Balancing competing demands within a "flexible delivery" environment  
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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the beliefs and practices of three university teachers operating within a newly established, specifically designed, "flexible delivery" environment. During the course of one semester the three university teachers, each from a different faculty, reported the various demands on their time and expertise as they planned and implemented their new subjects. Data gathered through interviews with the three teachers and their students, classroom observations, the collection of artefacts, such as teacher diaries of activities and planning materials, and discussions with the teachers about their beliefs and practices, and their responses to working within a "flexible delivery" environment revealed that meeting the learning needs of their students was one of the most important factors for these teachers. In attempting to meet their students' learning needs, these teachers had to balance the demands of, for example, creating authentic learning experiences for their students; finding an appropriate "place" for technological innovations within the planning and implementation of their subjects; and defining for themselves the meanings of "flexible delivery" and "flexible learning". This study provides insights into teacher beliefs and practices within "flexible delivery" environments in university contexts and implications for the support of their professional development in the area of teaching and learning.

Theoretical Framework

The aim of this paper is to outline the way university teachers balance their beliefs about teaching and learning, the demands placed upon them by operating within a specifically designed "flexible delivery" environment, the needs of their students and the demands of their fields - including their research, consulting and community service activities. The aim of the study from which the data are drawn is to investigate the beliefs and practices of three university teachers operating within a newly established, specifically designed, "flexible delivery" environment. The present paper reports the results of some of the first analyses of some of the data gathered - it describes work in progress. We will also speculate on the implications of these results for possible staff development activities at the new campus and the "old".

Boice (1992), in his book The New faculty Member rejects the nostrum from a chapter in a book called The Compleat Academic (Taylor, 1987), "Do not panic about the amount of time you are spending on coursework. You may not get anything else done while you are planning and delivering your first courses. Typically no one does...". On the contrary, Boice writes, successful new faculty make time to do everything adequately, even when they do only some things excellently: "... new faculty who fare best in finding comfort, success at teaching, and tenure do find time to manage more than preparing lectures...". The teachers whom we are investigating here were staff at a new campus, teaching new courses in new degree programs. Moreover, two of them were relatively new to full time university teaching...
positions. It is not unreasonable, then, to expect that the research on new faculty might apply to some extent to their cases.

The emphasis of the investigation, however, is not on the competing demands which all academics face. Principally we will examine the way university teachers coped with the competing demands on their time, energy and available resources as they planned and carried out their teaching, specifically within a flexible delivery environment.

Pedagogical choices are part of every teacher's life; however, for these teachers the choices were to be made in the context of a new campus where the espoused mode of teaching and learning was by "flexible delivery". Thus, to some extent, we will need to look at the specific issues that arise because of "flexibility". The University of Queensland's Report of the Flexible Delivery Working Party (1997) characterised flexible delivery as follows:

The University's approach to flexible delivery should be governed by the need to match learning objectives with student needs. It is expected that face-to-face teaching will continue to be the major mode of instruction. The University's use of flexible delivery will be characterised by

- a mix of teaching modes, with some subjects offered entirely in face-to-face mode, others offered entirely at a distance, and the majority using a combination of modes;
- the large majority of students being exposed to several modes of teaching during their degree courses;
- a large number of flexibly delivered award and non-award courses for the professions, particularly at postgraduate level;
- cooperative arrangements with other providers for the interchange and development of learning materials; and
- learning materials developed for multiple uses (eg. as modules in different courses, offered here or elsewhere).

It continues, setting out expectations and implications.

This situation will be reached by evolution over a three to five year period rather than by a sudden and radical restructure.

The more widespread adoption of flexible delivery has a number of implications for academic staff. In particular, subject development will become a team activity with academic staff supported by other professional staff; the time demands on staff will need to be recognised and managed; and achievements in flexible delivery will need to be recognised and rewarded.

**Design and Methods**

The University of Queensland's oldest and largest campus is at St Lucia in the city of Brisbane. It has several other campuses and, in recent years, it has established a completely new campus at Ipswich, a city about 35 kilometres to the west of Brisbane and merging into it. To quote the University's Web site,

(http://www.uq.edu.au/ipswich/About-history.html):

In 1996, the University of Queensland committed itself to establishing a campus in Ipswich - the decision resulted from Federal and State funding
promises conditional on a new campus being established in Brisbane's western corridor.

The campus commenced operations with students in February 1999. For over a year prior to that university staff at various locations worked on planning and writing degree programs and the courses of which they are composed (until 2001 "courses" are known as "subjects").

The model arising from the teaching and learning philosophy espoused for Ipswich originally was called "flexible delivery" (see above), and this was the model in force at the time participants in this study were appointed. The term "flexible learning" is now preferred and used on the University's Web site:

The learning environment at Ipswich is very different from elsewhere. It's close, intimate and supportive, with small classes, group work and high levels of interaction with peers and staff.

It's leveraged by the use of technology - students, groups and classes interact with and through on-line learning platforms, tools and resources, as well as various forms of multi-media.

And it's resource-intensive. Students are expected to use the wide range of printed, multi-media and on-line materials available to them, rather than relying simply on a text book and lectures, as elsewhere.

We call this mode of learning flexible learning. We believe it creates a more active, engaging and rewarding climate for both students and lecturers.

Three staff teaching at the University's new Ipswich campus, Nicole, Donald, and Martin (all pseudonyms), were invited to participate in the study. Case studies were prepared involving each of these staff and focussing on one course each was teaching. In Martin's case the course was a level 1 ("first year") course. Donald's course was a level 2 ("second year") course, and Nicole's a graduate coursework course. These staff were not selected at random. They were selected first to cover a range of faculties (Social Sciences; Business, Economics & Law; Engineering, Physical Sciences & Architecture), and secondly because they were seen by us as innovators who were trying to participate in the spirit of flexible delivery espoused by the University for the new campus. As reported elsewhere (Isaacs et al, 2000), each had a fairly well-developed educational praxis.

Each of the participants was interviewed, using semi-structured interviews, near the start of semester 1, 2000, and after the end of the semester. The interview transcripts were supplied to the relevant participant for validation and amendment where necessary. Members of the project team observed some classes of each of the participants (Nicole's almost completely resource-based course was "observed" to a limited extent by inspecting the Web pages and monitoring the bulletin boards - the largely printed-word-based course could not really be monitored to any great extent). The participants also were asked to keep weekly structured diaries. We also collected artefacts for each course, such as course handouts and notes, as well as print outs of relevant material that appeared on line. In addition we sought feedback from the students enrolled in the courses. A more complete description of the project and its methodology may be found in Isaacs et al (2000).

This paper reports work in progress. Here we rely principally on the interview transcripts and field notes. Some additional information about the publication records and other non-teaching achievements of the participants was sought by email well after the end of semester 2, 2000.
Results and Discussion

Nicole

Nicole, was appointed to an Associate Lecturer (Academic Level A) position a year before the first students arrived at the campus. While she had recently gained a PhD, she had been in the workforce since the early 1980s. She had studied intermittently, gaining various tertiary qualifications, since commencing work. She had risen to the rank of acting subject master in a high school prior to starting PhD studies. When she started at the new campus Nicole had three years' experience as a casual tutor at university. Although her nominal appointment was as Associate Lecturer (Academic level A), when she took up the position at the new campus she was made acting lecturer (Academic level B) because of the higher duties she was to perform.

Nicole found herself addressing two sets of issues. In the first place, she was new to full-time academia and needed to establish herself in that career. In the second place, she was planning and delivering new courses in a new degree program on a campus where the espoused teaching and learning method was "flexible delivery".

Nicole appears to have addressed the issue of her academic career most successfully. After two years in academia she had successfully transformed her Lecturer A contract position, acting as a Lecturer B, into a continuing appointment at the Lecturer B level.

Nicole seems to have achieved this by creating a flow of publications and by the quality of her teaching (broadly construed to include course development). Nicole saw her position at the new campus as providing opportunities and challenges that would have been inconceivable at the central campus:

Q: Now do you get to feed in to varying committees and groups and what not that you may not have been involved in before?

N: Oh yeah. I do personally, I mean I've been acting program director here for six months now as a level A. At St Lucia no way no how would I be sitting in the same room as the vice chancellor discussing issues of teaching and learning that wouldn't happen. And um, even as a level B [it is] highly unlikely that I would have those opportunities on the St Lucia campus, except on an occasional invitation. But I've had a fair amount of input.

Like all staff appointed before the first students arrived, Nicole's duties included the planning and development of new courses and programs. However, our case study took place during the second year of full operation of the new campus. At this stage Nicole and other staff were focussed on delivering courses already substantially developed, as well as developing courses to be offered in subsequent semesters. Our study looked at Nicole teaching a postgraduate coursework course planned in 1999 and early 2000 and delivered for the first time in 2000. The course is the last one students take in their degree before they finish and become professionals. For the first half of the semester they are in professional placements at many locations throughout the state and do little university study:

The subject we're talking about... comes at the end of the students' program... The arrangement of the subject is in a couple of different phases which I've called Modules. The students enrol in the very last semester of their two year course and yet the first ten weeks of that semester they are on prac placements... and they can't, because that's so engrossing for them, they can't and find it very difficult to do any university based work. So they
complete all of the semester's work for the subject will be squeezed into the half semester when they come back. They will have two subjects to do, this one and another subject... Normally student load would be four subjects, but they are doing two subjects with double intensity...

Thus, for Nicole a major trade off in flexible delivery is between having the students experience the reality of their profession by remote placement and having them learn *academically* at that time. Under the flexible delivery ideology it is tempting to try to deliver university learning to the students' often remote locations. However, Nicole recognised that the students' energy at this time would be for their work-based learning and resisted the temptation by keeping the amount of "academic" learning to a minimum. Students were required to work through only four of the thirteen modules comprising the course while on placement and they were to relate the content of the modules to their placement experiences. However, on return, they looked at and discussed all thirteen. The students are, of course, learning in ways other than "academic" while on placement. However the learning may well be more akin to an apprenticeship than "normal" university learning. In similar contexts Lave and Wenger (1991; Wenger, 1998) speak of learning by legitimate peripheral participation in the community of practice to which the student aspires to belong.

Nicole used a wide range of resources in her course. Print-based resources such as a work book and readings, as well as the handouts one might find in a more conventional course, were used; so also were videos, as well as on line bulletin boards and chat groups.

This has been quite a resource-based course. Obviously, if I'm going to remove myself as some sort of owner of information and replace the students in that position as self activated learners then I need to give them the resources to do that and ... They have the standard course guides. They have a learning guide which leads them through what would be traditionally lectures (?) they have the readings with them and texts. They're probably the standard components of most courses... perhaps the innovative, maybe not so innovative, ... [a feature] of this course is the use of authentic materials and triggers and what we tried to collect here and put at the students' disposal is a wide range of instances that they that they might experience ... and what I'm aiming to do with those sorts of resources is get the students... [when they are in the work force] to have a look at what they've done to get in this course and think you're there go there... We also give them a breadth of connection points with the materials to cater for themselves. So if they are excited by video the videos [are] there. If they are excited by web sites then web sites are there. If they feel that they want to look at authentic ... materials it's there. So the whole range but probably not the whole range but a wide range including newspapers articles, book readings.

Nicole saw no barriers restricting her choice; she had ample time:

Q: How much lead in time did you get for this um the one that's just been...

N: Oh plenty. I was hired mid 1998 and I was hired at that time I knew that I would be doing [the preparation of this course] . Yep.

Q: That's not too bad.

N: Oh no, I had plenty of time.
and even ample financial resources:

It is to do with the coffers here. I don't think the opportunity of developing such a wide resource base could have [happened] at another campus. So instead of coming to this course thinking within the limits that are often impacting on the teaching at a university level [I] can come in with a blank slate and say, alright what would be the best way for these people to learn, given the range of technological and traditional approaches that we have in education.

Nonetheless, decisions, especially about the use of on-line resources were complicated by problems with the technology (problems which also seem to have caused Donald to avoid it almost completely):

Well I had to start from scratch, But for me to I was a blank slate, you know And I also had to spend a year figuring out what the deal was in terms of the parameters for teaching using on-line materials and web CT. Web CT wasn't up when I started, people hadn't used it. We were designing a whole new program I didn't know how [the course] would articulate with that so much as I could have broad ideas as what I wanted to do. I had to wait. I couldn't actually start working on it until probably just before the semester before it was going to start.

Perhaps paradoxically, Nicole, whose area arguably is the least ICT-focused of all, made the most extensive use of these technologies. Students when on their placements kept in touch by 'phone and by email and used bulletin boards within the WebCT environment. As mentioned above, the major part of the course was taught using assigned work and bulletin board discussion, some mediated by computer, but much of it in printed form. The course was very resource rich, but not ICT dependent in any major way.

Donald

Donald, like Nicole, did his PhD after another career. He worked from the early 1980's until the early '90's, when he completed a BA degree and, by 1997, acquired a PhD. Much of his later study was part-time. After three or four years as a research assistant and part-time lecturer, in 1999 he was appointed Associate Lecturer (Academic level A) located at the new campus. In 2000 he was appointed to a lectureship (Academic level B). Our study looked at Donald teaching a level 2 course planned in 1999 and taught for the first time in 2000.

Like Nicole, Donald needed to establish his academic career after time spent in postgraduate studies and part-time university teaching. Like Nicole, he too was initially appointed at Level A and was, in 2000, appointed at Level B. Also like Nicole, he has had a steady stream of scholarly publications in recent times. Also, like Nicole, he is very active on committees at the School level. However, Donald sees possible conflicts between what he sees as presenting his course with integrity and due rigour and the desirability of having his courses well-received by students. Student evaluations of his teaching and courses are not always as favourable as he would like:

I'm willing to take a few chances to do this stuff, despite the fact that when I fail, my TEVALs [student evaluations of teaching or course] suffer or when I teach theory based subjects my TEVALs suffer and all of that sort of stuff you know ...

Also, his courses are sometimes seen as difficult:
I was really put under pressure in the first year class last week by the students to make, they were saying well we do four subjects this semester and only one of them is difficult and that's this one and how can you justify that you're the only one that teaches anything that's difficult?

Donald has also chosen to eschew the use of high technology. Indeed, there is no required use of either information or communications technology other than in very straightforward ways, such as the use of Powerpoint presentations in classes. Like Nicole (and, as we shall see, Martin) he has reservations about the available technologies, partly because they seem unreliable.

D: Yeah well we don't really use much in the way of IT for quite a few reasons. One reason is that that the students just loathe WebCT and they complain about it all the time.

Q: Is that across the board?

D: Yes, yeah they don't like it cause it doesn't, not, it is clunky to work and I don't like using it myself but IT is so brittle and fragile and if it doesn't work a hundred percent of the time when the students need it then don't use it. And I find as well for me most of the time there is very little value it adds to the learning process and all it does is add more hours of my time doing or taking time away from my research and it's frustrating students. You know things like, you know, if there's, you know, hot links there to other sites and they don't work -doesn't work and I can't do my weekly assignment and they get angry about it and but one thing they do seem to be talking about now is like chat groups and it just seems to be things like that so.

... Um but I use videos, I use PowerPoint sometimes, just occasional use, but then in terms of the sort of soft technologies, well the most important thing really is just the modules that they have to work through each week really, cause it allows them to know something at least when they come to class.

Donald, who is working in an area where knowledge management matters, has clearly worked out epistemological and educational theories and high educational ideals. He believes (as, as is apparent from the design of his course, does Nicole) in having students' learning grounded in their experience in possible future workplaces.

...it's always good if you're teaching a subject area particularly if you can get the students to actually do it rather than just read about it and write about it and talk about it but to actually have some real experience, you know, work out what it feels like...

But he must balance the pedagogical imperatives of his teaching philosophy against the realities of the work place beyond the University. He does this by having students do brief case studies based on very short visits to a work place.

... and we can't actually do that in this subject because nobody's going to allow a bunch of second year students...

He strongly believes in student centred learning.

I've got to develop another subject first semester next year ... and I'm struggling at the moment with how to do that because in many respects this
shouldn’t be a teacher there. Students, their real experience in ... can be in that subject doing it themselves. I really should have a very minor role in that and I'm trying to figure out a process that allows them to be in charge and to chart their own courses and be just in the background without anything going off the rails and they learn something that's relevant and in fact learn something at all you know take away some not just knowledge but real hands on know-how actually got the feel for what it's like.

And he takes a program-long view of his work and tailors his courses to the expected development of the students.

...we have a general sort of framework which is more or less to work right across the program and that is first year subjects pretty tightly controlled and you know, the processes are all there and not give them much room for them to have to deal with uncertainties about, you know am I allowed to think, am I not allowed to think and if I am allowed to think, am I allowed to think in a creative way or do I have to say what I think the teacher thinks I need to say and all that sort of stuff, and then so second year we loosen off that a bit...

...maybe in third year there'll be less structure again because we figuring that all the time building the base skills at doing this sort of stuff so that by the time they get to third year they can be self organised. Yeah.

This awareness applies even within courses:

...so we see in this particular subject that we only have formal module-based classes for the first half of the semester. For the second half of the semester we meet at the same place and the same time but there's no formal structure and they're working on their industry projects and really it's their group meeting for that project, and I come around and we talk about how they've done and what sort of data they're gathering from the field and how I help them make sense of that and they have to write a report for a presentation at the end.

Thus Donald balances his desire for students to be independent learners against his perception of their readiness at various stages of their intellectual development.

Martin

Martin, too, has had a career outside the university sector. However, unlike the other two, he has been at the University for a number of years and has taught in universities in roles from tutor to senior lecturer “for probably 20 years”. He was promoted to Senior Lecturer (Academic Level C) a few years ago. He relocated to the new campus to be associate director of a new stream of programs. Our study looked at Martin teaching a level 1 course being taught in 2000 for the second time.

Martin already had an established career at the University. Thus some of the issues that might (pre)occupy Nicole and Donald are of less concern to Martin. However there are also a number of pedagogic issues which concern Martin.

Martin is teaching in an inherently information and communication technology rich area. Thus it has seemed natural for him to integrate ICT into the teaching of the course. Paradoxically, while Martin has extensively used computing technology in his course, he has not made much use of communications technology. He sees his course as one in which
students need to learn to be creative and is more focussed on freeing that creativity. In a sense Martin feels his students to be too comfortable with the technology. He wants them to experience creativity independent of technology. On-line interaction and chat groups do not seem to rate highly in this context.

Q: Could you give us a summary of the particular technologies that you do incorporate into your classes. In a succinct sort of list.

M: Oh okay. Well in many ways that question is not quite relevant in the context of our course because mainly it's based in information technology, information environments, communications, they're all there. So yeah, obviously the overhead projector, we have a lot projection, I use PowerPoint all the time, I use the web all the notes and things go up on the web. The students are in that technology all the time, so they're using it...

Q: One thing that struck me this morning was your encouraging the students to use simple technologies like pencils to sketch and also in your general discussion you seem to be saying that technologies are there to do things such as record, but it is the thinking that you apply to it that makes the meaning.

M: The osmosis technique.

Q: I was interested in that point.

M: Well it's an important point to make with these students particularly because they're into the technology....

... if something comes up, sure I've got the mailing list, but I can wander down to the lab and ask questions or say we're going to do something and often a lot of them will be there. So I think it is important. Because face to face communication is still the best. And this morning I gave, well you were there when I gave the spiel about the work books. I started writing this long email, and I thought well, I'll have them on Friday and I'll tell them. Because they can get it from me and they know what's important from just the emphasis in my voice...

Martin is concerned that his technologically sophisticated students not lose sight of the reasons behind its use. Thus high technology is favoured in this course only where it is manifestly essential. There is also a tension here between the desire to make use of the technologically rich environment provided at the new campus and the desire to create a rich relationship with the students.

Martin, whose course involves much hands-on work by students in laboratory or studio environments, is continually wrestling with the inflexibility of the teaching spaces available and of the timetable in this flexible delivery environment. For him, the ideal of flexible delivery would involve spaces dedicated to his course and a timetable which could be varied almost ad hoc and certainly from one week to the next.

...we went through a lot of discussions in the early phases before the campus was done, about spaces, and I had some designs but they didn't go there because there's a notion that all the space on this campus was essentially [common] and everything was flexible ... there was almost a notion that a
couple of years ago, you know, where vaguely a student could come into the student centre take a tag and it would say this space, this time [is yours]...

We were under pressure with our studio space to be seen as a computer lab, like this morning, oddly enough a student in the first year was sitting around the foyer because the two labs had been booked by another program... this semester and it didn't matter too much the first few weeks but as the pressure builds up... we had no where to go, nowhere to work. They find they just have to be there and working.

My ideal would be the spaces like the second year labs. Those little mini labs, rooms of about this size, which might take say six people and then immediate break out space where I could you know say, "Hey, everybody we need..." and everybody could come to a space and I can have the projector on and talk about things and they can go back into their spaces. And this six or eight person room would also have a tutor assigned to it so a tutor might be responsible for two mini labs and that's my ideal sort of thing and then you just work through projects that way.

... it's how real life works ... You're all there physically together, you don't come in for an hour a week, you know, it's life. It's a real situation...

I would say look we need less computers and we need more space we need to be able to use that space in flexible ways so that we can have the activities we want. ... It could be about the fact that you know social learning going on in there students can make a little nest of and they've got their three machines in there ...I mean it could be about lots of things. We don't get that freedom so even though we're you know generously supplied, resourced at one level um I think space is not generously resourced and I'm not sure that it ever will be

Martin told one of the authors in a casual conversation that he was continually frustrated in two ways that were contrary to his idea of flexible delivery. First, the timetable had to be essentially the same each week of the semester, even though the students were doing a substantially fixed program. This meant that in some weeks scheduled classes (for example lectures) simply were not run because they were not needed. However the unused hour could not be transferred to another hour in another place for another purpose (although this was subverted because student numbers were small and informal arrangements could be made). Similarly, classes basically had to be scheduled for the same places at the same times each week. The system did not permit scheduling of a class in one place one week and in another the next. This was likely to be exacerbated in future years as student numbers in the course increased, and as the number of simultaneous classes and courses increased.

The future

All three participants are increasingly preoccupied with the future of their courses:

So at the very least I'd like to have every student in a group or individual tute with a tutor. At an appointed time they sign up for 20 minutes at least, depending on how many students, it can be shorter or longer but generally there not less than 20 minutes every week is what I would like to have, but I can't do that every week, because as I said, I already have four tutors in this subject alone. What? And they spend a lot of hours. So it's a fair number of
tutors we're looking at. It's expensive and eventually my feeling is it will be wound down. But while the money's there and I can do it and at least these students in these cohorts will have the benefit. [Martin]

In five years time, the key to this subject is the authenticity of the materials, and in five years time they will still be authentic but they will seem like yesterday's lot because of the way they [look in detail] Even just as just as much as just having a 1999 date or 2000 date even if it could have just been just exactly the same with a different date on the top, that can be an issue for students. As we know we've seen videos developed in the past and the students just turn off the moment they see someone wearing 1970s clothes [Nicole]

N: We had, we did have to some extent um an open cheque book I think in the beginning. And now people are saying that's all very well but how can we fund, sustain this um this particular mode that you've - that you've designed is this going to be an ongoing cost, when will it need to be renovated and how much will the renovations cost? Um those sorts of things and I think that there hasn't necessarily been a lid put on experimentation but I think people are asking for more judicious consideration of what you might be doing.

Q: So if you were teaching this at St Lucia or um you wouldn't necessarily have thought about experimenting to the extent that you have?

N: No and in fact I am helping to um, someone develop something out at , out at St Lucia and the lid on her work is four thousand dollars. Now four thousand dollars is not enough to experiment with anything new. [Nicole]

Q: Yeah I suppose I was going to ask you about as resources, the availability of resources changes as things, as years go on um will it mean the gradual depletion or ... 

D: Um, it could mean changes like that , it doesn't necessarily have to um mean that we water down the whole thing, there are going to be some subjects which ah, are going to use at least a certain amount of lecturing of a fashion or kind of old fashioned style lecturing. But they're subjects in which we attract you know several hundred students and ah, having several hundred students all distributed across a lot of classes of about twenty or twenty-five students means a lot of, a lot of time for which we have to hire casuals and stuff. And hiring casuals is quite problematic, casual tutors is problematic for us [Donald]

Success for the Ipswich Campus will mean ever increasing enrolments in degree programs and their constituent courses. But the future for the Ipswich campus in the near future would seem to involve at best funding at 2000 levels, rather than funding per student at 2000 level. This means that the seemingly abundant funding for courses and course development will be less so the more successful the Campus. However, the methods used by the three participants seem predicated on small numbers and plentiful resources. Their critique of "St Lucia" is a critique of departments, staff and structures which lack these luxuries. Will our participants' teaching become ever more like that of their criticised peers at "St Lucia" as the
resource environments become ever more similar? Indeed, should Ipswich succeed as a learning environment, will it become a victim of its own success, or will innovators such as those reported here reason and plan their way around the seeming restrictions?

Conclusion

Tensions of various kinds are a fact of academic life at present. The participants in this study, like many of their peers, and certainly like American new faculty in fairly conventional institutions (Boice, 1992), saw difficulty in meeting the sometimes seemingly conflicting demands of various parts of their role as university academics: teaching, research, and service. Yet all three seem to have been successful in meeting these demands. In the case of teaching and service, the new campus seems to have been a source of opportunity. Nicole and Donald felt they had been given opportunities for service at the new campus which would not have been available to academics at their level of appointment at the older, "central" campus. Martin seems to have benefited by the possibility of adopting a new teaching field and new orientation at the new campus - possibilities that may not have been open at the old location. In the area of research, Donald and Nicole seem to have blossomed. There is no indication, however, that this has any connection to their being at the new campus although, recently, Nicole has published about her teaching. Indeed, conversations with other academics there seem to indicate that doing research is difficult given the time demands of course preparation. Perhaps our carefully selected participants were "special" in this respect. The next stage of this study, a questionnaire for all, arising from the case studies, will help to clarify this point.

Of great interest to us are the tensions which are more intrinsically linked to the novel features of the Ipswich campus. All three had reservations about using technology which has seemed to them unreliable. To the extent that the technology is, indeed, unreliable the solution is a technical one. However, to the extent that the unreliability is not inherent in the technology there may be a need for staff development. Both Donald and Martin seemed troubled by the perceived pressure to use ICT in their teaching. Each felt, for their own reason, that this was to some extent inappropriate. The rhetoric around the new campus supports their stand. However, perhaps there needs to be more effort put into explaining this rhetoric in a convincing way.

Martin's concerns about space and timetables highlight the question "what exactly is 'flexible' in flexible learning and flexible delivery?" So too does Donald's concern to have students take only as much responsibility as seems reasonable for their learning and the consequent limitations on students' activities. It is clear from the philosophy on the Ipswich Campus Web page (quoted above) that to "the University" "flexible learning" (the phrase now being used) means the use of the most appropriate learning resources and activities to achieve each learning goal. However, to Martin, "flexibility" ought to involve the free use of learning spaces both with regard to their configuration and to the times at which they are available. And to Donald it involves variations in the nature of the learning activities dependent on the academic and intellectual maturity of the students as they proceed through courses and programs. In some circumstances Donald's "flexibility" may imply the flexibility in space and time desired by Martin. However, in spite of his qualms, Donald's flexibility has, to date, been accommodated within the system.

The three participants in this study are exceptionally good university teachers, each of whom uses pedagogical methods based on a fairly well articulated philosophy of teaching and learning (Isaacs et al, 2000). They plan rationally and see curriculum as enacted curriculum, involving teaching and learning activities and assessment, not just a syllabus of topics or a roster of classes. Even so, each must continually make decisions to balance their philosophy with the practical realities of academic life and of the system in which they are teaching. But,
having spoken to many staff at the new campus we are convinced that these three are in the van in this respect. Others at the Ipswich campus will need help, at the very least in developing a clear pedagogical perspective within which to locate their teaching. Much "first aid" assistance may well be needed also, while they are developing and implementing this perspective into a praxis.

Some of our participants had concerns about relations between department members at the new campus and their departments at the "main" campus. These seemed to centre on differences in pedagogy and on how to divide effort been teaching and other academic activities.

... for some of our subjects, we have to rely on people at St Lucia to teach them or develop them because some of the subjects we teach here are from our ... program which is based at St Lucia. And the lecturers in charge of those subjects are at St Lucia and they don't, they don't want to spend the time putting the materials together. Or even in subjects where we've put the materials together and all we're saying is can you update them from one year to the next, they just don't want to do it... And um, one of our colleagues last week um suggested that we should think about whether we were really putting too much effort into our students' learning. ...

The Ipswich Campus is meant to be a seed bed in which pedagogies can be grown which ultimately will be adapted for the other campuses of the University. But the soil at Ipswich is not identical to that at St Lucia. Some of the participants, for example, doubted the University's promotion system really valued teaching prowess as much as research performance - an idea contrary to the University's espoused policy. One might expect the priorities at Ipswich to be somewhat different to those at St Lucia and this may cause some friction, especially when important decisions regarding promotion and resources, for example, are taken by bodies which cross campus boundaries. This in turn raises the issue of the role the Ipswich initiative might play in the development of teaching on the "central" campus. This issue is addressed at greater length in Isaacs et al (2000). It is, however, obvious even from the information presented in the present paper that teachers at the Ipswich campus are capable of being and, in some cases, are examples or exemplars of "new" ways of encouraging students to learn. The challenge for staff development is to have staff at the "central" campus see them as stimulants rather than irritants. To an extent the response in reality will be determined by the way in which teachers in the "traditional" location view the reward structure of the University. If it rewards student centred, constructivist, innovative, flexible teaching then the path of the academic staff developers and instructional designers will be smoothed. If not, the staff developers' task will be even more challenging.
References


