**Research Talks**

A seminar series to support works-in-progress

#### When: Monthly on Wednesdays from 10.30am-12.00pm

#### Venue: Kingswood O.G.46 – option for Zoom available on request

Hosted by the Learning Futures Portfolio, *Research Talks* is a seminar series for members of the WSU community – HE researchers, HDR students and staff in Schools and professional units – to present their HE curriculum, teaching and learning research as a ‘work-in-progress’. The series is intended to be collegial and developmental, an opportunity to present a puzzle or a challenge from a research project (for e.g., conceptual, empirical, theoretical, methodological, or related to writing) and to draw on the collective expertise available for feedback that is both productive and future-oriented. The goal is to support staff progress their efforts towards scholarly dissemination.

For more information please contact [Dr Dominique Wilson](mailto:Dominique.Wilson@westernsydney.edu.au?subject=Research%20community%20enquiry) on (02) 9678 7838

## Next Session:

#### **Beyond listening to first generation students: culturally responsive and sustaining methodologies**

#### Dr Amani Bell, Education Innovation, The University of Sydney

#### Lorri J. Santamaría, The University of Auckland

#### When: Wednesday 13th December

#### Where: TBC – Parramatta South

Over the past few decades universities worldwide have opened their doors to students whose parents and grandparents were historically excluded from societal participation and higher education for reasons associated with racial, ethnic, socio-economic and/ or linguistic diversity. Many students benefitting from such efforts to widen participation are from low socio-economic backgrounds and/ or first in their family to attend university, otherwise known as first generation students. While some progress has been made in responding to the needs of these internationally under-served learners, many challenges remain, and there have been few international studies on this topic. I present findings from a series of studies undertaken in Australia, Canada, Aotearoa New Zealand, South Africa, the UK and the USA that used culturally responsive and sustaining research methodologies to critically examine how first generation students enact persistence within higher education (Bell & Santamaría 2018). Inspired by the work of Southern, Indigenous and post-colonial scholars (e.g. Chilisa 2012; Durie 2005; Smith 1999) we believe that these methodologies can help expose what Penny Jane Burke calls the ‘hegemonic discourses of widening participation’ (2012: 3). These strengths-based culturally sustaining approaches include a potentials approach (Airini et al. 2010), Participatory Learning and Action (Bozalek & Biersteker 2010), Talanoa (Vaioleti 2006), narrative inquiry (Denzin 1997), yarning (Sherwood et al. 2015), and photovoice (Wang 1999). I will reflect on the strengths and limitations of using culturally responsive and sustaining research methodologies to explore the experiences of first generation students. I will also offer a synthesis of the convergences and divergences of students’ experiences in different contexts. The seminar concludes with a discussion of the future research possibilities and practical recommendations suggested by the body of work.

## Past Presentations

#### **Soft systems and hard evidence in HE research**

#### [Dr Carol Russell](mailto:c.russell@westernsydney.edu.au), Learning Transformations

#### When: Wednesday 29th November

This seminar will examine how systems thinking methods can be used in higher education research and evaluation. We will review what is meant and understood by ‘systems thinking’ and explore some examples in higher education. Systems thinking can draw on ‘hard’ systems methods (measurements, feedback loops, etc.) and ‘soft’ systems methods (recognising and negotiating across different world views). It therefore provides ways of navigating and working across widely disparate research methodologies and educational theories. Systems thinking provides some pragmatic and practical approaches for working in an increasingly complex HE environment, especially where cross-discipline collaboration is needed and there is an imperative to base decisions on evidence. The seminar will include some activities to try out a couple of basic methods with your own examples

### Representation of graduate voice in the literature surrounding post university transitions

[Kelly Whitney](mailto:k.whitney@westernsydney.edu.au), Careers

[Gayl Purchase](mailto:g.purchase@westernsydney.edu.au), Widening Participation

#### When: Wednesday 11th October

With increased competition in the tertiary sector and the Australian government’s fee deregulation agenda, graduate employability is a hot (and hotly contested) topic. Enmeshed in the debate is a critical discussion about the purpose of higher education and where responsibility lands if ‘employment’ is a contributing measure of student success. This piece of research, affectionately referred to as ‘terrified novice researchers phase 1’ is a work-in-progress examination of the literature considering post university transitions to employment, specifically concerned with the lived experience of graduates in transition and the presence (or perhaps absence) of graduate voice in the literature in this space.

#### **Developing a research plan for yourself: If you are aiming for nothing you’re sure to hit it**

#### [A/Prof Michael Sankey](mailto:m.sankey@westernsydney.edu.au), Learning Transformations

#### When: Wednesday 27th September

In the hurly-burly of academic life sometimes prioritising quality time for research, or even just writing, can be something that we do not pay enough attention too. But this is fundamental to both our future prospects as an academic and our sense of well-being within our workplace. In this session we will explore some of the concepts contained within the article by Wright & Sharma (2013) around conceptualising a research program rather than a research project. We will also start the journey of developing a personal research plan that can align with both your interests and circumstances.

### Facebook and close-reading: tackling the “destructive resistance” of university students who don’t do the readings

[Dr Roger Dawkins](mailto:r.dawkins@westernsydney.edu.au), School of Humanities & Creative Arts

[Dr Navin Doloswala](mailto:k.doloswala@westernsydney.edu.au), School of Humanities & Creative Arts

#### When: Wednesday 13th September

In most university courses, it is likely the case only 30% of students complete the required reading assignment each week. Quizzes are commonly implemented to tackle the problem, often with some success. This paper documents an innovative solution that combines technology-assisted learning and metacognitive strategies in a familiar environment and an appealing way. The solution is a close-reading practice using Facebook. This paper reflects on the implementation of this practice on two occasions during a fourteen-week communications course. On each occasion the tutorial classes involved were assigned a specific section of a reading and asked to attend a closed Facebook group during their tutorial times. In the Facebook group, text-based questions were posted by the instructors. Questions were designed, following close-reading best practice, to motivate students to discuss passages in detail and build knowledge – using the internet. After each class, students collaboratively paraphrased the text in a wiki; and in the following week students were quizzed on concepts from the text. Trends from the quiz results and observations of student participation in the close-reading events demonstrate that close-reading can achieve what the University defines as a “good quality” reading comprehension, and that using Facebook as a technological scaffolding for close-reading results in a fun experience for all, also challenging students’ conceptions of the classroom. Moreover, close-reading using Facebook can solve problems resulting from a lack of student preparation, including poor engagement with course content and surface discussion of readings.

### Teaching development in research spaces: reframing teaching development in the doctoral curriculum

[Dr Tai Peseta](mailto:T.Peseta@westernsydney.edu.au) & Professor Simon Barrie, Learning Transformations

Professor Keith Trigwell, Education Innovation, The University of Sydney

Dr Jeanette Fyffe, Graduate Research School, La Trobe University

**2nd August 2017**

Probert’s (2014) OLT report *Becoming a university teacher: the role of the PhD* was in keeping with the long line of international disquiet about the indifference to teaching preparation in the PhD: “across the sector the low level of participation by HDR students in any kind of formal preparation for university teaching suggests that it is simply not seen as important by those who design doctoral programs, or by those with whom students work most closely, such as their supervisor” (p.11). Probert’s report set the stage for a considerable sector-wide challenge that is only now starting to be addressed. Although novel examples of teaching development and preparation opportunities are apparent in the sector, it is unclear how these opportunities are integrated into the research project itself. Even the most recent review of research training in Australia (ACOLA, 2016) shies away from situating its uncritical advocacy for ‘industry’ as a problem that might be usefully taken up as one of curriculum. In this presentation, we draw on our OLT funded project [Reframing the PhD for Australia’s future universities](http://reframingphd.com.au/)(Barrie et al 2015*)* and the underlying notion of ‘stewardship’ (Golde & Walker, 1996) to make a case for how spaces for researcher development (the research project, supervision, the intellectual climate, and skills programs) might also be understood and designed as spaces for teaching development. Data were collected from a range of sources across 5 universities (4 Australian and 1 New Zealand) each with their own distinctive approach to teaching development in the PhD. These included interviews with PhD students, early career academics, and institutional leaders involved in doctoral education. We not only present examples to illustrate how teaching development for PhD students can come alive in contexts that have traditionally been thought of as ‘research-only’, we also invite feedback on a conceptual shift for doctoral education - from one of research, to one of stewardship.

### “Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn”: Towards a model of engaged learning

[Dr Keith Parry](mailto:k.parry@westernsydney.edu.au), School of Business

**16 August 2017**

This presentation will discuss a work-in-progress project that aims to develop a model for engaged learning/teaching. Building on Biggs and Tang’s (2011) discussion of constructivism, it will be argued that students should become producers of knowledge rather than consumers of content (Stevens 2015). Academic engagement, which can be defined as active engagement in learning, is a key predictor of high achievement. Yet, too often, students are apathetic, lack interest, and only engage superficially with learning; leading Newmann (1992, 2) to argue that ‘‘the most immediate and persisting issue for students and teachers is not low achievement, but student disengagement’’. Undergraduates are too often passive during teaching sessions and Herrmann (2013) has proposed active learning as a solution to this problem. Such an approach engages students in high-level thinking strategies and develops improved cognitive skill (Stolk & Harari 2014). This presentation will detail a variety of unique activities that were used with students studying sport management. Working with both industry partners and blended learning staff, authentic and engaging learning experiences for students were initially developed. The evolution of these learning activities will be examined, highlighting the importance of co-creation with partners to ensure that both parties benefitted from the activities. Of particular note is a mock press conference that was run with the GWS GIANTS AFL team where the students were able to play the role of sports journalists and interview young, inexperienced players. The benefits for both students and the club’s players will be detailed. Further, an initial model for engaged learning will be presented. This model highlights preparation, authenticity, reflection, and collaboration as the key elements for creating high quality engaged learning activities.

### Changing the individual or changing organisational practice: Rethinking the impact of a university teacher development program

[Dr Jenny Pizzica](mailto:.pizzica@westernsydney.edu.au), Learning Transformations

**30th August 2017**

Evaluation studies of university teacher development (UTD) programs have often sought to collect evidence of the impact of such programs on the quality of university education by focussing on the individual teacher-participant. These processes of evaluation rarely trigger a reinterpretation of the meaning of impact, evidence and quality. The growth of social practice theories has given rise to possible lines of analysis of UTD program impact as changes in organisations and workgroups. Such theories have introduced new perspectives by highlighting that organisations are not only driven by social phenomena but can be conceptualised as social constructions. This paper is drawn from a close examination of the impact of a discipline-specific UTD program. It explores participants’ experiences of working in their home organisations following completion of the program. The hermenutic inquiry considers impact not as being about uncovering a stable reality or true definition but about refreshing and clarifying the interpretation of impact as a lived phenomenon. In this re-consideration of extracts from a doctoral study, the collective construction of understanding and practices within organisations emerged as a central concern. How learning and teaching was practised could be seen as a social process that is formed from the arrangement of the various practices involved in working with students and colleagues and understandings of education work constituted in workgroups, departments and the organisation. The experiences of participants in this study highlighted that contestation, negotiation, conflict, resistance and inertia within their workplace were a routine part of life as an educator. This suggested that a practice theory lens, in which meaning is seen to reside in collective practice rather than in individuals' heads, could be useful to make sense of the participants’ experiences.