Lifelong Learning: Partners, Pathways, and Pedagogies

Keynote and Refereed Papers from the 4th International

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Lifelong Learning Conference

Yeppoon, Central Queensland, Australia

13 – 16 June 2006

Hosted by Central Queensland University

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PREFACE

Much of the discourse attending contemporary educational provision focuses on human agency – on the presumed capacity of individuals to make informed choices among competing options, and of communities to fashion and direct their own learning futures. Yet running counter to this discourse is an equally powerful theme – that of control, surveillance, and the sense of being corralled and manipulated by unseen but pervasive forces.

From one perspective, current debates about lifelong learning might seem particularly susceptible to capture by these forces of control and surveillance, as seen in discussions of whose interests are really served by lifelong learning and whether, for example, it is little more than late capitalist workers themselves taking on the economic and personal costs of reskilling required by their managers. From a very different perspective, lifelong learning discourse can be regarded as equipping us with the conceptual and analytical tools and vocabulary needed to critique and deconstruct contemporary educational policy and practice and, hopefully, to create new and more enabling and productive futures.

This crucial interplay – between lifelong learning as agency and control, between replicating the status quo and constructing new futures – is encapsulated in the theme of this fourth conference in the series of biennial, international lifelong learning conferences hosted by Central Queensland University Library and held at Rydges Capricorn International Resort at Yeppoon, Australia. The theme "Lifelong Learning: Partners, Pathways, and Pedagogies" is intended by the conference's editorial and program committee to provide a framework for conceptually sophisticated, methodologically rigorous, and empirically grounded engagements with the possibilities and problems associated with these three key elements of effective lifelong learning. The notion of mobility underpins all three elements – from the ongoing negotiations to develop and sustain partnerships, to creating and traversing pathways across programs and qualifications, to learners and educators communicating with one another across space and time. That same notion of mobility was evident in the vivid metaphor of "snakes and ladders" selected by the committee as the backdrop for the listing of potential subthemes under each element of the conference theme: individuals and institutions climbing ladders of success only to find unexpected obstacles that cause them to slide down snakes and have to begin their ascent anew.

This idea of lifelong learning as the site of competing discourses and of constant mobility has been taken up enthusiastically by the contributors to these refereed proceedings of the conference. *Partners* are evident in papers ranging from community organisations and family members to critical spirit and postgraduate supervision. *Pathways* underpin papers concerned with unlearning and late capitalism through to creative industries and teacher education. *Pedagogies* are represented in discussions ranging from learning futures and values education to learner autonomy and student-centred pedagogy. It is also pleasing to see the prominence of the conference's national and international dimension, with papers reflecting research, policy-making, and practice in Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, South Africa, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom.

The breadth and depth of engagement with lifelong learning partners, pathways and pedagogies is evident also in the session streams to which they have been allocated in the conference program:

- Clients and their needs
- Cross-cultural learning
- Educational programs and strategies
- Gender and social issues
- Good practice
- Information literacy
- Learning and teaching
- Learning communities
- Learning relationships
- Learning styles, strategies, and values
- Needs of the learner
- Partnerships in education
- Pathways in education
- School-based programs and strategies
- Student journeys
- Teaching programs and strategies
- Technology, multimedia, and e-learning
- Workplace and VET (Vocational Education and Training)

This rich array of topics is augmented by two symposia: information literacy and bridging professional practice and knowledge management in health and, a program innovation for 2006, a conversation about international perspectives in information literacy – under the auspices of the Australian and New Zealand Institute for Information Literacy (ANZILL).

The competing discourses and multiple interests of lifelong learning are taken up also in the four keynote papers at the conference. Associate Professor André Grace, from the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta in Canada, draws on his knowledge from having attended all three previous conferences to analyse and synthesise the keynote papers from those conferences through the lens of critical intelligence in an era of neoliberal pragmatism. Professor Michael Dureau, Executive Director of the Warren Centre for Advanced Engineering in Australia, poses the significant question, "Lifelong learning: Is industry up to the job?". Professor Diana Laurillard, Chair of Learning with Digital Technologies at the London Knowledge Lab (part of the Institute of Education at the University of London) in the United Kingdom, pursues the complex links between learning technology design and professional engagement. Associate Professor Peter Kell, Associate Dean (Research) in the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong in Australia, interrogates the possibilities for equality of opportunity in the context of what he terms "the new world disorder".

One indicator of the quality of the papers published in these proceedings is the statistics related to acceptance and rejection. As with previous conferences, all papers submitted for consideration for publication underwent a double-blind peer review process – that is, each paper was read separately by at least two referees who did not know the identity of

the paper's author/s and whose identities were unknown to the author/s. The editors of the proceedings exercised an adjudicatory role in the event of a significant variation in referees' recommendations. One hundred and forty-nine abstracts were submitted for the conference, seven of which were rejected. Subsequently, twenty-six authors withdrew their papers from refereeing, and a further forty did not submit full papers to supplement their abstracts. Of the seventy-six refereed papers, fifty-five were accepted for publication, one of which was later withdrawn. In addition, five proposals for workshops were accepted; two were subsequently withdrawn, leaving workshops related to postcompulsory and vocational education and training, online communities, and information literacy education.

As always, it is a pleasure to acknowledge the commitment and contribution of a number of people without whom these conference proceedings could not have been published. In particular, I am grateful to:

- the authors for submitting their work to review;
- the referees for conducting that review, sometimes at short notice;
- my co-editors Debbie Orr, Fons Nouwens, Bobby Harreveld, and Colin Macpherson;
- Colin Macpherson for his additional role as copy editor:
- the staff members of the Central Queensland University Library for once again overseeing and facilitating the complex organization of an international conference; special thanks are due to Graham Black, Barbara Turner, Kylie Cronk, Yvonne Luckel, Delma McDonald, Vicki Roberts, and Phyllida Coombes.

As with the published proceedings of the previous conferences in this series, I hope sincerely that you find these proceedings challenging, engaging, meaningful, and thought-provoking. It will be an appropriate justification of the hard work and insights represented here if researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners take up and use these papers as resources and navigational tools in the ongoing exploration and creation of lifelong learning partners, pathways, and pedagogies – preferably by promoting agency and capacity while diminishing control and surveillance.

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Chair, Editorial Committee

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