

Academic Futures

Academic Futures:
Inquiries into Higher Education and Pedagogy

Edited by

iPED Research Network

CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS

P U B L I S H I N G

Academic Futures: Inquiries into Higher Education and Pedagogy,
Edited by iPED Research Network

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PREFACE

iPED (inquiring pedagogies) <www.coventry.ac.uk/iPED> is a higher education research network which facilitates research into teaching and learning, complemented by international interaction amongst practice-based scholars, academic developers and innovators, leaders and managers. Established in 2005 and based at Coventry University, iPED supports those within and beyond the university who undertake pedagogic research, offering an encouraging environment in which critical inquiry can take place. iPED has developed a community of academic colleagues of many nationalities who participate as contributors, peer-reviewers, critical friends and guides. Peer-led, iPED, aspires to overcome the barriers of discipline, culture, geography, and economic and hierarchic status which divide pedagogic researchers.

With particular interests in the staff and student experience in higher education, iPED undertakes its own research projects. In addition, iPED offers independent evaluation and project management support and/or advice to other pedagogic researchers. While providing regular workshops and one-to-one mentoring, iPED also runs an annual international conference. Over the years this has focused on *Academic Identities*; *Academic Futures*; *Academic Visions and Realities*; and, most recently, on *Researching Beyond Boundaries: Academic Communities without Borders*.

Initiated as a means of bringing our conference interaction to a wider audience, this book has evolved into a collection of new work. It exemplifies the iPED Research Network's diversity and allows both the links and the boundaries between disciplines to be highlighted. Transcending role, it draws on experiences and research at many levels of the higher education hierarchy. The contributed chapters are thematically divided into three sections: *Responding to Complexity*, *Transforming Academic Identities* and *Pedagogy and Practice*. The Foreword, Introduction and Conclusion highlight connections within the work as well as offering an element of internal critique. The chapters are supplemented by commentary from critical friends, often representing a different discipline or country to that of the chapter's author, relating the work to that of other educational researchers and global contexts. Keywords are

provided to encourage the reader to dip into the book according to their research interests.

iPED would welcome your feedback via info.iPED@coventry.ac.uk.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

- CRWO – Contactgroep Research Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs (The Netherlands)
- EDIN – Educational Developers in Ireland Network
- EQF – European Qualifications Framework
- EU IST – European Union Information Society Technologies
- GUF – General University Fund
- HE – Higher Education
- HEI – Higher Education Institution
- HEDG – Heads of Educational Development Group (UK)
- HERD – Higher education expenditure on R&D
- HERDSA – The Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia
- HELTASA – The Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa
- iPED – Inquiring Pedagogies
- JISC – Joint Information Systems Committee (UK)
- MA – Master of Arts
- OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- Peda-Forum – The Finnish Network for Developing University Teaching
- PDA – Personal Digital Assistant
- PDP – Professional Development Portfolio
- PEDNETT – The Norwegian Network for Higher Education
- PELLEA – Portfolio Evaluation in Lifelong Learning improving Employability of Adult learners
- POD – Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education (North America)
- R&D – Research and Development
- RAE – Research Assessment Exercise (UK to 2008, to be replaced by the REF – Research Excellence Framework)
- SEDA – Staff and Educational Development Association (UK)
- STLHE – The Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (Canada)
- SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
- VLE – Virtual Learning Environment

FOREWORD

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This is a book of its time, and one for its time. Higher education and the world in which it exists have both become “supercomplex” (Barnett 2000); highly dialogical, with multiple narratives about purposes, projects and processes. The ground shifts and previous securities crumble. In the new seismologically-challenged environment academics do their best to grasp the new opportunities presented by shaky ground while not being overpowered by the sheer complexity of the situation.

This book offers a model and a way of thinking to help in this, and sharpens the reader’s thinking about the fundamentally changed nature of the environment and about their own current projects and activities. So for example Stan Taylor’s chapter on the changing nature of the doctorate gives us an account of the breakup of the Humboldtian tradition and the seismological shifts occurring in doctoral study, not only towards “McDoctorates” but in multiple other directions. Other chapters focus on the detail of innovations and their implementation within a context where the pace of technological development is almost breathtaking, for example the chapter on being a “reluctant podcaster” by Aisha Walker.

What all the chapters have in common is the rigorous and grounded approach based on evidence. However they eschew any simplistic notion of an “evidence-based approach”, one which sees empirical evidence as presenting universally-applicable answers. Rather, the relationship between evidence, theory and implications for practice is cast in multiple subtle shades across the book. This is appropriate in a postmodern age. There is no assumption of “one right way”, and no aspiration to provide right answers. The book as a whole provides insights to empower readers and help them become more adaptable, strengthening their alertness to their environment and clarity of their gaze.

The book focuses on analysing and enhancing pedagogical practice, areas in which the notion of the “reflective practitioner” tends to be dominant (Ecclestone 1996: 146-161). Several authors elsewhere have

noted that despite its ubiquity in HE teaching courses and elsewhere it is a flawed and partial concept. While there is nothing wrong with “reflection” (which is in some instances of its use simply a synonym for “thinking”), there is a need to work at excavating the assumptions, values and attitudes behind our practices and engaging critically with them. Important in this project is the role of research and scholarship in providing better ways of conceptualising the world and developing new theory, in generating “sensitizing” theory and frameworks as well as substantive ones (Sibeon 2007) to give new perspectives on habitual practices. This book points to good ways forward in this.

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INTRODUCTION

FRAMING A RESEARCH COMMUNITY FOR ACADEMIC FUTURES

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I was privileged to be the director of the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at Coventry University when the conference upon which this book is based took place. The University was undergoing extensive change, questioning its previous role and attempting to find a future in excellent teaching and in highly applied “third stream” research. The University invested in CSHE as a means of developing and sharing the best of academic practice. It had already established an iPED – Inquiring Pedagogies – network, brought into being to provide a space for colleagues to undertake and share pedagogic research. iPED held its second international conference in 2007. This conference stemmed from our wish – CSHE and the iPED network – to reach out beyond the University, internationally, to provide a space for discussion of some of the issues that we thought were important and interesting. By so doing we hoped to enrich our thinking by sharing two days with colleagues across the world. This book is largely the product of that conference.

Background

The conference was about academic futures. It was set against a background of very rapid and far-reaching change in the world at large and in higher education. Previous identities and previous boundaries look much less secure. These issues have been dealt with extensively elsewhere, and are identified now only to acknowledge their significance. Most developed countries are now reaching very high participation rates – well over 40% of the population in the UK attend university. We know that education is increasingly viewed and treated as a commodity to be

bought and sold in a market. Globalisation affects universities in many ways: universities engage with complex issues that can only be tackled on a global level; graduates who need an international perspective and capabilities; and an emerging global market for education.

Increasingly, universities are undertaking “third stream activities”, highly applied research, and development that challenges the discipline-based knowledge that has been at the core of universities. It is a messier world of “mode 2” knowledge that is trans-disciplinary, focused on problems or activities and not on individual disciplines. Central to this change is apparently exponential growth in the generation of knowledge of all kinds. Now, more than ever, “the idea of a university” is not a simple or a settled matter. It is no longer straightforward to say what a university is and what it does.

Neither is it easy to draw a line around the university to mark a boundary with the rest of the world. Boundaries of many kinds are becoming more permeable. It is more common for staff to move into and out of the academy during their working lives. Departmental boundaries are increasingly challenged, as universities organise themselves to provide problem-solving services rather than simply to offer homes for disciplines. Ron Barnett (2000) has spoken of “epistemological pandemonium”. It is a challenging and often an exciting time because the very idea of what it is to be a university is continually in question.

The makeup of the academic workforce is changing internationally. Again, this is a huge topic in its own right, but trends include a growth in third stream staff working in a more entrepreneurial environment and also a growth in professional support roles, especially learning support. There is casualisation, in places. To put this more positively, many have so-called “portfolio” careers, where people may choose to live a more flexible working life, directly controlling how they use their time and not wishing to be bound to a single employer. A growth in cross-institutional leadership and management can also be seen, more rooted in the business of the university and less closely allied to the academy.

An inevitable consequence of this growth and diversification is a diminished shared understanding of what a university is or of what it is to be academic. We can no longer think of the university as consisting principally of a core of academic staff as the main actors, with a number of walk-on extras supporting them. Universities are much more complex, which raises questions about the nature of academic work today and in the future. What do we now mean by “academic work”? Who does it? Many activities that were formerly solely the province of the academic are now

provided by a wide range of supporting staff. It is clearly no longer sufficient to say that academic work is what academic staff do.

Despite this rapid change, there remains a great deal of stability in many national systems. The number of academic staff undertaking a mix of academic activities is still increasing in developed countries. So whilst the traditional tripartite conception of academic work – teaching, research and service, or administration, is under pressure, it is still very much alive. However, the number of support, part-time, teaching-only or research-only staff is increasing proportionately faster.

So the future for universities is probably less obvious than it has been at any time in the past. A great deal within and beyond the university is in flux. This leads to feelings of uncertainty, even of crisis. The death of the university has been announced by some, somewhat prematurely perhaps. Viewed more positively, there has never been a more fascinating time to be involved in higher education or researching it, precisely because of all this change.

An academic practice focus

The name of the iPED network may seem to imply a focus solely on teaching and learning, but a much broader view has been taken, encompassing the whole of academic work. CSHE and the iPED network have taken an “academic practice” approach to academic work, seeing it as a group of interconnected activities – teaching, research, leading and managing – and as being bound up with ideas of academic identity and academic role. We believe that what it is to be academic is at risk in a fast-changing environment where there is no automatic respect for academic values, especially when they have not been clearly articulated. We ask:

- What may it now mean to be academic or to do academic work?
- How do people learn to do academic work?
- How can they be helped to do it more effectively?

To argue for the distinctiveness of academic work may seem backward-looking. It is easy to appear to hark back to an age, in Halsey’s words, of “donnish dominion” (1995) when crusty, tweed-clad academics, pale, male and stale, relaxed in the senior common room, remote from the world, but our interest is in academic futures.

There are at least two strong constraints that discourage us from making academic work the centre of our concerns. The first is found in a discourse that sees universities as businesses, nothing more nor less,

describable in much the same terms. We are now used to talking about institutional missions, corporate plans, outputs, products, customers and markets. To argue that there is anything distinctive about academic work can sound like sanctimonious special pleading, when universities are now businesses. A counter-proposal is that universities are increasingly and necessarily businesslike but they are not simply businesses. Whilst universities are certainly drawn into the “real” commercial world, and gain much of their contemporary vitality from these interactions, they have particular characteristics, none of which is unique to universities but which, taken together, suggest a continuing special character. They retain a critiquing function; as the gateways to social opportunity they must behave equitably; they provide a space for so-called “pure” research that has no immediate commercial benefit; they also have the job of making knowledge cheap or free and widely available. This last function may sit uncomfortably in a world of patents and commercial advantage but universities have the role of destroying the economic value of intellectual capital, as Steve Fuller from the University of Warwick has suggested (2002: 150).

The second potential constraint on our thinking about academic work is a discourse of inclusion, of equal opportunities. To give academic work particular attention seems to ignore that all staff working in a university contribute to excellence, and that teamwork, transcending traditional staff definitions, is essential for success. Not long ago I spoke to a group of administrators about working with academic staff. A member of the audience was clearly not impressed with this line. At the end he said “I don’t want to hear about academic staff being different and needing particular attention. I work in HR and my job is to make everyone the same.” This is perhaps an example of confusing equity with uniformity. However, inclusiveness is a real concern. Academic staff have better terms and conditions than many others working in a university and are entirely capable of defending their vested interests. An alternative response to this sort of criticism is not to abandon the term “academic” and what it stands for but to start to think about ways in which being academic can be made more inclusive than it currently is. In other words it may be time to start thinking about what academic might mean, not to stop thinking.

An approach to academic practice

The iPED conferences have sought to take a view of academic practice that is strategic, integrated and scholarly.

The iPED network was funded by a university to make a difference to practice, for the benefit of the university and all those involved with it. Thus it is itself a **strategic** intervention. It has taken a very wide view of academic work and its context and sought to locate practice within that view, again as a strategic approach. This is not without its tensions. Many of those involved in development roles in universities have traditionally been attracted to the role by the opportunity to help individuals. Many interventions have been very small scale. The writers of one chapter express a common ambivalence towards a close alignment with institutional intentions.

iPED was also concerned about the whole academic role and did not seek to draw a boundary around teaching and learning, separating these from research. Instead, they were both seen to be part of academic work, potentially bound closely together and mutually reinforcing. This was not to deny the forces for separation, nor that the aspiration for unity was often no more than that in many academics' working lives. The third conventional part of academic role, variously called management, administration or service, was also part of a whole. This third element did not exist independently. Managers manage teaching or research or third stream activity; they do not simply manage. Overall, therefore, the conception of academic work was an **integrated** one. It was a happy coincidence that a number of colleagues had a very similar view and were willing to look beyond the conventional boundaries.

It was integrated in another sense too. It was as concerned about academic learning as about student learning – seeing them, indeed, as indivisible. These are fields of study that have often seemed far apart from one another, each deep in its own cul-de-sac. Much literature on student learning has been focused for many years on a “deep” and “surface” learning paradigm that has been immensely influential and that has only in recent years attracted criticism for its lack of attention to context. Much support for academics' learning has been offered from outside academic communities, using a managerial discourse that invites rejection, and with little understanding of what lies at the heart of academic work. Yet there is a way in which both of these areas can be united – with the idea of learning. iPED sought to place learning at the centre of its concerns, whether the learners were staff or students. It sought also to draw from all relevant literatures, rather than to remain within very segmented domains.

One valuable feature of the iPED approach, with its integrated view of academic role, is that it works across some very unhelpful divisions. For entirely understandable reasons, educational development – supporting teaching and learning – has often been pursued in opposition to other

aspects of academic work. Teaching and research have been viewed as mutually opposing claims on academic time. It has not helped that the majority of educational development activity has taken place in teaching-led institutions, reinforcing the “them and us” aspect. Another division is between those who support the development of teaching and learning expertise and those who have a more general staff development remit. These are two tribes that inhabit overlapping territories, but that seldom communicate with each other. These divisions may seem very parochial, as indeed they are. They are also entirely understandable, given the history of universities and of research and development communities in the UK.

iPED also took a very clear position on **scholarship** – that it mattered and made a difference. In this, it benefited from an enlightened university view. Pedagogic research costs money. It requires that staff are given time and encouragement to acquire the tools to review their practice and that they are encouraged to do so. It is a long term investment requiring sustained commitment, when the concerns of the moment can seem more pressing and a “training” approach may appear to bear more directly on those concerns.

The role of research

The purpose of the iPED initiative is to support highly effective academic practice by fostering a spirit of inquiry and by providing the tools to enable it to happen. The target groups would include all those staff members whose academic practice would beneficially be informed by the processes, outputs and outcomes of pedagogic research.

There are a range of forms of research that might be supported:

- At practitioner level, personal, non-generalisable research, such as action research and reflective practice, can directly enhance the practice of individuals and groups. A capacity to use existing evaluation systems and to design evaluations tailored for particular needs can be a widespread capability among those who teach.
- Larger scale evaluation research may take place for a number of purposes. Current practice at, for example, programme level, may be evaluated to inform the design of future provision; educational initiatives also require evaluation.
- More generalisable research, exploring key issues in current and future pedagogic practice, will normally be supported by external competitive funding.
- Institutional research refers to a rigorous approach to understanding institutional data to inform policy and practice, and may be accompanied by the design and review of systems and processes to facilitate IR.

iPED has acknowledged that people may have different starting points and purposes for research. The role of iPED is to help colleagues move from where they are and in their desired direction. Capacity building is a long-term strategy requiring sustained commitment. However, once achieved it can be a powerful resource in the improvement of standards of pedagogic provision.

Researching practice is not self-evidently a good thing – it may appear threatening, even alien. iPED, for example, is working in an environment where fast top-down change has been operating. There are insecurities and sore spots; there is regret in places for the familiar certainties of the past. Research may look like criticism of a comfortable and previously satisfactory way of working. So it is wise to tread carefully.

iPED is suggesting that teaching and other academic activity is researchable, that it can be improved by research. Yet university teachers – like all teachers – are traditionally suspicious of anything that sounds like “theory”, often for good reason. Some of what purports to be educational theory is in the worst sense useless; a great deal of what is written is really rather dull. In addition, the press of everyday life for teachers makes it very difficult to look beyond the immediate skills of the moment. A research initiative such as iPED’s must also be sensitive to the fact that the research capabilities of many highly experienced researchers may not be immediately relevant to pedagogic research. So we have to appear relevant – and to be prepared to look honestly at our own practices and admit where there are shortcomings. When an educational researcher meets a practising academic in another discipline, the learning needs to be two-way.

Disciplines and professional groupings are a complicating factor. There is plenty of evidence that disciplines make a difference. Not only does the epistemology of a discipline have an obvious bearing on its pedagogy – that is to say that what you teach makes a difference to how you teach it. There is also evidence that disciplines tend to organise themselves differently, tend to hold particular clusters of beliefs and values, and certainly to use different vocabulary.

So what happens when you invite academics from a range of disciplines to engage in pedagogic research? This is a research paradigm question – do they have to come to us, as social scientists of a sort, or do we go to them? The problem is at its most acute when dealing with the physical sciences, where academics will be unfamiliar with social science research methods – and indeed will have as part of their professional training learned that many of its basic tenets are simply wrong. Pedagogic research sits alongside much more strongly entrenched discipline-based

research. The latter is a major call on people's time – and one that is usually explicitly rewarded. It may also be a very different kind of research, as I have already suggested. There may be real tensions there. So we have to be aware that disciplines make a difference.

At its best, though, engagement in pedagogic research can be an immensely powerful aid to reflection and to personal and professional growth. It has been said many times that universities will study anything sooner than study themselves – they often seem very unreflective places – but pedagogic research that examines identity and purpose and that explores alternative ways of thinking and acting may be very valuable. Most academic staff have not had the opportunity to explore the nature of their academic role, to examine their own disciplinary affiliation critically, to look closely at their own expertise and how it develops.

About the book

These contributions to discussion do not make a tidy picture. They were not designed to form part of an exact whole and it would be disingenuous and unproductive to attempt to show that they did. They show immense breadth in voice, from the confident, public rhetoric of policy literature to the tentative, sometimes embattled tone of the seeker after identity in a less than comfortable world. They illustrate the breadth of discussion that has been generated by the iPED network and the several clear themes that have emerged. They are also a testament to the quality of discussion that has taken place, and that has been given space by the iPED network and its very successful conferences.

Responding to complexity

The opening section deals with complexity, and illustrates a number of ways in which academic work is becoming more complex. Partly this is because more is being required of universities from without, driven by major social and cultural change. For example, in “The Post-Humboldtian Doctorate”, Stan Taylor describes the changing nature of doctoral study and explores its implications for the capabilities that are required of research supervisors. Some of the changes result from system-level attempts to manage academic work. In “Challenges of Competitive Funding at Universities”, the writers review the research funding systems of five countries, noting differing attitudes to the mix of core and project funding. They suggest that there is no clear advantage in any one approach, but that differing regimes strongly influence behaviours, in

ways that may be beneficial or otherwise. They note the significance of context.

It is not uncommon for members of academic communities to lament the growth of “managerialism”. However, the writers of “Planning for a Sustainable Academic Future” believe that the complexity of institutions requires clear managing. The chapter reflects a contemporary uncertainty about the purpose of higher education and the kind of institution that can deliver it. It chooses to locate this in the need for sustainability – the writers themselves admit that it is a slippery term. Its advocacy of a “student learning journey” approach as a means of focusing on what is really important at that institution is an attempt to counter the silo structures of universities. Usefully, it notes that excellent learning will not come about simply through excellent teaching. Many people contribute to the quality of the learning experience. It also shows an awareness that it is only through management action that some of the desired aspects of an institution can be brought about. “Plaisir, Jouissance and Other Forms of Pleasure” points out that learning, which is after all at the core of universities, is highly complex, and yet is often represented simplistically. The writers start from a dissatisfaction with a purely cognitive view of learning, and the paper is thus representative of a significant change in approach to the understanding of learning in higher education. Whilst the initial positioning is reminiscent of a longer-running critique of higher education, from Rousseau to Carl Rogers, it is given an engaging twist with the application of a feminist perspective and a post-structuralist vocabulary.

Transforming academic identities

In times of rapid change it is unsurprising that issues of identity come to the fore, as old certainties are questioned. It is striking that the first two contributions are not about the identities of mainstream academics, but about those of educational developers. This perhaps reflects the emergent nature of that group but also its situation, within universities, not always securely within the academic fold and charged with achieving changed practices. The writers of “‘I’ and ‘We’: individual identity within communities of inquiry” offer a fascinating insight into the issues of identity that arise when major strategic change is attempted in an institution. They write of the tension between a tradition of autonomy and collegiality on the one hand and the new behaviours that are being encouraged at institutional level. There is also tension in the institutional direction: a drive towards individualism, in the form of research

performance, is to be achieved through the formation of a pedagogic research community, which suggests a rather more collegial set of values. The chapter neatly illustrates the problematic nature of “communities of practice” and warns of the dangers of self-declared notions of identity. The chapter points up that there are choices to be made and stresses that academics actively make choices, working within their situation to achieve what they want. Change is not simply visited on passive beings. “Establishing Identities in Professional Academic Learning Communities in Ireland” draws attention to the differing situations of educational developers in their various national systems, using Ireland as an example. The Irish network is portrayed as being in an early stage of development. Its emphasis is on the value of writing to develop a sense of identity and its writers question the need for a shared narrative. The article stresses the value in moving forward, in not using a mythical golden age as a focus of mourning, but to appreciate that identity formation is a continuous phenomenon. In “Academics as Entrepreneurs”, Andy Bissett notes the emergence of entrepreneurialism in universities as a challenge to more traditional values, but suggests that professionalism is changing not disappearing. Again, academics are not passive; they bring their own values and have agency within new structures. The exercise of that agency will limit the growth of entrepreneurship. “When Teaching in a Variety of Communication Forums is a Possibility: a systems theory perspective” is very different from the preceding chapters in that it draws from systems theory rather than the more commonly used socio-cultural and psychologically-based literatures to examine student and teacher interactions, including those which are technology-mediated. It offers a number of useful insights – such as that a system (in this case a learner) will simplify their environment by increasing their own complexity.

Pedagogy and practice

For a number of contributors to pedagogy and practice, technology-mediated learning was a concern. “Representing Pedagogy” takes a broad view of curriculum – it is simultaneously content, planning, process and other, hidden elements – and explores the challenges in representing it by technology-mediated means. The process of using tools to describe curriculum could be a valuable experience for teachers. The writers argue that ideas from community of practice literature – participation and reification – can help to unpack the learner’s interaction. “Online Lurking: Benefit or Barrier to Learning?” tackles the methodologically challenging area of silence, concluding that a balance needs to be struck between space

for reflection and a responsibility to contribute to others' learning. "Mobile Devices, Knowledge and Learning" notes the fast growth in mobile learning and the interaction between the technology and those who use it. The chapter emphasises the fundamental challenge to education institutions that are still based in a physical space and that work with linear time, as those boundaries of space and time dissolve and as epistemological certainties are challenged by local, highly contextualised knowledge. "Portfolios for Student and Professional Development" explores what a portfolio is, or might be, and how it can be used. It is a complex area, made more so by the many ways in which "reflection" is understood. There is an e-learning strand here too – e-portfolios offer a flexible medium but may face institutional constraints. Assessment can be problematic but the author suggests that reliability can be achieved. "Confessions of a Reluctant Podcaster" is an interesting example of practitioner research, bringing together a thoughtful analysis of issues, informed by literature, and a survey of student views, and producing useful insights into the potential benefits of the medium in question. "Problem-Based Learning or Project-Based Learning: a False Dichotomy?" considers the beneficial outcomes of a variety of Enquiry-Based Learning approaches. "Seeking Students' Perceptions of Individualised Writing Consultations" is a particularly welcome addition to the range of issues dealt with here. Academic Writing has a long US tradition but a much shorter one in the UK despite the widely acknowledged need to find ways to help students to write. The chapter notes two of the key issues in such provision – the need to be sensitive to disciplinary differences and the challenges of scaling up one-to-one provision that is usually appreciated but that is costly. The study provides evidence that academic writing support is appreciated by students.

Conclusion

It is sometimes claimed that higher education research is an underdeveloped field. Some of it may also appear to make little difference to practice. The iPED initiative is, I believe, an immensely valuable initiative. Not only does it make a contribution to the development of research capacity nationally – indeed internationally – it also supports those who undertake academic work in exploring their practice and its context. In its inclusion of the strategic and the scholarly, in its bringing together the theoretical and the practical, and in advocating and exploring an integrated view of academic work, iPED has sought to move beyond

some unhelpful oppositions and into a series of more creative tensions. This book provides evidence of the value of this work.

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PART I

RESPONDING TO COMPLEXITY

CHAPTER ONE

PLANNING FOR A SUSTAINABLE ACADEMIC FUTURE

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Keywords

sustainability; cross-organisational planning; student learning journey

Introduction

The range of contemporary national enquiries into higher education provides evidence that academic futures continue to change. In the USA, the Spellings Report (2006: ix) came to the “uneasy conclusion that the sector’s past attainments have led our nation to unwarranted complacency about its future”. Concerns included inequitable access to post-secondary education, and variable standards and outcomes including the low literacy skills of some graduates. In Australia, the Review of Higher Education Discussion Paper (2008: 1) focused on a sustainable role for higher education in a rapidly changing society:

There will be new social and economic challenges, and new opportunities, arising from international transformations such as the rise of China and India, from social changes such as the ageing of the Australian population, and from environmental transformations such as climate change.

In the UK, the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills has launched seven reviews of higher education for much the same reasons: “universities are integral to our national culture and a cohesive society. They create a broad community of learners willing to question conventional