Emerging issues in higher education

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Overview

- Recurring issues identified in my work around the world during a recent national senior teaching fellowship and in other international work
- Good ideas with no ideas on how to implement them are wasted ideas
- Change doesn’t just happen but must be led, and deftly
The need to develop work ready *plus* graduates for an uncertain future

People who are not just work ready for today but work ready *plus* for tomorrow (95% of the world’s leaders have a degree). The plus can include being:

- Sustainability literate
- Change implementation savvy
- Creative and inventive not just ‘regurgitative’
- Clear on where one stands on the tacit assumptions driving the 21st century agenda, assumptions like:
  - ‘growth is good’
  - ‘consumption is happiness’
  - ‘ICT is always the answer’
  - ‘globalisation is great’

For detailed tips see the ‘Right Outcomes’ section of the FLIPCurric site
Validating learning outcomes

Key reference points for assuring learning standards: whose voice counts most/least?

- National Qualifications Framework or equivalent
- The University’s mission and its graduate attributes
- Learning outcome standards determined by ALTC discipline groups, UK subject benchmarks/Quality Code, AHELO, WASC, NILOA, DESD, BCA etc.
- The learning outcomes for courses of the same name in other places
- External professional accreditation standards (when applicable)
- Results from inter-institutional benchmarking, peer review
- Academic experts’ input, inter-institutional peer review and moderation
- Key capabilities identified by successful early career graduates/alumni/in job advertisements
- Employer feedback; input from External Course Advisory Committees
- The results of School/Department Reviews
- Government policy and funding incentives
- What parents, prospective students and others say they want
- Plus?
Need for a shared professional capability framework
Professional capability subscales

Personal capabilities
• Self awareness and regulation
• Decisiveness
• Commitment

Interpersonal capabilities
• Influencing
• Empathising

Cognitive capabilities
• Diagnosis
• Strategy
• Flexibility and responsiveness
Top ranking capabilities successful graduates in 9 professions

1. Being able to organise work and manage time effectively (GSK)
2. Wanting to produce as good a job as possible (P)
3. Being able to set and justify priorities (C)
4. Being able to remain calm under pressure or when things go wrong (P)
5. Being willing to face and learn from errors and listen openly to feedback (P)
6. Being able to identify the core issue from a mass of detail in any situation (C)
7. Being able to work with senior staff without being intimidated (IP)
8. Being willing to take responsibility for projects & how they turn out (P)
9. Being able to develop and contribute positively to team-based projects (IP)
10. A willingness to persevere when things are not working out as anticipated (P)
11. The ability to empathise and work productively with people from a wide range of backgrounds (IP)
12. Being able to develop and use networks of colleagues to help solve key workplace problems (IP)

Code: GSK – generic skills & knowledge; P-personal capability; IP – interpersonal capability
C – cognitive capability
Capabilities greater than 4/5 on importance for 147 Western Sydney employers

Personal capabilities
• Willing to learn from errors; calm under pressure; perseveres; responsible; wants to do a good job; ethical practitioner; sustainability literate; adaptable; knows own strengths/ weaknesses; can defer judgement; pitches in; has sense of humour & perspective

Interpersonal capabilities
• Empathy – can work with diversity; listens; networks well; team-player; communicates effectively; understands organisations; not intimidated

Cognitive capabilities
• Can set priorities; sees key point; diagnostic not fixed approach; can adjust plans in practice; independent thinker; creative & enterprising

Generic skills & knowledge
• Can organise and manage workload; effective user of IT; effective at self-managed learning and professional development; sustainability literate
Powerful Assessment

- Assess less but better
- What you learn is what you assess
- Focus on the capabilities that count and ability to draw appropriately from and deliver key skills and knowledge
- Dilemma-based, problem based, integrated assessment (real world or simulated) – decreases the chance of plagiarism
- Creativity and invention not just regurgitation
- How to scale this up in large U.G. programs

For detailed tips see the ‘Right Assessment’ Section of the FLIPCurric site
Universities and the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals

- The SDGs cover social, cultural, economic and environmental sustainability

- 193 countries have signed up to the SDGs

- Universities are ideally positioned to help their country address these goals in research, teaching and engagement

- The Times HES has just launched impact rankings based on the SDGs (see: https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/university-impact-rankings-faqs)

- The ACU has addressing these as a key strategic priority and is planning a survey of its 500 member universities on best practice in addressing them
Growing interest in social entrepreneurship capstones as a way to address the SDGs

• Keynote at the International conference of entrepreneurship educators at Oxford in September

• Sydney School of Entrepreneurship & links to Sweden

• Switzerland, St Galen and OIKOS

• UN Regional Centres of Expertise in ESD and use of a social entrepreneurship capstone

• A powerful form of Work Integrated Learning and university-community engagement
ICT in higher education

“Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?”

T. S. Eliot

• Need for agreed quality tests on its use for learning

• Need valid assessment when identifying which tool is ‘effective’ (e.g. assessment which involves regurgitation vs dilemma based assessment)

• A focus on ICT literacy and the critical appraisal of the pros and cons of ‘the fourth industrial revolution’ in all programs – ICT as a focus of the curriculum not just as a learning tool
Intercultural communication & international education

• Work with the University of the North West in South Africa
• Increased focus on risk management and QA for international students
Labor review of PSE and potential for a national office for L&T in tertiary education

- Potential to set up a national Teaching and Learning Office for Tertiary Education (c.f. Ako Aotearoa)
- Interest in pathways programs
- Greater focus on TAFE
- Commitment to student protection
- QA for international education and regulation of all providers
- Potential to link up with HEPPQN and CABF
Professional recognition and development

- Need to validate our Tertiary Teaching capability framework by undertaking studies of successful tertiary educators using the research framework from our studies of successful performers in 10 professions.

- Need to replicate and use the findings of the *Learning Leaders in Times of Change* study for leadership selection and development.

- See the *Making it Happen* Section of the FLIPCurric Site – validated by the 3700 L&T leaders who co-created the site.
'Good ideas with no ideas on how to implement them are wasted ideas'

- Engaging the disengaged
- Recognising that change is learning
- Culture (‘how we do things around here’) counts

For detailed tips on successful implementation and how to build a change capable culture see the ‘Making it Happen’ section of the FLIPCurric site
Hot spots for regulators

– Sound governance confirmed via external review;
– Course design, valid outcomes and valid assessment as per FLIPCurric;
– QA for work integrated learning;
– Assessment clarity (e.g. via first class, use of assessment focused learning guides);
– Academic integrity and prevention of contract cheating;
– Robust admissions;
– QA for third party providers and assuring agent quality;
– Clear complaints’ management process & contact person;
– Quality of ICT-enabled learning;
– Interest in a first year exit survey as part of QILT.
The New University & College

- A careful focus on validating program level outcomes and developing work ready *plus* graduates
- Specific transdisciplinary attention to the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals in partnership with their surrounding communities
- Equal attention to social as well as commercial entrepreneurship
- A shared moral purpose
- STEAM not STEM
- Helping every student consider where they stand on the tacit assumptions driving the 21st century agenda
- A focus on standards not standardisation
- Operating as living laboratories and models on how to manage change effectively
Some emerging myths?

- Information is learning
- Teaching is learning
- Learning is not a profoundly social experience
- ICT is always the answer
- HE is a cost not an investment; and is a business not a public service
- HE’s sole purpose it to produce work ready graduates for today
- Change is an event like the launch of a strategic plan not a complex learning/unlearning process
- All change is progress
- Change is achieved through brute logic
- Consensus should be around the table not around the data
- The knight on a white charger myth
- Public humiliation and rankings make HEIs improve
- Rewarding individual excellence rather than team improvement gives most benefit
- Competition is more effective than collaboration
- Quality inputs guarantees quality outcomes
- High satisfaction scores means high quality graduates
- When in doubt restructure
Further reading and resources


