AALL
Association for Academic
Language and Learning

Learning from our students

Alan Calder and Bhama Daly

Teaching and Learning Development, James Cook University, Cairns Queensland 4870, Australia

Email: Alan.Calder@jcu.edu.au, Bhama.Daly@jcu.edu.au

It is acknowledged that Academic Language and Learning (ALL) professionals have a unique relationship with students and that this allows them to gather information about the nature of successful student learning experiences. This paper provides an overview of an ongoing study at James Cook University consistent with Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's concept of learning as a social process, and of building a community of practice by "talking with students about what and how they learn" (Chanock & Vardi, 2005, p. 1). Students were asked about the strategies that lecturers can use to improve learning; and the ALL community, through the Unilearn E-mail list and the ALL discussion forum, was also asked to contribute student feed-back on this issue. The initial information received from these sources formed the basis of academic staff development workshops where academics, support staff and students came together to discuss strategies to improve the student learning experience. In leading a process of this type, ALL professionals are actively engaging in the scholarship of teaching and learning, and by stimulating further discussion amongst academic staff, students and support staff, the authors aim to contribute to an improved understanding of the nature of successful learning experiences.

Key Words: student learning experiences, academic staff development, scholarship

1. Introduction

This paper explains a process whereby student perceptions, institutional data, and teaching and learning research are all brought together in academic staff development workshops designed to promote a collaborative learning community to improve student learning experiences. In 2006, James Cook University (JCU) Academic Language and Learning (ALL) professionals collaborated with academic staff developers within the Teaching and Learning Development (TLD) unit to develop academic staff development workshops under the title of "Learning from our students" – the title being adapted from one of Biggs' (2003) four principles of effective teaching in higher education. The paper has been encouraged by the idea that ALL professionals (also referred to as Language and Academic Skills (LAS) practitioners) are in a unique and powerful position to undertake research into effective learning experiences. The proposition is that experienced students in particular have been engaged in the act of learning within the higher education sector for some time, and because there is an atmosphere of trust between the student and the ALL professional, the potential exists to explore these expert experiences in some depth. According to Chanock and Vardi (2005), "It should be clear, from this survey of the types of research LAS practitioners can do largely by drawing on the data from our day-to-day work, that teaching provides a wealth of opportunities for 'reasoning why' students do what they do, and producing papers that contribute to the development of our community of practice" (p. 3). Bearing in mind that perceptions of learning experiences change according to the year

level of the student (Gunn-Lewis & Malthus, 2000), both first year and later year students were asked to reflect on the two key questions of this study:

- What strategies can lecturers use in their lectures to help you learn?
- What is it about the delivery of the entire subject (resources, assessment, tutorials etc) that helps you to learn?

Student responses to these questions became the catalyst for the development of staff workshops designed to analyse and promote effective learning pedagogy through a community of practice as defined by Lave and Wenger (1991). Lave and Wenger emphasise the social context of learning whereby it is not an isolated, individual activity, but a social and interactive process. In the university environment, students learn through engagement with other students and staff, and through a shared repertoire of knowledge and resources. Learning then occurs through a process that Lave and Wenger (1991) define as "legitimate peripheral participation: By this we mean … that learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and that mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move towards full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community" (p. 29). It is the process by which students are initiated into the sociocultural practices of the learning environment and which establishes their identity as a community of practice within the university environment. Thus, this paper refers to learning as a situated activity within a community of practice that involves key stakeholders in the learning context – learners, teachers and ALL professionals.

2. Methodology

Data for this study were obtained through interviews with students, through information obtained from the ALL community, as well as a review of national and international research, institutional data, and through an analysis of the discussion and debate arising from the academic staff development workshops.

2.1. Student interviews

More than two hours of videotaped interviews were conducted with a sample of 26 students from all year levels that included students from international, domestic and non-English speaking backgrounds. The students were randomly selected to participate and their answers to the key questions in the study were transcribed and categorised according to the issues that emerged. The eight issues were flexibility of delivery, assessment and feedback, group work, passion shown by lecturer, variety of teaching strategies, resources, support workshops, staff availability, and being provided with the relevance or "big picture" about a subject.

2.2. National and international research

In order to harness the experience of other ALL professionals and to foster the concept of advancing learning through a community of practice, data were also obtained from the ALL community through the Unilearn E-mail list and discussion forum (Calder, 2006). ALL professionals were asked to draw on the interactions they have had with students and lecturers over the years and reflect on the same two key questions that were posed to students: What strategies can lecturers use to help students learn? How does delivery of the subject (resources, assessment, tutorials and teaching style of the lecturer) assist student learning? A total of 15 ALL professionals responded and a representative summary was developed and presented at the workshops in Cairns and Townsville. To obtain a wider perspective, both nationally and internationally, relevant papers about enhancing engagement (Yorke, 2006; Field & Kent, 2004; Myers, Nulty, Whelan, & Ryan, 2004; Kift, 2004; Krause, Hartley, James, & McInnis, 2005), supporting student learning (Chanock & Vardi, 2005; Radloff, 2005; Taylor, 2006; O'Regan, 2005; Milnes, 2005), and effective learning (Biggs, 2003; Ramsden, 2003; Race & Brown, 1998) were compiled into a 200-page resource booklet for workshop participants.

2.3. JCU Institutional Data

The workshop development team also chose to tap into a wide range of institutional data: Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ), Student Feedback on Subjects (SFS), Student Feedback on Teaching (SFT) and the JCU First Year Experience (FYE) Questionnaire – adapted from Krause et al., 2005). The relevant data from all these sources were introduced to workshop participants through a printed workshop booklet and the following sections provide more detail about how these data were used.

2.4. Academic Staff development workshops

Two-hour academic staff development workshops were conducted with 22 lecturers in Cairns and 20 lecturers in Townsville in 2006. All faculties were represented at the workshops. The aim of the workshops was to facilitate discussion on how teaching practice influences student learning and motivation by presenting faculty lecturers with feedback from students, current research from external and institutional data, and from feedback provided by ALL professionals. The workshop participants were divided into groups of four to five people who viewed student videos and transcripts and then discussed how they would address the students' issues in their own contexts. Eight students, representing a range of years and disciplines, were invited to participate in the groups and a panel discussion followed in which these and other issues were further explored.

Several ALL professionals argued for the use of student panels in workshops as this strategy usually has an impact on the participants and helps bridge the gap between student and academic staff expectations. Since the aim of this project was to learn from our students, it was entirely appropriate for the "Learning from our students" workshops to include a student panel to elaborate on their views about learning issues.

Figure 1. Input, development and outcomes of academic staff development workshops.

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of how a wide range inputs influenced the content of the workshops and how outcomes and institutional dissemination attempted to influence teaching and learning practice at JCU. The inputs can be categorised in three ways: the student perspective as the main catalyst as mentioned above, national and international research, and

JCU institutional data. The academic staff development workshops provided a way of validating these inputs through discussion and debate and putting the issues within institutional and discipline-specific contexts.

A written summary of the panel discussions and workshop content was disseminated to the wider academic community. Workshop resources were also placed on the "Arrive, Stay and Succeed @ JCU" online staff forum and were also used at the "Teaching First Years" academic staff development conferences.

3. Analysis

The following analysis firstly reports on the effectiveness of the academic staff development workshops and then analyses the key themes that emerged from the workshops.

3.1. Academic staff development workshops

The total attendance for the workshops was 42, which was regarded as significant for a staff development workshop. The responses in Table 1 show a high approval rating for the workshops in terms of addressing students' learning needs, and of developing a community of practice. The participants generally valued the opportunity to engage in professional dialogues with their peers, gained an appreciation of the internal instruments used for feedback from students, and importantly from the ALL perspective, appeared to be motivated to embed learning assistance practices, such as formative assessment and improved feedback mechanisms, into the curriculum.

Table 1. Evaluation of "Learning from our students" workshops (n = 38). Ratings are on a 5 point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

Did the workshop help you:	Mean rating
1. Consider current perspectives on learning support?	4.65
2. Recognize the value of feedback offered from students (SFS/SFT/CEQ)?	4.35
3. Expand knowledge of ways to embed learning assistance practices into curriculum?	4.3
4. Engage in professional dialogue that will enhance student learning?	4.6
5. How would you rate this workshop (1 = not useful, 5 = highly useful)?	4.45

The written comments on the workshops indicated that the staff development activity may indeed have influenced the teaching practices of some of those who attended. For example, participants' comments included statements about future intentions to implement alternative assessment strategies, seek feedback from students instead of relying only on SFS results, and instigate activities that promote student learning and motivation.

Despite the overall positive feedback from participants, there can be limitations in using workshops as a method of influencing academic practice. For example, the students and teaching staff involved in the workshops may not be representative samples of the lecturers and students from across the institution. This was illustrated when in one workshop the students were calling for more explicit feedback, yet the lecturers challenged this view and claimed they did give extensive feedback only to observe that many students did not even bother to collect their assignments. These staff development activities predominantly attract the most conscientious students and lecturers, thus it would be difficult to claim that academic staff development workshops of this type are capable of influencing teaching practice on a wide scale.

From the ALL community feedback, it appears that the ability of academic staff developers and ALL professionals to influence teaching practice is often limited by poor or unrepresentative

attendance at workshops of this type. ALL professionals often therefore resign themselves to the strategy of "working through their champions" in the hope that improved pedagogical practices will spread throughout the academic community. This suggests that the workshops are only one of many strategies that are required to influence practice and this again highlights the importance of disseminating the following workshop findings and themes throughout the wider learning community of the institution. The four key themes to emerge from the workshops were feedback and assessment; strategies to help students learn in lectures; strategies to help students learn in tutorials; and issues of flexibility, resources and delivery.

3.2. Feedback and assessment

Students stated they would like to receive comprehensive feedback on all assessment items including exams. The feedback could be generic and placed on the web, or handled in tutorials or at the next lecture. Students also asked for the quality of feedback to be improved to include diagnostic feedback such as common strengths and weaknesses and how to overcome the latter. Students reported that feedback from teachers and tutors teaching the same subject was often inconsistent. If feedback on assessment represents a learning opportunity, it needs to occur early in a semester so that students can use the knowledge effectively for the next piece of assessment. One student made an argument for increased numbers of smaller-weighted assessments rather than one highly-weighted assessment piece. The rationale given by the student was that smaller-weighted assessment pieces enhanced the learning process, and that more frequent assessment provided opportunities to explore better ways of "doing things" before any major piece of work has to be submitted. Feedback received from ALL colleagues suggested that there is also a need for clear expectations and clarification of assignments. In their discussions with ALL professionals, students had stated that they often felt confused about what they needed to do in order to complete tasks, and that they needed "someone to talk to" about their issues.

Institutional data support the concerns students expressed about feedback and assessment. The JCU Student Feedback on Subjects (SFS) instrument has a 5-point Likert scale (completely unacceptable = 0 to outstanding = 5) for the closed items shown in Table 2. The instrument is available online to all students and had a response rate in 2005 of approximately 20%. The SFS provides institutional data in relation to assessment and feedback issues that are relevant to this study.

Table 2. Student Feedback on Subject (SFS) closed items.

1	The quality of the learning experiences in this subject was
2	The interest level generated by this subject was
3	The explanations given by the staff in this subject were
4	The organization and structure of this subject was
5	The quality of information provided about assessment requirements was
6	**The quality of comments on assessed work was**
7	**The specification of criteria used to assess work was**
8	Staff interest in assisting students to learn was
9	The level to which we accomplished the aims of this subject was

SFS data for JCU students (Table 3) show that student responses for each item vary according to year level as Gunn-Lewis and Malthus (2000) have suggested, and the ratings appear to get lower as the students progress though their degree until they reach postgraduate levels of study. However, within the context of this study, the most striking observation is that, regardless of the students' year level, they generally gave the lowest ratings to the quality of the comments on their assessed work (item 6) and on the specification of criteria used to assess work (item 7).

A. Calder & B. Daly

Table 3. Student Feedback on Subjects (SFS) average scores (Source: Rapson, 2006).

				SFS Question Number (see Table 2)					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Year 1	3.35	3.46	3.62	3.52	3.50	3.37	3.39	3.76	3.46
Year 2	3.53	3.50	3.60	3.44	3.42	3.35	3.31	3.74	3.46
Year 3	3.52	3.51	3.59	3.42	3.39	3.31	3.30	3.71	3.47
Year 4	3.42	3.45	3.37	3.27	3.25	3.31	3.21	3.55	3.37
Year 5	3.77	3.83	3.72	3.62	3.58	3.45	3.47	3.80	3.61

Another internal instrument, Student Feedback on Teaching (SFT) is administered in JCU classes at the request of a lecturer and asks students to rate various statements (Table 4) about their teacher.

Table 4. Student Feedback on Teaching (SFT) items.

1   The quality of this teacher's explanations was

2   This teacher's interest in assisting students to learn was

3   The structure of this teacher's presentations was

4   This teacher's accomplishment of the aims of the subject was

5   The information about assessment requirements provided by this teacher was

6   This teacher's understanding of the subject was

7   The level of feedback provided by this teacher was

8   This teacher's effort to motivate students was

9   The level of interest generated by this teacher was

10   How this teacher clarified the subject's expectations of students was

11   This teacher's organisation was

12   This teacher's use of teaching aids was

13   This teacher's punctuality was

14   This teacher's availability to students was

15   This teacher's use of email and the world wide web was

16   Overall, the quality of this staff member's teaching was

Figure 2 below shows that in the SFT responses, the four least acceptable items related to feedback, assessment, motivation efforts by the lecturer and interest generated by the lecturer. The least acceptable item was item 5 in relation to "the information provided about assessment requirements by this teacher." The 2005 SFT results represent 576 separate evaluations of teaching through 17,721 individual evaluation forms.
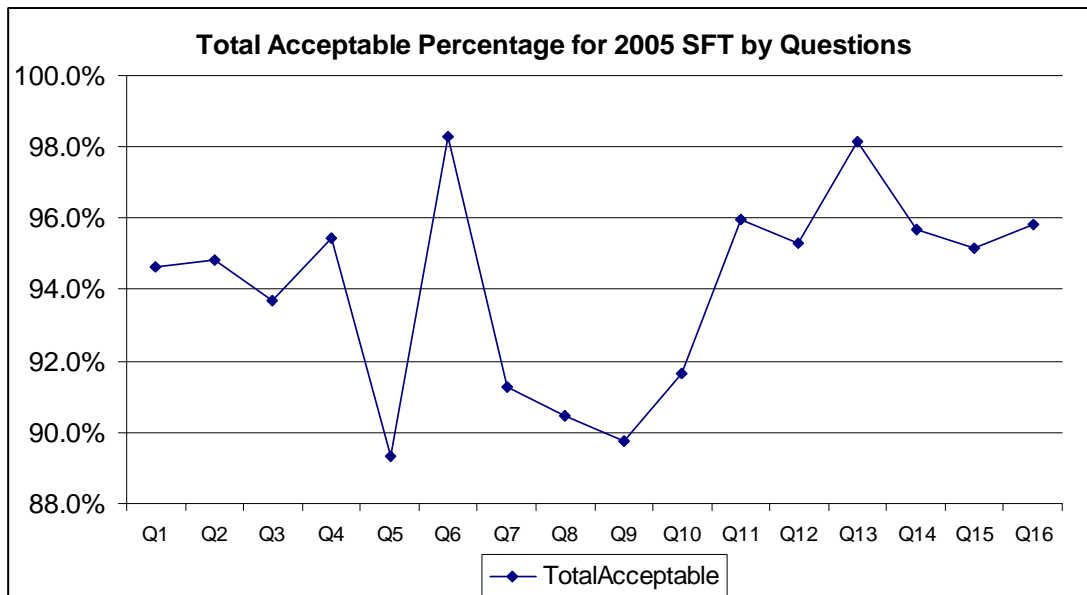
Figure 2. Student Feedback on Teaching (SFT) percentage of students rating the statement as "acceptable" (Source: Rapson, 2006). Question numbers correspond to those given in Table 4.

The above concerns about the quality of assessment and feedback are supported in another institution-wide instrument, the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) that measures graduate satisfaction of students and their courses. Rapson (2006) reports that JCU student responses clearly indicate that students are looking for improvements in the quality of the feedback they receive and in assessment processes in general.

There is a significant body of literature (Bandura, 1997; Yorke, 2006; Ramsden, 2003; Taylor, 2006; Biggs, 2003) and considerable institutional data that provide support for the views on feedback and assessment that the students initially brought to the staff development workshops. Ramsden (2003) provides affirmation of the JCU students' views when he suggests that "of all the facets of good teaching that are important to them [students], feedback on assessed work is perhaps the most commonly mentioned" (p. 96). Links between the themes that emerged in the workshops and the literature are explored in the following sections.

3.3. Strategies to help students learn in lectures

Figure 2 also shows that students have some concerns about their lecturers' ability to generate interest and motivate through their teaching. The second least acceptable item in the SFT was item 9 in relation to "the level of interest generated by this teacher" and the third least acceptable item was item 8 in relation to "the teacher's effort to motivate students."

There was an overwhelming endorsement from students and the workshop participants about the importance of lecturers being passionate about their subjects and about teachers who really enjoy teaching and being with the students. For example, some of the comments made by students were: "be engaging – exude enthusiasm"; "enthusiastic teachers are motivating"; "the most inspiring teachers don't sit behind a desk, they move around the lecture space showing interest and enthusiasm and passion for the job." Students also emphasised that lecturers should be empathetic and supportive: "demonstrate that you remember what it is like to be a student, talk about your own student learning experience, or your work experience. This makes the teacher appear more approachable and aids in developing a community learning spirit." These comments highlight the importance of "the personal" in higher education articulated by Yorke (2006, p. 14) when he suggests that, "although teachers cannot guarantee students' success, they can at least bend the odds in its favour through their moral commitment to student learning, the attitudes they convey and the methods they use."

A colleague in New Zealand who responded to the request for information for the workshops provided an interesting perspective for discussion. She found students' approaches to study and their expectations changed from year to year, and while not surprising given such attitudes and perceptions are not static, she suggested that lecturers might want to similarly adapt their approaches in their teaching practices. First year students, for example, may require more explicit instructions about assessment tasks or more guidance with locating resources than later year students. Gunn-Lewis and Malthus (2000) explore this issue of different student expectations with adult overseas students and conclude that for the lecturer it comes down to good teaching practice that includes not making any assumptions and showing respect and empathy for the students.

A recurring theme was the need for students to be provided with real life authentic learning experiences and to be clearly informed about how the information and tasks they are working on relate to the world, their degree, and their subject. Students require the "big picture" when they begin a course of study and need to be told what it is they are going to learn during the lecture, review what they learnt in the last lecture, and reinforce their learning throughout the semester. One student in particular clearly identified the importance of being able to "contextualise" her learning as the semester progressed. The importance of real life experiences within the learning experience was also evident in Rapson's (2006) analysis of the CEQ data where she found that the most positive written comments from students related to the practical experience components of a course.

Some practical pedagogical teaching techniques that emerged from the workshop discussion were about body language and voice: some of the comments were "use lots of eye contact, body gestures, voice intonation, humour and drama to get the message across"; "engage the students by including short bursts of activities during the lecture." The analysis of the data from the workshops, interviews, and feedback from ALL professionals showed that students appreciate the inclusion of interactive strategies such as quizzes, small group discussion and other activities that cater for different learning styles. An important suggestion from the students was for "less wordy" PowerPoint slides to avoid confusion and information overload. One student bluntly stated, "Reading material from PowerPoint slides is boring and unhelpful." In the interviews, students raised the point that lecturers need to use microphones in large lecture theatres as the acoustics may make it difficult for students to hear the lecturer's voice.

Many of the issues raised here are clearly problems of the reliance many institutions place on a lecture/tutorial educational model that is far from the seamless learning environment proposed by Kuh (1996). However, while the reliance persists we must continue to seek and act on the feedback provided by students and encourage the use of the wealth of information and resources available though academic staff development units and ALL professionals.

3.4. Strategies to help students learn in tutorials

One ALL professional, in response to the request for input to this workshop, highlighted the important role tutors play in students' academic progress and how tutors moderate the transition experience. Rhoden and Dowling (2006), while acknowledging that progress has been made in Australian universities regarding the training and induction of tutors, question the extent to which tutors are resourced, trained and supported in their valuable contribution to student learning. Unfortunately, there were few institutional data to bring to the workshops on this topic; however, students and staff participants at the workshops acknowledged there is a need for improvements in the way learning is managed in tutorials at JCU. The participants agreed that it was important for tutors to know the names of students and that all students should be involved in tutorials by setting work, which is not too burdensome, for the next tutorial so the students attending will know they have to contribute towards the tutorial. Some students had reported on the difficulty of learning from tutorials that were the same format each week. There was a consensus that tutors should try and present a range of activities in tutorials each week. Students stated that exciting tutorials were those that presented creative and innovative activities, which they said resulted in superior learning experiences.

There was some debate about small group discussions in tutorials. One student considered it repetitive with poor learning outcomes. Others thought that small group discussions could work if the nature of the activity varied, for example, mind mapping activities for conceptual learning followed by an exercise in comparing similarities and differences in conceptual understanding. Another student commented that sometimes tutors did not give sufficient time for students to plan for group work. Another student observed that a tutor's strategy of providing progressive grades for participation in tutorials and group work maintained attendance that benefited all students – particularly those presenting papers toward the end of the semester.

The workshop discussion on tutorials from both the student and staff perspectives provided an opportunity to draw the attention of all participants to resources such as Race and Brown's (1998), *The Lecturer's Toolkit.* This text provides hints for what students can do in tutorials to improve their learning, and guides for running tutorials including managing learning in small groups.

3.5. Flexibility, resources and delivery

Flexibility was an important issue for most students. One student suggested a varied approach to lectures and tutorials, such as staging library research skills workshops in which students learn a practical skill that is beneficial to subsequent assessment. Another approach suggested by students and also reported in the literature (Field & Kent, 2004; Benckendorff, 2005), is the development of workshop sessions that combine lectures and tutorials into "lectorials", and a combination of online and face-to-face teaching. Such an approach would address many of the issues previously discussed which were related to an over-reliance on the traditional lecture/tutorial model.

Students suggested that all assessment details should be provided at the start of the semester, especially assignment topics. They stated that not knowing what assignments they had to do, or not being able to plan for their assignments, and being given the information late in the semester, only served to place additional stress on them. Students had commented that providing assessment details at the beginning of semester provided an opportunity to reflect on the assessment piece during the semester and collect relevant material as it becomes available. Support for this approach is provided by Myers, Nulty, Whelan, and Ryan (2004) who further suggest providing students with a detailed concept map of a unit's pedagogical design, content and assessment areas to be used in conjunction with traditional textual subject outlines.

Furthermore, students with work and family commitments appealed for more flexibility regarding when subjects are offered and how they are offered. Some internal research (Benckendorff, 2005) presented at the workshop from the School of Business attributed some of the poor retention in the School to a lack of flexibility in course offerings and proposed a range of initiatives to widen course delivery strategies through timetabling, online methods and other technologies. This particular report also recommended exploring opportunities for more inter-active and stimulating teaching formats to engage students along the lines of those already requested here by the students interviewed for these workshops.

A student provided an interesting illustration of how subject resources and delivery can be enhanced when she praised her lecturer for preparing short podcasts that summarised each lecture and highlighted the major points. The student appreciated the lecturer's efforts in making the podcasts, stating that the podcasts provided a focus for the readings, helped students prepare material for the lecture, and facilitated examination revision. The podcasts also assisted in reinforcing the "big picture" that students had suggested improved their learning experience.

Most importantly, this illustrates the benefits of bringing the JCU learning community together into a social learning process because several academic staff members have since got together to discuss and learn from each other about how to effectively use podcasts in their course delivery.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study began by asking students two key questions:

- What strategies can lecturers use in their lectures to help you learn?
- What is it about the delivery of the entire subject (resources, assessment, tutorials etc) that helps you to learn?

The student responses to these questions and inputs from research from a range of sources were presented to academic staff in workshops to encourage ongoing discussion of strategies to improve learning through a community of practice. The themes that emerged from these discussions were feedback and assessment; strategies to help students learn in lectures and tutorials; and also issues about flexibility, resources and subject delivery.

All of the learning issues raised in this paper are not new to ALL professionals, students or others involved in academic staff development. All universities can point to teaching and learning plans and other policy documents which specifically address learner engagement, strategies and techniques to promote active learning, interaction, deep learning, constructive alignment and challenging learning environments along the lines advocated by Biggs (2003) and through Ramsden's (2003) four principles of effective teaching in higher education. Indeed, one of Ramsden's principles involves "learning from students" and another is about "concern and respect for students and their learning", both of which have helped guide this paper.

The paper has also been guided by the idea of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Percy & Stirling, 2005; O'Regan, 2005; Milnes, 2005), where all those involved in teaching students have contributed to an improved understanding of successful learning experiences. This study not only facilitated ALL professionals' input to the learning issues raised by students, but it also allowed for valuable exchanges in views between staff and students and introduced all workshop participants to relevant research. For example, the issue of assessment weightings facilitated the introduction of recent work by Taylor (2006), Meyers et al. (2004) and Kift (2004) who provide examples of how the revision of the timing and weighting of formative assessment programs can produce positive effects on student success and engagement with the curriculum. Through dissemination of the workshop outcomes and resources to the wider academic community at JCU, the authors have attempted to follow Radloff's (2005) advice to "ensure that their work is disseminated beyond their peers to academics across the disciplines in order to influence teaching practice" (p. 12).

Apart from the issue of appropriate assessment and feedback, two other student-centred issues emerged quite strongly in this study. Firstly, there is a need for a sense of clarity about where students are going and what is expected of them (as one student stated, they need to be made aware of the "big picture"). Ramsden (2003) identified this as the need for clear goals and intellectual challenges with students being engaged, independent and in control of their own learning. Secondly, it became clear in this study that it was a lecturer's personal approach to teaching that was a key factor in the establishment of an effective student learning experience.

The one word agreed on by students and staff about what makes an effective learning experience was *passion*. Lecturers who obviously love their subject and love what they do are clearly important factors that influence the students' motivation to learn. In a socio-cultural context, Yorke (2006) describes how policy and practice at various levels can influence students' achievement, yet he stresses the importance of the "personal" as a common theme in a successful student experience.

The process of developing and delivering the "Learning from our students" workshops has demonstrated the collaborative nature of the ALL community and confirmed the role ALL professionals as actively engaging in the scholarship of teaching and learning. However, one cannot help but wonder why the sorts of issues raised by students in this paper continue to be raised despite the evidence in the literature and the work of ALL professionals and academic development staff.

One of the reasons why students continue to report problems in these areas, despite some increased efforts on professional development and induction activities, may be that simply more time, resources and support for academic staff are still required to make this significant cultural change in the way we approach teaching and learning in higher education. Rhoden and Dowling (2006) question the extent to which tutors are resourced, trained and supported and it is clear that most lecturers are stretched to their limits in terms of the time they can devote, for example, to providing the comprehensive feedback on assessment that students are seeking. Furthermore, Martinez (2008) identifies the lack of research on induction programs and suggests that academic induction is often poorly articulated and ad hoc. She argues that "induction for all new academics needs to be a well-articulated, integrated package that better reflects the lived experience of new academics juggling the demands of teaching, research, administrative and service components of their new work" (p. 49). Ultimately, if there is a lack of resources, training and support for lecturers and tutors, institution-wide changes to teaching practice can only be initiated by an institutional commitment to teaching and learning driven by strong leadership (Radloff, 2005; Yorke, 2006). ALL professionals must contribute to this leadership and continue to research, publish and promote discussion about the nature of successful learning experiences.

Acknowledgements

References

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York: W. H. Freeman.

Benckendorf, P. (2006). *Flexible Learning Opportunities in the School of Business*. Internal Report. Townsville: James Cook University.

Biggs, J. (2003). *Teaching for quality learning at university: What the student does*. (2nd Ed.). Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press.

Calder, A. (2006, August 1). Learning from our students. Message posted to Unilearn electronic mailing list, archived at majordomo@uws.edu.au

Chanock, K., & Vardi, I. (2005). Data: We're standing in it! In *The Reflective Practitioner*: *Proceedings of the 14th Annual Teaching and Learning Forum, 3-4 February 2005*. Perth: Murdoch University. Retrieved 28 August 2006 from http://lsn.curtin.edu.au/tlf/tlf2005/refereed/chanock.html

Gunn-Lewis, J., & Malthus, C. (2000). Dialogue with adult overseas students: Reflections on experiences of teaching and learning. *New Zealand Journal of Adult Learning*, *28*(1), 50-67.

Kift, S. (2004). Organising first year engagement around learning: Formal and informal curriculum intervention. Keynote address in D.Nulty & D. Meyers (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 8th Pacific Rim Conference on the First Year in Higher Education*, Monash University, 14-16 July [CD Rom].

Krause, K., Hartley, R., James, R., & McInnis, C. (2005). *The first year experience in Australian universities: Findings from a decade of national studies 1994-2004*. Canberra: DEST.

Kuh, G. (1996). Guiding principles for creating seamless learning environments for undergraduates. *Journal of College Student Development, 37*(2), 135-148.

Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Martinez, K. (2008). Academic induction for teacher educators. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 36*(1), 35-51.

Meyers, N., Nulty, D., Whelan, K., & Ryan, Y. (2004). Enhancing the transition of first year science students – a strategic and systematic approach. Paper presented at the *8th Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference: Dealing with Diversity*. Melbourne: Monash University. Retrieved August 21, 2006, from http://www.fyhe.qut.edu.au/past_papers/papers04.htm

Milnes, S. (2005). LAS and its disciplinary ambitions. In S. Milnes, G. Craswell, V. Rao, & A. Bartlett (Eds.), *Critiquing and reflecting: LAS profession and practice: Refereed proceedings of the Language and Academic Skills in Higher Education Conference 2005* (pp. 141-154). Canberra: Academic Skills and Learning Centre, The Australian National University.

O'Regan, K. (2005). Theorising what we do: Defamiliarise the university. In S. Milnes, G. Craswell, V. Rao, & A. Bartlett (Eds.), *Critiquing and reflecting: LAS profession and practice: Refereed proceedings of the Language and Academic Skills in Higher Education Conference 2005* (pp. 131-140). Canberra: Academic Skills and Learning Centre, The Australian National University.

Percy, A., & Stirling, J. (2004). Coming of Age: Developing a genealogy of knowledge in the LAS field. In K. Dellar-Evans & P. Zeegers (Eds.), *'In the future...': Refereed proceedings of the 2003 biannual Language and Academic Skills in Higher Education Conference* (pp. 53-61). Adelaide: Student Learning Centre, Flinders University.

Percy, A., & Stirling, J. (2005). Representation for (re)invention. In S. Milnes, G. Craswell, V. Rao, & A. Bartlett (Eds.), *Critiquing and reflecting: LAS profession and practice: Refereed proceedings of the Language and Academic Skills in Higher Education Conference 2005* (pp. 141-154). Canberra: Academic Skills and Learning Centre, The Australian National University.

Race, P., & Brown, S. (1998). *The lecturer's toolkit*. London: Kogan Page.

Radloff, A. (2005). Supporting student learning in the 21st century university: What's the job and whose job is it? In G. Grigg, & C. Bond (Eds.), *Supporting learning in the 21st century: Refereed proceedings of the 2005 Annual International Conference of the Association of Tertiary Learning Advisors Aoteroa/New Zealand (ATLAANZ)* (pp. 2-17). Dunedin: The Higher Education Development Centre, University of Otago.

Ramsden, P. (2003). *Learning to teach in higher education* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Rapson, R. (2006). *JCU Student Survey Review*. Internal Report. Townsville: James Cook University.

Rhoden, C., & Dowling, N. (2006). Why tutors matter: Realities of their role in transition. Paper presented at the *9th Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference: Engaging Students*. Brisbane: Griffith University. Retrieved August 21, 2006, from http://www.fyhe.qut.edu.au/past_papers/2006/Papers/Rhoden.pdf

Taylor, J. (2006) Assessment: a tool for development and engagement in the first year of university study. Paper presented at the *9th Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference: Engaging Students*. Brisbane: Griffith University. Retrieved August 21, 2006, from http://www.fyhe.qut.edu.au/past_papers/2006/Papers/Taylor.pdf

Yorke, M. (2006). Student engagement: Deep, surface or strategic. Paper presented at the *9th Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference: Engaging Students*. Brisbane: Griffith University. Retrieved August 21, 2006, from http://www.fyhe.qut.edu.au/past_papers/2006/Keynotes/Yorke.pdf