

## **The Role and Impact of Faculty Development on Learning and Teaching Outcomes in Higher Education**

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*... the academic profession needs training in much the same way as academics consider that other professions need it and indeed provide it for them. This means that the training itself must be professional, that it should normally lead to recognized academic qualifications, that it should be closely allied to practice, and that – above all – it must be associated with relevant research. (Elton 1987, p.76)*

*The attitude that exists within academia that one doesn't train to teach will not be possible in the future. University teaching is quite different from school teaching. If academics are to enjoy the freedom to develop their own courses and control their examination and assessment methods, they must be properly qualified to do so. (Review Committee on Higher Education Financing and Policy 1997, p.57)*

*It is ironic that academics – the professionals who nurture all other professionals in every field of endeavour – continue to eschew professional qualifications for themselves. (Review Committee on Higher Education Financing and Policy 1997, p.147)*

*The training that academic staff receive in order to meet the challenges posed by massification, diversity and the move to flexible learning, is scant. .... The point has often been made that university teaching is perhaps the only remaining profession not to have developed a professional structure. (HERDSA 1997, p.15)*

*With the exception of the 'oldest profession on the world', university teachers are now members of the only profession in the United Kingdom for which there is no recognised or required course of training. (Dallat & Rae 1993, p.270)*

### **Introduction**

The need to provide some form of professional development for academic staff who teach in higher education is well recognised and most universities have special centres or units dedicated to this task. Professional development is, of course, a core feature of most professions but it has a special role in higher education due to the particular nature of this work. This is because teaching in higher education can be considered to embody two quite distinct areas of knowledge – the knowledge related to the discipline and the knowledge related to teaching (Warren Piper 1994). The problem is that whereas individuals might spend some eight years developing specialised knowledge in their discipline area, and a doctoral degree is usually considered to be a requirement to “teach”, the development of knowledge related to teaching is rarely considered. The possession of a recognised qualification in teaching is not a requirement for most teaching positions in our universities, nor is there a requirement for any ongoing systematic professional development.

Increased student participation in higher education and the increasing diversity of these students, combined with a renewed focus on learning outcomes, have resulted in new attention being paid to the work of academic development units (Blackwell and Blackmore, 2003; Fraser, 2005; Elvidge, 2005). This carries both great opportunities as well as great risks for those involved with academic development. Risks because academic developers will have to justify their approaches, methods and outcomes as never before. The development of the professionalisation of higher education teaching will require the articulation of the professional knowledge base that underpins the practice of university teaching, the ways staff develop this professional knowledge, agreed standards of professional practice and the ways in which attainment of these standards of professional practice can be validated and publicly recognised. Similarly, the professionalisation of academic development will require academic developers to articulate their knowledge base and provide evidence of the effectiveness of their practice in terms of teaching and student learning outcomes.

## **The Australian Context**

While many of the issues related to faculty development and student learning in higher education are common across different countries, there are some local differences in both organisational and governance structures and in language that need to be noted in trans-national dialogues to avoid any misunderstandings. The Appendix to this paper summarises features of higher education in Australia and some of the current developments, especially as they affect academic development. Perhaps the key feature of Australian higher education to note is that nearly all universities are publicly funded and subject to strong Government regulation.

It is also worth noting that “faculty” is not a term used in Australia in the sense that it is used in North America. Faculty are referred to in Australia as “academic staff” and the term faculty is reserved for organisational units above the level of departments and schools. In Australia we use the term “academic development” rather than faculty development and the generic term for faculty development centres is “academic development units.” The difference in terminology is not trivial and worth exploring. Faculty development implies activities focused on the individual while the term academic development is used more inclusively to include organisational units, curriculum, policies, systems as well as individuals. Indeed some academic development units have explicitly decided not to work with individuals at all, deciding that maximum sustainable benefits can be achieved through working with systems. Another feature of this difference is that faculty development tends to focus on the teacher rather than on learning and the student experience.

## **The Changing Role of Academic Development Units**

Academic development units in Australia have been subject to three major types of changes in recent years. First, the organisational location of academic staff development has varied depending on the views of institutional management and also the particular position in the cycle of managerial change institutions happen to be in. Typically there is a call for an academic development unit which is centralised to be dispersed across the organisational units of the university such as departments because the unit is seen to be out of touch and remote from the disciplinary cultures of departments. Invariably such moves are followed some years later by the recognition that there needs to be a focused strategic organisational structure that meets the needs of the whole institution and central units are reformed. Parallel with these types of changes are changes in reporting lines. There is an increased tendency for academic development units to move from being independent academic units to be under the control of senior management in order to ensure academic development is focused on strategic institutional needs rather than the interests of individual academic staff developers. This has sometimes been accompanied by academic developers being reclassified from being academic staff to general staff.

A second type of change relates to the focus of academic development itself. An older model, where academic development was focused on individual staff, is being replaced by one that addresses processes within the university such as policies, quality assurance systems and curriculum. The argument is that systemic sustainable change requires change at the whole of institutional level rather than the behaviour of individual staff.

A third area of change for academic development units has been an enlargement in the range of functions carried out by academic development units. The core functions of units have been related to the professional development of academic staff related to learning and teaching functions. However, in recent years additional functions have been added to units including educational technology, quality assurance, staff development in academic related areas such as leadership, and institutional research and policy development. These different agendas bring with them different sets of values and work practices giving different academic development units different flavours, and, in some cases, significant internal tension.

For example, some academic centres get involved with accreditation, audit and quality assurance issues which can be seen by academic staff to be more aligned with management agendas related to the market place than education and student learning. This presents something of a dilemma for academic development units since the support of senior management has become a prerequisite for their survival. Recent Australian Government intervention in higher education,

including the need for greater quality assurance and outcome evidence, have given academic development units a renewed role and prominence in universities but this can come at a cost if units are not agile enough to play campus politics effectively.

Another consequence of the renewed focus on academic development is that questions are more frequently being asked about the effectiveness of academic staff development. Most universities in Australia work on a volunteer model where those staff (and it always the same staff!) who are interested in learning and teaching participate in seminars and workshops. This model, well documented in the literature of academic development in higher education, can be characterised as “preaching to the converted”. Providing effective professional development related to teaching for the vast bulk of academic staff that are focused on their research profile remains a central issue for academic staff development which will require addressing a series of very complex issues related to institutional leadership, academic identity, reward and recognition systems and workload allocations in our universities.

It would be fair to say that many academic units have been relatively complacent about critically evaluating the effectiveness of their own practice. There is little point raising the importance of academic development within institutions if the effectiveness of such activities are not readily apparent to the key decision makers. There is surprisingly little evidence about the effectiveness of academic development (Coffey & Gibbs, 2000; Gibbs & Coffey 2000) and developing a research basis for academic development must be seen as a key priority for learning and teaching in higher education.

### **The Purpose of Academic Development**

Determining the effectiveness of academic development requires first agreeing on what the purpose of academic development actually is and what it is trying to achieve. This is by no means a straightforward issue as a few examples will illustrate.

It could be argued that the focus of faculty or academic staff development is the total academic work engaged in by academic staff, not just the activities related to teaching. Thus, one approach to academic staff development could be helping staff find an appropriate balance between their research and teaching activities which could, ironically, involve lowering the quality of teaching and hence student learning.

Alternatively it could be argued that the focus of academic development should not be the individual member of academic staff but the student. The effectiveness of academic development is thus assessed on its effect on student learning outcomes and not the satisfaction of academic staff. In an ideal world these two outcomes would not be in conflict but in practice they often are. Another approach is to argue that academic development is there to serve the needs of the institution, and specifically the needs of the institution as a business. Being asked to introduce educational technologies aimed at reducing costs at the expense of student learning outcomes would be one example. In Australia we are currently facing an interesting variant of this model where the Commonwealth Government is about to link some of the funding to universities with learning and teaching performance measures. One of these indicators will be the percentage of units of study that students pass. Is pass rate a measure of academic standards or a measure of the quality of the learning environment? Depending on your view academic development activities aimed at maximising Government funding might not necessarily lead to improved student learning.

Another role for academic development units within institutions is to be a force for change and innovation, challenging the prevailing existing managerial directions and teaching practices. This is not to suggest that any of these alternatives are “right”, or in any way mutually exclusive, rather it is to argue that we need to be very clear as to the purpose of academic development before we attempt to evaluate its effectiveness.

## Future Directions

One of the exciting things about being involved in academic development in universities at the current time is being at the centre of so many fascinating issues such as the advent of new knowledge-based industries, new information and communication technologies and the growing internationalisation of higher education.

The demands on higher education to produce graduates is increasing and institutions will be expected to meet increasing expectation of society and deliver high quality learning. There will undoubtedly be increased attention given to the way university staff teach and, in particular, the preparation they undergo for their teaching role.

A recent major report prepared for the Australian Commonwealth Government (Dearn *et al*, 2002) investigated the current provision of professional development for university teaching in Australia and proposed a series of principles and practices for underpinning support for university teaching as well as a number of specific recommendations.

### Principles

University teaching is a professional activity that:

- is deeply informed by research, scholarship, professional practice and community service;
- can have a profound effect on both what and how people learn;
- is based on scholarship, critical reflective practice and peer review;
- requires a high level of expertise related to:
  - disciplinary knowledge;
  - knowledge of how people develop knowledge in different disciplines;
  - knowledge about how to facilitate the process of people developing knowledge in different disciplines;
- requires both skills and knowledge which can be learned and further developed through professional learning;
- is built on values, ethical principles and professional standards which are developed, negotiated and sustained by a community of professionals; and
- is accountable to its stakeholders including the community, governments and students through explicit quality assurance processes.

### Practices

University teaching should be:

1. Supported and informed by an independent body of professionals responsible for developing standards for both professional practice and professional learning programs.
2. Founded on a systematic program of induction and ongoing professional learning for all staff involved with teaching including those employed on a sessional basis.
3. Linked to a system for recognising that individuals have met the agreed standards for professional practice
4. Subject to quality assurance processes involving independent assessment with respect to the:
  - a) provision of both initial and ongoing professional learning; and
  - b) minimum standards required for professional practice.
5. Aligned with both national and institution-wide policies and practices related to teaching, learning and research.

6. Adequately resourced.
7. Embedded in the recognition and reward systems, career paths and opportunities for professional learning offered within universities.
8. Involve all staff directly or indirectly involved in teaching including those employed on a sessional basis.

The report made 14 recommendations including:

### **Recommendations**

1. All staff new to university teaching should be required to complete either a formal preparation program in university teaching or a portfolio demonstrating their teaching competence as part of their probation requirements.
2. Given the requirements for (a) quality assurance, (b) the need for a form of recognition that is portable, and (c) the need to embed university teaching in a scholarly framework subject to peer review, preparation programs should form part of formal award courses, which might include a comprehensive peer review of a portfolio.
3. The minimum standard required for professional practice as a university teacher should be that represented by the Graduate Certificate level. Possession of a Graduate Certificate in Higher Education would act as a proxy for teaching expertise just as possession of a Masters/PhD reflects discipline expertise.
4. Graduate Certificates in Higher Education should incorporate assessment of learning outcomes related to both theoretical knowledge about student learning as well as practical skills in facilitating learning.
5. The structure of Graduate Certificate in Higher Education programs should be flexible enough to allow for the needs and characteristics of different institutions and disciplinary fields, both in terms of mode of delivery and of curriculum.
9. Preparation programs for sessional teaching staff should, as a minimum, represent components of an accredited Graduate Certificate of Higher Education. This would enable staff wishing to complete a Graduate Certificate to do so.
10. Institutions should either provide, or provide access to, further qualifications in higher education building on the Graduate Certificate as part of their overall strategy of ongoing staff development and quality enhancement.

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. Do we have an agreed understanding of the professional knowledge that underpins teaching in higher education that could provide a basis for academic staff development programs?
2. How do we map the professional knowledge that underpins teaching in higher education to the roles of individual staff given the disaggregation of academic work (course designers, learning support staff, educational technologists etc).
3. What are the most effective ways for staff teaching in higher education to develop the professional knowledge that underpins teaching in higher education?
4. How can we best validate the professional knowledge of individuals that underpins teaching in higher education?

5. To what extent should the professional knowledge related to teaching in higher education be embedded with disciplinary knowledge and the communities of practice represented by academic departments?
6. Why is professional learning in the area of teaching in higher education held in low esteem by so many university academics?
7. Are those involved in academic staff development able to provide evidence as to the effectiveness of their work?
8. Do those involved in academic development engage in researching the field of academic development and implement evidence-based practice?
9. Do we need to link professional development related to teaching to the roles and responsibilities of academic staff and make participation in professional development a condition of employment in the same way as it is for other professions?
10. Should staff development programs for those teaching in higher education include a broader range of professional skills in addition to pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge?
11. To what extent should academic development reflect the priorities of institutional management versus what might be considered the values of education and what we know about developing student learning?
12. To what extent should academic development be a change agent within institutions?

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### About John Dearn

John Dearn received his B.Sc.(Hons) degree from the University of East Anglia (UK) and his Ph.D. from the University of Southampton (UK). His specialist research interests in science are in ecological genetics and evolutionary ecology and he has published many research papers in this area. He has held research and teaching positions at the Australian National University and the University of Melbourne and in 1984 took up a position at the Canberra College of Advanced Education where he was responsible for teaching the first year introductory biology program. He has strong interests in all aspects of teaching and learning and has been widely involved in the development of higher education, both within his university and nationally.

At his university he has been Director of the Science Resource Centre (a learning centre for first year science students), a Fellow of the Centre for the Enhancement of Learning Teaching and Scholarship, Academic Director of the New Student Orientation Program, Chair of the Faculty of Applied Science Education Committee, a member of the Academic Board of the University and Chair of many committees including the Faculty of Applied Science Education Committee, the University's First Year Experience Committee, the University Teaching Grants Committee, the University Academic Development Committee and the University Flexible Learning Committee.

He was a major writer for both volumes of the national year 11/12 biology textbook (*Biology: The Common Threads*) and was Leader of the highly successful Australian Biology Olympiad Team in 1994 and 1995. John was a member of the national Higher Education Council Review of Distance Education in 1992, a Project Director for the 1992 national Review of Modes of Delivery in Higher Education and was a member of the national selection committee for the Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching national teaching development grants.

In 1994 John was awarded an inaugural National Teaching Fellowship by the Australian Commonwealth Government which enabled him to spend three months in the USA as a visiting scholar at Harvard University visiting universities and colleges looking at innovative approaches to teaching introductory science courses. In 1997 he was awarded the inaugural Australian Award for University Teaching in the category science teaching and in 1998 was appointed to the national Committee for University Teaching and Staff Development (CUTSD).

From 1997 to 2003 John taught one of the annual Chautauqua staff development courses for the National Science foundation in Texas. In 1998 John was appointed Director of the Centre for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Scholarship (CELTS) at the University of Canberra, continues to serve on various Government advisory committees and has been a member of the International Council for Educational Development. He is currently an auditor for the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) and President of the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) and was appointed to the position of Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at the University of Canberra in 2003.

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| <p><b>Appendix:</b> This article appeared in the issue of <i>Educational Developments</i>, The Magazine of the Staff and Educational Development Association (UK), Volume 6, No.1, March 2005.</p> |
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## University Life Down Under

John Dearn

### The Australian Context

Australia might be on the other side of the world from the UK but the challenges facing staff and universities in both countries are remarkably similar. Nevertheless, there are some interesting features of higher education in Australia that need to be appreciated in order to understand some of the issues of concern here.

Australia has a total of 41 universities, 37 of which are public. They vary in size with about equal numbers under 10,000 students, between 10,000 and 20,000 students, and over 20,000 students. The current suite of universities emerged following the re-designation of what were called colleges of advanced education and institutes of technology as universities in 1990. Some 15 years later universities are beginning to form alliances based on perceived similarities in roles and histories. For example, eight research intensive and largely older universities formed, somewhat unimaginatively, the Group of Eight, and have been joined by the Australian Technology Network group, the Innovative Research Universities group and most recently the New Generation Universities group.

While the basic nature of Australian universities will be familiar to those in the UK, there are some interesting differences. First, Australia, like the USA, is a federation of states and territories and has separate state and territory governments as well as the Commonwealth Government. The significance of this is that universities, unlike say schools or hospitals, are funded directly by the Commonwealth Government. However, universities themselves are constituted through their respective state or territory governments, each with their own legislative acts and requirements. The Commonwealth Government has recently signaled its intention to bring all universities under its control, something that no doubt will be resisted by some of the states and territories who see universities as integral to their economies.

A second issue to note arises from that iconic feature of Australia—its size. This imposes a number of constraints on higher education, notably the lack of movement of Australian school leavers between the major city centres which are largely situated on the coastal fringe of the country. While we might talk of a single unified system of 37 public universities, in reality the universities in each of the states and territories remain relatively independent with respect to student participation. “Going to university” may mean something a little different in Australia where most students attend a local institution and many school leavers start university living at home.

### Current Issues Facing Higher Education in Australia

Like higher education institutions across the world, universities in Australia are attempting to come to terms with balancing costs, quality and equity in an environment of decreasing government support, increasing demands, changing expectations and rapidly diversifying student population. A feature of the Australian context has been the provision of higher education to overseas students, predominantly from the Asian region, who now make up some 16% of university students in Australia. The growth in overseas students has been driven in part by the need for universities to generate additional income. However, addressing issues such as admission requirements and assessment standards has presented most universities with some serious challenges.

Quality assurance, in particular, has been a major issue, due largely to the fact that Australian universities are self-accrediting institutions and until recently, unlike the situation in many other countries, lacked a systematic national external quality assurance system. The quality of Australian higher education itself has not been in doubt. However, in an era of public accountability, mere assertions of quality can no longer be considered sufficient.

In 2000, in response to the clear need for an enhanced quality assurance system, the state, territory and Commonwealth Ministers of Education agreed to the establishment of the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA).



## **AUQA**

AUQA began operating in 2001 and is conducting audits of all universities on a five yearly cycle. The process being used requires universities to conduct a self-review and summarise the results in a portfolio. This portfolio is examined by a panel of auditors who then conduct a detailed site visit that involves interviewing staff from all levels and areas of the institution. Their report, which is made available as a public document, includes a set of commendations as well as a set of recommendations with respect to which the institution prepares a response and an implementation plan.

The AUQA approach is based primarily on institutions being judged against their own mission and objectives, something seen by some as a weakness. However, AUQA expects institutions to have established and to be able to justify their own standards and benchmarks as they see appropriate. Another concern is the very large amount of time and resources being allocated by universities to their self-review and portfolio preparation, though perhaps this initial cycle will prove to be atypical. It is not unusual for institutions to say that the AUQA review was the incentive for doing a lot of things they had been intending to do for some time. Moreover, handled strategically within institutions, the self-review process can be a powerful staff development exercise.

Overall, the AUQA approach is encouraging an evidence-based approach to quality assurance and quality improvement based on requiring universities to state what are attempting to do and why, how they are attempting to achieve these objectives, what results they have achieved and what actions they have taken on the basis of these outcomes. This is an approach that those who work in staff development feel comfortable with and for this reason academic development units in many universities have played a major role in preparing their institutions for AUQA audits.

### **The Role of the Commonwealth Government**

The work of AUQA is complemented by the work of the Commonwealth Government through its funding mechanisms and its monitoring of performance data. One form this takes is what is called the Institution Assessment Framework Bilateral Discussions, a new accountability mechanism introduced in 2004. This involves the Commonwealth Government department (DEST) first preparing a detailed report on each institution containing a wide range of data covering finances, students, staff, learning and teaching, and research. These data are presented for a number of years for both the institution itself, the national average and the average of the group of universities the institution happens to be in e.g. the New Generation Universities. The institutional report is then used as the basis for a detailed strategic bilateral discussion held over a day between representatives of the Commonwealth Government and senior staff of the university.

### **The Australian Higher Education Review**

A major national review of higher education in Australia was conducted in 1998, a year after the UK Dearing review. However, this review and its subsequent recommendations did not engage effectively with the political process and failed to produce any significant outcomes. In March 2002 another review was launched, this time driven enthusiastically by the Commonwealth Minister for Education, and has resulted in the implementation of a large number of reforms which have the potential to significantly change the nature of higher education in Australia. The review, named *Higher Education at the Crossroads*, began with the release of seven scholarly papers (well worth reading) which provided the basis for an extensive public consultation process. The resultant reforms, named *Our Universities, Backing Australia's Future*, passed through the Commonwealth Parliament at the end of 2003. It is a complex package and only some of its elements can be outlined here.

### ***The Funding Model***

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the reform package is that funding for teaching and research has been explicitly separated. Actually, the split is between research on the one hand, through national competitive grants, and funding based on student numbers which is for teaching and scholarship. We are yet to have a serious discussion about what scholarship might mean in this

context and specifically how it can be assessed. The significance of this initiative is that it neutralizes any argument about designating teaching-only universities since universities will be research orientated to the extent that their staff are successful at obtaining research grants. It leaves open, however, how universities themselves might translate this policy direction into their workload and promotion policies.

The funding model for teaching is, however, very complex and is on the basis of the number of students undertaking units of study (subjects or modules) in particular discipline clusters. The Commonwealth has designated twelve discipline clusters (e.g. law, humanities, engineering) and provides funding to universities on the basis of the number of students taking units in these areas. For example, a university now receives \$1,509 per annum for each equivalent full time student in law units but \$16,394 for each equivalent full time student in agriculture units. The problem is that many courses require students to take units across a range of discipline clusters. Thus the income that universities get from the Commonwealth Government depends on both the curriculum structure of the courses and the elective units that students decide to take. If this sounds complex, it is, and universities are currently attempting to develop new systems to manage their finances. Furthermore, universities are given specific targets numbers for students in each of the disciplines clusters by the Commonwealth Government, with significant penalties imposed on universities that fail to achieve or exceed these targets.

At the same time, the amount of money that students contribute towards their undergraduate degree also depends on the discipline, except that there are three discipline clusters with respect to student contribution levels. For example, students studying law units will pay about \$6,427 per year but those studying arts and humanities units will pay only about \$3,854. In an extra twist, universities from 2005 can charge up to 25% extra student contribution – a gesture towards developing more of a market economy for higher education. Interestingly, preliminary results show little evidence that demand for particular institutions is affected by whether they have raised their student contribution above the base level.

### ***Full-fee Paying Places***

One of the most contentious aspects of the new higher education reform package is the expansion of full-fee paying places for Australian undergraduate students and the introduction of an income contingent loan scheme similar to that available for Commonwealth supported students. This will clearly represent some interesting issues for universities in terms of their admissions policies with respect to equity.

### ***Learning Entitlement***

In a new initiative as part of the reform package, from 2005 students will be entitled to seven years of full time study as a Commonwealth supported student. In order to implement this scheme, and to track students' study across different universities, all students will be issued with a unique national identifying number with the rather ugly acronym of a CHESSN (Commonwealth Higher Education Student Support Number) which will be administered by a new national Web-based Higher Education Management System (HEIMS) being implemented in each university.

### ***National Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education***

One of the most significant aspects of the reform package is the establishment of a National Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education – clearly paralleling the creation of the Academy in the UK – with a mission of promoting and advancing learning and teaching in Australian higher education. The new Institute will be established in Melbourne with a budget of \$22 million a year and a Planning Director has already been appointed. Just prior to its launch in August 2004 it was renamed the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in honour of a previous Commonwealth Minister of Higher Education. Amongst its many roles, the Institute will administer a greatly enhanced national teaching award scheme.

### ***Learning and Teaching Performance Fund***

A final feature of the new reform package worth noting is the creation of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund. The purpose of the fund will be to explicitly reward excellence, not facilitate quality improvement, and will allocate over \$80 million each year to those few universities that best demonstrate excellence in learning and teaching. Implementation of the new scheme has been delayed while negotiations continue over how excellence is to be measured – clearly a problem given that the scheme is intended to be equitable across all institutions.

Institutional eligibility to apply for the funding from the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund will depend on satisfying a number of criteria. These include providing evidence for the systematic support for the professional development in learning and teaching for sessional and full-time academic staff, evidence of probation practices and policies which include effectiveness as a teacher, evidence of systematic students evaluation of teaching that inform probation and promotion decisions for academic positions and evidence that the student evaluation results are publicly available on the university's Web site. However, this preliminary assessment carries no funding, yet ironically may have the greatest impact on improving learning and teaching.

### **Looking Forward**

The initiatives described above, which represent just some of the changes occurring in higher education in Australia, are not dissimilar to what is happening in many countries. While most academic staff may not be directly involved with responding to and implementing the new policies, they are certainly aware of the accompanying change and uncertainty – many hoping it will all go away and that life can return to normal!

Such a view, while understandable, especially from those staff who simply want to get on with their teaching and research, it is not supported by the available evidence and indeed the future for higher education looks destined to be characterised by further and even more profound change.

In the face of this change and uncertainty it would seem that one approach for academic staff is to work towards developing a greater professionalisation of academic work. However, an investigation conducted in Australia in 2003 revealed little interest among many academic staff in obtaining formal qualifications in higher education teaching, despite the fact that this activity was the predominant form of work for many. Unless there is a greater attempt to better clarify the nature of academic work and the relationship between teaching, scholarship and research, accompanied by the establishment of appropriate professional standards and agreed acceptable preparation for professional practice, academic staff are going to be vulnerable to the major changes sweeping higher education.

For those involved in staff development the implications are significant. Academic staff development units (ADUs) are by their very nature at the centre of change in universities. Increasingly there are pressures for ADUs to align themselves more strongly with university management and greater expectations on them to deliver strategic outcomes at a systemic level. To successfully negotiate this uncertain terrain will require renewed professionalism among academic developers on both sides of the globe.