

Vice Chancellor's Awards for Excellence in Teaching

The new Vice Chancellor's Awards For Excellence in Teaching were presented on Wednesday 2nd May at a function in Truffles Restaurant. These awards superseded the previous Distinguished Teaching Awards instituted in 1999, and entail a new process and higher rewards.

The process, which was co-ordinated by CEPD, was rigorous. Nominations were called for in July 2006. As part of the selection process, all nominees had to submit a portfolio of evidence of the manner and extent to which twelve dimensions of excellence were present in their teaching. These dimensions

include amongst others: communication; alignment of goals, teaching and assessment; active student engagement; enthusiasm; developing students' learning capabilities and autonomy; and contributing to advancing learning and teaching within and beyond AUT.

The portfolios were assessed after which all short-listed nominees were required to create a poster to illustrate their teaching philosophy and practice. They then engaged in a dialogue with the Selection Committee. 2007 was the first time this process was implemented and it is currently being reviewed.



EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AWARD WINNERS (FROM LEFT) JANE MORGAN, ANDY BALLARD, THE VICE CHANCELLOR, DEREK MCCORMACK, SUE YONG AND PAUL MOUNTFORT.

Advice for new teachers at AUT

Paul Mountfort (Vice Chancellor's Excellence in Teaching Award Winner)
School of Languages
Faculty of Applied Humanities

THE SHEER RANGE of teaching contexts, disciplines and qualification levels means the challenges facing first-time lecturers are many and varied, with no easy solutions.

Rather than focusing on pragmatic 'coping' strategies, I think it worthwhile to

reflect on the more generic issues raised by the tertiary sector's pedagogical model itself in a post-industrial society.

I think that many of the surface-level anxieties we face in delivering content to large audiences, framing course materials, and 'managing' a class, spring from a more systemic problem. This is the attempted maintenance of an 'industrial' model (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007), where knowledge or 'skills' are seen as commodities to be handed down

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– something approximating a supply-line.

What is happening in the wider society is that new media are challenging the 'conduit' model with a more participatory, bottom-up one. Students now entering university frequently experience a mismatch between the way in which broader cultural knowledge is now

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distributed across a variety of media, and people participate in its creation via affinity groups, versus the top-down, expert or authority driven model that still pertains in many academic disciplines.

Why do lecturers so often complain that students want to text or talk on cellphones rather than focus on lecture content or

Continued on page 2

Editorial



WE HOPE that Semester Two has got off to a good start for everyone and that you are ready for some new ideas and stimulating articles.

If you are new to teaching at AUT you will be

interested in advice from experienced colleagues, especially from the four staff shortlisted in the recent Vice Chancellor's Awards for Excellence in Teaching. Their reflections on their early teaching and suggestions for new teachers are summarised in the first article.

In this issue we're attempting to address the constant call for help with critical thinking. Encouraging critical thinking in our students requires us to demonstrate critical thinking in our teaching, but it's easier said than done. Camille Nakhid has given us some practical suggestions about critical questioning. Peter Gossman suggests that a transformative learning experience will promote critical thinking, and Coral Ingly recommends Stella Cottrell's excellent study guide on Critical Thinking Skills as a way of planning the practice of critical thinking skills in our lessons.

This edition also summarises an interesting article on group assessments, outlines a recent conference on Critiquing Pasifika Education, and explores the teaching implications of computerised simulated learning.

We wish you rewarding reading and a worthwhile semester.

Lorraine Parker
Director, CEPD

Advice for new teachers at AUT

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participate in tutorial discussions? Why is Wikipedia so often referenced (or not, as the case may be) while print materials lie unread? Why the constant worry about 'declining' literacy – especially writing – standards?

These are symptoms of the fact that in a networked society capabilities such as searching online, engaging multi-media

WE MIGHT SEE LECTURES SUPERSEDED BY STUDIO-STYLE WORKSHOPS IN WHICH LEARNERS DEVELOP AND PURSUE RESEARCH INTERESTS AND SOLUTIONS, USING, AND CREATING IN, NEW MEDIA PLATFORMS SUCH AS PODCASTS, BLOGS, AND WIKIS.

devices, and generally multi-tasking, are often valued more highly than the older literacies many educators privilege.

I think the massive challenge lecturers new and old face is to retool our approaches to every aspect of teaching and learning in order to keep in sync with the kinds of capabilities that are becoming increasingly crucial for students, and which may engage their attention much more fully than traditional modes.

How a more 'post-industrial' learning model may look includes a much higher degree of learner autonomy, student-negotiated achievement milestones, peer collaboration, self-directed project work and portfolio assessment. This approach – let's use a web analogy and call it Learning 2.0 – encourages students to develop a variety of capabilities and form their own networks of participation as part of a process of active knowledge creation, as opposed to more passive knowledge reception.

Awareness of the massive challenges posed by energy and resource depletion and climate change also urgently need to

be threaded through every discipline area, to make them relevant to dawning 21st century realities.

Ideally we might see lectures superseded by studio-style workshops in which learners develop and pursue research interests and solutions, using, and creating in, new media platforms such as podcasts, blogs, and wikis. The sense of centralised authority that goes with the supply-line model then diminishes as we work hard not to 'cope' or manage our students, but to create spaces for us and them to explore new learning modalities and ways of being in a rapidly changing world.

Knobel, M.N., & Lankshear, C. (Eds.). (2007). *A New Literacies Sampler*. New York: Peter Lang.

Jane Morgan (Highly Commended)
Public Health & Psychosocial Studies
Faculty of Health & Environmental Sciences

IT SEEMS A long time ago now that I started my teaching career and yet I vividly remember people who made a significant impact on my approach to teaching practice and the way I conducted myself, both in the learning/teaching environment and with students in general.

In my opinion, the educator role requires a marked cognitive shift from working in a professional capacity in industry. Hence, there needs to be a movement away from a solely content focus (which is probably the reason you have been employed in the tertiary teaching sector) to a process focus (which is possibly what you are concerned about). That's great, as it prompts you to observe others, question, and engage with students.

Moving into an educator role while retaining your sense of self as a professional and as a person takes time and support from others. But here are some ideas to help seasoned professionals starting up as teachers:

- Seek out teachers who are known to be competent and ask to observe their teaching. Watch what they do, the teaching strategies they use, the way they engage with students. Spend time with them as they prepare teaching

sessions, gaining insight from them as they go about the 'ordinary' aspects of preparation. From my experience, expert teachers are generally very willing to mentor others as part of what they do.

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- Be prepared to make mistakes and learn from them. Ask students for feedback on individual sessions; what went well, what didn't? Over time you will learn to gauge student responses from the questions they pose, from their body language, and whether they come to class.
- Create space for questions and interaction in class sessions, even if it does feel daunting. In doing this you will get to know students as individuals, plus reduce the 'formality' of the learning/teaching environment.
- Familiarise yourself with academic life at every opportunity, from the jargon used to the policies and procedures you are expected to follow within an institution. This is a slow process but vital as part of the daily administrative role in working at the 'coal face' with students.

Sue Yong (Highly Commended)
Accounting
Faculty of Business

THE THREE VITAL maxims for a new person to succeed in their teaching career are:

- Build good rapport with the students
- Know the subject well and keep it simple
- Incorporate real life examples in teaching and assessment

Build a good rapport with the students by identifying the students' needs and gauging their level of learning. Class teaching should be in an informal environment which encourages active student participation. Humour and sharing something of yourself are ways of building good rapport.

Simplify the content using plain English and vary your style of delivery to retain students' interest. Assess beyond the subject content to include other skills and capabilities such as critical thinking, conceptual thinking, problem solving, teamwork and communication.

Incorporate real life examples in class to make the subject content more relevant and link what is taught in class with the world beyond the classroom. Teachers who know their subject well will gain students' confidence and customise their teaching to meet their needs. Flexibility and teaching beyond the prescribed text will enhance learning and expose the students to a variety of examples, problems and exercises.

The teacher should always start with the subject principles followed by problem exercises to reinforce learning. Additional resources and exercises from the teacher will help to create independent learning.

Andy Ballard (Highly Commended)
Interdisciplinary Studies
Faculty of Business

IT'S TEMPTING to believe that good teaching is all about amassing a repertoire of proven techniques to use in specific situations. This belief is inherent in questions such as "How can I make the students listen?" and "What should I do to make students answer my questions?" If only it were so simple. In fact, good teaching requires much deeper thinking about yourself, your teaching practice and the students' learning. The following three areas are good ones to start with.

Be yourself

Show your enthusiasm for your subject and this enthusiasm will spread to your students and inspire them to want to learn. Build trust with your students by being honest and open. Treat students as

individuals and make the effort to learn their names and something about them. Share your failures together with your successes and always admit when you don't know something or have made a mistake.

Learning not teaching

It's about their learning, not your teaching. Develop your understanding of how students learn and how you can create an environment to facilitate their learning. Essentially what the student does is far more important than what you do. Your role is to understand how each of your students learns, and then to use this understanding to encourage them to learn deeply and independently.

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Reflect

Reflect on each class, maybe with a trusted peer or a member of CEPD. Consider this an essential part of a process of continuous improvement. Think about what happened in each class, and why. Ask students for their perspectives – they can be quite illuminating. Analyse your experiences with theories of adult learning, communication, motivation and others as you form your own philosophy of learning and teaching.

Note: Of course a new teacher can't be expected to follow all the above advice in their first semester of teaching. In time many of the skills discussed above will become second nature to you. CEPD staff are here to help and are happy to discuss any questions that you may have. Eds.

Book Review

Cottrell, S. (2005). *Critical Thinking Skills: Developing Effective Analysis and Argument*.

Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan

A COMMON and recurrent issue for lecturers is students' competence in critical analysis. This is an area with which students really seem to struggle. The level of ability is generally of a low standard, not just among undergraduate students in their written assignment work but frequently also among postgraduates in their theses and dissertations. Yet there seems to be an assumption that students studying at tertiary level know what critique involves, have a certain capability in critical thinking and how to apply the skills in their work. The reality is that descriptive analysis prevails in student work, along with a general lack of ability to develop sound argument based on a clear line of reasoning that is presented in a well-structured, logical order. Tasks that demand higher order cognitive abilities expressed through requirements such as "compare and contrast", "critically evaluate" and "justify your response", present analytical challenges that many students seem ill-equipped to meet.

Cottrell's text aims to help readers develop an understanding of what is meant by critical thinking and offers invaluable guidance to students on how to develop a range of critical thinking skills. Techniques such as focusing attention, identifying similarities and differences, sequencing, categorising and close reading underlie not only critical thinking but also personal management skills. Improving these skills can benefit personal and professional life as well as academic work.

In a well-structured series of chapters, the book contains clear explanations, good examples and many practice activities with answers and supporting texts, to develop an understanding of the key elements of critical thinking from the basics to structured evaluations. The topics covered in the book include: constructing effective arguments, critique of others' arguments and evaluating supporting evidence, recognising flawed reasoning, false premises and tautology,



CORAL INGLEBY

and applying critical thinking to reading, writing and note-taking.

The most useful content for helping students gain an understanding of critical thinking and analysis is in Chapters 3 to 6 (especially Chapters 4 and 5) and 8 to 10. Chapter 3 focuses on identifying arguments and is helpful in directing reading to the most relevant material.

Chapter 4 distinguishes between argument and disagreement. This chapter also clarifies the difference between forms of non-argument such as

summaries, explanations and description and distinguishes analytical writing from descriptive writing. Importantly, the chapter helps distinguish what is relevant from other forms of information, since it is easy to be distracted by surrounding material so that the point is missed – a key issue for assignments based on case studies.

Central to addressing analytical issues commonly apparent in students' writing, Chapter 5 shows how to check arguments for clarity, internal and logical consistency and structure, while Chapter 6 helps recognise underlying assumptions and implicit arguments.

A key skill in critique is finding and evaluating sources of supporting evidence. Especially useful to conducting a literature search and review, Chapter 8 distinguishes between primary and secondary sources of information as well as between fact and opinion, and defines concepts applied in research evidence, such as authenticity, validity, currency, reliability, relevance, probability and controlling for variables.

Chapter 9 helps develop strategies for reading selectively and for selective and critical note-making. This chapter helps understand how to identify different

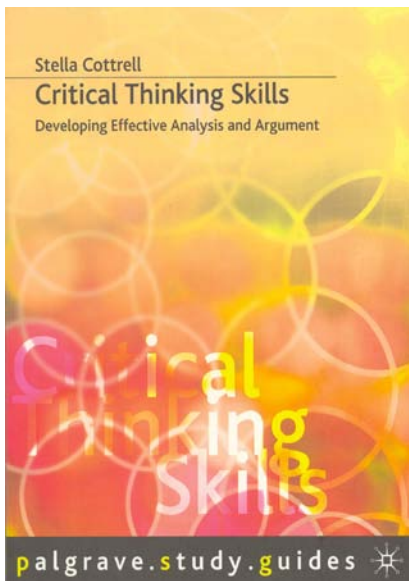
How do you make notes to support critical reading?

- What does this really mean?
- Do the reasons support the argument?
- Is there any supporting evidence?
- Does this match what I know about the subject already?
- Does it fit with what other people say about the subject?
- Is this relevant and useful to my current purpose?
- How does this add to previous research on the subject?
- Are there any flaws in this?



TIP: Read without a pen in your hand. This helps to avoid writing lots of unnecessary notes that you haven't thought through.

(Cottrell, 2005, p.153)



theoretical perspectives, how to relate theory to argument and how to categorise and interpret information.

Chapter 10 highlights the use of critical thinking when writing, identifying the appropriate language structures for indicating or signposting the direction of arguments. Chapter 11 contains several checklists to help build skills in evaluating critical writing and for using as a self-evaluation tool in assignments. Both chapters provide an excellent basis for developing better academic writing skills and help to demystify the art of good written communication.

Cottrell's coverage of the elements of critical thinking and skills application is comprehensive yet presented in an easy-to-use format. This subject warrants a course in its own right as a compulsory paper for all students embarking on a degree programme. If such a course was introduced at the beginning of undergraduate studies, overall grades would improve dramatically and many of the presenting problems in student writing that persist to postgraduate levels would be much reduced. In essence, with better critical thinking abilities, student writing would be a pleasure to read and to mark! Cottrell's text would provide not only an excellent resource as a basis for such a paper, but also for academics wanting to improve their own writing skills for scholarly publication.

Coral Ingley
Department of Management,
Faculty of Business

Encouraging critical thinkers in the classroom

TO DEVELOP critical thinking skills in our students, we have to reflect critical thinking in our teaching. How do I respond to students' questions? Does my response suggest an answer with the opportunity for a response and an ensuing question from the student? Do I allow debate during my presentation of theories and not just at the end? Have I made statements in a way that would arouse a challenge from the students and allow them to feel safe in doing so? Do I reflect aloud the conclusions I have drawn and leave a 'but..' or 'what if...' at the end so that the students can think about what other conclusions they could have drawn? Do I ask the students to consider what further questions the topic raises?

In the responses that the students give, ask the following questions: How did they come by that knowledge? Why is it important to know the source of the information? In what way does the source of knowledge influence how you understand the issue?

WHATEVER THE SUBJECT, WE CAN ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO BE CRITICAL THINKERS BY GIVING THEM THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THEIR ARGUMENTS FOR THEMSELVES AND FOR OTHERS.

Critical thinking should be reflected as much in the teaching as in the learning. Here's an example of what this means in practice:

Statement: Christianity is the most popular religion in New Zealand.

Basic question: Should Christianity be the official religion of Aotearoa/ New Zealand?



CAMILLE NAKHID

Adapt this question to prompt critical thinking: What reasons can you put forward for making (or not making) Christianity the official religion of the country?

What would it mean for you (or your friends) as a Muslim, Buddhist or Jew if Christianity was made the official religion of Aotearoa/New Zealand? What are some of the main arguments surrounding this issue? What theories of community, identity, religion and spirituality do you think best support the idea of an official religion? Where did you get this information? Where did you think they got their information? What information might have been omitted from the sources? Why? What else would you have wanted to know?

Whatever the subject, we can encourage students to be critical thinkers by giving them the opportunity to discuss the significance of their arguments for themselves and for others.

Camille Nakhid
School of Social Sciences

Critical thinking through transformative learning

MEZIROW DEFINES transformative learning as 'becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand and feel about the world' (1991, p. 167).

There are five specific stages in transformative learning and the content of your teaching will determine the strategies you use to invoke transformative learning.

1. The activating event

The activating event can be anything that triggers students to examine their thinking and the possible limitations of their understanding:

- To create an effective critical event, you must anticipate what students believe and know
- Conflicting perspectives in readings or role plays can motivate students to examine their own perspectives.
- Challenge what students believe. A case study, quote, picture, or story can be used to confuse and intrigue students and thus increase their motivation to learn whatever you will be presenting in class.

2. Identifying current assumptions

The best strategies for helping students identify their current assumptions all require that students explain their thinking:

- Use a critical questioning technique. Ask students to explain their reasoning and the reasons behind their reasoning.
- Ask students to make a prediction about

an experiment or reading and explain it to others in their group

- Have students talk through their thinking or problem-solving strategy
- Ask students to evaluate a specific position, solution, or reading and justify their critique.

3. Encouraging critical reflection

Critical reflection requires students privately to examine their current assumptions.

- Ask students to keep a class journal of questions, observations, and experiences. Give students five minutes at the end of each class to write in their journals.
- Ask students to respond to a specific class experience or reading. Provide a set of semi-structured questions to guide their reflection.

4. Encouraging critical discourse

Critical discourse is the most social aspect of transformative learning. Create opportunities for students to reflect in conversation:

- When you introduce a new strategy, concept, or paradigm in class, ask students to analyse the approach and compare it with their previous assumptions.
- Discussion and debate provide opportunities for students to have their assumptions respectfully challenged. You can invite a student to play devil's advocate-challenging everyone's assumptions-or you can play the role yourself. You can also ask students to

explain and defend a viewpoint they disagree with.

5. Giving students an opportunity to test a new paradigm or perspective

For transformational learning to move from thought to action, students need opportunities to apply new knowledge (Taylor, 1998).

- Return to the disorienting dilemma and have students approach it with their new knowledge. Ask them to examine it with multiple perspectives or problem-solving approaches.
- Ask students to observe and interpret events, experiments, readings, or experiences using their new knowledge.

Many of these stages can be organised in groups and further details about how to implement them effectively are available at <http://ctl.stanford.edu/Tomprof/index.shtml> If you try one of these strategies, please let us know at CEPD so that we can report it in *Teaching and Learning In Focus*.

Peter Gossman
CEPD

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Critical reading for postgraduate research students

A COLLEAGUE recently approached me in relation to her concerns about the limited ability of many postgraduate students to read research literature critically. I noted that these concerns were often expressed by teachers and supervisors of postgraduate students and we discussed possible explanations for this situation and some options for addressing it. Subsequently, I made a survey of relevant resources that might be provided for students. The survey revealed a range of resources including some very helpful texts

and an array of internet-sourced materials which fall into several categories. Some of the latter provide guidance on critical thinking in academic contexts in general, or when reading. Others focus directly on the critical reading of research literature (e.g. How to Read a Scientific Paper; Dissecting a Journal Article). These resources vary widely in terms of level of detail and the extent to which examples are provided. While some of this material is generic in applicability, it is often tailored for particular disciplines.

The most helpful resources also take into account specific categories of research (e.g. quantitative, qualitative, case study, experimental). As I am currently compiling a comprehensive list of these materials, I would welcome information about helpful resources that you have come across, or that you have developed and would be happy to make available to colleagues. Contact me if you would like a copy of the list.

Neil Haigh
CEPD

Understanding knowledge: developmental stages

AT THE RECENT HERDSA Conference held in Adelaide, I attended a half-day workshop on Critical Thinking facilitated by Jenny Moon from Bournemouth University, UK. One of the very useful exercises she used in this session took us through four stages of understanding knowledge development, as described by Baxter Magolda (1992). In our workshop we were challenged to match quotations from individuals in Baxter Magolda's study with the four stages briefly outlined below as a way of identifying progression of critical thinking in students.

Stage of Absolute Knowing

In this stage, knowledge is seen as certain or absolute, and is the least developed stage in Baxter Magolda's scheme. Learners believe that absolute answers exist in all areas of knowledge, and formal

learning is seen as a matter of absorbing the knowledge of the experts (e.g. teachers).

Transitional Stage

In this stage, there is partial certainty and partial uncertainty about knowledge – and learners accept this and see the need to understand rather than just acquire knowledge so that they may make judgements as to how best to apply it. Teachers are seen as facilitating the understanding and the application of knowledge.

Independent Knowing

Learning is uncertain – everyone has their own beliefs. Independent knowers recognise that now they can expect to have an opinion and to begin to think through issues. They regard their peers as having useful contributions to make. They will expect teachers to support the development

of independent views, providing a context for exploration.

Contextual Knowing

Knowledge is constructed and any judgement must be made on the basis of the evidence in that context, but understood in relation to the consideration of the quality of knowledge claims in the given context. In this stage, opinions must be supported by evidence, with the teacher as a partner in the development of appropriate knowledge.

Lorraine Parker
CEPD

REFERENCES: Baxter Magolda, M. (1992). *Knowing and Reasoning in College Students*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
Moon, J. (2007). *Critical thinking: an exploration of the theory and pedagogy*. London: Routledge Falmer (in press).
Refer also to Jenny Moon's booklet: 'We Seek it Here... a new perspective on the elusive activity of critical thinking – a theoretical and practical approach'.
www.ESCalate.ac.uk

AUT's computerised simulated learning environment

THE AUT Simulation Centre, a learning laboratory on the Akoranga campus, offers students a series of computerised, simulated experiences in a clinical setting. The skills of clinical reasoning and critical thinking are developed through interactions with Sim Man in a complex team environment.

What is Sim Man?

Sim Man is a computerised Laerdal® patient mannequin, which staff are able to programme in a large variety of ways to expose students to many simulated health issues. These range from respiratory, cardiac and a variety of medical complaints to therapeutic interpersonal interactions in times of crisis.

The Simulation Centre also offers a self paced CD-ROM where students are able to follow a computer 'game' to assess, interpret and provide health care for clients in the comfort and safety of their own home.

What teaching strategies are required for simulated learning?

Simulated learning is a technique rather than technology and it is highly engaging, interactive and clearly relevant to practice. Therefore the teaching strategies must be extremely realistic and flexible to meet multi-disciplinary educational needs.

Feedback through a safe and effective debriefing process following a simulation experience is as important as the experience itself.

While real live clinical experience will always be a necessary part of healthcare education, simulated learning allows us to predict, control and individualise learning situations. Computerised simulated learning environments enable students to acquire a range of cognitive and motor skills, and to practise these in a safe setting. This educational experience may well become central to many health practice curricula nationally and internationally in the future.

Bernice Tatton
Health Care Practice



CHEST SOUNDS THAT HAVE BEEN PROGRAMMED INTO SIM MAN HELP STUDENTS ASSESS HOW WELL A PERSON IS BREATHING. ALTERED SOUNDS MAY INDICATE CONDITIONS SUCH AS ASTHMA OR PNEUMONIA.

Critiquing Pasifika Education Conference 26-27 April 2007

THE CONFERENCE on Critiquing Pasifika Education was jointly organised by AUT, the University of Auckland and Massey University and held at the AUT Marae. About 80 people attended, almost all of them Maori or Pasifika. The focus was on these areas:

- The politics of Pasifika and Pasifika education
- Pasifika knowledges in the university
- Critiquing Pasifika research and collaborative research projects
- Indigenous Maori research issues
- Pasifika students learning programmes in the university
- Academic commitments to critiquing Pasifika education in the university

Papers from this conference will be published in a special edition of the *Alternative Journal of the Nga Pae o Te Maramatanga*, Maori Centre of Research Excellence at the University of Auckland later this year. For further information contact: Dr Linita Manu'atu, School of Education, AUT University.

E-mail: linita.manuatu@aut.ac.nz telephone: (09) 9219999 ext 7345.

One paper from the conference is summarised below:

'Va': The being-social and Pacific education

In their complex paper Albert Refiti and I'u Tuagalu explored the significance of the concept of 'va' (space) in Pacific education. The word has multiple meanings and can refer to spaces between people of many different types, such as space for worship, respect for elders and so on. It is also the interface, or depth, between Pacific people and their ancestors, such that it is an obligation for people to provide an opening between today's world and their ancestors. 'Va' can also be used in the sense of a gift which is obligatory and between mutually obligated transactors. Teachers are automatically in a 'va' relationship with both their subject matter and their students; it is a giving/serving relationship. 'Education should be not a gift but a blessing.'

Jennie Swann
CEPD

Group assessments: Dilemmas facing lecturers in multicultural tertiary classrooms

'GROUP IS GOOD, and group is good for curing all social ills' was the cynical observation of one of the lecturers in this study. Her comment reflects the uneasiness of lecturers at tertiary institutions with the notion that the educational advantages of group assessments far outweigh the disadvantages and that such an approach promotes the integration of minority groups in multicultural universities. In our article on group assessments (Strauss & U, 2007), we reflect on the dilemmas facing lecturers in multicultural tertiary classrooms when they adopt group

role to play in tertiary institutions.

However, adopting an unquestioning stance, as far as the value of group assessment is concerned, serves neither lecturers nor their students well. Lecturers need to realise that such projects need to be carefully selected, designed and implemented and that students need to be sufficiently prepared with both the requisite academic and socio-cultural skills to undertake them successfully. The challenge for our institutions is to ensure that group projects are a positive learning experience for our students. In the words of one participant, '... assessment is to do with fairness and justice and we often forget the big picture and we concentrate on the detail'.

Pat Strauss and Alice U
School of Languages

Strauss, P. & U, A. (2007). Group assessments: Dilemmas facing lecturers in multicultural tertiary classrooms. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 26, (2), 147-161.

Pat and Alice are Senior Lecturers in the School of Languages who carried out research on group assessments with AUT lecturers, across three faculties. They are currently engaged in evaluating students' attitudes towards and perspective of group work and group assessments. Alice has also been awarded a RELT (Resources to Enhance Learning and Teaching) grant to disseminate information on good practices in assessed group projects. For more information about applying for a RELT grant please contact Pam Wyse (x8375) at CEPD.

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assessment as a means of evaluation and highlight those challenges which often jeopardise the successful implementation of this type of practice.

Despite the challenges involved in the implementation of group projects, we feel that carefully planned and properly monitored projects do have an important

Teaching and Learning in Focus is produced by the Centre for Educational and Professional Development (CEPD) at AUT University.

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