

ACADEMIC BOARD MINI-FORUM

WEDNESDAY 13 APRIL 2005

Been there done that? - Putting the Pieces Together - Rediscovering scholarly society over coffee -

NOTES

Convener: Dr Alex Byrne, University Librarian

Presenters: Prof Jill McKeough, the Dean of the Faculty of Law.

Prof Subhash Challa, Professor of Computer Systems Engineering in the Faculty of Engineering.

Introducing the forum, Dr Byrne raised the following questions:

- What is the interaction between Teaching/Learning/Research and Scholarship?
- Does scholarship mean something different at UTS?
- Does scholarship means something different for UTS?

Prof McKeough, Dean, Faculty of Law

Prof McKeough supported the general view that:

- teaching had to be informed by scholarship
- research fostered scholarship by encouraging curiosity, questioning and debate, but was not of itself scholarship.

She reflected on research and scholarship in legal teaching and practice:

- scholarship in legal teaching was critical to educate students to think beyond the technicality of Law and add value to their learning experience and their future practice of the Law
- technology might simplify and increase access to legal information, but it cannot replace the greater understanding of the implications of Law that the scholar acquires through ongoing awareness and research
- the team, even more so than individuals, is important in fostering and increasing scholarship.

Prof Subhash Challa, Professor of Computer Systems Engineering, Faculty of Engineering

Prof Challa introduced his presentation by attempting to give meaning to the terms 'scholar' and 'scholarship'. He noted that the definition of the latter sees scholarship evolving along with its contribution to society through:

- Teaching – teaching and scholarship were fundamentally interlinked: the passion shown by the scholar and the depth of knowledge of the topic greatly enhance the learning experience of students.
- Generation of “Intellectual Property” – if “Intellectual Property” had to be radically new, only the scholar with a deep and extensive knowledge of the

topic could create “Intellectual Property” by ensuring its discovery went beyond what is already known.

Prof Challa acknowledged the importance of colleagues in extending one’s scholarship, but noted that unfortunately the level of debate and sharing of ideas didn’t always happen as much as it should. It was important for UTS to create the conditions to enhance scholarship by encouraging greater interaction between academics. The Academic Board forums were one way to do this.

Prof Challa concluded that there was possibly no such thing as a complete scholar, as knowledge is endless. The scholar may be the one who acknowledges that learning is a life-long, never-ending activity and continues to build his/her knowledge.

Discussion

Human dimension of scholarship:

- interaction between people greatly enhances scholarship and makes it more effective
- scholarship is about sharing a passion, with peers or students.

The question of research vs teaching-only Universities

- Creating and disseminating knowledge are two activities which have traditionally occurred in the University. Research and teaching are intimately linked, and even if it is accepted that knowledge can be produced outside the University, it is critical that the strong link between research and teaching be maintained and encouraged within the University.
- Breaking the link between research and teaching at a university level will lead towards the emergence of an elite who would create and concentrate the knowledge that others would only disseminate.
- As much as scholars enhance the learning experience of their students, the teaching act enhances the scholars’ experience by encouraging them to revise and articulate their knowledge, and bring it to life for students with no background of the subject.
- While conducting research activities without teaching activities does not greatly impact on one’s level of scholarship or successful outcome of the research, it is generally accepted that teaching without involvement in research activities fails to enhance one’s scholarship and students’ learning experiences.

Can one be a scholar without discovering? Can a non-scholar make a discovery?

- The scientific model somehow biases the definition of a discovery: in science, the discovery has to be new. This definition cannot easily be applied to all disciplines (e.g. Humanities, Social Sciences, Law) where discovering can well be reconsidering and synthesising existing ideas to come up with a different interpretation that sheds light on an existing concept.

Nonetheless, in all disciplines, research activities leading to discovery requires deep knowledge and ongoing involvement. The university is offering optimal conditions for one to undertake and focus on research activities likely to lead to discovery as it

allows one to be fully involved in research activities as well as in ongoing contact with a large community of scholars in various disciplines.