
Title of presentation: O brave new (academic) world – some personal reflections

Abstract:

This paper presents my personal reflections on the inexorable and basic changes which have led to what is indeed the brave new world of academe. It explores such trends by use of the acronym, CHANGE, with the respective letters denoting: C for corporatising, H for homogenising, A for automating, N for narrowing, G for globalising, and E for entropy. It concludes with a brief comment on some essential questions needing further research and eventual resolution, and welcomes any dialogue it might foster.

Introduction

The academic world is indeed a “brave new one.” The changes to the scope and the fabric, if not indeed the quintessence, of the once very secure and in many ways cloistered world of universities are both fundamental and pervasive. Consequently, it is extremely hard to step back and reflect on their fundamental implications.

The aim of this paper is, in a small way, to comment on some of these systemic changes and to canvas the potential consequences of this metamorphosis. Given the conference’s theme, I think it appropriate to frame these personal reflections around the acronym: CHANGE: namely

- **C for corporatising**
- **H for homogenising**
- **A for automating**
- **N for narrowing**
- **G for globalising**
- **E for entropy**

C for corporatising

Universities, throughout the developed world at least, including Australia, are increasingly embracing the principles and praxis of large private sector corporations.

Perhaps the key reason for this is the strong push by governments to reduce their direct economic contributions to all levels of education, universities included. Carolyn Allport (1999), the National President of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), is direct in her assessment of the impacts on the Australian Federal Government’s 1999-2000 Budget on Australian universities.

In summary, this 'Education Budget' continues to reflect the Government's view that any real improvements in funding should come from private sources — students and industry. Public benefits that come from public investment in teaching and research are ignored in favour of providing more savings for the budget bottom line. It is not a view that other countries have taken, and it is one that in the next decade will need to be re-examined (Allport, 1999: 2).

Allport's noted concerns about the government's continuing 'ignorance' of the public benefits accruing from public investments in teaching and research are most germane to my present purpose. Indeed, the Australian Federal government has blankly refused, for the last several years, to fund the salary increases negotiated by the NTEU out of public revenue (Aitken, 1997: 5). It has also fairly recently argued that the bulk of the benefits ensuing an undergraduate university qualification, and all the benefits deriving from post graduate course work awards, are private ones. Accordingly, Australian university students have, for the last decade, paid a form of university fees through either a deferred loan payment via their future taxation payments, or now by means of either this deferred payment system or an 'up front' payment at the time of enrolment. Professor Don Aitken (1997) makes a telling point about the concerns that Allport raises.

In practice, we have had a compromise in which public benefit is assumed to be more important than private benefit: but the balance constantly shifts, and at the moment is shifting obviously towards the notion that private benefit is more important than it has been and there should therefore be more private investment. Those who don't approve of this shift should recognise that the university world has been quite hopeless at arguing the other point of view in any systematic way. We are much too used to talking to Government, and quite unused to talking to Australians generally (1997: 8).

In passing, I hope that Professor Aitken is implicitly directing his criticism at the senior management of universities, rather than the entire "university world". Why? Because it is generally only that level of a university's hierarchy that has direct access to either government, or to the general community.

This significant change in Government's funding policies is now coupled with the government's apparent encouragement of senior university management to regard the government as customers or clients, rather than as the primary funding source, as has been the government's traditional role, at least in Australia. Such a metamorphosis in the long-standing relationship between the Government and Australia's publicly funded universities clearly portends a "brave new world", for staff, for students, for managers, for bureaucrats, and for the Australian community *in toto*. Unfortunately, the only critique, at least in the public domain, of this fundamental paradigm shift to date is being put by the union movement and some individual academics, rather than by university sector's industry association (the Australian Higher Education Industry Association) or by the Australian Vice Chancellors Committee.

One such individual academic is Professor Alan Patience, who bluntly distils the effects of this paradigm shift on Australian universities. Patience (1999) exclaims that governments "have unleashed insular bureaucrats on the rapidly globalizing academic world." Further, he argues that:

They have forced universities to fund more of their own activities, thereby undermining the very autonomy that enables a great university to contribute fearlessly and truthfully to its society's development.

... senior managers in universities have been forced to be collaborative with the politicians and bureaucrats. They have become alienated from their teaching and research colleagues and, especially, from students whose needs

they now rarely comprehend. Almost none is personally in touch with the sheer struggle for survival that is now the grim every day reality for many students. ...

Instead of nurturing the intellectual life of their universities, senior administrators are bureaucratically obliged to ape the managerial styles of CEOs in private corporations, and to detach themselves from their academic colleagues (Patience, 1999).

Such reflections are admittedly personal ones, and have been hotly refuted by both individual senior politicians and university policy-makers. My own experience and personal opinions, formed over two decades as an academic, are identical with those of Professor Patience. Indeed, there seems to be a sometimes covert campaign in some Australian universities, to disempower, or at least to neutralise, the institutional influence of what are often regarded by senior university managers as ungrateful, unmanageable, and under-worked, academics. I am most keen to learn from others about their own views on such most rudimentary issues.

On a broader note, however, the observations of Henry Mintzberg (1996) on how any government activity should be measured and managed are worth serious consideration. Mintzberg (1996) attacks, in relation to the activities of government, the myths of measurement, an ideology, which he holds is embraced with religious fervour by the Management movement. He notes that many of the benefits of measurement do not lend themselves to government entities and that many activities are in the public sector precisely because of measurement problems.

The assessment of many of the most common activities in government requires soft judgement - something that hard measurement cannot provide" since in many public sector organisations and sectors "the appropriate output measure is not clear ", according to Caruana et al (Mintzberg, 1996 as cited by 1997: 4).

I would humbly argue that the traditional 'activities' of a university — teaching and research — are precisely the types of activities which should primarily be 'judged' through 'soft' as opposed to 'hard' measures.

Another clear trend toward corporatisation is the entry of a host of private-sector, for profit organisations into the tertiary (or post secondary) education and training marketplace. Perhaps the most concerning, at least within Australia, is the case of the "Greenwich University", the current identity of the International Institute of Advanced Studies, founded in St Louis Missouri in 1978 (McConville, 1999: 14). McConville (1999) contends that the emergence of the Greenwich University, "and a number of other institutions calling themselves 'universities' has revealed serious flaws in the processes for establishment of universities in Australia." He continues:

The issue of Greenwich University has raised a much broader question about whether there should be an accreditation process for universities and their courses.

...

The Greenwich University Act is the first Act of its kind in Australia, whereby the establishment of a University and its entitlement to offer degrees has been imported from a system where there are no restrictions on such matters (McConville, 1999: 14).

The Global Alliance for Transnational Education (GATE), self-described as “an international alliance of business, higher education, and government dedicated to principled advocacy for transnational education offerings” (Murphy, 1999) is another clear example of the increasingly blurring geographic and institutional boundaries of the educational marketplace. This push is an international phenomenon, with GATE a key ‘player’. Murphy (1999) poses two extremely important questions:

Public universities in Australia which are involved in GATE also need to address two other questions. First, are there no legitimate domestic content requirements for tertiary education courses in Australia? Second, do they really support operating grants, ARC [Australian Research Council] grants, HECS [Higher Education Contribution Scheme] places, etc. (or a student funding voucher) being available to all public and private, domestic and transnational, physical and virtual universities that currently operate in Australia?

To date, these questions are unofficially unanswered.

The increasing search for strategic alliances between traditional universities and corporations in the field of staff training and development is yet another inevitable consequence of corporatisation. Richards (1999), for instance, outlines a radical innovation in 'corporate learning' within an extremely large Australian corporation, Coles Myer, which has formed a strategic alliance with Deakin Australia, the commercial arm of Deakin university.

The new institute, the Coles Institute, will train Coles Supermarket's 50,000 staff across Australia, from year 10 school leavers scanning groceries at checkout tills to executives doing PhDs in marketing or organisational structure.

There are more than 1600 corporate universities in the US, some operated by large multinationals, and dating back more than 40 years. But increasingly, the institutions are being set up by middle-ranking firms.

Unlike the solid campus buildings of some US corporate learning institutions, the Coles Institute will largely be "virtual", although lessons on the Internet and through other computer technologies will be supplemented by training room courses."

Such an alliance leaves me with mixed feelings. In one sense it does have the undoubted potential to enable people who may otherwise have been denied access to higher learning a massive learning opportunity. Accordingly, it offers participating academics a wealth of potential new research avenues and funding source, personal contacts, and a very real chance to have their own experience and wisdom critically tested. Conversely, it may create serious academic conflicts of interest, and the sacrifice of both academic rigour and learning diversity at the altar of ‘customer service.’ Only time will tell.

Another crucial legacy of this corporatisation is the fundamental alteration, in some universities at least, of the policy on the ownership of university staff member’s intellectual property (IP). Such universities’ policies now categorically state that they legally own the intellectual property of all their employees, whenever and wherever that intellectual capital was conceived and developed, provided that it was done in the

'course of his or her duties'. Accordingly the legal right is with employers to determine how, to whom, and when it is made available to an ever widening set of 'consumers' or 'clients', as opposed to the now archaic terms 'students' or 'candidates' or fellow scholars. Such a policy goes right to the core of the social role and contributions of a vibrant university. This policy setting has created considerable debate and angst in the United States (see Cooper, 1998). In that nation there is a clear bifurcation of views on this very thorny question of ownership of intellectual property rights in the area of on-line course developments.

The American Association of University Professors [AAUP] has just published a report that holds tight to the belief that a professor's course, whether taught via computer or otherwise, should be considered that professor's property.

The National Education Association [NEA] also advocates placing ownership of course materials in the hands of professors. "We don't think that this new-tech environment means that suddenly, because they've got a Web site, the university owns it," says Christine Maitland, higher-education coordinator for the association. "I sometimes think administrators get a little carried away and think they can just grab these materials (Guernsey, L and Young, J.R, 1998).

The responses to such exhortations by university senior managers in the United States have been quite diverse. Some have clearly stated that university staff own the IP they produce; conversely, others have followed the letter of the 'work for hire' dogma, thereby asserting full legal ownership. Indeed Margolis (1998) is unequivocal in his conclusion about the primal cause of such electronically delivered educational material:

Market capitalism, not the Internet per se, is the force behind developing the wired university. Applying market principles to North American Universities will, as David Noble warns, fundamentally alter them and possibly destroy what we think of as a "great democratic higher education system". Ironically, however, students in their roles as consumers are more likely to embrace than to resist these changes. The brave new universities that emerge will be hailed as yet another triumph of the free market even as liberal education atrophies.

In Australia, the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) in its National Intellectual Property Policy (1996) is clear in its position.

If any clause specifically pertaining to ownership of copyright in universities were to be developed, it should be based upon the mission of higher education, and upon the custom of keeping copyright in scholarly work with the originator (NTEU, 1996: 3).

The NTEU policy statement clearly advances the case that "the purpose of intellectual property policies in tertiary education institutions should be firstly to encourage an environment in which teaching, learning, and research will flourish. This may be achieved by encouraging the free exchange of information and ideas within and between institutions and the community". NTEU continues that:

A secondary goal of intellectual property policies should be to facilitate,

where appropriate, the commercialisation of intellectual property created by staff and students.

In circumstances when these two goals conflict, no decision or action should be taken by a tertiary institution without due regards to the rights and wishes of the originator(s). (NTEU, 1996: 3).

These two conflicting goals pointed out by the NTEU seem to go to the heart of the dilemma within a number of universities both in Australia and throughout the world. In short, it appears that such universities' fundamental missions have clearly and irreversibly changed — whatever the reason(s) — and accordingly so too have the basic terms and conditions of employment. Perhaps the senior management of such universities needs to therefore clearly articulate such fundamental change both in their long-term strategic plans, in their employment contracts, and in their internal communications with their staff.

Monotti (1994), a lawyer, provides the following detailed comments.

the particular circumstances of academic employment and the purposes for which traditional copyright works are created are so different from those in traditional employment, that the general principle expressed by the Whitford Committee and contained in s 35(6) is not applicable. Instead, these works fall into the category where an agreement to modify the provisions of s35 (6) is appropriate.

...

A principal of common law is the prima facie right of all persons to use and exploit their skill, experience and knowledge to earn their living. *Ansell Rubber Co Pty Ltd v Allied Rubber Industries Pty Ltd* [1967] VR 37; *Herbert Morris v Saxelby* [1916] 1 AC 688.

[A] man's (sic) aptitudes, his skill, his manual or mental ability - all those things which in sound philosophical language are not objective, but subjective -- they may and ought not be relinquished by a servant; they are not his (sic) master's property -- they are his own property; they are himself (sic). *Herbert Morris v Saxelby* [1916] 1 AC 688. at 714 per Lord Shaw of Dunfermline. This principal is generally applied in the context of confidential information cases where a distinction is drawn between "objective knowledge" of specific information about the employer's business which is of considerable value to the employer and "subjective knowledge" which is philosophically personal to the employee and forms part of the general stock of the employee's knowledge gained during employment. (Monotti, 1994)

It seems that, if this precedent still applies, all universities claiming ownership of any employee's work must — in agreement with the 'originator' — determine what specific portion of his or her knowledge is 'objective knowledge' about the employer's business, versus what portion is 'subjective knowledge' accumulated by a person often over a substantial time period and which forms an integral part of his or her general stock of knowledge. To date, such an important task seems to be perceived as too onerous to pursue by the senior management of some universities.

Other aspects of corporatisation within universities, about which the experience of colleagues is most keenly sought, are:

- The replacement of traditional administrative systems with systems more akin to management control systems;
- a fundamental change in the stated (or actual) purpose of the university;
- a strong push toward private sector based performance appraisal systems; and
- a change in the structure and rationale of reward systems.

A colleague in another Australian university, Rob Walker, to me sums up cogently the essential impacts of such corporatisation of university life:

So we face a paradox. Our concern is with the pursuit of intellectual autonomy in the face of a need for greater co-operation, teamwork and respect for the specialist skills of others. And in this lies what I see as a crucial tension between academic values and the rapid emergence of the university as a corporate organisation embedded in a mercantile culture.

More and more decisions that should be strategic are made in terms of immediate financial crises, student numbers and staff costs. The scope of the academic dimension has shrunk and academic leadership has been displaced by efficient management. (Walker, 1997).

H for homogenising

This personal reflection is not based on any hard empirical research, but rather on the comments of other academics. These are coupled with personal reflection of the discernible changes, firstly to the distinct reduction in both the content variety and in the research problems and methodologies, of specific discipline and subject areas within universities of which I am familiar. By this I mean that there appears to be an accelerating quest, among some academics at least, for acceptance of their outputs by key policy-makers both at the political, institutional and research resource allocation level. The research allocation regime in Australia at least has recently been 'stream-lined'. Cathy Sherry (1999), a relatively junior academic, cogently sums up this research funding dilemma:

The funding crisis means fewer permanent jobs — and ferocious competition for those that do exist. This encourages everyone in the system — job applicants, junior staff, and promotions committees — to focus, almost exclusively, on the top of the research chain: articles in referred journals, books, PhDs, and Australian Research Council Grants.

...

This is where the Catch-22 arises. PhDs, ARC grant results and research published in refereed journals or books rarely reach the general public, hence their perception that we are irrelevant (Sherry, 1999).

In turn, such a restrictive and restricted research regime militates directly against the creation and dissemination of both controversial or innovative or 'extra paradigmatic' research and innovative learning and teaching resources. Surely these are the very *raison d'être* of a properly functioning and vibrant university. Indeed, some recent critics have spoken disparagingly about the *commoditisation* of curricula (Lewis, 1998; Margolis, 1998).

This growing homogeneity also applies to the apparently growing sameness of the desires, and in some cases articulated demands, of university students. This increasing homogeneity is observable in respect of what they want to learn (ie subject content); how they want to learn it (both in terms of physical location, and learning styles); how they will be assessed in relation to both their quantum and quality of their individual learning. Ultimately — and most alarmingly — it also seems to apply to their basic motivation, namely to gain access to a substantial future income stream by ‘getting a low cost degree’, or access to sufficient money to “help pay back his or her loans (Margolis, 1998:1).” . This trend is strategically described as the increasing bargaining power of one of any university’s traditional constituency — students — who now are increasingly termed customers or clients, and who in many cases pay, or have paid by their employers, a larger share of the cost of their tertiary education than in the past (at least in the case of Australia). Space does not permit a full discussion of such a change. In brief, however, it portends both positive and negative consequences, and must at least be sensibly and often discussed by both academics and their students.

Another aspect of this trend toward homogenisation is in the area of how a university’s senior managers (previously termed the professoriate and the vice chancellery) view their primary rights, roles and responsibilities, along with those of their ‘subordinates’ (who historically were termed colleagues). The latter are increasingly being termed ‘employees’, and being seen as cost items to be ‘managed down’ by some senior university management. In a very real sense, this change I would contend is a direct consequence of the growing level of corporatisation I have already touched upon.

A for automating

As noted in the **corporatising** section, an enormous effort is being devoted to creating ‘on line, flexible learning packages’ in most first world universities. The stated reasons for such a phenomenal change are many and varied. I am not inherently opposed to such innovation. However, I strongly feel that there is a pressing need to stand back from the excitement of being at the ‘leading edge of technology’ in order to assess the fundamental learning benefits and ‘costs’ of this brave new technological world before it becomes our master rather than one of our learning ‘servants’. In this view, I totally concur with Walker (1997):

I agree that our aim should be to foster intellectual autonomy but I have come to believe that this can only be achieved through a developing relationship between teacher and student. The apparent objectification that takes place when we move what we want to say to a set of slides, a web page or a CDROM (or a book) is often in fact a diversion from our need to attend to a relationship within which our purpose is the intellectual development of the student. Whether or not I can do this successfully remains to be seen but in switching off the computer and stepping in front of the lectern I feel I have at least (if only symbolically) made a gesture, and perhaps a start.

...

I don't want you to think that I am arguing for a return to all the values of elitist tertiary teaching, far from it. But I think we need to think hard about which values and practices we are prepared to give up and which we want to

fight for. Changes in the role of the university demand that we all rethink what we do when we teach.

...

I think we should resist the temptation to see 'on line teaching' in terms of technology and instead look at it as constituting a new medium. For then we are forced to see the challenge, not as a challenge to teaching methods but as a challenge to educational strategies. (Walker, 1997: emphasis added)

In brief, we all need to, as communities of practice, go back to our core roles as academics, and wisely use all available learning enhancement and delivery technologies and processes. We also need to fight strongly and vocally against the mis-directed and at times ideologically driven search for a technological panacea or cornucopia.

This rush toward automation is also evident at the institutional level. Witness, for instance, the University of Phoenix, which has no tenured academic staff, but which “operates over 50 satellite campuses and learning centers, mostly rented space in office buildings’, and which enrolls “more than 42,000 adult learners (Margolis, 1998: 1).” An even more prophetic institution is the Western Governors University of Guam, which is aligning itself with, and directly engaging a raft of private sector organizations, including the likes of Microsoft, KPMG-Peat Marwick and Sun Microsystems (Margolis, 1998: 1). This model is increasingly attractive to both governments that believe themselves to be, or actually are, strapped for cash, and for private sector organisations wishing to broaden their revenue streams and market development opportunities. It portends, if it ever were to become the dominant method for tertiary level ‘education’, the possible demise of universities, as we know, and in some quarters at least, cherish them. Shakespeare’s exclamation, “O brave new world what creatures thou hast in thou” seems chillingly apposite.

Let’s not forget, in the same breath, the relatively substantial funds being allocated by senior university administrators /managers to the automation (viz, electronification of) the burgeoning supra-administrative systems which normally characterize large bureaucracies. Several large Australian universities have recently invested some tens of millions of dollars toward the implementation of SAP as their over-arching information management systems. As noted this is at the time of reducing real government funding and a potential fall-off in enrolments by full-fee paying overseas students into these large universities.

N for narrowing

By narrowing I here mean both a loss of professional scope, which in my world is a diminution of both an academic’s areas of institutionally supported professional interest and academic curiosity, and a reduced sense of passion, by a significant proportion of Australian university staff, about their primary roles and responsibilities. In a sense, these trends have already been alluded to under the heading **homogenisation**. However, what has not yet been said is that these, in turn, have led to either a state of anxiety, or a state of lethargy, or a state of perceived powerlessness. Professor Alan Patience (1999) is incisive:

... too many academics have fallen into paranoia and passivity in the face of these attacks on academic life. They are their own worst enemies as they stick their heads in the sand or comply with unrealistic demands.

In the face of these pressures, many higher education academics are now wallowing in bathos.

Their roles as thinkers, researchers, and as teachers -- ie as putative public intellectuals -- are white-anted by politicians, the media, and a growing band of bitterly anti-intellectual populists.

Too many young and promising scholars are now obliged to work on short-term, insecure contracts. Serious scholars are becoming fearful of speaking out for fear of endangering [their] jobs. (Patience, 1999)

Barry Jones (1999) a former labour government minister and school teacher, and an extremely widely read individual, likewise puts some very telling points about the increasingly tacit nature of Australian universities.

Some universities have been disturbingly quiet in recent decades, barely contributing to or stimulating debate on current issues - - for example, on economics.

Elsewhere, increased dependence by researchers on funding from industry has had an inhibiting effect, too.

The decline is, I suspect, partly a by-product of super-specialisation. Promotion in academia, where many are called but few are chosen, depends on publication and demonstrating mastery of a specialisation -- often a super-specialisation. Academics then become wary about applying their knowledge or analytical skills outside their precise expertise.

Narrowing could also mean a narrowing of opportunities for students in the sense that socially or economically disadvantaged students may have in fact less, not more, choice of either majors, or locations or levels of tertiary educational attainment, given the apparent increase in the mantra of user pays. In this sense, narrowing affects equity and quality.

We therefore face a very real opportunity as academics: to stand up and be courageous enough to speak out, both openly and at times controversially, on substantial issues — by which I mean issues which are, or will affect, the communities (both academic and civil) of which we are all members, and from which we are nurtured and nourished.

G for globalizing

The huge increase in both the total stock of publicly accessible knowledge and the range delivery systems available to any individual, group, organisation, or community seeking new information is a fact, itself created largely by the automation of which I have briefly written. In short, the globalisation of knowledge availability and its *virtualisation* are fundamentally affecting all universities — indeed all organizations — in ways which were perhaps inconceivable only a short time ago. Such globalisation of knowledge is however, a two edged sword.

One the one hand, it has led to the growing differentiation between the ‘product’ offerings of individual universities. This could lead to university level learning being more available to a larger total number of aspiring learners. Such differentiation is based on a host of aspects: for instance, in terms of educational content, instructional design

methods used, the type and range of content delivery alternatives provided to ‘customers’, and the assessment methods by which their progress and academic certification will be determined. It also has opened up exciting new opportunities for cross-national, cross-cultural research and knowledge transfer both in our research and in our teaching roles.

On the other hand, the increasing globalisation of knowledge, itself the bastard child of a reversion to economic fundamentalism by most first world governments, may well lead to less, rather than more, student choice. This will ultimately depend on how much senior university managers are willing to invest in creating truly unique and enriching learning material, as opposed to seeking the lowest cost per unit of [knowledge] content provided. Each university’s resolution of this critical issue will, to me at least, rests very heavily on its dominant value system and its dominant logic (see Bettis and Prahalad 1995). Unfortunately, the trend toward corporatisation, which itself was spawned by the increasing demand for, and direct involvement by, the corporate sector in university programs, does not augur well for such a dominant logic to be grounded in truly academic research or educational philosophies. It also hinges very heavily on the economic and intellectual ability of students to both access — at a bearable personal economic cost — and synthesize the cornucopia of data which is now electronically available. I have yet to see any substantive, reliable academic research on what seems to be an heroic assumption by supporters of the Internet and other forms of on-line learning about students’ level of access and ability to effectively use the ever-growing knowledge base.

E is for entropy

Universities are living, open systems. As such, they are subject to the universal ‘laws’ of such systems. Beer (1980) explains that “entropy will occur if energy is not continuously imported and converted into valued outputs that allow reinvestment and further development.”

My personal view, as attested to by the observations herein, is chillingly clear. Universities, in a variety of forms, but always as close communities of scholars — dating back to ancient mathematical scholars in Alexandria, the disciples of Plato and Aristotle in Athens, and the early groups of scholars in the Orient — have always been a powerful and positive component of civilized societies. Regrettably, they are now being systemically deprived of essential ‘energy’, and university policy-makers and senior managers are, albeit perhaps unwittingly, essentially undermining the transformation processes that have until recently stood the tests of time, of adversarial vested interests, and of economic challenges. Professor Ian Lowe (1999) encapsulates this entropy well:

The core functions of universities in teaching and basic research are being eroded, increasing pressures to shift resources to applied research and commercial development, and exacerbating the trend to offer vocational courses for fee-paying students rather than liberal education to prepare young Australians for the challenges of the new millennium.

This observation will doubtless be strongly criticised by the advocates of the free market forces argument. James Quinn’s (1992) comments are therefore worthy of considerable attention.

A large portion, but not all, of an organization's knowledge resides in three human reservoirs: (1) the cognitive understandings, (2) the learned skills, and (3) the deeply held beliefs of individuals ...

By concentrating on key elements of the learning process, companies can leverage intellect enormously... (Quinn, 1992: 253-56).

Universities, especially now that they are increasingly being both funded and managed as corporations, surely must be at the vanguard of such a focus of attention on the learning process. A vital success factor for such a focus, as Quinn (1992) directly tells us, is installing proper support systems and incentives. This, in turn, unarguably requires the continuous 'importing of energy' — that is, resources — and its conversion into valuable outputs. A critical question is, therefore, what **are and will continue to be** the most valuable outputs (and outcomes) that any university, as an essential institution of any civilised and positively evolving society, is responsible for 'producing' on behalf of its social and intellectual communities? A closely related question is how much of such valuable outputs are our communities willing, and able, to directly fund through their (elected) governments, ie the 'public purse'?

Some essential questions needing further dialogue and resolution

I hope to have raised some essential questions in this personal reflection. They emerge directly from the above pages. In sum, they are:

- What, if anything, can or should we try to do about the strong push by governments to reduce their direct economic contributions to all levels of education, universities included?
- Have our basic terms and conditions of employment changed irreversibly?
- Is it legitimate to assert that our 'skill, our manual or mental ability' are 'own property' and therefore cannot relinquished by us, or unilaterally taken from us?
- Is there a growing reluctance on our part to create and disseminate controversial or innovative or 'extra paradigmatic' research and innovative learning and teaching resources?
- Is the bargaining power of one of our key stakeholders, our students, increasing? If so, what are its positive and negative consequences?
- Is there a pressing need to stand back from the excitement of being at the 'leading edge of technology' in order to assess the fundamental learning benefits' and 'costs' of this brave new technological world?
- Are we prepared to stand up and be courageous enough to speak out, both openly and at times controversially issues which are, or will affect, the communities (both academic and civil) of which we are all members, and from which we are nurtured and nourished?
- Is there any substantive, reliable academic research on students' level of access and ability to effectively use the ever-growing knowledge base?
- What **are and will continue to be** the most valuable outputs (and outcomes) that any university is responsible for 'producing' on behalf of its social and intellectual communities? How much of such valuable outputs are our communities willing, and able, to directly fund through their (elected) governments, ie the 'public purse'?

In sum, then, I close with Robert Walker's key challenge, namely that "we need to think hard about which values and practices we are prepared to give up and which we want to fight for".

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I have been trying to broaden both the dialogue with, and my senior university managers' current policy on, this quintessential issue for some 12 months. As an active member of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), which is the Australian equivalent to the NEA in America, I have personally written to senior management, reminding them of

To date, my university's senior management cadre has resisted any such a policy setting. The

In response to my letter, senior management's feedback was that "Section 35(6) [of the Australian Copyright Act] position is reflected by the University's policy number 504. That position would also prevail prior to adoption of the policy by the University". I then drew their attention to