



Wicked issues: higher education research, and institutional innovation for learning and teaching – a reflection on ‘emic research’. A showcase presentation at the HERDA 2013, *The Place for Learning and Teaching*, Research and Policy Strand, 1-4th July 2013, AUT University, Auckland, New Zealand.

Merilyn Childs

Australian Digital Futures
Institute, Toowoomba

Merilyn.Childs@usq.edu.au

Mark Brown

Massey University, National
Centre for Teaching and
Learning

M.E.Brown@massey.ac.nz

Mike Keppell

Australian Digital Futures
Institute, Toowoomba

Mike.Keppell@usq.edu.au

Natasha Hard

Australian Digital Futures
Institute, Toowoomba

Natasha.Hard@usq.edu.au



About the presenters (click images to find out more)



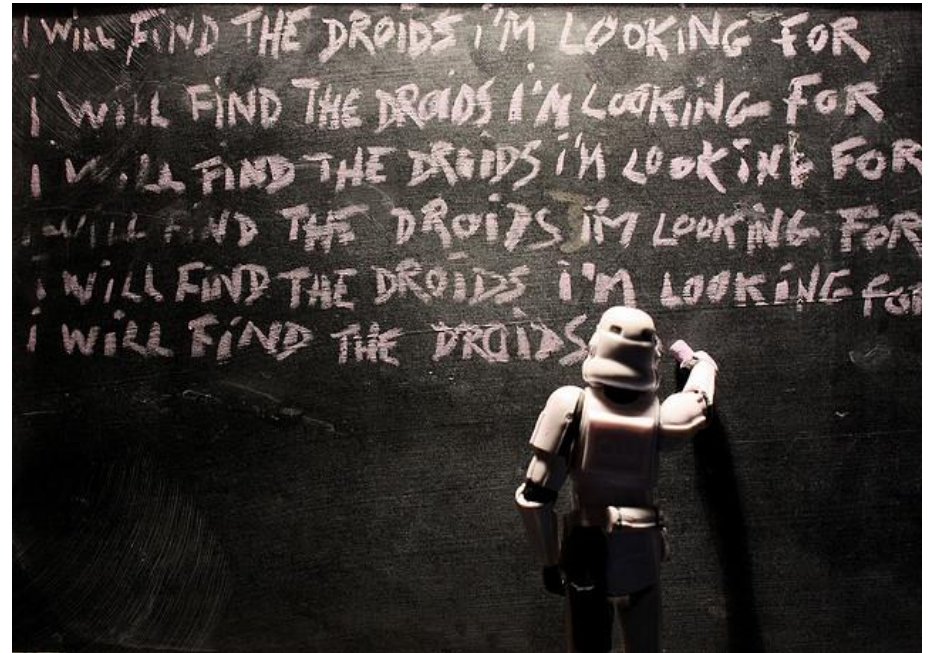
Preamble

- **‘Wicked’ does not equal** “bad”
... or “cool”
- The **research** that triggered this reflection lead to **great outcomes!** (see slide 13)
- The research partners **continue to warmly collaborate**
- Our aim in this presentation is to foster **critical reflection about research method in HE**
- No [Ewok](#) was harmed in the making of this presentation!



Some basics...

- The study : Was funded by [DeHub](#)
- The focus: Managing **institutional change** through **distributive leadership** approaches: **Engaging academics and teaching support staff** in blended and flexible learning at **two Universities**
- The partners: Charles Sturt University (NSW Australia) & Massey University (NZ)
- The method: **eight case studies** were developed through **emic research**



Some terms:

Emic: of, relating to, or involving analysis of cultural phenomena **from the perspective of one who participates in the culture being studied**

Origin of EMIC

phonemic

First Known Use: 1954

Coined by **Kenneth Lee**

Pike an American linguist and Anthropologist (June 9, 1912–December 31, 2000)

<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/emic>

- Emic



Some terms:

Wicked problems are characterised by the following:

- The **solution depends on how the problem is framed** and **vice-versa**
- Stakeholders have **different world views** and **different frames** for understanding the problem
- The **constraints** that the problem is subject to **and the resources** needed to solve it **change over time**
- The problem is **never solved definitively**

Origin: [Horst Rittel](#) and [Melvin M. Webber](#) formally described the concept of wicked problems in 1973

- Wicked problems



Our wicked problem in the context of the HE Sector's wicked problem



Dimensions of wickidity#1: Emic research strengths



Dimensions of wickidity#2: Emic research challenges



Dimensions of wickidity #3: The mighty challenge of received, preferred wisdom.



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/st3f4n/7684774224/sizes/z/in/photostream/>

Dimensions of wickidity #4: confirmatory research.



Final Reflection: * wicked problems live, OK?
*when framing: consider & explore the wicked problems
*report the wicked problems so the HE sector remains critically engaged when doing emic research.



Outcomes of the study

- Childs, M., Brown, M., Keppell, M.K. Nicholas, Z., Hard, N., and Hunter, C. (in press). *Managing institutional change through distributive leadership approaches: Engaging academics and teaching support staff in blended and flexible learning*, DeHub: Queensland
- A comprehensive set of findings, 3 key lessons and 5 take home messages available as a [short report](#)
- Eight richly described [case studies](#) of institutional approaches to fostering learning leadership
- [Publications](#), links and other resources
- A [wikiResearcher](#)



Referenced during presentation

Childs, M., Brown, M., Keppell, M., Nicholson, Z., Hunter, C., and Hard, N. (in press) *Managing institutional change through distributive leadership approaches: Engaging academics and teaching support staff in blended and flexible learning*, DeHub: Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).

Rittel, Horst W. J.; Melvin M. Webber (1973). "[Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning](#)". *Policy Sciences* 4: 155–169. Retrieved 28th June 2013.

Trowler, 2012. [Wicked issues in situating theory in close-up research](#), *Higher Education Research & Development*, Special Issue: Questioning theory-method relations in Higher Education research, (31)3, 273-284.
Doi: 10.1080/07294360.2011.631515

Whelton, M. & Ballard, G. (2002). Wicked problems in project definition, Proceedings of the International Group for Lean Construction 10th Annual Conference, Brazil, August.
<http://mail.leanconstruction.org/pdf/WickedProblemsinProjectDefinitionIGLC10.pdf> Retrieved 12h June 2013.

Thanks to [Stefan](#) and [Kristina Alexanderson](#) for making their wonderful images via Flickr available using Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/st3f4n/7698537630/>