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## Commentary: Curriculum Alignment and After: Prompts, Positions and Prospects at La Trobe University

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# Commentary: Curriculum Alignment and After: Prompts, Positions and Prospects at La Trobe University

## **Abstract**

The move to align curriculum has been an important aspect of endeavours to improve and reform higher education. This article places alignment reform at La Trobe University in its institutional context. The reform of generalist degrees programmes is emphasised. The article first traces a problem of curriculum anarchy which La Trobe shared with many other institutions. The paths and foundations of La Trobe's move to align its curriculum are then described, with a focus on their implications for generalist (i.e., non-vocational) programmes. The article concludes by suggesting and sketching a new agenda for reform after alignment: a focus on what students are actually doing now that their academics think they have everything properly aligned.

## **Keywords**

Aligned Curriculum

## **Cover Page Footnote**

A colleague, Kay Souter, and a new friend, John Howes, helped me by commenting on an earlier draft. They might not agree with everything that's still here.

## Introduction

Beginning in 2007, prompted by new leadership, La Trobe University undertook *Design for Learning* or *DfL*, a review of its curriculum (Probert 2009). Across the whole university, discipline-by-discipline, colleagues convened to define, sequence and align student-learning outcomes with graduate capabilities. This essay offers an opinionated participant's view of La Trobe's reform asking (1) why it was needed, (2) what it involved, and (3) what should now follow on. My focus is on the evidence base and options of wholesale curriculum reform – past, present and future. It's too soon, and the managerial environment is still too uncertain, to report outcomes at La Trobe.

Curriculum policy change is often messy like that. In the influential accounts and visions of curriculum alignment, like Biggs & Tang (2007) or Wulff (2005), a kind of Taylorism can apply as would-be master plans conjure curriculum to congeal, sum and sequence. The grand schemas supposedly prompt all staff to frame and to own credentialling rationales for subject content links, and magically appear to turn every student learning action into outcomes that gradually enable student capabilities. Alignment allows curriculum to be seen to become something to be managed in stages ticked on spreadsheets, and described in heat-maps and flow-charts.

This essay is opinionated. I am as sceptical about the managerialisms as I am as enthusiastic about curriculum alignment. I am a teacher, not a curriculum manager, after all. I liken curriculum reform to a bungee jump instead. Check your springy rope and harness and verify your instructor's credentials and business plan all you like, but you still have to lean forward and jump into an abyss. Academic edu-managers' notions of better practices in teaching and learning and in aligning subjects actually operate in environments in which leaders (and their priorities and penchants) come and go, and in which their academic edu-followers know they can dilly-dally, if they feel they have to, or if they want to (Tagg 2012). This is why this essay is about edu-options and edu-politics, viewed as imperatives and prospects. They have to be discussed even before actual outcomes can be coolly assessed. At the classroom level, curriculum change is always a risk. Assiduous studies of other jumpers' best practices help, of course, but you still have to jump. This is why I discuss the evidence base for each policy option I canvas. Enduring curriculum change is more than an outcome ticked off or a capability tracked on some spreadsheet. It arises when opinionated faculty take the plunge and engage in earnest collegial conversations grounded in evidence.

## Why Design for Learning Was Needed

### *La Trobe background*

The problem to which *Design for Learning* was a response was a university curriculum (in generalist degrees) that had lost focus. For the forty years following its founding in 1966-67, La Trobe University let a hundred flowers of curriculum bloom and widened every access to higher education (Jenkin & Richards 1989). La Trobe began in 1967 by helping undo three genteel traditions restricting access to undergraduate higher education: (1) the exclusion of the mature-aged, (2) the hidden barriers to the indigent intelligent, especially to immigrants and to the state- and parochial-schooled, and (3) the nurture of "Honours" students and corresponding neglect of "Pass" students. Old Anglophone traditions of University education generally only catered to the grammar-schooled who arrived crammed, cossetted and pre-parsed. Even taking account of the

belated introduction of tutorials in the 1950s and 1960s, the prevailing old-University culture of benign neglect really offered students two time-honoured choices: coast for a genteel pass, or else educate yourself guided by the most remote forms of instruction imaginable: the lecture and belated feedback.

New visions like those implemented at La Trobe eventually created new blind spots, however. La Trobe's radical and inclusive 1960s-1970s thinking about higher education turned out to be flawed in other aspects of access and success. In the realms of generalist and non-vocational degrees, individual academics were given too much scope to shape curriculum (as distinct from subjects). The collegial and collaborative dimensions of higher-education curriculum were unduly neglected, encouraging scores of subjects, randomly sequenced, with far too few explicit learning objectives and outcomes in common. (Aside: the La Trobe story I am about to describe is common to many research-and-teaching universities.) Curricular issues were often matters for which academics were untrained (academics are generally selected as promising specialty researchers, not as teaching generalists) and inexperienced (few academics study how novices conceive and learn subjects in which academics inure by dint of prolonged excellence) (Perry 1983).

### **Historical Context**

La Trobe's generalist programmes embraced a teach-your-specialty form of 'academic freedom'. This libertarian approach to curriculum widened reforms of higher education which had originated in the late-Enlightenment and post-Napoleonic eras when teaching had been reinvigorated by linking it to expertise in research as appraised by peer esteem and publication (Humboldt 1810 in 1970; Brew 2001; Elton 2005; Clark 2007). Age-old university pedantries linking teaching, grammar and scholarship were recast in the era of Goethe and Diderot as un-professional and antiquarian, Cardinal John Henry Newman's *Idea of a University* (1886) belated defense of scholarship failing to stop the rot. By a mid-twentieth-century era of inclusionary democracies, however, the same, but now vastly expanded, assertion of academic professional credentialism only encouraged subjects re-hashing (an academic's) research interests. A smorgasbord of subjects was born, but seldom a curriculum diet that was balanced.

The most influential university reformer of the late-Enlightenment and post-Napoleonic eras, Wilhelm von Humboldt, never envisaged such a result. He was convinced academics' research expertise should combine with a knowledge of "the development of the [student]" so as to prompt the latter to leave feudal thrall of the classroom and to enable collaborative and independent study (Humboldt 1810 in 1970, p. 243; Dressell & Thompson 1973; Boud 1988). This meant enabling the student to progress from "passive receptivity to freedom, i.e. to a disciplined intellectual independence" (Humboldt 1810 in 1970, p. 255). But academics in Anglophone generalist higher-degree programmes never faced pressures of external professional accreditation, or indeed Humboldt's Prussian-style regulation. There was therefore a danger their hubris might overpower everything else; to be sure, the academic was not present solely for the sake of the student, but nor should curriculum be so "one-sided" as to reflect the academic's purely personal predilections. Humboldt's aim instead was a "continuously self-renewing, wholly un-coerced and disinterested [teaching and learning] collaboration [between academics and students]" (Humboldt 1810 in 1970, p.243; Filmer 1997, p. 57-58).

Promise seldom matches delivery in higher education, however. Although most students who come into universities today anticipate otherwise (Coates 2006; Astin 1985), Humboldt's adjectives about best practice in tertiary study -- 'self-renewing', 'dis-interested' and 'collaborative' -- are still seldom applied by students to describe their actual learning styles in

universities (Marton & Säljö 1976; Marton et al. 1993; Watkins & Hattie 1982; Entwistle & Ramsden 1983).

### ***Current Democratic Context***

If this academic thrall of precept and preceptor was ever justified, it should not remain so much longer, not least because we are entering an era of mass higher education. Edward Gibbon, for instance, after ‘studying’ history at Magdalen at Oxford between 1750 and 1753, noted how academe was a remote “order of men... [in which] improvements so eagerly grasped by the competition of freedom are admitted with such slow and sullen reluctance in those proud corporations above the fear of a rival and below the confession of an error” (Gibbon 1775 in 1950, pp. 30-31). Some academics in generalist programmes in research-active universities, past and present, still think their role is just to “profess”, i.e., to teach their subjects, but not really to teach students they have their subjects. They might imagine all would be well if the students were better. They might even expect the status of student carried the expectation that students had to adapt to their academics’ professing (not the other way round) (Schroeder 1993; Perry et al. 1996; Jacobson & Reddick 2005; Palmer 2007). This is the second myth of academic life in Pascarella and Terenzini’s list of five ‘howlers’ arising from their 1991 study of the best and worst in contemporary US universities: *How College Affects Students: Findings from Twenty Years of Research*. Their myth was “traditional methods of instruction provide proven and effective ways of teaching undergraduate students” (Terenzini & Pascarella 1994, p. 29). They found they do not, of course.

Pierre Bourdieu has similarly drawn on Edmund Husserl to describe this evidence-poor outlook by which academics often conspicuously fail to apply the same rigours to conceptions and reception of their teaching as to fundamentals of their research. Bourdieu considered this oversight an outcome of a “disposition ‘neutralisante’” of research-active academics teaching in generalist programmes. This outlook was one “impliquant la mise en suspens de toute thèse d’existence et de toute intention pratique” -- involving “bracketing all vicissitudes of existence and practical intended outcomes” (Bourdieu 1989 in 1994, p. 222).

### ***Dis-Empowering Pedagogies in an Era of Mass Higher Education***

In these ways, the pedagogic freedoms and hubristic traditions that considered curriculum as just a smorgasbord were actually forms of indifference and license. One of my purposes here is to argue for a better-informed kind of academic freedom paying proper professional attention to thresholds and progression points for learners to learn in any given subject (Perry in Bolker 1997; Perry 1983, 1988; Säljö 1987; Kegan 1994). Because of ways like these, some fine traditions of teaching informed by social inclusion at La Trobe University (and places like it!) were also distorted by countervailing anti-democratic academic traditions dis-empowering students. The indulging of teachers in “anything goes” smorgasbords of subjects deflected attention from disciplinary connections to the concepts, capabilities and prior knowledge of the taught (Rose 1989; Tompkins 1990; Bain 2004; Huston 2009). The whole point of education is that the student doing the studying is as important as the subject taught and studied. From a student’s perspective, unless he or she is ready to educate him- or herself, a fulfilling undergraduate generalist curriculum (in a few Sciences and many more Humanities and Social Sciences) had to amount to more than La Trobe’s (and many other universities’) simple sum of each all-empowered academic’s individual inclinations.

A curriculum that just sequences random inputs from academics is a shallow sum (Biggs & Tang 2007). Anarchic and teacher-centric, with no-one seeking progression points and common denominators, the smorgasbord of discrete subjects in random sequences under-performed professionally. The academic “neutralising” *politesse* of collegial tolerance disguised a kind of indifference, impeding the evidence-based discussion of inputs, environments and outcomes on which a genuine curriculum is based (Astin 1985). The very kinds of spirited discussion common in departmental research seminars hardly ever spilled over in planning sessions about what was taught, to whom, let alone how. These unprofessional pedagogic practices failed students by ignoring what students might want or expect (Biggs 1989, 1999, 2012; Brophy 1991; Hinds et al. 2001; Dweck 2000). The most important indicator (for student retention and satisfaction) is student-to-teacher interaction; the smorgasbord syndrome made it harder for a university like La Trobe to orient itself to students’ needs, prior learning and talents (Kuh 2008; Astin 1993; Light 2001; Wulff 2005). Bloated curriculum may then not appeal. Students can confront a table groaning with too many examples of different and remote individuals’ ideas of a good thing to eat.

### **Conclusion: Re-Centering Academe on the Student**

Curriculum that works seeks patterns and progression points and has “an unshakable focus on student learning” and on students’ active involvement; its focus ought to be on students’ doings and just a bit less on the hubris of teachers’ deeds (Kuh et al. 2005, p. 65). While some (better prepared?) students relished lots of choice, the student satisfaction and retention data from the 1990s and 2000s suggest the smorgasbord bewildered many other students (Coates 2006). In the Humanities, Social Sciences and some of the Sciences at La Trobe University, students had difficulty articulating, beyond recalling content they had enjoyed, what they had learned in terms of skills, job readiness and intellectual maturity. The core problem was that, like any open “bring-a-plate” community event, La Trobe’s profusion of generalist subject offerings sometimes proffered sweets before hors d’œuvres, without even trying to pass a curriculum dietitian’s tests of balance and fitness for purpose.

La Trobe’s anarchic curriculum (in generalist degrees) suited past eras of full employment and of elite participation in higher education. The fewer-&-readier students then were heady and ready to embrace any opportunity. Nowadays, higher education is a norm, rather than an exception. Nor is it free. Students also worry about being unable to articulate the benefits of their generalist education beyond a list of themes studied. And as access to higher education extends to more and more under-serviced communities, students often have to justify the time and the expense to themselves, to family and to associates; i.e., to people who have no prior experience of anything educational that is also self-expressive. As students are invited to plunge into the disciplines, their academics need therefore to empower them with the scripts they need in order to enable them to answer these urgent questions which, right now, are necessarily weightier for them (Entwistle 1987; Coates 2006).

### **What Design for Learning Involved**

If real success is to attend the effort to bring a person to a definite position, one must first take pains to find him where he is and begin there.... In order to help another effectively I must understand what he understands. If I do not know that, my greater understanding will be of no help to him (Kierkegaard in Kegan 1994, p. 292).

This is why La Trobe had to turn toward curriculum reform. First as a *Curriculum Taskforce*, then under the rubric of *Design for Learning*, over three difficult and inspiring years, 2007 to 2009, of cross-disciplinary discussion and drafting, then three more years of hesitant implementation, 2010 to 2012, a new pan-university curriculum “brand” was defined. With *Design for Learning*, the old *laissez-faire* era of old La Trobe curriculum closed.

Before I can begin to suggest further directions for curriculum reform at La Trobe, I need to describe and to ground the considerable suite of changes inaugurated by *Design for Learning*. As I see *DfL*, it has these features, which I describe in dot paragraphs, using references to indicate something of the sources of the underlying ideas:

- La Trobe academics arrived at a new institutional self-definition of teaching and learning directed principally toward six Graduate Capabilities: Writing, Speaking, Critical Thinking, Creative Problem-Solving, Inquiry-Research, and Teamwork. [The sub-text favouring “active” learning (or learning via “heuristics”: Glaser 1984; McEwan & Bull 1991; Wimsett 2007) is taken up later in this article.] The use of the term “Capabilities”, rather than “Attributes” or “Competencies”, was chosen because La Trobe emphasised students’ development of enduring and generic skill-sets that transcended their originating classroom contexts (Stephenson 1998). These six generic Capabilities were no managerial fiat, however; each was framed by each La Trobe discipline, and therefore ‘owned’ differently. The managerial nub of the new policy of six key Capabilities turned rather on the expectation that each discipline must be able to show explicit progression over the three year levels of the undergraduate degree and that the expectations must also be shared explicitly with students in their assessments and assessment matrices (Bath et al. 2004; Sumsion & Goodfellow 2004; Spencer et al. 2012).
- Each discipline also had to frame a sequence of three ‘Core’ undergraduate subjects: Cornerstone at first year, Mid-point at second, and Capstone at third (Goldstein & Fernald 2009). Each such Core subject would teach disciplinary subject ‘content’, but each would actually be designed to set students up to articulate, and above all to put in practise, key disciplinary ‘concepts’. The aim would be to take students explicitly to, and then across, known disciplinary thresholds of student achievement (Perry 1983; Ramsden et al. 1987; Walvoord & McCarthy 1990; Kegan 1994; Donald 2002; Pace & Middendorf 2004; Gurung et al. 2009).
- Each subject at La Trobe University, not least the Cores, would also now have to somehow be seen to address the six Graduate Capabilities. If a discipline maintains it develops “Writing” skills, for instance, it must then show how this is done at each year level, and how those skills progress through demonstrable and explicit indices of student accomplishment, pre-set collegially for each year-level, but always allowing for different explicit disciplinary norms of accomplishment (Laird et al. 2008; Moses 1990; Robertson & Bond 2005)
- “Demonstrable and Explicit” are words in earnest. (I will take up again when I turn to future directions for *Design for Learning*.) Key dimensions of staff or student ‘ownership’ of the Capabilities apply. Much depends on whether the Capabilities are presumed by staff (“You must have done or known this already, so...”) or just modelled by staff (“I’m showing you, though I may not explicitly say so...”), or whether they are to be explicitly taught to students (“Watch me do it...”), or required of students (“You do it now...”) or evaluated (“Here is how I make this a factor in assessment...”) (Sumsion & Goodfellow 2004; Spencer et al. 2012).

*Design for Learning* required all La Trobe staff to go for broke on the Capabilities they chose to emphasise; they had to be explicit with colleagues and with students about which aspects of their subjects' assessments fuelled which Capabilities.

- These aligning initiatives were also paired with other measures designed to better support and engage with students. These involved a focus on learning spaces, on students serving as library mentors, on early-warning indices of possible student withdrawal from key first-year subjects, and lastly on special 'skills' classes to assist tutors and lecturers to support students in those same first-year subjects. Help *in situ* is more effective than 'bolt-on' models of remediation (Rose 1989, 2012).
- The core idea was that, right across La Trobe, students would now be told -- one way or another, in every subject, by every academic -- an explicit curriculum 'story' of the skills, concepts and practices underpinning their studies in their disciplines. The reason was to enable the kind of change that everyone could buy into: not least bewildered students in generalist degrees who might not see the wholes in the parts they were experiencing.
- This is really a university-wide plan to stimulate each discipline's capacity to stimulate students' active and reflective learning ("metacognition": Langer 1997; Biggs 1999, 2012; Donald 2002; Bain 2004). This focus will then give La Trobe University a coherent ethos as a differing-yet-cohering sum of disciplinary parts which know what they are each 'on about', how they are going to make those things explicit and, most important of all, how they are going to make their students active and complicit in those agendas.
- Once each La Trobe discipline can articulate its Capabilities with respect to progression points and threshold concepts of student learning outcomes and assessment practices, it knows and can show its points of distinction in relation to other programmes in other universities. A key dimension of institutional self-recognition is added (Kuh et al. 2005; Kuh 2008).
- Every one of the Graduate Capabilities at every year level of every major in every degree is also then able to be reported by teaching academics to La Trobe University's teaching administration, there to be charted, and thereafter able (down the track) to be reported back to students (as personal capabilities demonstrably acquired). A secondary outcome enables reporting to national educational administrators (i.e., to the [Australian] Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Authority TEQSA) as an evidence base for a distinct La Trobe University 'brand' (TEQSA 2012).

All in all, La Trobe University was lining up its dishes and weighing its calories by specifying learning outcomes by Capabilities, then aligning assessment tasks and assessment matrices to match (Biggs 1999; Wulff 2005; Jacobson & Reddick, 2005). Moreover, a massive universal system of spreadsheets, databases and heat-maps was erected to chart those alignments and thereby to enable academics and administrators to contrast and cross check (Spencer et al. 2012).

The refining, aligning and mapping was done for three reasons. First, to prompt staff to explore, discipline-by-discipline, their coverage of the Graduate Capabilities they value (Sumsion & Goodfellow 2004; Spencer et al. 2012). The same processes also indicate points of curricular over-kill. Second, La Trobe academics are enabled to better to respond to students, within each subject, or also across all the subjects in their majors and in their degrees. Students are offered a coherent and explicit 'story', beyond the disciplinary 'content', of the nature of their intellectual



achievements and of their progress. Third, La Trobe is now ready to report to potential markets and to outside bodies (TEQSA 2012).

## What Should Follow Design for Learning

In talking with one another, the [reticent] person who is silent can ‘let something be understood,’ i.e., [s]he can develop an understanding more authentically than the person who never runs out of words (Heidegger 1927 in 1996, p.164).

This last element of my agenda deals with what should come next. While welcoming the aligning of curriculum, but not its excesses of managerialism, I canvas opinions and evidence here so as to stimulate richer academic conversations about teaching and learning.

La Trobe colleagues’ recent review of their Business, Economics and Law Faculty (FBEL)’s mapping endeavours under *Design for Learning* indicated an oversight in curriculum reform at La Trobe University. There had been no student involvement in *DfL* (Spencer et al. 2012). FBEL’s observation may have been prompted by their reading of other Australian surveys of mapping endeavours at Macquarie University and the University of Queensland (Sumsion & Goodfellow 2004; Bath et al. 2004). When it came to trying to involve students, however, the University of Queensland approach had just set out to check whether current and exiting students (in a sample of students studying in their Music Department) understood their Graduate Attributes/Capabilities in the same terms as their staff had mapped them (Bath et al. 2004). They did. To keep students in mind, the University of Queensland envisages, as might La Trobe in the next stage of *DfL*, tracking progress through regular cycles of student experience questionnaire review questions testing for understandings of Attributes/Capabilities (Bath et al. 2004).

### **Academic Philistinism and Curriculum Alignment**

By contrast, the Macquarie approach, discussed in the same issue of *Higher Education Research and Development* as the University of Queensland study, didn’t factor in student perceptions or students’ actions. Macquarie researchers pointed out, if only to dismiss, Macquarie academics’ concerns, theoretical and actual, about having to genuflect to university managers’ woolly lists of ‘motherhood’ Capabilities that no-one actually teaching really wanted, let alone ‘owned’ (Sumsion & Goodfellow 2004). La Trobe’s proponents of *DfL* heard much the same from disengaged colleagues. There is indeed a shock-and-awe academic literature on supposed evils of requiring universities to make their missions explicit and to be accountable (Bok 2006 critiques them; Lorenz 2012 and Smith & Webster 1997). *Quelle horreur*: recent government reports in US, UK or Australasia still look to achieve just these sorts of things. There are related concerns in the prim spectra of the academic literature about Philistines’ lists of Capabilities and/or about hodge-podges: Clanchy and Ballard (1995), Whitston (1998), Crebert (2002), Holmes (2000), and Bolton and Hyland (2003).

These alarms are false. They ignore the hyper-hodge-podge of un-aligned curricula like old La Trobe’s. They also caricature university managers as *dirigiste* ogres; academics become puppets. This view makes a virtue of the old academic culture of indifference to any notion of curriculum as extending beyond what an academic might want to teach. La Trobe’s *Design for Learning*, for instance, would not have taken three years to gestate and another three to implement if such strings were being pulled! And La Trobe’s economical (but expandable) six Capabilities are neither a

hodge-podge, nor much of an imposition; each discipline defines the Capabilities their ways. The *dirigisme* is only for disciplines to have to report on how they define the Capabilities. They also have to be able to show how they know their students can identify them too.

These alarmists also harm the potential for growth in their academic sectors. They allow Gibbon's old academe to persist, that "proud corporation above the fear of a rival and below the confession of an error". Sniffy dismissals of the needs (let alone the potential!) of the increasing numbers of students with extrinsic motivations who just require more explicit senses of mission and direction make little sense when the higher education sector is otherwise set to grow. In this era of mass higher education, when student satisfaction and retention is so important, learning outcomes open-and-shared and tied to consensus on Capabilities are more likely to enable staff and students to prosper (Astin 1985, 1993; Kuh et al. 2005; Kuh 2008). The hopes for the advance in status and employment that underpin many immigrant and first-in-their-family students' reasons for venturing into higher education are to be welcomed, even as academics in generalist programmes must work to temper, adjust and enlarge these expectations.

This is no Philistinism. This is a realm of opportunity (Astin 1985; Schroeder 1993; Breen & Lindsay 1999; Coates 2006). Alarmists in generalist programmes err (and perhaps write their own redundancy) if they presume their students always and/or already have to be as intrinsically motivated as they (Perry et al. 1996; Breen & Lindsay 1999; Dweck 2000). While intellectual curiosity (intrinsic motivation) is indeed a true goal of all higher education, it is unreasonable and unrealistic to expect all students to exemplify this at first year, perhaps even mid-way. Conversely, it is just as reasonable to expect the curriculum will be so designed, step-by-step, threshold-concept by threshold-concept, to enable and to nurture students to progress to learning to learn for own sakes, and then to be able to reflect on their learning (disciplinary meta-cognition: Langer 1997; Biggs 1999; Donald 2002; Laurillard 2002; Bain 2004; Hall 2007).

The oversight of neglecting what students might think and especially of neglecting to foreground (in planning 'teaching') what students are expected to do is important. It points to a future direction for *DfL* to further enrich and re-focus curriculum reform at La Trobe and push forward the re-branding of the university.

### ***Un-Coverage: Re-Positioning Students to be Active Learners***

Too much reform discussion to date has been staff navel-gazing. In the minds of most staff, their teaching is still what seems to be in focus when discussing 'curriculum'. The crux of *DfL*'s disciplinary definitions of the pan-university Capabilities and the elaboration of associated learning outcomes and assessment tasks are still being seen substantially as things that teachers write (genuflecting?, and then overlook?), rather than as things they let students loose to discuss, work towards *and do* (i.e., explicitly, reflectively, knowing where and how they are making progress as and when they also 'cover' certain kinds of content) (Tompkins 1990; Bain 2004; Palmer 2007; Huston 2009).

What this might mean (for academics) is abandoning some (but not all) aspects of "coverage" pedagogies in subjects offered in the future at La Trobe University. The alternative (or complementary) approach I suggest is influenced by "cognitivist" constructive-developmental educational social psychologies, but not without attending to political and social-justice contexts (so important in the history of La Trobe University) that also shape individual educational outcomes (Malcolm & Zukas 2001; Tennant et al. 2010). By this greater attention (1) to disciplinary forms of assessment, (2) to feedback and (3) to students' disciplinary threshold

concepts and ways of seeing, possibilities opened up by the mapping of graduate capabilities and subject learning outcomes in *DfL* would then (4) open pathways for students to learn more actively. The aim would then be to achieve more student “self-authorship” at La Trobe: “the [student’s] ability to reflect on one’s beliefs, organize one’s thoughts and feelings in the context of, but separate from, the thoughts and feelings of others, and literally to make up one’s mind” (Magolda 1999, p. 6).

We already know there are at least two clear pathways to achieve these ends. One path proceeds via enquiry- or problem-based learning, collaborative or individual (Terenzini & Pascarella 1994; Biggs 1999; Kuh et al. 2005; Robertson & Bond 2005; Coates 2006; Kuh 2008; Huston 2009; Jones 2011a, 2011b; Brew & Jewell 2012). The other pathway proceeds via undergraduate research and/or workplace learning (Boyer Commission 1998; Katkin 2003; Merkel 2003; Kreber 2006; Healey & Jenkins 2006, 2009; Macquarie University 2012). Examples are developed by Pace & Middendorf (2004), Calder (2006), Díaz et al. (2008), and Sipress & Voelker (2009) who discuss and exemplify what these ways mean, for instance, for my own discipline: History.

This does not mean there will be no academic ‘teaching’ as such. Teaching will always be there, even making ‘deliveries’ when needed, but not always, and never just for the sakes of academics’ research interests. Teaching will be more conversational (Laurillard 2002; Booth 2004) to facilitate and model academic forms of inquiry and reportage. The “teaching” then scaffolds a platform to enable students to climb up safely before they are asked to direct (in part) their own learning by being invited to plunge in (Brew 1999, 2001, 2003, 2012; Elton 2006).

As long as the reform focus remains just on what La Trobe staff are doing and saying (i.e. on techniques and supposed outcomes of their teaching), and so long as the reform focus is not on what La Trobe students are actually thinking (i.e., on their pre-conceptions and prior knowledge) and doing (i.e., on their inquiries, assessment tasks and learning procedures), the potential in La Trobe’s *Design for Learning* to empower student learning is still but half unleashed (Brew 2006). Just relying on a manager’s agenda of mapping teacher-defined curriculum outcomes and aligning them with assessment tasks and graduate capabilities may mean that the chance to extend, prolong and fulfil La Trobe’s radical mission of democratic engagement and social inclusion is still thwarted because the students are still too passive (Jones 2011b). For the potential in *DfL* to be really fulfilled, La Trobe students also have to be learning differently; above all, they need to be learning more actively. This means taking *DfL* mapping processes to the next level to initiate collegial discussions among academics in every discipline about how La Trobe students might be enabled by their academics to ‘let learn’ (Heidegger 1968, p.15) more actively and more self-reflectively. What’s needed is opinion, backed by evidence, with a readiness to subject outcomes to rigorous evaluations. Academics need to grab the harness, taking charge based on the best evidence they have to hand, and take the bungee plunge.

In my view, the next objective that can truly build on the fine achievements of curriculum alignment is to begin the opinionated conversations with staff and students that will eventually frame a learner-centred paradigm for higher education. This is not the same as a self-indulgent student-controlled learning (Magolda 1999; Barr & Tagg 1995; Tagg 2003; Elton 2006). In a learner-centred curriculum: “teachers model the process of constructing knowledge in their disciplines, teach that process to students, and give students opportunities to practice and become proficient in it” (Magolda 1999, p. 7). After the great beginning of *Design for Learning*, the next agenda for higher education at La Trobe University should empower student self-authorship in learning by proceeding on any and all fronts to find ways to actively engage La Trobe students (Booth 1963 in 1970, p. 25-28). Enquiry-based learning and undergraduate research are two key

ways, but there are others. We would then be fulfilling the potential in *Design for Learning* for re-branding La Trobe University as *the* place to which you go to study *if* you want to be really active and creative in your learning, but also it would be the place where you feel supported by academics who conceive their 'teaching' as also nurturing, facilitating and modelling, not just as instructing (Shore, Pinker & Bates 1990; Neumann 1994; Brew & Boud 1995; Elton 2006; Brew 1999, 2001, 2003).

The next phase of *Design for Learning* should therefore turn toward students, and focus La Trobe academics' attention more on their assessment tasks and the challenges and kinds of feedback they give to undergraduate students with respect to their enquiries and to their written and oral presentations (Trigwell & Prosser 1996; Healey 2005; Jenkins, Healey & Zetter 2007). The next phase of *Design for Learning* should focus La Trobe academics on what they are setting up students to do. How are they going to establish challenges that inspire and engage? How are they going to offer feedback that really is timely, formative and helpful? In this vision, La Trobe academics would then be moving to "hear [students] to speech", rather than just trying to "speak [them] to hearing" (Morton 1985, p. 54-55).

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