The Learning Organization

Leading entrepreneurial e-learning development in legal education:
a longitudinal case study of 'universities as learning organisations'

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… the creativity you can express in the world of education attracts me
Tamsitt, G. [Series B]

Introduction

Universities are under pressure. Higher education systems around the world are experiencing assaults on multiple fronts. They have to respond to a globalised, highly-networked, post-industrial knowledge-economy in which student numbers are increasing and the student body diversifying. They are subject to increasing surveillance and decreasing support from government, and are expected to be a crucible for innovation: to play an entrepreneurial role for socio-economic development (eg Clark, 1998, 2003; Taylor, 2012; Sam and van der Sijde, 2014).

As if all this is not enough, then there is the disruption – the *promise* and the *threat* - caused by technology. The *threat* comes from the potential for 'unbundling' in higher education (eg Christensen and Eyring, 2011; Barber *et al.,* 2013) – an issue we return to later. The *promise* has long been upheld and explored, especially in distance education (eg Archer *et al.,* 1999; Naidu, 2014).

The demands on leadership, and for investing in preparation for university leadership roles, are considerable and intensifying (eg Bryman, 2007; Scott *et al.*, 2008; Gibb *et al.*, 2009; Grunefeld, 2015). The imperative for universities to become 'learning organisations' (if they are not already) would seem to be self-evident, with Duke (2002) citing entrepreneurialism-as-adaptation as one manifestation of a successful 'learning university', for example. But what is it that we really mean by this idea? What makes a given university recognisable as a learning organisation?

Universities as Learning Organisations
The concept of the learning organisation was popularised with the publication of The Fifth Discipline (Senge, 1990). Some interest in how the notion might apply to universities followed (eg Duke, 1992; Martin, 1999). Two decades later, however, Bui and Barush (2012, p. 2) observe that 'there remains an acute shortage of empirical investigation' of Senge's work, particularly in the context of universities. Despite persistent interest, one recent review (Örtenblad and Koris, 2013, p. 174) finds 'the literature is not very cumulative' with variable attention being given to definition, context, stakeholder perspective and notions of adoption and adaption. In particular, these authors note that:
- the definition of a 'learning organisation' varies by author, and
- 'most surprising is … that almost no one has referred to Senge's (2000) book chapter on universities as learning organizations, … [and this is] one of his most relevant works ever'.

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Below, we use perspectives from Senge's chapter to guide our analysis.

What exactly is meant by a 'learning organisation'? The core idea is that, for an organisation to thrive and grow, requires that it learn and adapt at a rate that exceeds the rate of change in the wider environment. Garvin (2003, p. 11) advances five main activities to be accomplished:

- systematic problem solving;
- experimentation with new approaches;
- learning from their own experience and past history;
- learning from the experiences and best practices of others, and
- transferring knowledge quickly and efficiently throughout the organization.

He offers for consideration the following definition:

> A learning organisation is an organisation skilled at creating, acquiring, interpreting, transferring, and retaining knowledge, and at purposefully modifying its behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights.

This parallels the idea of an 'entrepreneurial university' put forward by Burton Clark (1998, p. 4):

> An entrepreneurial university, on its own, actively seeks to innovate in how it goes about its business. It seeks to work out a substantial shift in organisational character so as to arrive at a more promising posture for the future.

Garvin's (2003, p. 11) definition 'begins with a simple truth: new ideas are essential if learning is to take place.' Further, 'learning requires action. But that action cannot be uninformed: it must be tied in some way to prior reflection. This is a surprisingly stringent test …' he suggests, 'Many universities fail to qualify…' When she was Pro-Vice Chancellor at the UK Open University, Diana Laurillard was moved to open a 1999 paper as follows:

> University teachers must be the most surprisingly unreflective of all professional practitioners. While happy to theorise about every last corner of the human and natural world, the core activity of our professional work – teaching – remains wonderfully unproblematised.

Laurillard's comment is revealing for what it suggests about identity – about how academics understand and see their work and themselves, and how both get valued (eg Fuller, 2005). Senge (2000 p. 1) saw things this way:

> … most … members of the academy seem still to see little cause for concern and little reason for fundamental change. Most teachers cannot imagine a day when there will not be students cued up at their door waiting for their words of wisdom.

To compound matters, nowadays, the prominence of research performance ratings (eg UK's RAE; Australia's ERA) all too often helps cause the teaching dimension of academic work to be pushed to one side in research-led institutional contexts (eg Fuller, 2005) a point raised by Thornton (2014) in the legal education context.

In this paper, we present a 'longitudinal case study' of leadership for educational change in a 'niche' organisational entity in a research-led institutional setting – an entity focused around the provision of practical legal education. We draw on a range of candid insights revealed during a series of

interviews granted by the Director of this entity on the occasion of his retirement in mid-2016, as well as contemporaneous literature. The aim is to examine the notion of the university as learning organisation by reviewing the experience revealed through this case study in terms of two key ideas from the literature.

Two key ideas

Two key ideas framed part of our discussion with the Director, and are central in what follows. Firstly, Daniel *et al*. (2009, p. 1) see expansion as 'the defining trend' in contemporary systems of higher education, with 'open and distance learning' and 'eLearning' as the means to increase access: the imperative is to break 'Higher Education's iron triangle' – so that it is readily scalable (wide access), academically credible (high quality) and affordable (low cost). This argument was also made by Garrison and Anderson (1999) in a little known, but for us, prescient study.

Secondly, Garrison and Anderson scoped the opportunity opened up by learning technologies for traditional, research-intensive universities to rethink their approach to teaching and learning. The 'alternative model' they advance, called 'Little Distance Education' (LDE), is contrasted with the 'big, industrial model' of Distance Education, characterized by the 'mega, open universities'. Traditional and major research universities, they suggest, have so far 'failed to construct a model of distance education and distributed learning … consistent with [their] mandate, culture, and practice'. Their ideas, together with those of Archer *et al*. (1999), not only go to the heart of our study, but, are coterminous with the account we present.

A case study in legal education – in three parts

Institutional and professional context (1/3)

The Australian National University (ANU) is a research-intensive university – typically rated amongst the top of Australia's 'sandstone' institutions. Established as a research-based single-campus institution, with no undergraduates during the 1950s, nowadays there are more than 20,000 students. It comprises seven 'Colleges' (not 'Faculties') of which Law is one (Foster and Varghese, 1996).

Citing the establishment of Legal Workshop (LW) in 1971, Foster and Varghese (1996, p. 203) comment that Law is 'perhaps the most innovative faculty on campus' and responsive to the 'needs of a profession'. Effectively a 'department' within a College (Faculty), LW 'offered a novel alternative to taking articles as a means of entering the profession'. LW offered the first Practical Legal Education (PLE) program in Australia in 1972: an approach intended to replace the more 'hit and miss affair' associated with being an articled clerk (Hogan, 1983, p. 4). It was outcomes oriented from the start, seeking to ground students in the relevant competencies for practice, with a commitment to 'learning by doing' (Hogan, 1983, p. 8).

For a period of some twenty years from the mid-1990s Associate Professor Gary Tamsitt was Director of LW. This appointment was preceded by a term as

'Director of Professional Development' in a well-known private law firm, amongst other positions. It also followed more than 20 years in the Army Reserve, a role that he maintained for some time after becoming Director. Two further points are important here:

1. The PLE program offered by LW became a full-fee paying Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice (GDLP) from 1995. That is, the Director was effectively running a 'not-for-profit educational business'.
2. The authors of this paper have worked or collaborated with him for much of his tenure as Director.

Method, and approach to 'data' interpretation (2/3)

The 'data' that inform what is, effectively, a longitudinal case study of educational change (Court, 2010) come from four primary sources:

1. An extensive range of interviews that we were granted with Gary Tamsitt (hereafter 'the Director') undertaken in three successive 'series' spread over about 6-months in 2016. Comprising some 13 hours of records, extracts are designated as 'Series A, B or C', respectively.

   Most interviews were semi-structured. One hour-long interview ('Series C') used a discussion prompt based around Garrison and Anderson's (1999) eight 'defining characteristics' for LDE (Box 1). Extracts are designated as 'Interview, LDE'.

2. A variety of 'office' documents spanning many years that the Director made available for our consultation, including: Director's reports and minutes for management meetings; study handbooks; briefing papers; review reports; letters to professional bodies (such as the Law Society or Admitting Authority) and so on.

3. Our own reflections, and numerous interactions over many years, regarding our lived experience as players in the history we review (eg see Foley and Steed, 2002; Pearson and Trevitt, 2005; Trevitt, 2005; Trevitt *et al.,* 2009); and,

4. Additional publications by LW and other colleagues.

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1. Maximizes Interaction
2. Focuses on Meaningful Learning Outcomes
3. Maximizes Active Learning
4. Is Flexible in Design
5. Supports a Systems View
6. Is Distributed
7. Is Compatible with Research Practice
8. Is Cost-Effective

Box 1: the eight defining characteristics of 'Little Distance Education' identified by Garrison and Anderson (1999).

Outcomes (3/3)

Two quite distinct perspectives characterise and sum up the Director's perceptions of his era.

A. An entrepreneurial stance

> *We eat what we kill*
>
> [Series A]

Prompted about 'cost effectiveness' (Box 1), one of the three apexes on Daniel's 'iron triangle', the Director's response was unambiguous:

> *'I've always taken that as a given. This reflects my personal focus … Are we doing things that produce good financial outcomes?'*
>
> [Interview, LDE]

Regarding the mid-2000s, the period between successive waves of educational change in the GDLP (see below), the Director observed that:

> *'LW needs to diversify. We needed to have more programs, and not just the GDLP.'*
>
> [Series B]

This was the period that saw a number of competitive tenders pursued. It also saw the establishment of two new and different study programs – in Migration and Military Law.

B. Successive 'waves' of educational change in GDLP

> *… evaluation is the engine room of educational development*
>
> [Series B]

Two broad 'waves' of development characterised the GDLP during the Director's tenure. Separated by about a decade, the first commenced in the late-1990s. It involved taking the GDLP 'online'. With the advent of ANU's first Learning Management System (LMS) this quickly saw the cessation of most classroom-based on-campus teaching (Trevitt, 2005; Trevitt *et al*, 2009). The second 'wave' involved creating a simulated virtual legal office environment with small groups of students 'working in firms'. Student numbers during the first wave were 200 or less, but exceeded 2000 in the second (Ferguson, 2015).

While the GDLP aims remained similar throughout, the means for accomplishing them, and the capacity for accommodating students' changing life circumstances, changed markedly; effectively as Garrison and Anderson outline. In reference to 'higher education's iron triangle' (Daniel *et al.,* 2009) widening access (by better accommodating variety in student circumstances) was the key motivation during the first 'wave':

> *Making it more convenient for students to fit GDLP into their lives*
>
> [Interview, LDE]

Enhancing quality was the focus of the second 'wave':

Let's have a great leap forward – in terms of education.

[Interview, LDE]

Discussion

So what does this case study reveal? How does it help us examine the notion of universities as learning organisations, or help identify those conditions that help promulgate learning organisation–like behaviours?   Below, we consider such questions under four headings:

- A business model perspective on educational innovation
- The organisational context for educational innovation
- Leadership for educational innovation
- 'Internal networkers' supporting innovation

In particular, we consider evidence supporting Garvin's notion of becoming 'skilled at creating, acquiring, interpreting, transferring, and retaining knowledge, and at purposefully modifying [organisational] behaviour' for these purposes (Garvin, 2003, p. 11).

A business model perspective on educational innovation

The university has survived as an institutional form for a very
long time, which suggests that it has strong capacities for
adaptation. … An alternative view is that they simply have not
had a competitor in their particular ecological niche, a
condition that may no longer prevail … (Senge, 2000, p. 14)

That digital technologies might enable such competition and dramatically disrupt higher education business models is not a new idea (Christensen 1997; Christensen and Eyring, 2011; Barber *et al.*, 2013). Following Archer *et al.* (1999) three strategies underpin successful adoption of disruptive technologies:

a. start small, with a well defined project;
b. expect early failures; and
c. pursue new market segments.

Small projects are readily achieved with an organisational entity 'that can operate relatively independently' with a 'cost structure that can achieve profitability with small [niche] markets and low margins and a decision-making process that supports rapid prototyping and development of courses' (Archer *et al.*, p. 23). This describes exactly the way LW has been operating, and its relationship with its wider parent university. The first wave in the GDLP concentrated on maintaining the student learning experience while extending access. Student materials remained largely in print form: energy focussed on improving student interaction and assessment through the affordances of technology (Box 1). The focus was on increasing staff capabilities and the chances of success.

The notion of planning to fail, the second strategy, 'presents a considerable challenge to the core values of the conventional university' (Archer *et al.* 1999, p. 25). Support for rapid-prototyping will be tolerated under the banner of a

'small, marginal' unit, where 'extensive use of adjunct staff hired on a just-in-time basis' (p. 26) is possible (as with LW). Key is an 'Academic Technologies for Learning' unit, created 'to support, champion, and advocate application of instructional technologies' (p. 24). Again, our experiences mirror this scenario, with LW creating the 'College Education and Innovation Support Team' (CEIST). This unit promoted an iterative, experimental approach to the design of learning experiences (Foley and Steed, 2002; Trevitt *et al.*, 2009) and ensured quality standards and deadlines were met.

The final strategy involves identifying 'new market segments' and 'serving new client groups' (Archer *et al.*, 1999, p. 27). The success with identifying and securing new niche programs in Migration and Military law are key in our case.

The organisational context for innovation

> The modern college is as much a part of the Industrial Age as
> is the modern corporation. … based on bosses and
> subordinates rather than on teams. It is a system that
> emphasizes technical problem solving rather than deep inquiry
> into the systemic source of problems in our own behavior and
> in the design of our institutions (Senge, 2000, p. 5).

As well as being agile and responsive by virtue of its small size, LW also benefited from being 'on the periphery'. While Senge bemoans the corporatization of the modern university, entrepreneurialism has now come to be seen as 'a desirable good' according to some (eg Sam and van der Sijde 2014, p. 902). Revisiting Clark's ground-breaking ideas, Taylor (2012, p. 303) argues that 'the self-reliant, flexible entrepreneurial university as envisaged by Clark, in which opportunism is seen as a virtue but is never pursued at the expense of high academic standards, is an attractive template to which to aspire.' Such entrepreneurial opportunism is readily achieved 'on the periphery' (Clark 1998; Fleming, 2013). Fleming's work suggests many striking parallels with our case (Table 1).

Fleming observes that 'peripheral units' …	LW as case in point …
… 'are predominantly established under a mandate to be responsive to community and/or industry needs' (p. 340)	Both the establishment of LW, and the 'waves of educational change' in the GDLP, were motivated in this fashion
… have sometimes been 'given a clear mandate to become self-funded' (p. 341)	GDLP was full-fee paying from 1995
… may involve having to make the case that they will 'increase the university's capacity by bringing new students into the university, offering academically rigorous programs scheduled outside of full-time student hours and in off-campus locations' (p. 341)	The 2001 GDLP course guide noted: • 'a Part-time option [was introduced] in 1997'; • 'a "Flexible" (Distance) option in 1999'; and • 'an "In Practice" GDLP [was launched in 2001 involving] 16 weeks of placement in an approved legal practice'.
… 'do not seek to replicate the core; their organisation and culture will reflect a more flexible, innovative and open environment with an appetite for risk' (p.	We instance the Director's initiative in pursuing competitive tenders for educational provision, along with helping establish new programs in Migration and Military Law.

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… 'can also earn income for the university as part of a diversified funding base, thus enhancing the university's self-sufficiency and independence' (p. 344)	Again, we'd instance the Migration Law and Military Law programs, and the important contribution they make to the wider College and University.
… 'occupy an ambiguous space that requires a firm understanding by the parent organisation [regarding how it] aligns with or complement[s] the university core' (p. 344)	Occupying the (relatively) new space of PLE meant that the GDLP was not seen as challenging institutional 'core business'. Rather it fulfilled a complementary aim, which perhaps warranted a different approach (but see text).

Table 1: six defining features of 'units on the periphery' considered by
Fleming (2013), and analogous features in our LW case study.

Pursuing an informed, deliberate and shared strategy involving 'the periphery' and 'the core' (last row, Table 1) is central to the notion of a learning organisation. Yes, a deliberate strategy was pursued by the Director, but achieving wider shared appreciation of the nuances of the LW online and legal educational context, along with the operational niceties that befit that context, appeared to be challenging in the wider university – perhaps understandably, given ANU's history and prevailing institutional character (Foster and Varghese, 1996). Prompted as to whether the LW and GDLP initiatives should be thought of as an 'anomaly' or perhaps 'the harbinger of wider change' the Director responded:

> *… interesting you should frame it that way because at different times in the past I had thought that sort of thing might be possible. For example, I was on a [high level working group recently, with selected, hand-picked others] working to develop a framework for the University to [further] develop its online programs. I thought we [ie LW] could have played a role.*
>
> *[Unfortunately] I don't think they understood what we did. Maybe that's a failure on my part… It's actually been quite difficult to explain the sorts of things we've been doing. It's almost an example of the need for experiential learning!*

[Interview, LDE]

It is tempting to speculate whether issues associated with promoting and enabling 'genuine dialogue' (Oswick *et al.,* 2000) may be implicated here, in accord with considerations outlined next.

Leadership for innovation

'Imaginative local leaders … encourage ferment.' … They
- 'help people develop better skills in collaborative learning (a particular short suit of many educators who have excelled … as competitive, individual learners)';
- 'work to relieve specific constraints that hamper innovators, such as getting them more time, support, and relief from organizational pressures';
- 'they take a stand for what is possible'; and

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- 'confront the changes needed in [their] own behaviors.
  ...[and acknowledge] the symbolic power to *model,* to *be*
  the change [they] are seeking to create.'

<div align="right">(Senge, 2000, p. 7, his emphasis)</div>

The Director's leadership initiatives successfully drove up quality in the GDLP, while containing cost and extending access – more or less exactly as Daniel *et al.* and Garrison and Anderson had theorised. This is not an insubstantial outcome, given the many risks and challenges in a highly research-intensive setting. Leading innovative entities 'on the periphery' (ie LW) and the educational technology support units that support them (ie CEIST) is particularly challenging, according to Archer *et al*. (1999, p. 24).

The issue of becoming more skilled in teamwork in academia – Senge's first point above – remains a vexed one. However, achieving a 'shared vision' is one of Senge's five disciplines for a learning organisation, and the pursuit of team-based approaches to curriculum development was integral to each GDLP 'wave' (Pearson and Trevitt, 2005; Ferguson, 2015). The challenges during the 'second wave' exceeded those in the first wave: educationally, philosophically, and practically (eg student numbers were now in the thousands not hundreds). There was a larger and stronger emphasis on genuine collaboration, which, for some, confronted personal teaching identities and approaches. The 'first wave' had largely allowed staff to innovate individually, within existing course structures.

There was little evidence of *direct* assistance supporting collaborative learning in the second wave; no workshops or specific directives. Rather, collaborative approaches were promulgated more indirectly – by creating opportunities for 'genuine dialogue' (Oswick *et al*., 2000; Steed and Foley, 2002), with the Director contributing to numerous developmental discussions, and by focusing the GDLP pedagogy on collaborative learning. Conversation, discussion and dialogic spaces around teaching and learning practice existed in a way they did not in the first wave (Steed and Foley, 2002). For example, having lecturers share and discuss their responses to student feedback after each course became standard practice. Also, frequent visitors were brought in from outside for seminar discussions and so forth (eg Professors Michael Eraut and Paul Maharg). In this fashion, staff found themselves living what was 'being preached' – as much 'learning by doing' when developing the curriculum, as aspired to within the student learning experience itself.

The Director's efforts in pursuit of 'more time and support' on behalf of his staff – Senge's second point – took a variety of forms. Over and above the recruitment and/or institutionalisation of 'internal networkers' (see below) he worked to diversify income by expanding educational programs.

Senge's third point, taking a stand, brings to mind the occasional tension-full conversations involving the Director and those of us who might be considered 'internal networkers' (see below). On the cusp of a 'wave' those 'networkers' might be advocating delay in order to prepare more thoroughly, but the Director

would stand firm, and hold the 'tension' in a fashion that Martin (1999) identifies as central to such leadership.

Finally, that leaders should 'be the change they are seeking to create', was epitomised when the Director signed up for the ANU 'in-house' graduate program in higher education to set an example for his own staff. Despite thinking initially there would be little to be gained, our interviews revealed that his experiences in this program actually helped lay the conceptual foundation underpinning the 'second wave' of GDLP development.

It was clear from the interviews that the Director's stance as leader was shaped by his long experience and training in the Army and, perhaps to a lesser extent, by his experience in the private legal sector. That is, his experience *outside of academia* gave him the confidence to take on what many would consider unacceptable and high-risk initiatives inside the academy, which implies learning organisation characteristics could be considered wanting. Strengthening the capacity of and support for next generation academic leadership is now being seen as urgent (eg Scott *et al*., 2008) with some advances underway (eg Bryman, 2007; Grunefeld, 2015). However, leadership is not simply positional, but is also distributed (Scott *et al*., 2008) and includes individuals that Senge calls 'internal networkers'.

'Internal networkers' supporting innovation

> 'Even though they are essential, [internal networkers] will
> be most effective in concert with local line leaders
> and executive leaders' (Senge, 1996, p. 11).

Senge (1996, p. 10) cites 'internal consultants, trainers, or personnel staff in organization development or human resources' as possible contenders for the role of 'internal networkers' within a learning organisation. They should:
- 'have high accessibility to many parts of the organization',
- 'understand the informal networks',
- be 'seen as credible, knowledgeable, committed individuals', and
- 'not [be] a particular threat to anyone'.

Documentation of educational advisor contributions to LW and/or ANU College of Law and/or ANU (Trevitt *et al.,* 2009; Pearson and Trevitt, 2005; Trevitt, 2005; Foley and Steed, 2002) illustrates how each of these descriptors of Senge's certainly resonate with our experiences, though others should say how 'credible' or 'knowledgeable' they have been.

What is important is the extent to which such roles were recognised, developed, valued and institutionalised by the Director, and then others. The first 'internal networker' was a member of a central unit in the University. Subsequently, the Director established a new position within LW to support legal academics 'moving online'. Later, two new positions were created, and the resultant group became a small unit, CEIST, situated in LW. CEIST was the entire 'internal networking' resource supporting teaching staff during the 'second wave'.

That CEIST has recently been moved out of LW and repositioned as a resource for the entire ANU College of Law, suggests learning organisation-like

behaviour. CEIST, in its new role as a support unit for the entire ANU College of Law (ie including the traditional academic 'heartland') rather than just the 'development periphery' (LW), is now perhaps the most substantial and mature unit of its kind anywhere in ANU. Along with the newly created ANU-wide unit supporting online teaching, these initiatives are characteristic of successful entrepreneurialism in the way they embody 'reflexivity, involving continuous renewal of internal structures' (Gibb *et al*, 2009, p. 17). They demonstrate an incremental but significant step towards 'the self-reliant, flexible entrepreneurial university' envisaged by Clark. A step that exemplifies 'purposeful behaviour' in response to 'new knowledge and insights' in accord with Garvin's definition of a learning organisation.

A note of caution

The concept of the entrepreneurial university is not without its critics (eg Barrow, 2015; Finlay, 2004). But the devil is in the detail. A propensity for adopting business strategies long abandoned in the corporate world and 'already failing in the wider state sector for reasons that were well understood' concerns Barrow (2015, p. 54), a point that Duke (2002) also notes. Barrow claims university '[a]dministrators [have] embraced the rhetoric of entrepreneurialism, but immediately distorted it through the lens of established hierarchical bureaucracies'. Finlay (2004, p. 431) emphasises that it is leaders and other personnel within organisations who can be entrepreneurial, not the organisation itself. But then acknowledges that leaders can exercise agency in reconfiguring structures to make entrepreneurial actions more likely or easier to bring about. Our case suggests both the presence and absence of such agentive initiative, which we would expect represents others' experience more broadly.

Likewise, suggesting research-led universities should purposefully engage in educational innovation, let alone exploit online and distance education, is not without its detractors. Notable failures in the (not so new) brave world of educational innovation in general (eg Duke, 2014) and the mixed successes of e-learning (eg Zemsky and Massy, 2004) suggest caution is warranted. The challenge to identity runs deep in research-strong contexts, and the implications are just starting to be probed (eg Ross *et al*, 2014; Thornton, 2014). At the same time, growing interest in identifying the conditions for success with technology-enhanced learning (eg Chipere, 2017) suggest an emerging ecology of learning organisation tendencies across the sector, if not in any one institution.

Concluding comments

… good ideas with no ideas on how to implement
them are wasted ideas (Scott, 2008, vi)

… claiming that once an idea has been articulated it is no longer
of interest is the retreat of the expert from the
hard work of change (Senge, 2000, p. 14)

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We have outlined one instance of sustained entrepreneurial educational change accomplished within a strongly research-led institution. The 20+ year development trajectory exemplifies one approach to breaking Daniel's 'iron triangle' (by extending access, raising quality and containing costs) while offering empirical support for the educational and business models outlined by Garrison and Anderson (1999) and Archer *et al.* (1999): the only such empirical account that we know about.

Does this trajectory demonstrate the presence of learning organisation-like characteristics? In terms of Garvin's requirements for learning organisation behaviour, we can see that a culture of adaptation and change has become central to the ordinary business of the LW. It can be seen as an agile, self-funded 'incubator unit' located on Clark's 'institutional development periphery' (cf Fleming, 2013).

Different outcomes are in evidence at different organisational levels. Within LW, we can see evidence of staff:
- becoming more skilled at 'creating, acquiring and interpreting' new educational practices (and associated feedback for success) during two main waves of GDLP development; and
- creating 'internal networking' support in the guise of CEIST – a unit 'purposefully' geared to 'retaining' and 'transferring' relevant new organisational learning, for both the benefit of the 'second wave' and new programs that were being established.

More recently, it can be argued that LO-like behaviour on the part of the ANU College of Law is evidenced by the strategic repositioning of CEIST for the benefit of all (not just LW), along with additional educational innovations now underway in the larger College entity. Additionally, the recent strengthening of central University 'internal networking' can be seen as another LO-like development. It remains to be seen exactly what qualities of success will eventuate. Achieving such outcomes, against the tide as it were (ie in the face of diminished valuing of educational cf. research activity) in a research-intensive context is a not-unreasonable accomplishment.

At each level, our case analysis has revealed, embedding and sustaining substantial collaborative effort premised on what Oswick *et al.* (2000, p. 899-900) call 'real' or 'genuine' dialogue appears crucial:
> Dialogic communication suggests that meaning is always incomplete and partial, and the reason I talk with others is to better understand what I and they mean, hoping to find new and more satisfying ways of being together. (Deetz, 1995, pp. 97–8)

Thinking more generally about universities as learning organisations, what do we know about the organisational 'development' agenda(s), and associated timeframes? Typically, 'development' has not featured in any explicit fashion in universities for most (say 96%) of their known history. During the last 30+ years, however, three logically distinctive focuses have emerged and taken shape, namely: research, teaching (and learning), and human resources (see Debowski, 2012). As yet, it is unclear that *any* (let alone *constructive*) crossover

or dialogue is underway yet between these three 'worlds'. However, unpacking this idea from a learning organisation perspective, and exploring the potential benefits, would seem to be important. To the extent that universities are now engaged in a race between 'adaptive reinvention' and the 'unbundling' consequences of technological disruption, only time will tell who are 'winners' and what constitutes a 'winning formula'. But more explicit attention to organisational development would seem timely. High levels of self-understanding, along with a proactive, informed and reflexive stance, is increasingly being demanded of academic leaders. With time, those universities that benefit from capable leadership of this sort may be able to lay legitimate claim to being genuine learning organisations.

Acknowledgments

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