



Monthly e-Newsletter – November, 2010

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FAREWELL EDITORIAL OF SORTS

This is my final outing as AAIR Newsletter Editor. Thanks to all of you for allowing me to drop into your inboxes every month for the last four years or so. And thanks for the several contacts received about the Newsletter over the past month or so.

I'm grateful to the AAIR Committee for allowing me the freedom to produce the Newsletter in my own eccentric fashion.

As you might recall from the last Newsletter, AAIR is keen to hear from anyone who would like to take up the editorial role. There's a note about this on page 9.

Look forward to seeing many of you at the AAIR Forum in Geelong.

I wish you all well.

Best wishes,

Rob.

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

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

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

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

It's never too late!

You still have time – register now and we'll see you in Geelong. The Forum website is here, waiting for you to drop in, with a grand program and a registration page:

<http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/aaair2010/>

Among the things you won't want to miss, are the pre-Forum workshops and the SIGS.

Pre Forum Workshops

On 9 November, three workshops will be held. The workshops are:

- Survey design, administration and analysis
- Creatively presenting information
- New AAIRies workshop

Information about the Workshops is available at:
<http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/aaair2010/program.php>

Special Interest Groups

Four Special Interest Group sessions are scheduled to run during the Forum:

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

PLACES TO GO – THINGS TO DO

I think you have a busy year ahead. I've spotted up events that you will keep you on your toes from February to October 2011. And the bad news is that some of you will need to go to all of these! As a reward, I'm letting you finish up in October in either Bali or Ontario.

AAIRies should note that there are four Institutional Research outings listed below – and that doesn't include the 2011 AAIR Annual Forum in November – details to be announced at this year's Forum in Geelong.

TAFE Governance and Regulations Forum 28 February to 1 March, 2011 Rendezvous Hotel, Melbourne

The knit between what TAFE Institutes need to do, and the governance arrangements under which they operate, is a knotty and critical issue for the public VET provider. It becomes more knotty with the new national VET regulator sitting astride the marvellous diversity of policy objectives and funding models which state governments adopt.

The conference will cover some pretty broad and intricate terrain, including:

- Implications of a national regulatory & accountability framework
- Developing a good corporate governance model that articulates the sector's role in the National Training System
- Maintaining control & oversight while remaining flexible & responsive to market needs
- Simplifying quality & regulatory arrangements and reporting mechanisms
- Improving articulation between unis & TAFEs
- Innovation, contestability, competition & quality assurance
- Equity of access – focus on regional & rural markets
- The international student market: strengthening regulation & quality control.

That seems like a timely list of issues for TAFE, doesn't it? Details here – irritatingly, you will have to register to get hold of the 'free brochure', but it won't take you a tick:

<http://www.informa.com.au/conferences/education/tafe-governance-regulations-forum>

Postgraduate Supervision Conference

18-21 April 2011

Spier Estate, Stellenbosch, Western Cape

This conference is running under the overarching title of 'Postgraduate supervision: promoting a culture of postgraduate scholarship'. The themes are:

- Enhancing the scholarship of postgraduate supervision – the lense on supervisors
- Enhancing the scholarship of postgraduate supervision – the graduate experience
- The scholarship of assessing and evaluating postgraduate theses and Dissertations
- Diverse postgraduate candidates – a challenge to the scholarship of postgraduate supervision
- Support roles – promoting the scholarship of postgraduate supervision.

The four keynotes include two Aussies:

- Lynn McAlpine, Professor of Higher Education Development at Oxford
- Alison Lee, Director of the Centre for Research in Learning and Change at UTS
- Catherine Manathunga, Senior Lecturer in Higher Education in UQ's Teaching and Educational Development Institute
- Renuka Vithal, DVC, Uni of Kwazulu-Natal.

Away you go:

<http://www.postgraduate2011.co.za/>

2011 QLD VET Symposium

12 & 13 May 2011

Hilton, Brisbane

The Symposium targets VET in Schools and has four learning streams for different groups of folk, covering roles like Principal/Deputy Principal, VET Curriculum Project Officer, VET Coordinator, Head of Senior Schooling, Career Advisers, and SET Plan Coordinators. There will be plenary sessions on:

- Links between VET and higher education
- National VET regulator update
- Reporting requirements for RTOs
- VET industry champions.

VET in Schools continues on its merry way as bright and shining thing in the educational firmament.

Tweaks needed, most certainly, but much to offer many. The Symposium is conducted by Velg Training, which is VELG of old in new livery.

Details are here:

<http://www.velgtraining.com/symposium.cfm>

Association for Institutional Research Annual Forum

May 21-25, 2011

Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel, Ontario

Okay, the AIR Forum is the biggest concentration of institutional researchers on Planet Earth. Next year's Forum is themed 'Passport to new ideas and better decisions'. The streams are these:

- Technology: data management, warehousing, internet, and computers
- Analysis: research methods and data analysis
- Assessment: accountability, institutional effectiveness, and accreditation
- Resources: faculty, finance, and facilities
- Students: enrolment and experience
- Collaboration: communicating inside and outside the institution.

Alan Mackay from the Go8 delivered a paper at the 2010 AIR Forum in Chicago and will give us all an insight to the experience at the AAIR Forum in Geelong. Alan indicated that papers from Oz and NZ would be welcomed. In my rush to get the October newsletter to you, I messed up as Alan indicated in an email to me that the deadline for papers for the 2011 AIR Forum would close on 30 October. I should have told you, shouldn't I? Apologies. But here's the way forward – go to the 2011 AIR Forum and then go again with a paper in 2012. Details for AIR 2011 are here: <http://forum.airweb.org/2011/Pages/ParticipateAndLearn/CallForProposals.aspx>

UK & Ireland Institutional Research conference

16-17 June 2011

Kingston University, London

Helena Lim, the Coordinator of the UK and Ireland Higher Education Institutional Research Network, thought AAIR members might fancy a trip to London next June. I think she's right. Indeed, an old AAIRie has already booked in – Angel Calderon from RMIT is delivering one of the keynotes.

Themes include:

- Accountability & engagement: moving beyond performance indicators & quality assurance
- Supporting decision makers: planning, policy & management
- Institutional research in action: tools, methods & capacity building.

Deadline for Proposals is 7th February 2011:

<http://www.heir2011.org.uk/>

HERDSA 2011

July 4-7, 2011

Radisson Resort, Gold Coast, Queensland

HERDSA goes to the Gold Coast in 2011, courtesy of Griffith Uni. Next year's theme is 'Higher education on the edge' and research domains for the conference are:

- Academic practice, work and identities
- Learning, teaching, assessment and curriculum
- Quality and standards in higher education
- Leadership, management, governance and policy in higher education
- Student pathways, experiences, expectations and outcomes

26 November is closing date for expressing an interest in making a presentation:

<http://conference.herdsa.org.au/2011/>

20th National Vocational Education and Training Research Conference (No Frills)

13-15 July 2011

North Coast TAFE, Coffs Harbour, NSW

There's no detail yet, other than when and where. But No Frills needs no introduction. You know it will be good. Keep an eye out for those details here:

http://www.ncver.edu.au/newsevents/events.html#20th_National_Vocational_Education_and_Training_Research_Conference_%28No_Frills%29

EAIR Forum

28-31 August, 2011

Warsaw, Poland

EAIR is a cousin of AAIR, though EAIR is now formally The European Higher Education Society. The 33rd EAIR Forum is going under the banner of 'Bridging cultures, promoting diversity: Higher education in search of an equilibrium'. Forum tracks are:

- Navigating (in) diversity: policies, governance, institutional strategies
- Seeding & harvesting: students in mass higher education
- Quality management or management for quality?
- Linking academic & corporate cultures
- Changing the lifelong learning landscape
- Measuring performance and outcomes.

Here's the drill:

<http://www.eair.nl/futureforums/>

IT IS WRITTEN (1)

If you ever doubted the need for provider registration and regulation...

'...I decided that the weather would make it worth while looking for roach in the canal. My rod was crude enough but I had hooks of a special size which I had put away in a drawer in the bedroom. I got out the rod and went up for a hook. To my surprise the drawer was littered with sixpenny postal orders and also envelopes addressed to the brother describing him as "Director, General Georama Gymnasium". I decided to leave this strange stuff alone, took a hook and went of up along the canal. Perhaps my bait was wrong but I caught nothing and was back home in about an hour. The brother was in the bedroom when I returned, busy writing at the smaller table.

- I was out looking for roach, I remarked, and had to get a hook in that drawer. I see it's full of sixpenny postal orders.
- Not full, he said genially. There are only twenty-eight, but keep that under your hat.
- Twenty-eight is fourteen bob.
- Yes, but I expect a good few more.
- What's all this about General Georama Gymnasium?
- Well, that's my name for the moment, he said.
- What's Georama?
- If you don't know what a simple English word means, the Brothers in Syngé Street can't be making much of a hand of you. A georama is a globe representing the earth. Something like what they have in schools. The sound of it goes well with general and gymnasium. That's why I took it. Join the G.G.G.
- And where did all those postal orders come from?
- From the other side. I put a small ad. in one of the papers. I want to teach people to walk the high wire.
- Is that what the General Georama Gymnasium is for, for heaven's sake?
- Yes. And it's one of the cheapest courses in the world. A great number of people want to walk the high wire and show off. Some of them may be merely mercenary and anxious to make an easy quick fortune with some great circus.
- What's going to happen if one of them falls and gets killed?
- A verdict of death by misadventure, I suppose...
- Do you mean you're going to have a correspondence course with these people?
- No. They get a copy of my four-page book of instructions. Price sixpence only. It's for nothing. A packet of fags and a box of matches would cost you nearly that, and no fag would give you the thrill of thinking about the high wire.
- This looks to me like a swindle.
- Rubbish. I'm only a bookseller.'

- Flann O'Brien, *The hard life*, 1976, London: Pan Books.

ICDE World Conference on Open and Distance Learning

2-5 October, 2011

Nusa Dua, Bali

Okay, so you've been to all corners of the world in the past few months, putting in the conference hard yards. Just one more, then you can go to the beach. The International Council for Open and Distance Education is running its annual conference in Bali, hosted by Indonesia's Open University, Universitas Terbuka.

The conference billing is 'Expanding horizons – new approaches to open and distance learning'. Abstract submission closes on 10 January, 2011. More here:

<http://www.ut.ac.id/icde2011/>

The conference will be held at the Westin Resort. This might give you another reason to think about taking the big tin bird to Bali:

<http://www.starwoodhotels.com/westin/property/overview/index.html?propertyID=35>

Canadian Institutional Research and Planning Association Conference

October, 2011

Somewhere in Canada

I'm flying blind on this one. The Association's 2010 conference was held in Ottawa at the end of October, and when I last checked there was no indication of dates or location for the 2011 event.

But you should keep it in mind all the same. Conference information will probably turn up on this webpage:

<http://www.cirpa-acpri.ca/page.asp?page=1856>

And finally...

Let me just recap, AAIRies – there are four institutional research conferences listed above. Not sure what's happening next year with the South East Asian Association for Institutional Research. But you could add that to your list. The SEAIR website is here:

<http://www.seairweb.info/default.aspx>

So do plan to get out and about on the international circuit. You could even put a point on your HB pencil and write a paper. Just make sure you come to the 2011 AAIR Forum to share what you discover in your wanderings through the IR universe.

NEWSLETTER NOTES

1. What's in your stocking?

Here's your Christmas present: *Information is beautiful*, by David McCandless, published last year by Collins. You can take it out of your stocking and put it on your coffee table. With panache, McCandless tackles that part of an AAIRie's job which requires you to make your data accessible and interesting – even exciting – to those whose attention you want to capture. McCandless has a website, so you can try before you buy:

<http://www.informationisbeautiful.net/>

There's a map of Oz here, comparing the size of the Great Southland to Europe:

<http://infobeautiful2.s3.amazonaws.com/australia-europe.jpeg>

2. 'Changing culture for teaching and learning'

On 17 August, JCU's VC, Sandra Harding, issued the Terms of Reference for a new JCU's adventure – the establishment of a Teaching and Learning Academy. The Academy has three main purposes:

- To provide a forum for the development of a scholarly community which allows informed and respectful debate in relation to teaching and learning.
- To encourage, recognise and reward excellence in teaching and learning for University educators.
- To develop a set of professional standards for University educators.

So yet another twist on the question of standards has begun to turn in FNQ. There is a number of criteria for Academy membership, including a CPD element, which reads as follows:

- There will be yearly requirements to maintain membership, in the form of a collection of professional development points obtained through attendance and participation at in-house seminars and workshops, presentations or attendances at teaching and learning related conferences and publications on teaching and learning related issues.

The Academy explicitly recognises that there is a 'changing culture for teaching and learning' that merits thoughtful exploration, and rewards those who are tackling the new course. More information about the Academy is nestling here:

<http://www.jcu.edu.au/teaching/academy/index.htm>

3. GippsTAFE and Monash go together

The intersection between VET and higher education providers is a very busy place these days. Institutional and inter-institutional experimentation abounds, with the design of all kinds of new vehicles for entering the space. GippsTAFE and Monash Uni have engineered an agreement to increase education participation in Gippsland. Announced on 12 October 2010, the agreement includes collaboration on curriculum design, pathways, guaranteed articulation, sharing of infrastructure and sharing of teaching resources.

You can read the media release on the GippsTAFE website:

http://www.gippstafe.vic.edu.au/about/news_features/2010/new_agreement_to_increase_education_participation_in_gippsland

...or on the Monash website:

<http://www.monash.edu.au/news/newslines/story/1677>

4. For what it's worth

In August, the ABS released *Measuring Economic Returns to Post-School Education in Australia*. The paper applies two methodologies for estimating the rate of return, and compares their adequacy for various aspects of the task. The focus is on the return from undergraduate study.

You can read the numbers at your leisure. There's a bit of text to take note of:

- '...around half of the returns can be traced to greater experience in the labour market and the other half can be attributed to the enhanced productive capacity of educated persons'.

So learning on the job is as important as learning that occurs as you wend your way to a qual. Kind of obvious, but often overlooked, though workforce development approaches are pressing us to ponder the reality. The paper is here:

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1351.0.55.032>

5. Getting back to base

If DEEWR was selling copies of the terms of reference for the Base Funding Review, they'd give Dan Brown a shake at the top of the best seller list. I know you've got your own copy. I liked this bit:

- Without limiting the matters considered by the review, it should identify international benchmarks for course quality and student engagement.

You can download it again here:

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Policy/Pages/BaseFundingReview.aspx>

6. Performance funding indicators for NZ

In NZ from 2012, 5 per cent of a tertiary education provider's government funding will be based on performance against some or all of four indicators: course (or subject/unit) completion rates; qualification completion rates; progression rates to higher study; retention rates. There's more about the indicators here:

<http://www.tec.govt.nz/Learners-Organisations/Learners/performance-in-tertiary-education/what-the-indicators-mean/>

There is lots of performance information for tertiary education providers made available, in standardised format. The standard format makes use of the indicators, and much else besides. I've played here once or twice, half thinking about the advent of the My Universities website here in Oz. You can't make direct comparisons between providers on the website, but you can print off the institutional reports and set them side by side.

Have a look on the Tertiary Education Commission's website:

<http://www.tec.govt.nz/Learners-Organisations/Learners/performance-in-tertiary-education/Educational-performance-at-individual-tertiary-providers/>

7. What I'd like to know is this...

In August, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (Hefce) released *Understanding the information needs of users of public information about higher education*. I moseyed through it, again half thinking about the advent of the My University website in Oz. It was a scan; wasn't up for the full 170 pages – 80 pages plus appendices.

Interesting to see what items prospective students thought most useful in deciding where to study. Sixteen items in all, the top seven being:

- Proportion of students satisfied or very satisfied with the standard of teaching
- Proportion of students satisfied or very satisfied with their course
- Proportion of students in employment in the first year after completing their course
- Professional bodies which recognise this course
- Proportion of students satisfied or very satisfied with the support and guidance they received
- Proportion of students satisfied or very satisfied with their feedback on assessment
- Proportion of students employed in a full-time professional or managerial job in first year after completing course.

The full report is here:

http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2010/rd12_10/rd12_10b.pdf

8. And now, for my nexus trick...

This is my last newsletter, so this is a heads up to bookmark the site. The online *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, out of Wollongong Uni, has a special issue on achieving teaching-research connections in undergraduate programs. It will turn up here soon, and so should you:

<http://ro.uow.edu.au/jutlp/>

IT IS WRITTEN (2)

'If you doubt that teaching and research have such an uneasy relationship, then consider that all of the summa cum laude and honors achievement awards from an undergraduate university are very poor predictors of creative accomplishments in either the arts or the sciences. The Goertzel study's data [MG Goertzel, V Goertzel and TG Goertzel, *Three hundred eminent personalities*, 1978, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass] on the educational attainment of eminent figures, including eminent creators in the arts and humanities, showed that high creative performance in later life most strongly correlates with the part-completion of a tertiary degree. Formal undergraduate study contributes little to the formation of the creative mind, and often induces sheer boredom on the part of those who later on will demonstrate remarkable intellectual capacities. The discipline and field structure of the teaching university – its departmentalization and specialization – is a clear culprit. Conversely, the strongest predictor of later creative achievement is voracious reading. Such reading – or the viewing of films and the like – are the mark of a wide-ranging mind that is driven to connect elements that seem otherwise to be unrelated to or unlike each other. In difference, similarities are observed. The best undergraduate program in a research university for a creative mind would be a series of independent reading units that encouraged vast reading and synthetic composition. But instead the regular undergraduate program has to satisfy the normal student need for minimal reading and analytic specificity, and the appetite for the procedural, methodical and sequential organization of knowledge. In other words, everything the theoretical mind is impatient with.'

- Peter Murphy, 'Discovery'. In Peter Murphy, Michael A Peters and Simon Marginson, *Imagination: three models of imagination in the age of the knowledge economy*, 2010, New York: Peter Laing Publishing.

9. Feedback in thesis supervision

This is another one for you to bookmark. In 2009, Ako Aotearoa, NZ's National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence, funded a project titled 'Best practice in supervisor feedback to thesis writers'. It's an investigation into gold standard practice by a nice mix of supervisors and candidates from the disciplines of applied linguistics, marketing, and maths/statistics. Watch for the final report here: <http://ako.aotearoa.ac.nz/projects/best-practice-supervisor-feedback-thesis-writers>

11. You gotta read this

The US National Association of Scholars has released *Beach books: what do colleges want students to read outside class?* If I quote the first para of the report, you'll get the gist:

- 'In the last decade, the number of colleges that assign summer reading to incoming freshmen has soared. The National Association of Scholars has tracked and analyzed 290 such programs ... The study reveals national patterns in book selection. Major findings include a widespread assignment of books that promote liberal political views; a preponderance of contemporary writing; and a surprisingly low level of intellectual difficulty.'

Perhaps the sorriest finding is that 'the current college reading programs take little interest in the classics'. The report notes that there are:

- no works of classical antiquity ... none by Shakespeare ... no works of the Enlightenment; and among the acknowledged masters of American literature ... only Mark Twain is represented ... no classical works of Christian or Jewish thought; no scientific classics ... no classics of history ... Mary Shelley's fantasy *Frankenstein* is left by itself to represent not just British literature but all of European literature, from Homer to Dostoevsky.'

Jeeppers. A sorry lookout only if you think there is a canon, like I do. Postmodernists need not click here to read the report or look at the booklist: http://www.nas.org/poldoc.cfm?doc_id=1337

10. Learning online

And yet another for you to bookmark, also due by year's end. In July 2009 Hefce set up a 'Task Force to support UK higher education in maintaining and extending its position as a world leader in online learning'. Should be here soon: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/enhance/taskforce/>

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12. Ontario online

Okay, so you need to know about the Speech from the Throne, or the Throne Speech for short. It's the Canadian version of the speech the Australian Governor-General (or a state Governor) makes at the opening of a new Parliament, in which is set out the incoming government's program. So with that bit of background, the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) released in August a six page statement entitled *The Ontario Online Institute: achieving the transformation*.

The statement reads in part:

- The Ontario government announced in the 2010 Throne Speech and Budget that an Online Institute would be established to "bring the best professors from Ontario's postsecondary institutions into the homes of those who want to pursue higher learning." ... Postsecondary institutions will actively collaborate in developing online courses, recognize credit transfer for online courses and share best practices for e-learning.'

There are caveats, but the idea is out there and on the move. Among the first steps recommended is that the COU 'Conduct detailed discussions with sister universities in BC, Alberta, the UK, Australia and New Zealand and other jurisdictions to identify effective practices and pitfalls to avoid'.

Here's the statement:

<http://www.cou.on.ca/Issues-Resources/Student-Resources/Government-Submissions/PDFs/COU-OnlineInstituteSubmission.aspx>

13. Research and innovation in the EU

In October, the League of European Research Universities released a pretty lively statement that follows up on the EU's Europe 2020 strategy, one aspect of which is to support research and innovation as key contributors to economic prosperity. The statement is called *Universities, research and the 'Innovation Union'*.

The objectives and actions that the paper proposes are pretty familiar ones in designing joined up approaches to research, development and innovation. Nonetheless, it's a matter of how you put the bits together, and it's fascinating to consider how the system is envisaged in pan-European terms. The statement is here: http://www.leru.org/files/publications/LERU_AP5_Innovation_Union.pdf

14. Green and good in the UK

The UK-based Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges has released the *Universities that count annual report*. It maps the environmental and social performance of dozens of UK tertiary institutions. Workplace management is one index used and the report notes that leading unis in workplace management:

- Understand their staff through sophisticated survey and appraisal systems ...
- Have an effective talent management programme, identifying high-potential people and giving them what they need to succeed
- Monitor the effects of programmes to enhance diversity and equality ...
- Link reward and recognition to contribution, so that the best performers know they are valued.

You can get hold of the report here:

http://www.eauc.org.uk/file_uploads/2009-10_utc_full_annual_report-complete-final_%28big%29_1.pdf

15. Rankings at your fingertips

The Times Higher Education's World University Rankings are now available via an app for iPhones and iPods. I'm hard-pressed to love the THE rankings – they're silly really. And yet. And yet. I couldn't resist and I downloaded the app for 59p. I have a hard time working out the psychology of it – I dislike the rankings but I can't leave them alone.

The app is okay. But the THE rankings are still silly:

<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/2010-2011/iphone.html>

16. Papers past

There's a rich store in the papers from the 2001 through 2010 Australian International Education Conferences. You can browse at will here:

<http://www.aiec.idp.com/home.aspx>

My particular reason for visiting the 2010 conference papers was to look at the paper by Tony Adams, Melissa Banks, Dorothy Davis and Judith Dickson, titled 'The Hobsons retention project: context and factor analysis report'. Attrition is such a waste, and our rates have been a scandal really. One narrow way of looking at the waste is recorded in the paper:

- 'Every 1% drop in attrition would save Australia's public universities almost one billion dollars, or up to \$2.6 million per university.'

Recommended reading:

http://www.aiec.idp.com/pdf/2010_AdamsBanksDaviesDickson_Wed_1100_BGallB_Paper.pdf

IT ISN'T OVER YET

'In 1642, the very year of Galileo's death, on a farm located in a secluded English hamlet, a woman recently widowed gave birth to a frail and premature child...

'Except for a strong interest in mechanical contrivances [Isaac] Newton, like many geniuses, showed no special promise as a youth. For the negative reason that he showed no interest in farming his mother sent him to Cambridge. Despite several advantages of attendance there, such as the opportunity to study the works of Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo and the opportunity to listen the famous mathematician Isaac Barrow, Newton seemed to profit little. He was even found to be weak in geometry and at one time almost changed his course of study from natural philosophy to law. Four years of study ended as unimpressively as they began and Newton returned home – to study.

'This quiet and unobtrusive intellect burst forth brilliantly when, between the ages of twenty-three and twenty-five, Newton made three gigantic steps which secured his reputation and advanced modern science enormously. The first was the discovery of the secret of color which he arrived at by decomposing white light; the second was the creation of the calculus ...; and the third was his proof of the universality of the law of gravitation.

'Had he announced any one of these achievements to the scientific world, he would have earned enduring fame at once; but Newton said nothing about them. When a plague which had been raging in London abated he returned to Cambridge to secure his master's degree and then became a fellow. When he was twenty-seven his teacher, Barrow, resigned and Newton, now recognized at least as a serious student of mathematics, was appointed in his place. His success as a lecturer did not parallel his success in research. At times no one attended. The original material he presented was not even noticed, must less acclaimed.

'He finally published his work on the composite nature of white light, accompanying it with a presentation of his philosophy of science. Both the philosophy and the work on light were criticized and some scientists rejected both *in toto*. Newton was disgusted and resolved to refrain from further publication.'

- *Mathematics in Western Culture*, Morris Kline, 1964, Oxford University Press.

Opening for AAIR Newsletter Editor

Australasian Association for Institutional Research

AAIR is seeking an Editor for the Association's monthly Newsletter. The current Editor, Rob Sheehan, finishes in the role with this edition, and it is hoped that a new Editor could commence early in 2011.

The incoming Editor would be encouraged to take the Newsletter in new directions – to put a personal stamp on the Newsletter. The key for AAIR is that the content keeps our members informed and is of interest to our broad readership which now numbers around 540.

We are open to your ideas and happy to discuss how AAIR can best support the incoming Editor in the role.

If you are interested in the Editor's role, please contact by email or phone either:

- Josie Palermo – AAIR President
josephine.palermo@deakin.edu.au
Tel: 03-5227 7840

or

- Dean Ward – AAIR Secretary
d.ward@ecu.edu.au
Tel: 08-6304 2902

17. Be your own Master

Applications close on 8 November for the Martin Institute's 2011 outing of the Master of Tertiary Education Management:

http://www.mihelm.unimelb.edu.au/award_programs/mtem.html

Applications for the Institute's Graduate Certificate in Quality Assurance are open until 1 December:

http://www.mihelm.unimelb.edu.au/award_programs/gcqa.html

18. A simple calculation

WA's Department of Training and Workforce Development has a website called the TAFE Online Skills Calculator. Maybe it's been around for a while and I've been slow on the uptake. Essentially, you work through a couple of screens to do with whether you are at school or an existing worker, and your existing skill levels. By the end of the exercise, you get a list of quals that you could enrol in:

<http://tasonline.tafe.wa.edu.au/Reckoner/Default.aspx>

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19. Setting a course for VET

Skills Australia has released *Creating a future direction for Australian vocational education and training: a discussion paper on the future of the VET system*. The discussion paper poses a host of really good questions that go to the heart of all things VET, and the underlying sense is that the time incremental change is probably past – we need to think anew.

There's an awful lot of ground covered and it's hard to select anything particular from these 90 pages – it's all worth thinking about. The discussion paper has framed some broad focus questions – to wit, viz and namely:

- What has to change to achieve a more skilled and productive Australian workforce and to make Australia a leading international economy by 2020?
- How much change and development in the VET sector is needed? What can we live with? What are the burning issues in VET that need urgent attention so outcomes in participation and productivity can be realised?
- How can VET make a real difference for learners- addressing their backgrounds, ambitions and ensuring they can succeed in the changing world of work? In particular, how can outcomes for disadvantaged students be significantly improved? Should we be worried about low completion rates for qualifications?
- What should VET qualifications, practitioners and institutions be like in 2020? How do we get there?
- Is the quality bar in VET set too low? How can a training market with over 4,800 providers be effectively regulated?
- Is the blurred role of VET providers and other sectors a problem? Do we need to more clearly delineate who does what in tertiary education?
- Reforms in VET are not just up to governments- who are the drivers and what is their role?
- Is change affordable and who should pay?

Good questions, aren't they? The discussion paper is here:

http://www.skillsaustralia.gov.au/PDFs_RTFS/discussionpaper-creatingnewdirectionforVET.pdf

If you'd like to have a go at helping to answer one or two of the questions, public meetings are scheduled around the country, or you can make a formal submission before 26 November. Details here:

<http://www.skillsaustralia.gov.au/VETdiscussionpaper.shtml>

Notice of Annual General Meeting

Australasian Association for Institutional Research

2010 Annual General Meeting
10.00am-10.45am
Friday 12th November, 2010

Four Points by Sheraton
10-14 Eastern Beach Road
Geelong Victoria Australia

Agenda

1. Attendance, Apologies and Proxies
2. Confirmation of Minutes of 2009 AGM
3. President's Report
4. Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement
5. Election of President & Committee (two year term)
6. Planning for 2011 AAIR Forum
7. General Business
8. Next Meeting
9. Closure

Dean Ward
Hon Secretary

If you are unable to attend, you can submit a Proxy Form, which is downloadable from:

http://aair.org.au/Assets/2010_08_30%20Notice%20of%20AGM%20and%20Proxy%202010.pdf

20. The AQF has many stakeholders

The proposed changes to the AQF are generating lots of debate from all corners of the education fraternity. One of the voices that seems a little overlooked is that of industry. The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry's August submission to the AQF discussion paper has a number of observations to make about the proposed structure of the AQF, notional durations of learning, and about generic skills. The submission is here:

http://www.acci.asn.au/text_files/submissions/2010/EET/ACCI%20AQFC%20Response%2008-2010.pdf

21. A couple of things to keep an eye out for

As ex-editor, I won't be able to bring you links for two documents of VET importance. Keep an eye out for the next instalment from Study on the Quality of Teaching in VET, which you'll see here: http://www.mihelm.unimelb.edu.au/research_publications_consultancy/research/qualityofteachinginvet/index.html

And the Productivity Commission's draft report on the VET workforce, due in November, will be here: <http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/study/education-workforce/vocational>

AAIR e-Newsletter – November 2010

22. Don't forget about literacy and numeracy

In October, the Productivity Commission released *Links between literacy and numeracy skills and labour market outcomes*. The study underlines the importance of really getting to grips, properly and seriously, with improving literacy and numeracy skills. The findings are pretty much in line with what we might expect, but it's good to see this paper out there just because it underlines the critically important job that's there to be done in this area, not least for existing workers – a job for schools, ACE providers and TAFE. We can lose sight of this a bit as debate gets a bit focussed about the mid-AQF contest between VET and higher education, and about apprenticeships and traineeships. Let's not forget about the Cert Is and IIs.

For the record, the PC's paper notes that:

- 'Returns to skills also varied slightly along the distribution of lower and higher skilled workers. Raising the skills of lower-skilled people had a larger effect on increasing participation, compared with further improving high-skilled workers' ability.
- 'Increasing literacy and numeracy skills had a positive, statistically significant effect on both labour force participation and hourly wages. Thus, from a policy perspective, if people's literacy and numeracy skills can be improved, then they will tend to achieve better labour market outcomes.
- 'Compared with raising educational attainment, most of the results showed that there was a larger payoff to labour market outcomes from improving skills.'

The paper is here:

http://www.pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/102024/literacy-numeracy-labour-outcomes.pdf

23. It's never too early

I liked the LSAY Briefing paper titled *Attitudes, intentions and participation in education: year 12 and beyond*. It simply highlights the need to ensure kids are engaged in their learning from the get go, and that the idea of post-school study is floating around from Year 7 onwards. More evidence that securing higher levels of educational attainment must be the cooperative endeavour of schools and VET and higher ed providers. There's lots of work to do on that score:

<http://www.lsay.edu.au/publications/2316.html>

24. VET and Year 12 completion

The Australian College of Educators (ACE) has released *Enhancing the retention of young people to Year 12, especially through vocational skills*.

ACE commissioned the Work-based Education Research Centre at VU to undertake the research on which the report is based. A series of case studies from both schools and TAFEs across Oz offer some terrific models to think about.

The report identifies a comprehensive list of key success factors – illuminated by the case studies – and a list of things that get in the way of a really valuable VET experience. Nice read:

http://austcolled.com.au/sites/default/files/RYP_ACE_DRAFT_REPORT_Final_12July.pdf

24. What is a green job?

The OECD's Local Economic and Employment Development Programme has released *Green jobs and skills: the local labour market implications of addressing climate change*.

It's a pretty useful report because it causes you take stock of the free and easy use of terms like 'green skills' and 'green jobs'. What are we really talking about? The paper makes the point that 'Local policy makers will need to better understand what a green job really is before they can design and implement policies and programmes aimed at supporting their growth.'

The paper gets a way down the track, though as the authors freely acknowledge, there is more thinking to do.

The challenge for education and training is to work out what kinds of green skills and knowledge are needed where.

As the paper notes:

- 'In general, it can be said that for low to middle-skilled occupations, there will be a need for traditional skills complemented by "green skills", most of which can be offered by on-the-job training programmes. Higher skilled occupations, such as those found in eco-consulting, will require a broader and more specific set of new "green skills", best delivered by educational and in-depth training programmes.'

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/54/43/44683169.pdf>

FOR THE PODDIES, VODDIES AND BLOGGIES

Just two podcasts to bring to your attention, and a list of blogs.

First, the National Interest program on Radio National spent a quarter of an hour discussing Skills Australia's discussion paper, *Creating a future direction for Australian vocational education and training*. The guests were Jim Barron from Group Training Australia, and Leesa Wheelahan from the LH Martin Institute. You can download or listen here:

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/nationalinterest/stories/2010/3051916.htm>

Second, 'Greening the Internet' is an instalment of Melbourne Uni's podcast series called Up Close. You'll need to scroll down to episode 102 on this page to find out why the net might consume 60 per cent of the world's electricity unless we get a bit smarter about online living:

<http://upclose.unimelb.edu.au/home?page=1>

And finally, you'll find a directory of higher education blogs at the link below. While they are mostly US-based blogs, there are others listed like the Hedda blog from Oslo. It claims to be to be a list of the 100 best higher ed blogs:

<http://www.onlinedegreeshub.com/blog/2009/100-best-higher-education-blogs/>

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