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Strengthening learning and teaching leadership in the creative arts: createED 2009-2012

This special issue focuses on the leadership of learning and teaching in the creative arts through considering and reviewing the design, implementation and results of a strategic knowledge network which has been operational in Australian higher education environment since 2009, known as ‘createED’. At the heart of the createED project was a desire to strengthen leadership in learning and teaching across the creative arts disciplines, which we defined (for the project) as the disciplines of art, architecture, creative writing, design and performing arts (dance, theatre and music). The project was timely and important as, in 2010, Australia had some 65,565 domestic students enrolled in the creative arts across higher education institutions, making this cluster larger than education (60,738), engineering and related technologies (34,897), information technology (18,507), law, justice and law enforcement (40,549), but less than natural and physical sciences (79,651) and management and commerce (78,108) (Department of Education, Training and Workplace Relations 2010).

Since the early 1960s, in response to reviews of higher education from early examples such as the Murray (1957) and Martin (1964) reports through to the most recent so-called ‘Bradley review’ (2008), there has been a recognition that universities need to improve the quality of their learning and teaching. Over time, this has resulted in universities being charged with a responsibility to ensure that learning and teaching is being strategically led and managed. As a result, a number of academic development roles, typically situated in central units, were created to support institutions, discipline areas and individual academics to address issues of learning and teaching quality. Further development and refinement has seen the introduction of more formalised local learning and teaching leadership positions within universities, however, often these roles are performed in isolation from others in these positions, whether at the same institution, or outside of it. Yet active participation in a community of practice (CoP) is now accepted as a beneficial form of professional development, especially where the focus of these CoP groups is on common ‘real-world’ challenges and dilemmas relating to the task at hand, as well as on peer-to-peer learning and reflection (Drew 2010, Scott et al. 2008).

The createED project was funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council in 2009 with a remit to establish a network for leaders in learning and teaching – who we initially identified as Associate Deans and Deputy Deans of Learning and Teaching

and the other names by which such figures are known, which include Associate Deans and Deputy Deans (Academic) and (Education) – in the creative arts disciplines. The createED network focused on these learning and teaching leadership positions with the aim of bringing the figures working in these roles together to work nationally and strategically to enhance their leadership capabilities, address issues of importance in relation to learning and teaching, and research and publish collaboratively about learning and teaching leadership.

In the creative arts, as in the broader context of higher education, the leadership of learning and teaching, and who is doing performing this leadership, continues to be ambiguous and highly charged. Some argue that it is the academics who are actively engaged in teaching students who are, or should be, leading learning and teaching in universities today. Others suggest it is the Associate Deans, or those in even higher-level management roles such as those in the named positions of Pro- and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic). The ways in, and extent to, which individuals, disciplines or even entire divisions can also lead positive change and improve the quality, standard and relevance of learning and teaching in universities is also an issue of considerable concern and discussion.

In the light of these issues and debates, we present this Special Issue of *TEXT*, developed as part of the CreateEd project, which seeks to report on and explore this area of academic concern, to tease out some of its intricacies and to celebrate some of its achievements and innovations. In the issue's framing article, 'Strategically strengthening learning and teaching leadership in the creative arts through the createED network', project leader, Barbara de la Harpe, and project manager, Thembi Mason, build on the reflections presented in a previous special issue of *TEXT* on leadership in the creative arts (de la Harpe, Mason & Peterson 2011) to provide a reflective overview to the createED project ('the network idea'), its aims and aspirations ('the network ideal'), what transpired on the ground ('the network reality'), as well as, importantly, the project's current status and where it is headed ('the network evolution').

In 'Supporting creativity in architectural education: examining the impact of leadership, management and staff development', Anthony Williams and Michael Ostwald drill down into some of createED's findings, to present research into the issues preventing academics from taking on leadership and management roles (such as those of Deans, Heads of School and Heads of Discipline) in the creative arts. They discuss the impact that the specific factors of workload, career development, health, support, power relations, willingness and succession planning have on academics taking on leadership roles, and highlight these seven themes as significant barriers. At the same time, however, they acknowledge that for learning and teaching 'innovation to occur ... in a sustained way ... there is a need for strong leadership and effective management' in the creative arts.

Taking up one of these formal leadership roles in detail in 'The dilemma of formal learning and teaching leadership in the creative arts', Barbara de la Harpe and Thembi Mason discuss the issues that a number of Australian Associate Deans report that they currently face in this role. Drawing on data from discussions with eleven

Associate Deans from ten universities across Australia, the most common issues identified include the way the role is positioned in university structures, a lack of authority, the impact of high workloads on fulfilling the leadership and management aspects of the role, and the disconnection many perceived between their work goals and the academics they work with which is reflected in the negative attitudes of many academics to the role and its work. These Associate Deans suggested that finding time to connect strategically with others in similar roles and with academics in the creative arts outside their own institutions had the potential to contribute to a strengthening of learning and teaching and its leadership, a proposition which affirmed the work of the createED project.

Findings from two of the cross-disciplinary sub-projects that were a part of createED are presented in this issue. In the first, 'The industry studio in the creative arts: ten practitioner perspectives', J Fiona Peterson, Louise McWhinnie, Jane Lawrence and Josie Arnold explore industry studio practice and the implications this has for the design and implementation of forward-thinking educational studios in the creative arts. Through their presentation and analysis of multiple practitioner insights into the industry studio and its work, they provide a window into what the industry studio is, as well as what it should (or could) be, and recommend a series of priorities for enhancing studio-based educational practice in creative arts areas.

In the second of these project-related articles, 'Work integrated learning / professional practice in creative arts programs', Bill Wade, Sue Trinidad and Anthony Woodward set out to re-think, re-leverage and re-imagine the power of industry, education and cross-sector partnerships for the creative arts. They attempt this through presenting a series of case studies that demonstrate the range of work integrated learning (WIL) projects currently taking place in Australian universities. Their analysis reveals that WIL and professional practice activities are implicit in the curriculum for many programs, but suggest that there is a need for more shared knowledge about such approaches.

Picking up this thread of professionally-relevant learning and teaching, Eric Fassbender, Andrew Taylor and Peter Houtmeyers complement the two sub-projects from createED in their article, 'Student responses to a work integrated learning approach in a new media unit', by describing in detail a case study in which students worked collaboratively to find solutions to complex educational training challenges. They present the feedback from students which revealed they valued the work integrated learning opportunity and associated development of generic skills. As a study of how research can shape practice, the findings of the case study appear to have cemented the use of the WIL approach at their institution.

This Special Issue then includes a series of articles generated from another createEd-auspiced activity, a symposium titled 'Learning to be creative: revisiting core concepts in the creative arts in the academy', which was held at the Central Queensland Conservatorium of Music in Mackay in early 2012. This symposium took as its starting point Ken Robinson's seminal work on how everyone can learn to be creative to develop a series of examples of academics, disciplines and even

institutions and professions outside the academy leading innovation in quality learning and teaching.

In ‘Developing creativity across cultures’, Clive Graham evaluates a strategy employed in an Australian university to transition Thai university graduates, products of a predominantly rote learning pedagogy, to the critical-creative dynamic learning that is preferred in Australia. This strategy is premised on Robinson’s thesis of strategic creativity (2001, 2010, 2011) and on Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s contention that it is better to enhance creativity by changing the environment than by changing the individual (1997). Steven Pace’s ‘Rethinking education as experience design’ investigates how education can be rethought in terms of experience design – an emerging cross-disciplinary field of research and practice that is concerned with designing products, services, processes, events and environments with a focus on the quality of human experience. This article discusses selected theories and principles from the field of experience design, and considers how they can be applied to quality learning experiences, both face-to-face and online, and is of significant relevance to creative arts education.

Ashley M Holmes takes us to a very different learning environment in his reflective case study, ‘Social creativity at the coalface: a heuristic case study incorporating non-human agency’, which draws on trans-disciplinary literature in order to theorise the nature of the creativity involved in implementing a user centered design approach to ensuring the safe operation of an underground coal mine. Judith Elizabeth Brown’s case study ‘*Examining creativity in collaborative music performance: constraint and freedom*’ is overtly autoethnographic, drawing on this increasingly popular and useful methodology to examine what she terms ‘creative constraint’ and ‘creative freedom’ in collaborative music performance, focusing on the musical interactions and communications between a solo performer and herself as piano accompanist. This notion of collaboration as creative tool is also central to Jillian Adams’s article, ‘Creating the cook: cookery and creativity’ which uses the way Robinson conceives of the links between imagination, creativity and innovation (2011) to investigate how Australian home cookery in the post-war period moved from drudgery to become a creative art. It argues that creative cooking relies on recipes and how they are written and presented, as well as the cook’s skill and creative intuition.

Using a different set of technologies, Simon Dwyer’s ‘Lighting design: a creative, technological and collaborative pursuit’ highlights how some of the changes the discipline has witnessed over recent years have impacted upon creative processes, discussing whether lighting designers are learning to be more, or less, creative as their tools become increasingly advanced, a way of thinking about technology that is highly relevant in contemporary education and training. To complete this set of articles, in ‘Archives and libraries: trusted repositories of knowledge and vibrant engine rooms of creativity’, Donna Lee Brien and Rachel Franks investigate how contemporary libraries and archives function as both creative spaces and as facilitators of creativity. By examining examples of creative best practice from across Australia and around the world, Brien and Franks unpack how, as they respond to, and embrace, the digital age, these institutions function as engine rooms, as well as storehouses, of creativity –

suggesting that educational institutions could learn much from their modes of operation.

To provide a conclusion to the issue, expert commentator Linda Drew was invited to provide a commentary on a number of articles in the issue.

This Special Issue of *TEXT* presents a range of views on leadership in the creative arts: from the perspective of the individual academic and discipline area through to the formal leadership roles and ideas of a broader strategic focus. In so doing, the complexity of the higher education sector, and the place of the creative arts within it, are identified and discussed. The publication of this Special Issue has made an important contribution to a key goal of the createED project, that of promoting the scholarship of learning and teaching leadership and we thank *TEXT*'s editorial team for their generous support, as well as, of course, the authors and referees who have made this issue possible. We were also extremely fortunate to have a number of highly engaged participants directly involved, or otherwise engaged in, the createED project and its associated sub-projects, and we sincerely thank all these individuals for their commitment to learning and teaching in higher education. We hope this contribution to the topic of leadership in higher education engenders further discussion, scholarship and research on the topic.

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Professor Barbara de la Harpe, Thembi Mason, Professor J Fiona Peterson (from RMIT University) and Professor Donna Lee Brien from Central Queensland University worked on the CreateED project in various capacities from 2009 to 2012.