contended that although *student engagement* is fashioned by students themselves, *student engagement* occurs within an organisational context. Thus, *student engagement* can be influenced by organisational capacities. Consistent with this perspective of *student engagement* is the resource view of the organisation (Barney, 1991; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003; Prahalad & Hamel, 1990; Wernerfelt, 1984, 1995), which proposes that an organisation's performance is determined by its ability to obtain the resources it needs for its survival. Since *student engagement* has been linked to student progression and retention (Roberts & McNeese, 2010), regarded as two key performance indicators for educational institutions, an educational institution's *student engagement* ability is critical for its performance. Student engagement must therefore be managed and developed.

Developing *student engagement* as a strategic capability would also be consistent with the neo-institutional theory

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of organisations which implies that institutions impact on the construction of the social fabric (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). By developing *student engagement* as a strategic capability, educational institutions can work at embedding *student engagement* as a social norm. Both the resource theory and the neo-institutional theory of organisations highlight the value of *student engagement* as a strategic organisational capability.

Managing Student Engagement

The *student engagement* literature offers various models for impacting *student engagement*. Kuh (2003, p. 26) has constructed a model of education practices including level of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student–faculty interaction, enriching educational experiences, and a supportive campus environment. Krause and Coates (2008) have extended this model to the Australian context through examining the first-year university student experience. Krause and Coates defined seven key measures of engagement, namely transition engagement, academic engagement, peer engagement, student-staff engagement, intellectual engagement, online engagement, and beyond-class engagement. These were drawn from the earlier work of Coates (2006), which identified nine dimensions of *student engagement*: constructive teaching, supportive learning environments, teacher approachability, student and staff interaction, academic challenge, active learning, collaborative work, beyond-class collaboration, and complementary activities. These models capture the complexity of *student engagement*, reiterating the need for *student engagement* to be perceived as a strategic capability.

Other models also provide valuable insights into *student engagement*. For example, Atkinson (2011) has advocated the student-owned learning engagement (SOLE) model. In this model, students define the learning process and shape teaching and learning practice. By making the learning process explicit for both students and academic staff, the learning process can be altered. Similarly, Mitchell and Carbone (2011) have focused on learning tasks and how the characteristics of these tasks can influence *student engagement*. From analyses of oral and written reports of action research in the Project for Enhancing Effective Learning (PEEL), Mitchell and Carbone developed a typology of task characteristics impacting on *student engagement*. McCourt and Carr (2010) considered the impact of group tutorials on *student engagement* and found that the relationships students develop with each other and their tutor have a positive impact on *student engagement*. Neumann and Hood (2009) revealed that wikis can have a positive effect on engagement because of the collaborative and cooperative learning the online platform encourages. Owens (2011)

explored the impact of a for-credit university preparation unit on *student engagement* and discovered an improvement in the learning outcomes of students who had undertaken the unit.

These models are valuable. However, their focus is specific, usually converging on the teaching and learning process. Their purpose has not been to develop an institution-wide strategic approach to *student engagement*.

A different focus emerging from the *student engagement* literature is the influence of relationships and connection. This focus is picked up by Roberts and McNeese (2010), Suárez et al. (2010), and Rowe and Savelsberg (2010). Roberts and McNeese (2010, p. 3) have pointed out that students who feel they do not “fit in” can experience negative feelings. This negative experience can result in reduced engagement. As such, positive interaction with peers is viewed as a first step in influencing *student engagement*. Initiatives promoting positive peer connection such as service learning, volunteering, or sport are valuable in generating positive peer connections.

Positive peer connections are particularly important for international students. As Suárez et al. (2010, p. 3) illustrated, immigrant youth are often stripped of key relationships and can suffer an acute sense of loss and acculturative stress. Although not all international students move to another country for permanent residency, they face similar challenges as immigrants: being away from family and friends, and needing to adapt to a new culture and ways of living and learning. International students, then, can face the same stressors as immigrant youth do.

Positive peer connections are particularly important for international students.

The implication for the educational institution, particularly if providing education to international students, is to ensure that such stressors do not overwhelm the student and negatively impact on *student engagement* (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010).

This has been reiterated by Rowe and Savelsberg (2010). These authors argued that students who do not have broader social support, particularly with regard to safe and secure accommodation and housing, can end up in a social exclusion vortex (Rowe & Savelsberg, 2010, p. 36). Isolation from opportunities, compounded by potentially existing emotional/relational isolation, can result in a severe lack of belonging and lack of identity. Attachments to broader social supports are critically important.

A term that can be used to describe these relationships and connections is social capital (Morosanu, Handley, & O'Donovan,

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2010; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). Social capital (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993, 1995) is the organisation of networks, norms, and social trust that allows coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (Putnam, 1995, p. 67; Schuller, Baron, & Field, 2000). Social capital can be developed as an institutional capacity, evidenced in research on the social enterprise (Borzaga & Defourny, 2001; Mendan, 2011; Nyssens, 2006) and explicated in the social enterprise organisation framework (Frances, 2008; Mendan, 2011). The importance placed on relationships and networks by Roberts and McNeese (2010), Suárez-Orozco et al. (2010), and Rowe and Savelsberg (2010) for *student engagement*, suggests that social capital could be used to develop *student engagement* as a strategic capability.

The Social Enterprise and Social Capital: Developing Student Engagement as a Strategic Capability

Although an educational institution may not identify itself as a social enterprise, the social enterprise is one of the few frameworks to explicate social capital as an organisational capability that can be used to pursue organisational goals and strategies. Further, private and higher educational institutions do share a key similarity with social enterprises, namely the delivery of a service with social development value for which people pay.

Social enterprise can be defined as both a concept and as an organisation type. As a concept, social enterprise is the point at which the market sector and the civil society sector intersect (Dart, 2004, p. 415)—a philosophy that the market can be used to pursue social problem redress. As an organisation type, a social enterprise is an organisation seeking business solutions to social problems (Thompson & Doherty, 2006, p. 362). The social enterprise organisation identifies needs within a social problem, which could be met using the market. These needs are the necessities and conditions of different actors, which must be satisfied to address social issues (Noddings, 1984, p. 27; Nussbaum & Sen, 1993, p. 3).

A feature of the social enterprise organisation is its use and generation of social capital (Borzaga & Defourny, 2001; Evers, 2001; Laville & Nyssens, 2001; Nyssens, 2006; Silverman, 2004). In the social enterprise literature, social capital is used to refer to civic social capital (Laville & Nyssens, 2001, p. 322). Through social capital, the social enterprise becomes an organisation of citizens joining to solve a problem unresolved by alternative institutions (Borzaga & Defourny, 2001; Defourny & Nyssens, 2006). This leads to opportunities for building *student engagement* in the ways recommended by Roberts and McNeese (2010), Rowe and Savelsberg (2010), and Suárez-Orozco et al. (2010). These are integrated, broad social support structures. The use of social capital in building such structures

has been empirically demonstrated by Hoffer, Greeley, and Coleman's (1985) study on educational outcomes of high school students in the United States, Putnam's (1993) research on regional government in Italy, as well as case studies of small social enterprises (Borzaga & Defourny, 2001; Emerson & Twersky, 1996; Mendan, 2011). Other writers have also acknowledged the importance of social capital to build social structures in pursuing integrated solutions (Eldis, 2011; Pavel, 2009b; Sachs, 2005).

Social capital should not be confused with stakeholder management. Social capital is a fundamental element of transformative leadership, that is, leadership promoting shifts within an individual's consciousness (Pavel, 2009a, p. xxxviii), necessary to address social issues and build communities (Pavel, 2009b). Transformative leadership develops a community's capabilities to solve social problems based on concepts such as trust, solidarity, confidence, and faith (Cameron, 2010; Pavel, 2009a, p. xxxii). Stakeholders form collective action and become a fundamental part of the solution. This goes beyond managing the needs of stakeholders. As argued by Suárez-Orozco et al. (2010), this collective style of action will embed *student engagement*. The capability to operate in this way

Social capital should not be confused with stakeholder management.

occurs through social capital (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993; Silverman, 2002). Social capital is therefore a required capability for educational institutions to manage *student engagement*.

Developing Social Capital in an Organisation

Dialogue, the communication or interaction between actors that defines an issue (Braithwaite & Drahos, 2000, p. 553), is the key tool for developing social capital (Adger, 2003; Birch & Whittam, 2008; Coleman, 1988; Halpern, 2005; Putnam, 1993, 1995). It can be used in two ways. The first is to establish the connections and relationships to construct social capital (Adger, 2003; Birch & Whittam, 2008; Coleman, 1988). As social capital can be composed of different elements including obligations, expectations, and norms (Birch & Whittam, 2008, p. 442; Coleman, 1988, p. 119; Putnam, 1995, p. 67), dialogue can transmit information about these elements (Braithwaite & Drahos, 2000, p. 553). Without this knowledge, relationships cannot be established and social capital is not generated (Coleman, 1988, p. 98).

The second purpose of dialogue in social capital is to unify actors towards a goal (Adger, 2003; Putnam, 1995) since social capital is the collective action of a group of actors towards a common outcome (Adger, 2003, p. 388; Birch & Whittam, 2008, p. 443). Social capital therefore is an essential resource

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in being able to act collectively (Adger, 2003; Putnam, 1993, 1995), and being a factor of democratisation (Laville & Nyssens, 2001, p. 320) social capital is built upon equality and participation (Borzaga & Defourny, 2001; Laville & Nyssens, 2001; Nyssens, 2006). Social capital ensures communities can approach social issues inclusively (Lalvani, 2008; Rothschild, 2009). This enables communities to influence social issues through positive effects on social justice, equity, and poverty (Adger, 2003, p. 388). Such an approach is required to address *student engagement* (Rowe & Savelsberg, 2010; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). It follows then that an educational institution using social capital to embed *student engagement* should be demonstrating strong use of dialogue.

Method

The case study college delivers ELICOS and pathway diplomas to international students intending to study at university. Its student cohort is entirely composed of international students. There are approximately 730 students at the college, with 335 students studying an ELICOS course and 395 studying a pathways program in one of four areas: business, design, information technology, and engineering.

The data for this article were extracted from the first stage of a longitudinal research project examining the development of *student engagement* at the above educational institution. The unit of analysis was the organisation. The aim of this first research stage was to establish the college's definition of *student engagement* and its current *student engagement* capability. Once collected, the data were examined through the two propositions on which this research was predicated. Adopting an approach loosely based on a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), no directive was imposed on the data allowing themes to emerge.

The research methodology was qualitative, based on the assumptions of interactionism and pragmatism (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, pp. 1–18). Captured within interactionism is the notion of action and interaction. Corbin and Strauss (2008, p. 2) describe this as the development of knowledge through the "...acting and interacting of self-reflective beings". In the world of the pragmatist, knowledge is useful for practice (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 2). As determined by Corbin and Strauss (2008, pp. 4,5), "...knowledge leads to useful action, and action sets problems to be thought about, resolved and thus is converted into new knowledge...".

Using these two assumptions as the basis for research design, 19 focus groups were conducted in which participants reflected on *student engagement* more generally as a concept, and at the college as a capability. These focus groups were conducted

with various college stakeholders including students; academic, general, and support services staff; and management. The required procedures for ethics approval, including voluntary participation and informed consent, were observed.

The focus groups were semi-structured. A set of prepared questions was discussed by the groups. Additional issues raised by focus group participants were also discussed. The discussions were captured in mind maps and recorded on a digital voice recorder. Picture flash cards were used to assist participants in verbalising their thoughts on the organisation's current capability for *student engagement*, as well as an ideal capability for *student engagement*.

Results and Discussion

To determine the *student engagement* capability at the college, the college's definition of *student engagement* was first established. The focus group data matched the *student engagement* literature in that *student engagement* was not isolated to academic issues (Krause & Coates, 2008; Krause et al., 2005; Kuh, 2003; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). Students pointed out that their engagement was shaped by issues

such as housing, transport, family responsibilities, emotional issues, money, and culture:

"...there is no time to enjoy ourselves..."

"...I think time management is hard for people who have lots of responsibilities in their work, in their family, in their study life..."

"...there is no time to enjoy ourselves..."

"...you have to get money because life in general here is not so easy so you have to work at the same time..."

"...you are far away from your family...homesick..."

Academic staff, general staff and student support staff also identified *student engagement* as being determined by issues beyond academic concerns:

"...people want to study but they don't have the means to study..."

"...I think it is sometimes cultural. In Australia we highly value participation in sport...being actively involved in a group...whereas in some other cultures the quieter you are...like in some Asian cultures...it is more proper..."

"...it is a cultural difference...punctuality is so ingrained in

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our culture...now these kids who we're teaching they did not have lessons on punctuality...so how can they possibly come here...[and know]...it is not part of their being..."

"...I mean there are just different personalities..."

The above quotations confirm the multi-dimensionality of *student engagement*. This complexity is captured in Figure 1. Any approach to *student engagement* will be required to manage this complexity and address *student engagement* beyond task design or the learning process.

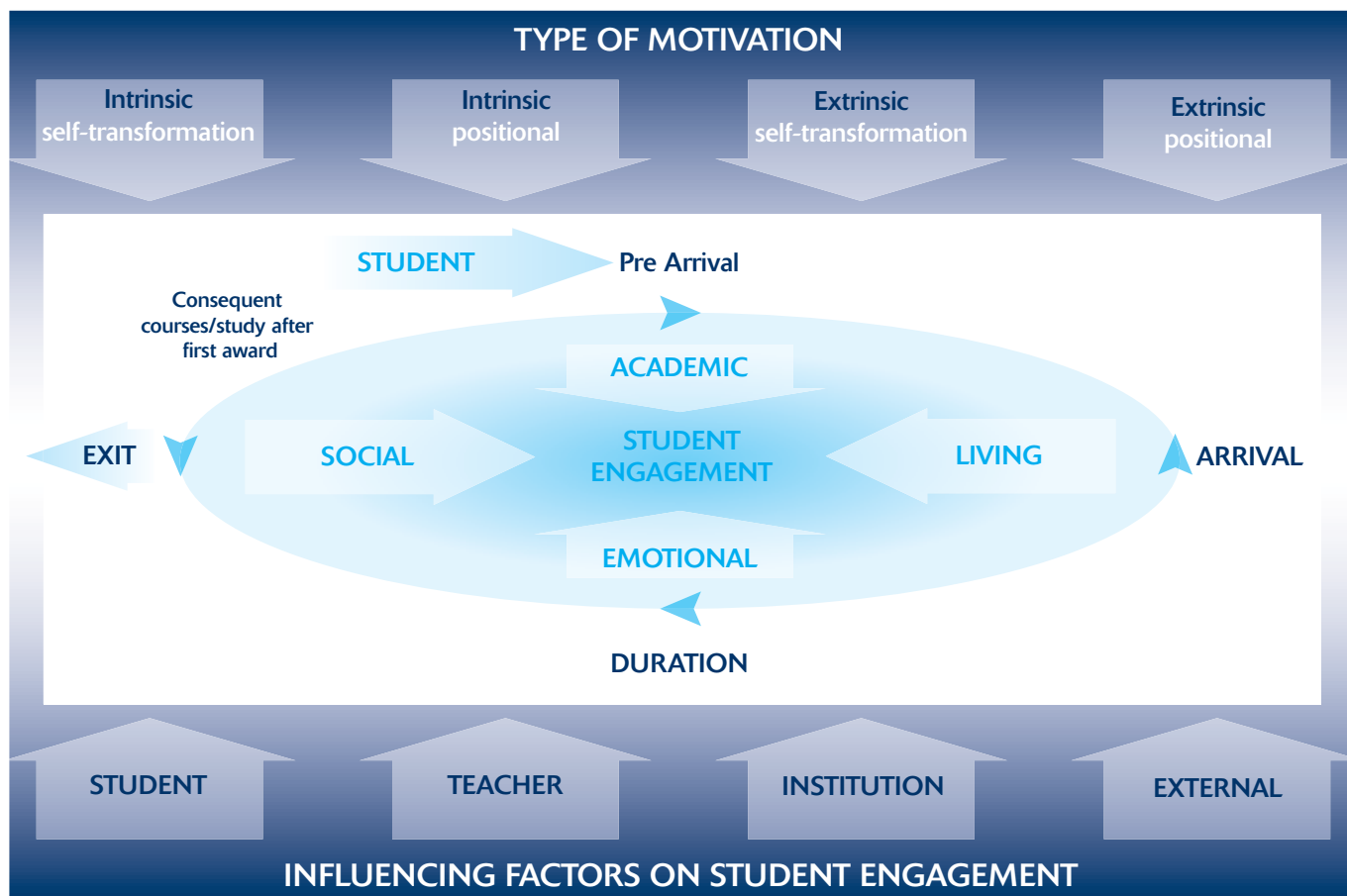
The framework illustrates four key dimensions constituting a holistic view of international pathway/ELICOS *student engagement*: academic, social, emotional, and living. Academic represents a student's capacity and willingness to deal with academic-related activities and issues. Living represents

the student's ability to complete day-to-day tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and paying bills. Emotional is the student's state of emotional well-being, as well as their ability to cope with emotional issues. Social encompasses a student's social network and the quality of that network, including cultural aspects. A deficit in any of these dimensions can result in a barrier to a student's engagement, and thus their ability to perform academically.

The student goes through a "life cycle" of pre-arrival, arrival, duration, and exit (or further studies). As the full life cycle of a student commencing at the college is usually five to six years, and sometimes more, it is likely that as the student moves through this life cycle, the *student engagement* dimensions will shift. It is necessary that any *student engagement* strategy addresses *student engagement* throughout the whole life cycle.

Figure 1:

Student engagement within a pathways college.



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The factors impacting *student engagement* include the students themselves, teachers or academic staff, the institution at which the students are studying, and external factors. These external factors are often not within the control of students, academic staff, or the institution. One example is government regulation. The presence of these factors and their impact on *student engagement* is demonstrated in the following quotes:

“...communication or methods of communicating with the students...and I’m talking more at the outset at the beginning of the life cycle [can be a barrier to *student engagement*]...”

“...parents have been quite involved in [students’] lives, picking the course they’re going to do...and then when they’re overseas [students’ parents] lose the ability to control and communicate [with their children]... [there is] no check and balance...and quite often the mum or dad will call and [the student does not indicate any problems]...parents are one of the most important resources in a [student’s] life...there is none of those checks [with international students]...”

“...we shouldn’t push [important] information through channels that require engagement...”

“...the student status should be improved; pricing, accommodation...everything...we feel like a business machine...I know we are a business for Australia...but it doesn’t make you feel good...”

“...we need teachers who are really committed...”

A key theme also emerged from the focus groups on the impact of motivation on *student engagement*:

“...[students who are not engaged]...have they come here [by their own decision]...or been told to come here by their parents...they haven’t decided “Hey I really want to take a big risk”...they’ve been told...it’s not an internal motivation, it’s an external force...they haven’t reflected on what it means...their expectations are zero and hence a bit of culture shock...”

“...[engaged students]...they’ve made the decision...I want to make a better life for me and my family...they would have done more research into Australia and what it would be like...”

“...[some students] have an expectation to just come here and party...and others work really hard and get ahead...”

As the above quotations demonstrate, motivation was not an

homogeneous factor; motivation varied across the student cohort with some students intrinsically motivated and others extrinsically motivated, particularly by parents. This is consistent with qualitative feedback presented by Pyvis and Chapman (2007) on students who chose to study at off-shore Australian university campuses. The authors discovered that students were either motivated by self-improvement or to improve their employment prospects, which the authors called *positional motivation*. Incorporating this finding with the college data, the model in Figure 1 illustrates that *student engagement* is influenced by four types of motivation: intrinsic self-transformation, extrinsic self-transformation, and intrinsic positional and extrinsic positional motivation.

The proposition I put forward in this article, that is, to recognise *student engagement* as a strategic capability, is consistent with the case study data, which suggest that *student engagement* at the college is multi-dimensional. This shift in conceptualisation empowers educational institutions to enact *student engagement*; it is not something out of the educational institution’s control, nor is it restricted to the learning process. This also means that in larger education institutions such as universities there can be a consistent driving force behind each of the institution’s divisions beyond improving progression and retention rates. Finally, this perspective enables educational institutions to recognise that *student engagement* is not just about any one particular facet of students and their experiences.

The student goes through a “life cycle”...

Having examined the nature of *student engagement*, the focus groups then considered the college’s capability for *student engagement*, both current and ideal. To assist participants in verbalising their thoughts, picture flash cards were used. Participants were asked to choose pictures representing both the current and ideal capability. One of the most common pictures chosen to symbolise the current capability was a car in the middle of a very crowded traffic jam. This picture embodied feelings of confusion and being overwhelmed with too many options. It represented an “unclear path”, and for one participant it depicted feelings of being only “one of many”. Other pictures chosen to represent the college’s current *student engagement* capability were pictures of roundabouts and crossroads, epitomising feelings of confusion, uncertainty, and lack of direction with regard to *student engagement*.

Two of the more commonly chosen pictures to represent the ideal were of flashy cars, one in the spotlight at a car show, the other a limousine depicting the “high life”. This represented participants’ desire to see high-quality *student engagement*, showcased across the industry. Two other pictures frequently selected were of cars being washed or fixed. For some

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participants, these pictures represented the current reality—a need to “fix” *student engagement*. For other participants, these pictures captured the ideal—a confidence that a *student engagement* capability will be developed.

The research indicated a gap between participants’ views of current *student engagement* at the college and the ideal capability, suggesting that any new *student engagement* initiatives implemented would need to be significant enough to address the gap. There was insufficient evidence of dialogue and relationship-building to suggest that social capital was currently being used to develop the *student engagement* capability, or that there was intention to use it. Indeed, although the most common “ideal” pictures conveyed a keen sense to develop a *student engagement* capability, how this might be achieved was unclear. Although participants mentioned factors such as commitment, expectations, support, and feedback, consistent with Tinto (2005b) there was no evidence to suggest a coordinated approach had been or was being developed.

Although these early data indicated that the case study college has a multi-dimensional, complex view of *student engagement* and therefore should embed *student engagement* as a strategic capability, the data did not confirm that *student engagement* could be embedded using social capital. Since the preliminary data suggest that the college does not have a particularly strong *student engagement* capability, it could not be determined whether an alternative to social capital was used or to be used, whether the absence of a *student engagement* capability was due a lack of social capital, or whether it was due to a timing issue since the college had not yet particularly focused on the development of *student engagement*. The preliminary data potentially suggest a timing issue, since stakeholders were not averse to the concept of relationships, communication, and networks to develop *student engagement*. However, data from later stages of the project need to be collected to confirm which of the above options represents the college’s experience.

This highlights one of the limitations of the research reported in this article. The data were extracted from the initial stages of longitudinal research being conducted at a pathways college as it begins to implement new *student engagement* initiatives. This limited the ability of this research to illustrate the role of social capital in developing the *student engagement* capability, since the college does not yet have a strong *student engagement* capability. The data from the later stages of research at the college are required to determine whether the college’s *student engagement* capability will change over time and most importantly, how, particularly since the ideal pictures did not make it clear what direction *student engagement* would take within the college. Second, in a real context

developing *student engagement* as a strategic capability through social capital is difficult, if not unrealistic, despite its theoretical appeal. This is particularly so for organisations that do not identify with the concept of social enterprise.

A further limitation of this research is that the experiences of *student engagement* were considered only at the case study college. Although the college was chosen for specific reasons, qualitative research should be repeated across various contexts to determine what other educational institutions’ experiences indicate about *student engagement* (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

Conclusion

Student engagement is, and will continue to be, a critical strategic issue for educational institutions (Coates, 2005; Krause & Coates, 2008; Krause et al., 2005; Kuh, 2003). Based on the ideas from Tinto (2005a, 2005b), I proposed in this article that to manage the complexity of *student engagement*, *student engagement* ought to be developed as a strategic capability. This could be achieved through developing social capital according to the social enterprise organisation framework (Frances, 2008; Mendan, 2011).

...*student engagement* ought to be developed as a strategic capability.

Although the multi-dimensionality of *student engagement* and the need for an approach to embed *student engagement* (Roberts & McNeese, 2010; Rowe & Savelsberg, 2010; Suárez-Orozco

et al., 2010) was confirmed, there was no support for doing so using social capital; the data did not indicate that social capital is the driving resource to develop *student engagement* as a strategic capability in a real pathways college. Although this is unsatisfactory for resolving the gap in the *student engagement* literature, the data do confirm the value of viewing *student engagement* as an organisational strategic capability.

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The Australian School of Management's Business Degree Curriculum: An Innovation in Collaborative Symbiosis



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Abstract

Organisational growth is achieved when good business practices are underscored by sound management and leadership skills. These skills largely stem from good education and training derived from undergraduate business management curricula. However, the business community regularly dismisses mainstream curricula because they lack practical orientation, rendering them irrelevant to the 21st century workplace. Despite businesses' criticism of the education sector, corporations and educational institutions spend US\$2.2 trillion annually on management education and training, making it a substantial resource investment. This begs the question whether such funds are being well spent. Critics assert that contemporary business curriculum is dated: business curriculum heralds from the corporate era when management schools primarily provided practitioner or vocationally oriented training facilitated by business practitioners. To gain respectability in the academic realm, management schools transformed to the faculty era where scientific research took centre-stage forsaking its practitioner roots. If business degrees are largely considered to be too academic and too far removed from real world applicability and utility, their credibility and validity are undermined. This paper introduces the Australian School of Management's solution to the described dysfunctional disjoint by linking the two disparate eras, thereby bridging the gap in a practical win-win solution. The three-year curricular model embeds a collaborative symbiosis between industry and academia and culminates in two double weighted capstone industry internships. The case study presented represents the Australian School of Management (ASM) genesis and development of this business management pedagogic model that is aimed at preparing aspiring practitioners for successful careers whilst having the ability to synthesise best practices.

Keywords

curriculum, internship, business school, management, academia

Introduction

Business education plays a vital role in providing managers in private, public, and government organisations with necessary skills. Organisations largely depend on tertiary business schools to produce knowledgeable and practice-oriented graduates to meet employment requirements. The 21st century ushered in a knowledge society wherein demand for a trained workforce, well equipped to meet current business needs, is critical for organisational success. A trained workforce attracts foreign investments essential to national economic growth and development (Organisation Internationale du Travail, 2007).

Since the 1950s, demand for university-level business education has surged astronomically, making it a cash-cow for business schools (Friga, Bettis, & Sullivan, 2003; Pfeiffer & Fong, 2002). Typically, business schools place greater emphasis on research compared to learning and teaching to attain academic excellence and respectability (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005). This emphasis on academic excellence favours business schools operating in the university domain well but has inadvertently left a gap in meeting the practical needs of business communities, apart from graduates with Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualifications. While both VET

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and Higher Education (HE) business qualifications have a place in the wider business milieu, a disjoint in pedagogic approach and curriculum possibly creates a situation in which lower to middle operations managers primarily hold VET credentials while middle to top strategic managers tend to possess university credentials.

The following case study demonstrates how the Australian School of Management (ASM) in Perth, Western Australia, has developed a hybrid pedagogical model that moulds high quality graduates with the appropriate blend of theory, applied skills, attitude, and aptitude, preparing them to succeed in their business endeavours. ASM is the newest registered higher education provider (HEP) in Western Australia and the only private HEP in the state that offers a Bachelor of Business degree. ASM was conceived to meet the gap in undergraduate business management education in the private sector and to complement the Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs being offered by its sister institution, the Australian College of Applied Education (ACAE). Adopting a quasi-dual sector model, ASM offers a genuine HE pathway to complement ACAE's proven VET programs in business, management, hospitality, events, and tourism, thereby mitigating the disjoint mentioned previously. ACAE, in educational collaboration with Southern Cross University since 1999, had been delivering bachelor level education at its premises in Perth and therefore ASM benefits from the decade long experience that her sister school has accumulated. This experience is instrumental in an initiative to effectively bridge the transition between VET and HE pedagogic models: ASM is uniquely positioned to achieve this in Western Australia and has the opportunity to realise its potential as the "new kid on the block" with its holistic and progressive academic agenda.

Unique among private higher education providers, ASM features two capstone double-weighted internship units. The value of integrating theory and practice in order to achieve the balance needed for graduate preparedness for industry is rooted in a form of incremental experiential immersion into the workplace whereby a variety of relevant skills are developed and honed. The benefits of an industry internship are highlighted by The Good Universities Guide (n.d.) and indeed internships are commonplace in university curricula. However, this element of pedagogy appears to be overlooked by non-university higher education providers notwithstanding the recommendation made by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council at the 2011 ALTA Forum that greater emphasis be placed on work-based education, internships, and work relevant generic skills (Australian Learning and Teaching Council, 2011). This paper highlights the role of ASM's academia-industry collaborative symbiosis model in building a robust work-integrated learning component of its Bachelor of Business program that meets and exceeds the prescription by the governing Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA 2011 Act) for a new higher education course of study accreditation application.

Literature Review

The literature shows that business school curricula underwent three historical periods, with the first period termed the corporate era. This saw the first MBA program being taught by practising professors or retired corporate managers in the 1950s (Schlossman, Sedlak, & Wechsler, 1998) (see Figure 1). A series of changes followed in 1954 and 1977, a period referred to as the faculty-based era, largely influenced by The Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Commission. These entities precipitated a shift to the core foundation of the business

Figure 1.
History of business schools.



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school model: the impartation of practical knowledge with a vocational approach to an academic approach driven by business schools in the higher education domain. Ranking systems for business schools introduced in 1988 focused heavily on program assessment of effectiveness in training for commercial enterprise (Gioia & Corley, 2002). According to Gioia and Corley (2002, p. 108):

'Both MBA students and their recruiters, of course, want a practical education, which raises the specter of business schools once again becoming glorified vocational schools, training people for jobs, rather than educating them as professional managers (and thus threatening our status as a bona fide "professional" field).'

Although the academic approach boded well with business schools to gain academic respectability and legitimacy (Pfeiffer & Fong, 2002), issues surfaced related to the missing relationship between businesses and business schools for co-operation, integrated curricula, research relevance, and need for soft skill development in graduates (Porter & McKibbin, 1988).

In addition to the changing roles of business schools, globalisation, demographic shifts, and the emerging new frontiers of workplace dynamics created uncertainty. Corporations sought ready-to-use solutions from academics who were generally accepted as the authorities in business practices. The phenomenon of globalisation created a demand for international managers who could think locally and act globally. For example, catering to local demographics is different from marketing to global markets. Rapid demographic shifts in population and ethnographic diversity require that courses meet the changing needs faced by organisations. For business schools operating independently of business communities in terms of what they teach, it is a challenge to fully understand underlying issues affecting their capacity to form mutually beneficial partnerships with businesses (Friga, Bettis, & Sullivan, 2003).

Criticism on business schools' detached scientific approach to educating business students is not new (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; O'Brien, Drnevich, Crook, & Armstrong, 2010; Rowley, Lujan, & Dolence, 1998). Business schools have been questioned about the relevance and the value of their course products in terms of helping graduates to secure jobs and enhance management practice (Pfeiffer & Fong, 2002). Business curricula have also been criticised for lop-sided approaches to solving problems by concentrating on analytics, making it more quantitative and less qualitative where tough questions need to be asked (Mintzberg, 1996; Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002; Porter & McKibbin, 1988). Bennis and O'Toole (2005) asserted that the discipline of business should be understood as a profession and not as an academic

pursuit anchored in the scientific model that replaced its initial vocational model. While business schools continue to use the scientific approach, criticism of their shortcomings as addressed in the preceding paragraphs remains unsolved (Pfeiffer & Fong, 2002).

In response to the above context, we discuss and outline the ASM hybrid pedagogical model in the following case study.

The Case Study Method

The case study method has for more than a decade been recognised as being suitable in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009) in the traditional disciplines of social sciences (Yin, 1994, p. 1) including psychology, sociology, political science, anthropology, history, and economics (Yin, 1981, p. xiii), as well as an approach for studying business settings. In addition, it has a practical appeal to practitioners; its usefulness extends to practice-oriented fields such as urban planning, public administration, public policy, management science, and education (Yin, 1981, p. 97). The method sets itself apart from other research methods because a case study is a "specific, unique and bounded system" (Yin, 1981, p. 97) which is congruent with Merriam's (2009, p. 39) characterisation of it being "an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system".

Criticism on business schools' detached scientific approach to educating business students is not new.

According to Yin (1981, p. 99), the "case study method has the ability to cover both contemporary phenomenon and its context" which is suitable for the changing needs existing in the business and business education domains. What emerges

from this particular case is not only the process of examining phenomena but the lessons learnt through the process (Stake, 1994).

This case study is based on the ASM's newly launched Bachelor of Business course. To conceptualise and design this course, ASM management extensively consulted with a range of stakeholders including (a) industry representatives, for example hotels and tourism enterprises (ACCOR, Hilton, Perth Convention Exhibition Centre), retail (Dymocks), services (accounting firms), and professional consultancies; (b) via the new course advisory panel convened in early 2009, and academics from Southern Cross University, University of Bedfordshire, Curtin University, University of Western Australia, Munich University of Applied Sciences, and University of New Hampshire; and (c) government agencies such as Tourism WA, as sounding boards to elicit specific feedback and recommendations on all aspects of course design.

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After undergoing the stringent regimen of registration, accreditation, and approval, the Bachelor of Business was launched in September 2011. This course's curriculum is scrutinised through the pedagogic lens to address the relevance of the structure and content to the holistic approach model.

The question as to the plausible reasons why mainstream business schools may fail in optimally preparing their students for the workplace was posed. We concluded that the primary shortcoming was a deficiency in the relationship between academia and industry. The proverbial missing link manifested shortcoming was a deficiency in the relationship between academia and industry. The proverbial missing link manifested in some university academics not having optimal interaction with industry can possibly be attributed to a lack of financial and human resources required to facilitate sound academia-industry links, and compounded by a historical mutual distrust of each other's expertise (Brown & O'Brien, 1981; Ross, 1988). ASM strives to build a strong synergistic relationship with industry in three ways: firstly, by literally bringing the industry into the classroom via faculty members who are not only academics but seasoned industry practitioners. Secondly ASM actively engages with industry in joint applied research and provision of Continuing Professional Education (CPE) products to the local business community. Finally, ASM draws from captains of industry through engaging with a strong and vibrant Industry Advisory Board (IAB) whose charter is to advise on strategic developments in various industry segments, connect ASM to key industry bodies, identify opportunities for ASM to work more closely with industry, seek potential industry sponsors, contribute to the relevance of ASM courses, and provide professional insights to students through mentor relationships.

Figure 2 illustrates the intersection between business schools and the business communities. The partnership dimension transforms the conventional way in which business students are educated. The model is underpinned by proactive engagement with business communities by way of pursuing partnerships and fostering collaboration on many fronts. This Partnership Program is a two-way relationship between the education provider and its clientele, the industry. ASM proactively engages with local and international businesses to arrange internship placements for its students while it frequently receives requests from businesses for students to work for them.

A relationship is forged when the school starts involving, and interacting with, industry decision-makers through collaboration for long-term gain. Collaboration fosters relationship building where exchange of ideas and knowledge identifies future needs for new knowledge to educate and train graduates for a changing economy, impacting workplace and employment opportunities. This type of engagement with industry is not new. Consulting firms have used the same model to approach individual organisations to service their training requirements with success, such as Ken Blanchard Associates, Boston Consulting, and McKinsey, to name a few. Business schools should not take the ivory tower approach as they further risk being blind to the concerns from not only businesses, but also scholars. A new mindset is necessary to help business schools operate to "rediscover the practice of business" (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005, p. 103).

Fusing the concept of proactive partnering with industry with vocational and scientific paradigms has led to the conception of the ASM hybrid pedagogic model that is presented as Figure 3.

Figure 2:

The intersection between ASM and Business communities indicating the Partnership Program through industry collaboration.

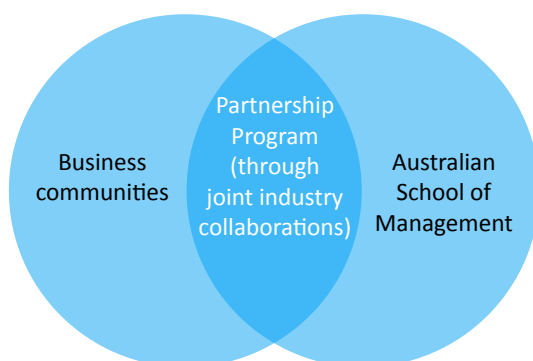
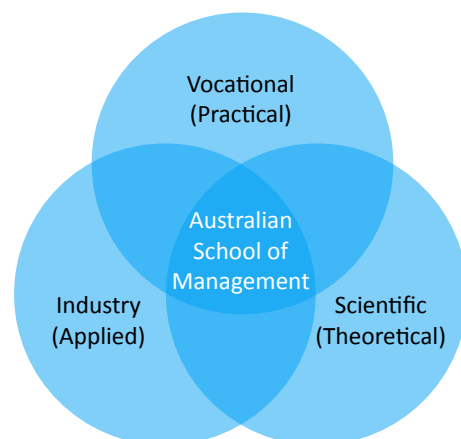


Figure 3:

The ASM hybrid pedagogic model.



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Figure 3 illustrates the combination of the original corporate era vocational ethos of business schools, the subsequent evolution to the faculty-based era scientific approach and the hitherto absent industry dimension. This combination is the innovation offered in this new model which is tangible-listed as a unique industry internship. This industry involvement refers to cooperation with industry stakeholders, ranging from owners to the rank-and-file.

The model encapsulates the attributes that are presented in the next three sections.

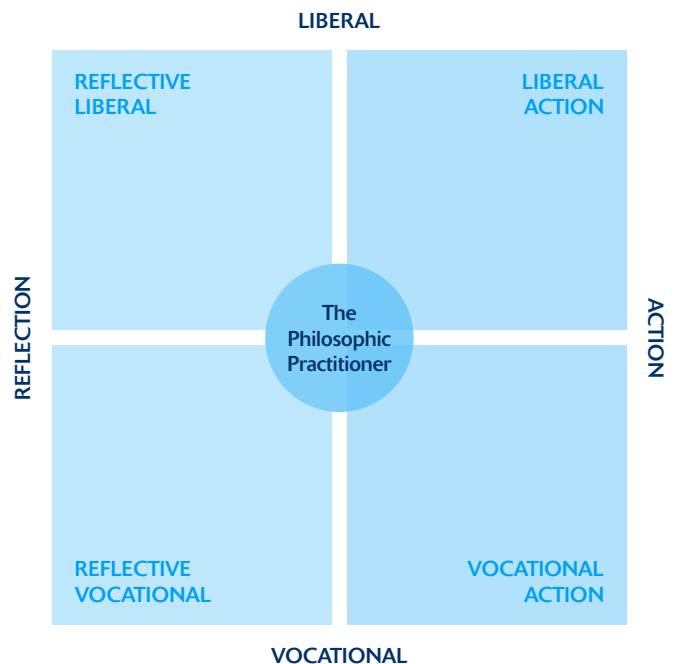
The Right Mix of Academic Rigour and Applied Skills

Students, like consumers, establish their own needs and learning outcomes. For example, a degree program with the right mixture of academic rigour, applied skills, and provision for meeting different learning preferences is beneficial for undergraduate students. Ogle and Berwick (2010) found that industry practitioners' recommendation to educators for improving curricula was to address practical knowledge and competency training to complement theoretical knowledge. While postgraduate research students prefer to learn academic research skills underscored heavily by theory, a terminal undergraduate program student is more inclined to acquire professionalism and employability skills (Star & Hammer, 2008) that can be aligned with the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) guidelines for mapping programs against expected degree learning outcomes (Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board, 2007). We argue that a right balance between the two extremes is preferred.

Lashley (1999) observed that vocational students, for example in hospitality management, are less inclined to theorise or reflect, given the dominant operational focus of their courses. This would suggest that business schools' education should be more didactic at the undergraduate level in order to better align with the desired workplace learning outcomes. The modern manager, however, is both a reflective (Schön, 1987, 1991) and philosophic practitioner (Tribe, 2002), qualities that cannot be simply instructed, thereby refuting the argument that teaching should be didactic in nature. Business schools can incorporate the curriculum concept encompassing the *end and stance* (Tribe, 2002) in their courses for students' development in view of marrying liberal and vocational/professional education, so as to better prepare graduates for the multi-faceted realities of the business world. Tribe (2002) illustrates this approach in a framework depicted in Figure 4 which shows integration and fine balance between discrete curricular forces.

Figure 4:

The Philosophic Practitioner (Tribe, 2002, p. 348)



Generic, Specific, and Research Skills

Business schools can employ the modular approach of generic, specific, and research skills to satisfy different learning preferences and degree outcomes. To enhance their employability in the marketplace and consequent success, graduates need to learn both hard and soft skills. With an ever changing workplace impacted by external environmental factors and technology, graduates should concentrate on developing skills that will help them cope with the volatility in their environment (Friga, Bettis, & Sullivan, 2003).

To enhance graduates' employability and professionalism in a knowledge economy, a business curriculum should have ample room for multidisciplinary, practical, and ethical elements in both knowledge acquisition and sharing/discourse in addition to generic skills. Generic skills include communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, teamwork, and computer literacy. Specific skills such as cross-cultural competency and continuous learning are also critical as demonstrated in their efficacy across industries (Barrie, 2005; Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Star & Hammer, 2008). The 2009 *Building Britain's Future: New Industry, New Jobs* report acknowledges the economic impact of research and encourages closer researcher-industry ties (Swain, 2010). A good balance of different skill sets is therefore desirable.

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Staffing

To bring relevance to business courses, business schools should consider focusing on a professional model akin to traditional models such as law and medicine in lieu of the adherence to prescriptive theory-based curricula. Collaborating with industry-grounded educators, sometimes referred to as *executive professors*, business schools can work collaboratively in teaching and pursuing other academic activities that can contribute to a real world learning experience, and provide adequate pedagogical and teaching training for executive professors to infuse real elements of business practice in the classroom. Therefore business schools must form a hybrid network of executive professors from diverse industries to enrich students' knowledge and learning (Clinebell & Clinebell, 2008).

The Right Mix of All Elements: The ASM Hybrid Pedagogic Model

The ASM hybrid pedagogic model (Figure 5) is an embodiment of the preceding overview. It manifests itself in a bachelor of business degree that provides flexibility in the course to suit individual students' learning outcomes and career specialisation where preference dictates. A modular approach underpins the program. This approach provides a foundation on which other bachelor of business courses can be developed in the future with specialisations or streams. For example, a Bachelor of Business in Hotel Management or a Bachelor of Business in Tourism Management may emerge using core subjects that are common across all bachelor of business degrees (foundational/mandatory units) and major units in an area of specialisation such as tourism management. In addition to the core and major units, there is also a category of elective units that may be either professional or liberal in orientation. The inclusion of liberal arts options is in line with the idea that non-traditional business units can encourage enhanced creative and entrepreneurial skills (Vinten, 2000)

Major units provide an industry flavour or advanced knowledge in a specific subject area. Feedback from industry and students showed that courses need a mix of operational concepts in which to contextualise the theoretical framework as well as flexibility to meet changing needs and preferences. Electives allow students to follow individual interests and both bachelor degrees offer students flexibility to change between courses due to the communality of the curriculum. For students who have identified vocational opportunities, there are two exit points: diploma and associate degree, after the first and second year of the bachelor course respectively. Industry engagement is featured in mandatory capstone units whereby students are required to draw from their preceding units in the program. An internship is a mandatory requirement for graduation and is prominent in all ASM degrees. We assert that a degree is often

Figure 5:

The ASM bachelor degree program/curriculum. The 3-year course constitutes 22 units of which 12 units of study are core (i.e., mandatory and common to all ASM degrees), 6 are major-specific (i.e., mandatory and particular to the different optional specialisations), two are elective units (either professional or liberal units that enhance students' scope), and two are mandatory double weighted capstone internship units. The sequential internships require external work placement of no less than 300 nominal hours each, totalling no less than 600 hours spent in the workplace environment. The placements are preceded by an on-campus internship workshop, complemented by podcasted seminars, to assist in preparing students for the workplace and addressing the internship assessment requirements.

BACHELOR OF BUSINESS			
YEAR 3	Internship 1	Internship 2	SEMESTER 6
	Major	Elective	SEMESTER 5
	Core	Core	
ASSOCIATE DEGREE OF BUSINESS			
YEAR 2	Major	Elective	SEMESTER 4
	Core	Core	
	Major	Major	SEMESTER 3
	Core	Core	
DIPLOMA OF BUSINESS			
YEAR 1	Major	Major	SEMESTER 2
	Core	Core	
	Core	Core	SEMESTER 1
	Core	Core	

not enough to secure quality employment. As employers are looking for more than a just a piece of paper, job seekers must exhibit real experience and professional work ethics that can be acquired only by immersion in the workplace.

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Prima facie, the curriculum resembles a typical two-semester based three-year undergraduate program that has a full load of four units per semester. However, the two double-weighted internship units occurring in the final semester are unique in Australian private HEP business school curricula. The ASM internships are key to the design, and follow the argument of applying knowledge and employability in a business or industry by giving students the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills gained in the classroom in the real world. Throughout the internship semester, in which the first internship precedes the second internship, a dedicated Internship Coordinator (IC) closely monitors student progress and ensures critical reflection of students' workplace experience via structured journaling in the form of a weekly reflect on their learning manifested in their workplace engagements and interactions. This integrated work experience coordination facilitates the best fit between student and industry. The close rapport built between the IC and human resource managers at ASM's industry partners guarantees the quality required by TEQSA and allows students to be assured of appropriate placements. ASM undertakes to secure its students placement in industry given the symbiotic relationship underpinning the Partnership Program through the described industry collaboration model (Figure 2). Graduation from the course requires successful completion of the internship units.

Unlike simulation-based internship programs, the ASM internship embodies the knowing-doing gap approach (Pfeffer & Sutton, 1999), and by placing students in real organisations it translates theoretical learning into practice. Following normal employment practices, students quickly transition to becoming bona-fide paid employees at the host organisations. Therefore, job responsibilities are formulated to help students immerse in the actual business operations.

Following the hybrid pedagogical model, host organisations are actively involved in three roles as managerial leaders overseeing the interns: task supervision, mentoring, and assessing. When being supervised in particular tasks, interns are "taught the ropes". During mentoring, interns are coached in areas such as team orientation. During assessment, the supervisor or manager gauges competency and decides what remedial action is required to ensure targets are met. A key assessment is the formal appraisal of the internship student's performance by the direct supervisor. This feedback serves a dual function: firstly as a means to qualify the work capabilities of interns, and secondly to monitor the efficacy of the internship program and to make adjustments in real-time.

The internship program consists of two components: a pre-internship induction involving an on-campus workshop facilitated by the IC, followed by podcast-delivered seminars that teach effective journaling; and then the in situ internship

proper. Assessment items involving lateral and creative thought processes transferable into actions—for example giving solutions to organisational issues—are sequenced in a scaffolding format throughout the unit. This approach provides students with a solid foundation of both practical and theoretical skills which support them in becoming respected professionals in their discipline. Fully cognizant of the importance of the role of a coach, the IC closely monitors progress of each intern and is easily accessible in person or on-line to provide assistance. This close interaction between the IC and intern facilitates progression from the first to second internship.

Conclusion

Our primary goal was to address the pressing issue of tertiary business education being criticised for offering courses that are not relevant to meet the changing needs of business communities. In this article we presented an innovative solution to the disjoint of existing curricula by adopting the Partnership Program with industry collaboration, which in turn informed the design of the ASM hybrid pedagogic model. In conclusion, it is argued that private education providers, which are themselves business entities, should have a direct business-to-business (B2B) relationship with industry, thereby benefiting from the commonality of the for-profit business model. The proposed model advocates a symbiotic relationship of interdependence and mutual benefit. Such a framework will encourage collaborative initiatives to bolster industry growth.

We argue that business schools and businesses are interdependent for continued development, training, and knowledge sharing. The degree of interdependence for both parties appears however to be different: business schools are in the long-term business of producing graduates for the labour market, while commonly businesses appear to think that their involvement with business schools is on a short-term basis, limited by the duration of a student's enrolment. Business schools should therefore take a proactive approach to forge strong inter-relationships with the business communities to foster continued interactions and rapport in order to increase and enhance business-to-business school collaboration in attaining collective benefits for all stakeholders.

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Curriculum Review at a New Zealand Private College: Dissecting the Knowledge Typology, Curriculum Logic, and Cognitive Complexity



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Abstract

Using the explanatory conceptual framework developed as part of the South Africa–Norway Tertiary Education Development Project, the Bachelor of Natural Medicine at the South Pacific College of Natural Therapies (SPCNT) was analysed in order to distinguish between different forms of knowledge, curriculum logics, and cognitive complexity within the curriculum. The findings suggest that the Bachelor of Natural Medicine at SPCNT has an overall contextual curriculum logic. There is a strong core of proceduralised conceptual knowledge base (with overarching contextual coherence). A significant proportion of proceduralised conceptual knowledge (with overarching conceptual coherence) can also be detected. The cognitive complexity increases from Years 1 to 3.

Keywords

curriculum, differentiation, knowledge, sociology of education, natural medicine

Introduction

In this paper we seek to apply the conceptual framework for the analysis of curriculum that was developed for the South Africa–Norway Tertiary Education Development (SANTED) Project to a new site: The South Pacific College of Natural Therapies' Bachelor of Natural Medicine (BNatMed). In doing this, the framework developed by Shay, Oosthuizen, Paxton, and van der Merwe (2011) was extensively drawn upon.

The secondary author has recently taken up the position of director at The South Pacific College of Natural Therapies (SPCNT), and used her previous research experience under the SANTED Project to analyse the recently approved BNatMed which is the primary qualification offered by the college. Professor Suellen Shay (University of Cape Town, South Africa), in the capacity of a neutral person, reviewed the findings of the analyses and provided helpful insights and feedback.

The intention is to fully review the BNatMed after the completion of its first cohort at the end of 2012. With this in mind, we are undertaking a full analysis of the BNatMed curriculum. The consideration of the curriculum types and cognitive complexity will form two aspects of this review.

The findings regarding cognitive complexity of the degree's constituent courses will also be used to revise and restructure the course assessments when it undergoes its full review towards the end of 2012. While the cognitive complexity of the courses making up the degree were supposed to follow

the level descriptors of the NZQA, the analysis showed that this did not always occur. In other words, National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 5 (Year 1) courses were sometimes more cognitively challenging than were NQF level 7 (Year 3) courses.

A further aspect to be researched, as part of this full curriculum review, will entail a critical evaluation of the data produced in this piece of research in the context of the natural health profession that the graduates enter.

While it is also not within the scope of this current research, a further area of investigation, still to be undertaken, is the question regarding whether mature students assimilate contextual knowledge more effectively than do their less mature counterparts. In the process of undertaking this further research, an examination of andragogical theory will be explored.

Contextual Background of SPCNT

SPCNT mainly draws mature students (over the age of 25 years) into its program, although a few school-leavers also apply and are accepted. In 2012 the proportion of mature students is 95%. Many of these mature students return to study after a fairly long period away from the academic environment. For many, deciding to study natural medicine is a lifestyle choice, often taken as a result of either themselves or someone in their family having had a positive experience with alternative therapies and complementary medicine.

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SPCNT has been offering qualifications in holistic natural therapies in New Zealand since 1940 and is recognised as one of the academic leaders among the naturopathic colleges in New Zealand. At present, the college is approved and accredited to offer a Bachelor of Natural Medicine, a Diploma in Herbal Medicine, and a Diploma in Traditional Pasefika Healing.

The college was set up by practitioners, and still functions as an incorporated society of practitioners, in response to perceived community healthcare needs. These needs continue to be addressed by present graduates of the college, of whom 94% on average obtain employment soon after graduation. The majority (over 51%) of qualified and registered naturopaths and medical herbalists currently in New Zealand are graduates of SPCNT.

The BNatMed integrates traditional wisdom with scientific knowledge and enables graduates to practise as natural health therapists communicating with, and complementing, mainstream health providers. Each of the optional pathways of the degree program represents a natural medicine modality that shares a common philosophy relying on the principles of holism and the inherent self-healing processes of the body and placing the emphasis on health rather than disease. It is intended that students will be able to specialise in traditional Maori and/or Pasefika healing knowledge so that graduates of these pathways can approach health and healing in culturally appropriate ways that ensure less stress for clients and therefore a more complete healing process. The BNatMed is currently the only degree program in New Zealand that incorporates Maori traditional healing as an option. This has given academic credibility to Maori models of health and assists the college to meet the government's tertiary education goals of addressing Maori participation and achievement at bachelor's level, "strengthening the provision of kaupapa Maori tertiary education options", as stated in the Tertiary Education Strategy (2007, p. 25).

It is intended that graduates from the BNatMed will have the following skills and attributes:

- broad and critical knowledge and understanding of natural medicine and nutrition, and of the anatomy, physiology, and pathophysiology of the body; in-depth knowledge relevant to the chosen pathway: Western herbal medicine; traditional Maori medicine, or traditional Pasefika medicine;
- confidence to work in the field of their chosen pathway: Western herbal medicine; traditional Maori medicine, or traditional Pasefika medicine;
- the ability to undertake clinical practice in natural medicine;
- skills in the practice of physical examination, differential diagnosis, and treatment;

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- the ability to critique and reflect upon the specialised practice-relevant knowledge and research;
- the ability to work in the natural health profession and to make professional decisions;
- the ability to demonstrate a range of personal qualities expected of natural health practitioners; and
- the ability to enter postgraduate programs in natural health.

Conceptualising Knowledge and Curriculum Distinctions

The starting point for the conceptual framework informing the analysis is Muller's (2008) classification of occupational fields, knowledge, and induction. Muller argued that within each occupational group there is differentiation in the knowledge base ranging from practical knowledge in the occupational pathway to theoretical knowledge in the academic pathway and various combinations in-between. It is, he argued, the combinations in-between that require more fine-grained distinctions. Gamble's (2009) work is helpful in conceptualising these fine-grained distinctions in knowledge along the qualification pathways with a particular focus on the occupational/professional end. Her work also facilitates an understanding of practical, context-specific knowledge.

Building on and extending Bernstein's (2000) theorisation of knowledge, Gamble (2009) distinguished between general (theoretical, context-independent) and particular (particular, context-dependent) knowledge. Theoretical knowledge can be principled (pure theory) or proceduralised (applied theory). While the notion of pure and applied theory has been well understood, Gamble argued that the same principled/procedural division is also to be found in practical knowledge.

In other words, there are two kinds of practical knowledge: the proceduralised, practical knowledge of the everyday, and the knowledge that is principled. Gamble's research into crafts shows that while the cabinet-maker's tacit knowledge is enacted in practice, it is often also highly principled. It relies on an understanding of the relationships between parts and whole, and a grasping of the "essential principles of arrangement" (Gamble, 2004, p. 196).

As Shay et al. (2011) pointed out, the key to the distinction between practical and theoretical knowledge is the recognition of the similarities between the two: Practical knowledge can be principled and theoretical knowledge can be proceduralised.

Drawing on Gamble's conceptual distinction, Shay et al. (2011) devised a knowledge typology in which conceptual knowledge and procedural (or contextual) knowledge are identified, and for each of these types further distinctions between principled and procedural were made, thereby creating a four-part

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knowledge typology:

1. conceptual knowledge,
2. proceduralised conceptual knowledge,
3. procedural knowledge, and
4. principled procedural knowledge.

Both conceptual and procedural knowledge can be principled but with an important difference: In principled procedural knowledge, the principles emerge from the procedures themselves; they emerge from the codification of practice. In proceduralised conceptual knowledge, the principles emerge from the conceptual domain from the theory. These are distinctive forms of knowledge and do not lead from one to the other. That is, they are not hierarchical. Procedural knowledge does not lead to conceptual knowledge and conceptual knowledge does not lead to procedural knowledge. This becomes a fundamental point when issues of curriculum are addressed.

From this knowledge typology the conceptual framework accounts for what happens when these different kinds of knowledge are drawn on as resources for curriculum, or re-contextualised into curriculum.

Muller (2008) distinguished between different curriculum logics, that is, curricula that have conceptual coherence and those that have contextual coherence. Conceptual coherence refers to curricula where the logic of the curriculum comes from the conceptual building blocks of the discipline. Contextual coherence refers to curricula where the logic comes from the external purposes of the curriculum, such as professional and occupational requirements (which are considered through input from the professions during the curriculum development stage). These logics are better thought of as a continuum since both are always present. Curricula that cohere around a contextual logic are not devoid of conceptual knowledge, and curricula that cohere conceptually are not devoid of contextual concerns.

The challenge is to determine the dominant logic. This dominant logic will distinguish occupational and professional (i.e., contextually oriented) programs from general-formative (i.e., conceptually oriented) programs. Depending on whether they are predominantly conceptually or contextually oriented, different kinds of knowledge will be re-contextualised into the curriculum in different ways.

Early analyses of the course data in several SANTED case studies, when the distinction was made between courses that are on the one hand conceptually oriented and those that are contextually oriented, led to a further extension of the four-part knowledge typology into a five-part curriculum typology shown in Figure 1.

With respect to the contextual orientation, there are three possibilities: pure procedural knowledge (C1), principled procedural knowledge (C2), and proceduralised conceptual knowledge with an overarching contextual logic or coherence (C3).

With respect to the conceptual orientation, there are two possibilities: proceduralised conceptual knowledge with an overarching conceptual logic or coherence (C4), and pure conceptual knowledge (pure theory) (C5).

Also emerging from the preliminary analyses was the need to specify different levels of cognitive complexity. This was undertaken using an adapted version of Bloom's taxonomy (adapted from Krathwohl, 2002 in Gamble, 2009). Refer to Figure 2. The analysis of cognitive complexity in the different courses of the BNatMed enabled a distinction to be made between, for example, a conceptually oriented course that simply requires recall (low complexity), explanation (medium complexity), or application of concepts (high complexity).

It is important to note that cognitive complexity is not co-terminous with curriculum type. That is, it is possible to have C2 curricula at a high level of cognitive demand, and C4 curricula at a low level of cognitive demand.

Figure 1:

Curriculum typologies: Recontextualisation of knowledge into curriculum.

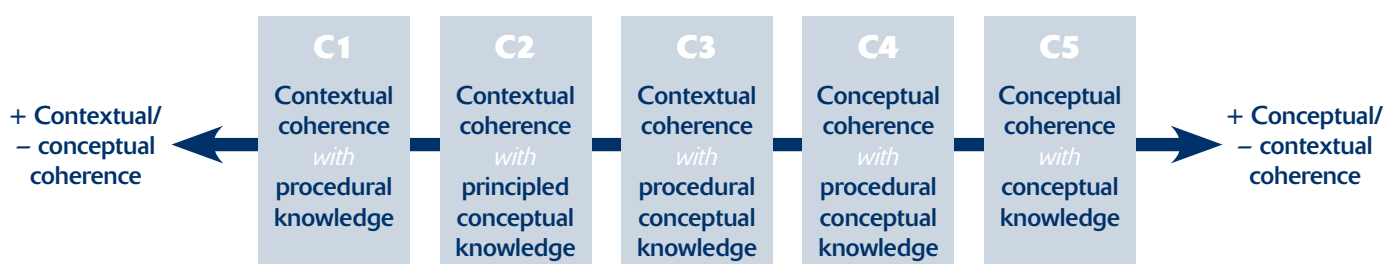


Figure 2:

Levels of cognitive demand/complexity.

Category	Level	Descriptions
LOW Factual recall/rote	1: Simple	Simple factual recall
	2: Medium	Recall complex content
MEDIUM Understanding of concept/principle; application; analysis	1: Simple	Simple relationships; simple explanations
	2: Medium	More complex relationships or explanations; counter-intuitive relationships; qualitative proportional reasoning
	3: Challenging	Identify principles that apply in a well-defined context
HIGH Creativity/critical & analytical skills/ application & integration of all skills	1: Simple	Simple procedure; plug into formula with only one unknown; no extraneous information; known or practised content
	2: Medium	Construction or interpretation of diagrams; problems with two or more steps; basic logic leaps; interpretation of data tables
	3: Challenging	Integration of all skills; publishable product; complex abstract representation; combination of concepts across sub-fields; complex problems involving insight and logic leaps; formulating new equations (using all unknowns); problem-solving in a novel context

Data Analysis

The unit of analysis was the course. For each course, data were collected by way of course outlines, student handbooks, lecture notes, PowerPoint presentations, student assessments, and assignments.

Figure 3 shows the structure of the BNatMed with its eight courses at each of the three years of the program.

For each of the 24 courses in the BNatMed the following sets of research questions were applied to the analysis in order to understand the nature of the degree:

1. What is the dominant logic of the course curriculum? Is it predominantly conceptual or contextual logic?
2. What type of knowledge dominates in the course? Is it proceduralised knowledge or principled proceduralised knowledge? Is it conceptual knowledge or proceduralised conceptual knowledge?
3. What is the cognitive complexity of each course? Low/Medium/High?

Using these analytical tools, each course for the BNatMed was coded for curriculum type (C1-5) and for cognitive complexity (low, medium, or high). Across each year (Years 1, 2, and 3) courses were aggregated by curriculum type and cognitive

complexity and weighted by credits. For example, all the credits for the courses coded C2 within a particular year were added and divided by the total credits for the year (usually 120) to arrive at the percentage of curriculum type per year.

Therefore, 50% of credits in Year 1 were coded C2. Cognitive complexity was recorded according to whatever level (L, M, or H) was most dominant, for example C4 H. If there was relatively even allocation, both levels were recorded, for example C3 M-H.

Results

The findings for the BNatMed are presented in a diagram of what knowledge has been selected and how this knowledge has been sequenced for progression. This is shown in Figure 4.

The analyses revealed that the following Year 1 courses have a contextual coherence with principled procedural knowledge (i.e., C2): Herbal Medicine; Principles and Practices of Natural Medicine; Foundations of Research; Traditional Practices. No C2 was found in Years 2 and 3.

Courses that were found to have a contextual coherence with procedural conceptual knowledge (C3) were: Massage (Year1); Nutrition: Biochemistry of Foods; Nutrition 2; Mind Body Medicine; Safe Practices; Botany and Herbal Cultivation;

Figure 3:

Bachelor of Natural Medicine program structure (each course is 15 credits or 150 notional learning hours).

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Anatomy & Physiology 1 (L5)	WHM Pathway: Botany & Herbal Cultivation (L5) OR TMM Pathway: Maori Healing Concepts (L5)	WHM Pathway: Pharmacology & Manufacturing (L6) OR TMM Pathway: Maori Healing Practice Observation (L6)
Principles & Practices of Natural Medicine (L5)	WHM Pathway: HIX (Homeopathy, Iridology & Exercise) (L6) OR TMM Pathway: Mirimiri & Rongoa Rakau (L6)	WHM Pathway: Therapeutics (L7) OR TMM Pathway: Maori Therapeutics (L7)
Traditional Practices (L5)	Anatomy & Physiology 3 (L5)	Pathophysiology 2 (L6)
Foundations of Research (L5)	Pathophysiology 1 (L6)	Managing a Professional Practice (L6)
Anatomy & Physiology 2 (L5)	Nutrition 1: Biochemistry of Foods (L6)	Clinical Practice 1 (Pre Clinic) (L7)
History, Philosophy & Politics of Western Medicine (L5)	Nutrition 2 (L6)	Clinical Practice 2 (L7)
Herbal Medicine (L5)	Safe Practices (L6)	Clinical Practice 3 (L7)
Therapeutic Massage (L5)	Mind/Body Medicine (L5)	Clinical Practice 4 (L7)

and Homeopathy, Iridology & Exercise (Year 2); Therapeutics, Pharmacology & Manufacturing; Managing Professional Practice; and Clinical Practice (Year 3). This strong C3 core is what could be reasonably expected in a bachelor's degree that focuses on producing natural medicine practitioners.

The analyses further revealed that the following courses have a conceptual coherence with procedural conceptual knowledge (C4): Anatomy and Physiology 1 & 2; History, Philosophy & Politics of Western Medicine (Year 1); Anatomy & Physiology 3; and Pathophysiology 1 (Year 2); Pathophysiology (Year 3).

The curriculum for the BNatMed included no C1 courses (contextual coherence with procedural knowledge) and no C5 courses (conceptual coherence with conceptual knowledge).

Progression refers to the extent to which there is development of complexity with respect to a particular curriculum type across Years 1 to 3 of the program, for example from C4 Low–Medium in Year 1 to C4 High in Year 3. The findings are presented in three parts: selection of knowledge and curriculum type, sequencing of knowledge within the curriculum, and the implications of selection and sequence for progression and articulation.

Selection of Knowledge and Curriculum Type

The increasing proportion of C3 knowledge from Year 1 to Year 3 suggests that the overall curriculum logic of the BNatMed is contextual. This was to be expected given the professional nature of the program.

There is a strong core of proceduralised conceptual knowledge (with overarching contextual coherence) (C3) as follows: 13% in Year 1, 35% in Year 2, and 87% in Year 3. A significant proportion of proceduralised conceptual knowledge (with overarching conceptual coherence) (C4) can be seen as follows: 37% in Year 1, 26% in Year 2, and 13% in Year 3. Principled procedural knowledge (C2) occurs only in Year 1: 50%.

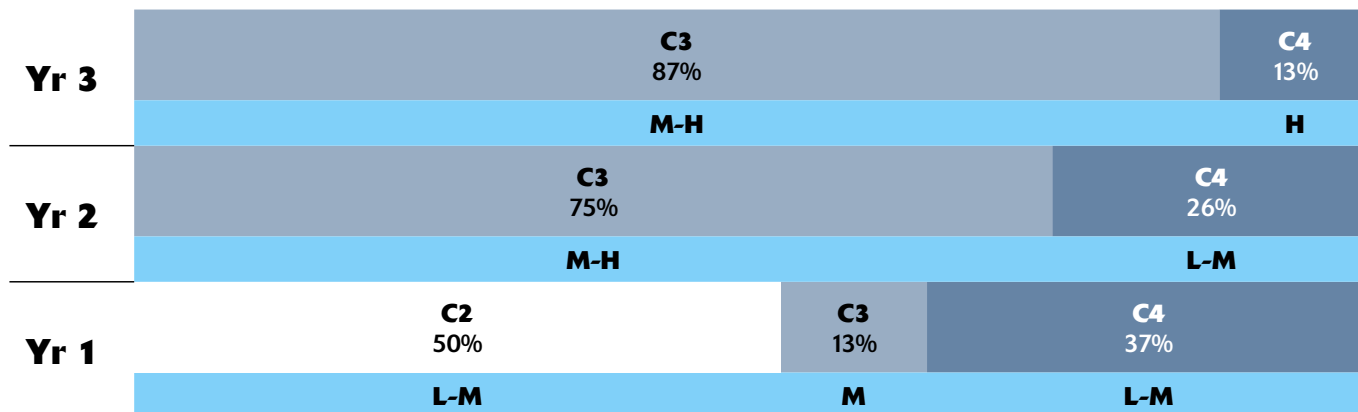
These findings are not surprising since this degree was designed, with input from professional bodies, to be a qualification that prepares graduates to take up work in the natural health sector in New Zealand. Therefore, as could be expected, graduates are able to apply for, and be awarded, registration with a number of New Zealand natural health professional bodies including the New Zealand Association of Medical Herbalists and the New Zealand Society of Naturopaths.

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Figure 4:

Bachelor of Natural Medicine selection and sequencing of knowledge and curriculum type. Refer to Figure 1 for legend.



Sequencing of Knowledge Within the Curriculum

With respect to C3 and C4 knowledge in the BNatMed, there is an increase in cognitive complexity from Year 1 to Year 3. C2 knowledge appears only in Year 1 where the cognitive complexity is low to medium.

Since the overarching aim of the BNatMed is to prepare natural health practitioners for the marketplace, these results are not surprising. A strong layer of conceptual knowledge must necessarily be laid before students proceed with clinical practice in their third year.

Implications of Selection and Sequence for Progression and Articulation

A number of interesting implications for progression and articulation can be drawn from the analysis:

- Progression from one level to a higher level requires increasing cognitive complexity in the dominant curriculum (core) type.
- The high proportion of C2 (principled procedural) knowledge in Year 1 as well as lower levels of cognitive challenge could mean an easier transition into degree level study for students returning to academic study after an hiatus.
- However, on the other hand, in Year 1 there is a high proportion of C4 knowledge (37%), dropping to 26% in Year 2 and 13% in Year 3. This would suggest that some students could be challenged by the strong conceptual emphasis in Years 1 and 2.

- There is increasing complexity in the cognitive challenge in the C3 and C4 core from Year 1 to Year 3.
- The decreasing proportion of C4 knowledge may suggest that progression into master's level after graduation with the BNatMed may be challenging. Since bachelor's degrees are supposed to prepare students for study at master's level, this will be a focal point when the proposed review of the BNatMed occurs towards the end of the year.

Conclusion

As we move into a full review of the BNatMed, we will make use of this conceptual framework to provide a helpful lens through which to examine the existing curriculum. It provides a basis for a better understanding of the differentiation of knowledge typologies, curriculum logics, and cognitive complexities within the curriculum.

One matter of concern, however, is the large number of NQF level 5 (Year 1) credits (165/46% of the total curriculum) against the low number of NQF level 7 (Year 3) credits (75/21% of the total curriculum). While this has not been the focus of the analyses in this research, the important matter of level will need to be addressed in any re-curriculum effort.

Finally, the analysis has also been confined to the intended curriculum, not the enacted curriculum, and curriculum redevelopment initiatives will need to factor in details of what is happening in the enacted curriculum. Furthermore, this analysis has not factored in the pedagogies used to facilitate the movement from the theoretical to the practical. This is clearly an important area that requires consideration.

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