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Vision & Choice, Ethical Characteristics of Academic Development Programs

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Abstract

The perceived importance and the prevalence of academic development programs worldwide mean that it is critical that characteristics essential for the success of such programs be identified and incorporated. This article recognises the manifold perspectives on identifying such characteristics, but argues that if it is desirable that an academic development program has ethical outcomes, then an ethical perspective is an appropriate starting point. From the basis of ethical principles, two vital characteristics of academic development programs are identified - vision and choice. In this paper, contemporary conceptualisations of academic development programs are considered first, then characteristics consistent with ethical principles are identified and amplified. The paper concludes with a description of an existing graduate certificate in higher education, and its graduates' outcomes as an example.

> 'OK, can someone from each table add up how many students each of you teach?' In the ensuing hub-bub lecturers and tutors added up their table-group total and then called out numbers in turn. 'That's over 1600 students amongst the 21 of you. Around 10 % of the whole student population' (dialogue from an academic development program, 2004).

Introduction

Academic development has as its ultimate goal that every university student learn at their highest potential in every university course. Therefore academic development programs (ADPs) are offered by universities in a variety of countries in order to develop academics' ability to facilitate this learning. And, as the dialogue above suggests, even one cohort of an ADP may influence the learning experience of a high proportion of students. This makes the nature of the learning experience provided to academics in these programs critical for the university community. In Australia the recent linkage of Federal Government funding with student perceptions of their course experiences, via the Learning & Teaching Performance Fund (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005), and the subsequent publicity, has provided an extra motivation for universities to be concerned with this compounding influence of ADPs. With such a high level of educational and, in Australia at least, funding stakes, it is critical to consider what overarching characteristics of ADPs may be important, even vital, to their success. There are many perspectives from which to consider important characteristics of a program, including those of stakeholders such as participants, facilitators and heads of discipline; conceptual perspectives such as constructivism, human capital and ethical principles; and various models for program delivery. This article takes the perspective of ethical principles to consider characteristics vital to an ADP; an ADP developed with ethical principles in mind has a systematic opportunity to facilitate equality and fairness, honesty and faithfulness, with no harm caused. If ethical considerations are not made until after the design stage is complete, then an ADP may unintentionally, but systematically, cause unethical practices to arise.

The article begins with current approaches to conceptualising ADPs, then considers reasons for prioritising ethical principles in the design of an ADP. Next, participant 'vision' and 'choice' are proposed as characteristics vital for ADPs to be consistent with ethical principles. Finally a graduate certificate in higher education is provided as an example of a program that has characteristics in keeping with ethical principles.

This article may be of immediate and obvious interest to those involved in designing and running ADPs. However, it should also be of interest to those who participate in, or may inform or contribute to, such a program; lecturers and leaders in the disciplines who have an interest in their own and their colleagues' educational development. Another audience may be policymakers who are keen to ensure quality of ADPs. By and large, the whole university community has a vested interest in the success of ADPs, and so the identification of characteristics that promote an equitable, just and fair program is in the interests of all.

Conceptualising Academic Development Programs: An Ethical Perspective

Reid (2002) asks if there is an 'ideal' approach for academic development? 'Ideal' raises complex issues, such as 'ideal for whom?' and 'from which theoretical perspective are you considering the 'ideal'?' There is a range of conceptual perspectives of ADPs, including a focus on: models for program delivery (Hicks, 1999); models for program facilitation (Pill, 2005; Booth & Anderberg, 2005; Ho, 2000); the degree of program structure/flexibility (e.g. Reid & Petocz, 2003); degree of explicit connectedness of program to broader institutional issues (D'Andrea & Gosling, 2001); employing and facilitating Boyer's scholarships (Savage & Betts 2005); roles of academic developers (D'Andrea & Gosling 2001; Fletcher & Patrick, 1998); the correspondence between orientations to academic development and conceptions of change as a consequence of that orientation (Land, 2001); and ontological and epistemological considerations (Quinn, 2003). Each of these may provide a different perspective of the ideal. With such an array of potential perspectives, it is not surprising that there is a diversity of ways of conceptualising program design amongst universities. D'Andrea and Gosling (2001, p.68) suggest that variations in approach to academic development in the UK, the USA, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa 'are symptomatic of uncertainty about the purpose of educational development both by its practitioners and by higher education managers'. This perspective considers academic development to be a theory-poor field or community of practice (Rowland, 2001; Tight, 2004) that still needs to incorporate a relevant theoretical basis for practice (Trowler & Bamber, 2005).

Dewey noted that, when there is long-term lack of consensus, it is best to approach the issues from a level deeper and more inclusive than the competing perspectives (1938/1963). One perspective for the identification of some of the necessary characteristics of ADPs which resides at a fundamentally deeper level is that of ethical principles. This perspective is important if there is a desire to develop a program that by design satisfies ethical considerations; this is unlikely to happen through serendipity, whereas up-front ethical considerations are more likely to ensure it. This desire may be grounded in a concern for the wellbeing of all participants. It may arise out of the need for participants to develop relevant ethical attributes themselves, for facilitating their students' learning in ethical ways and for

ethical application of their field of study. Finally, the desire may be that lecturers in the disciplines who are participants of ADPs know that they are engaged in programs that have ethical characteristics and that may promote their own ethical awareness and ensure for them and their colleagues equity, fairness and justice.

This is not to say that ethical principles are usually absent from design considerations of ADPs, but rather that a prioritised consideration of them may be worthwhile. Some benefits of ethical principle application to APD design is that they may facilitate optimised educational growth (Brown & Krager, 1985) and maximised benefits in the context of minimised harm (Nuhfer, 2001). The perspective has had currency from the time of Hippocrates (Pikoulis, Waasdorp, Leppaniemi, & Burris, 1998); and has been successfully utilised in numerous contexts (Nuhfer, 2001). There is precedence of their use in Higher Education assessment (McCormack, 2003) and post-graduate education (Brown & Krager, 1985).

The focus of this paper concerns ethical characteristics of programs for the purpose of the development of academic staff. I therefore refocus Reid's question above as: 'What characteristics of ADPs are vital for enacting ethical principles?

Application of Ethical Principles and the Primacy of Autonomy

Five ethical principles were determined by Brown and Krager (1985) to be pertinent to postgraduate education, a level comparable to academic development. These principles are autonomy (informed choice), non-maleficence (do no harm), beneficence (do positive good), justice (equality and fairness) and fidelity (honesty and faithfulness). This list is the same as that used in contemporary ethics for medical education (e.g. Palmer, 2005), with the notable inclusion of fidelity. It is worth noting that Brown and Krager's list and the medical ethics lists have a Western ethical perspective and that different principles may be fore-grounded in other outlooks. With the ongoing internationalisation of Western curricula, these Western ethical principles are increasingly debatable but nevertheless form the basis of the following analysis. In this section, the principle of autonomy is applied to ADPs, and two specific characteristics, vision and choice, are presented as being vital to enable participant autonomy. Then it is argued that an ADP which provides participant vision and choice is consequently more likely to be consistent with the remaining four principles.

Autonomy Applied: Participant Vision and Choice

Autonomy requires that participants of ADPs be as fully informed as possible and therefore able to understand the consequences of the options that they are provided with and of the choices that they make. Within the context of their growing knowledge of teaching and learning, participants need to be given optimal flexibility, appropriate to their level of academic development. This may entail more prescribed learning tasks and directed assessments early in a program, with scaffolding of participants' learning in a new context, and progressive removal of this scaffolded structure. Most of all, autonomy is promoted by providing participants with the capacity to see, a vision of where their involvement will take them over the period of a whole program. This is like the vision gained from a vantage point at the start of a journey, looking out over a landscape of possibilities. Autonomy is not demonstrated by trusting a guide completely to help one to a predetermined destination but by negotiating mutually agreed on destinations. The capacity to see ahead may be realised more easily in, say medicine, where patients' vision for the future is frequently a return to the health of the past; autonomy requires their informed choices to help them get back to a place that they know. In education, participants have not been where they want to go - a phenomena central to the process that we call learning - and so may be more prone to being led by the experts. However, autonomy requires a vision which enables participants to move towards their goal, a dream, a speculation by each of where they could be. Information about courses or modules is not sufficient in itself, and neither are contemporary academic development practices, such as immersion in contemporary literature, peer-review, reflective practice and scholarship of teaching and learning. These are pieces in the whole: the vision of where these may lead is critical for autonomy to be genuinely realised.

To gain such a big-picture vision a sufficiently detailed conceptual framework for the whole ADP is arguably necessary, whereby participants may see how each piece of the program fits into a coherent whole. This is consistent with research based on interviews with participants about conditions for effective ADPs, where Trowler and Cooper found that 'it is important that educational development lecturers develop a process for diagnosing conceptual frameworks and revealing them to participants' (2002 p.237). Suggestive as it is of future possibilities, a sufficiently detailed conceptual framework is like a map of the territory, and with which the negotiation mentioned above may take place. For example, Booth and Anderberg (2005) developed a framework that was 'intended to support teachers in coming to understand their practice and improve it in principled ways through theoretical grounding' (p.374) and that became 'a model for educational development and a process for becoming more aware, a more capable, teacher' (p.376). McWilliam (2002, p.290) considered that academic developers' knowledge is commonly 'assumed to be what leads to progress, not the knowledge of the developee.' A framework that provides participant vision may redistribute some of the lead to the 'developee', satisfying the principle of autonomy.

Moreover, a program that requires participants' forward planning of their own education, and a progressive movement from developee to self-developer, is more likely to prompt academics to continue to educate themselves in teaching and learning issues after completion of an ADP.

However, to be truly autonomous, participants in an ADP must have more than a vision of their progress; they must also have genuine choice, including that of theoretical alignment. If they have a conceptual framework that provides vision, but are constricted into a narrow route walled by a single specific theoretical orientation, or a 'rigid preferred model' (Trowler & Copper, 2002, p.238) for the program, then participants will not be able to be truly autonomous. Rather, participants need to be informed by a variety of teaching and learning concepts if they are to make genuine informed choices about their own learning, and about factors that they choose to govern the design of courses they teach. Therefore the autonomy principle requires that ADPs be not strongly aligned with one specific theory. This allows participants the conceptual space and the safety to operate in an ADP with:

> … the same systematic curiosity and capacity for skepticism that is the hallmark of good science and good scholarship whatever the object of analysis. These capacities should not be rendered irrelevant by a new order of thinking that insists that generalisable theories are the only useful knowledge… (McWilliam, 2002, p. 298).

In addition, for a cross-disciplinary ADP to promote autonomy, a conceptual framework must also be based on concepts that are accessible to participants from a variety of disciplines. Without this, participants may well not see the relevance of the framework to their context, and so its capacity to promote vision will be severely hampered. For cross-disciplinary programs, a useful way to do this is the incorporation into the framework of concepts in - common across the disciplines. This will be discussed further in the program example provided below.

Beneficence, non-maleficence, justice and fidelity

The characteristics of vision and choice, derived from the principle of autonomy, also facilitate, in the academic development context, the ethical principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, justice and fidelity.

Non-maleficence as a principle - first do no harm - can seem at first glance quite insipid, however, if applied it may radically transform action. An intention to do good, for example by promulgating learning and teaching best practice, may clash with a participant's beliefs or disciplinary standards. Failure to convert to the ADP's idea of best practice may result in implicit or explicit alienation from classroom discourse, or even result in a fail grade. Harm minimisation requires that participants from various disciplines, each with its own ontology,

epistemology, and pedagogy (or competing sets of these), are not alienated by a conceptual framework which undermines 'worthwhile local and context-sensitive knowledge' McWilliam (2002, p.289). One way, then, of minimising this undermining process is to ensure that no one theory, epistemology, methodology or perspective is privileged. Providing genuine choice in terms of destination and route for participants mitigates this concern. Many other factors could, of course cause harm during an ADP, however, if the program has the characteristics of vision and choice, this is a way to systematically reduce the possibilities for harm.

Beneficence requires that there should be, after causing no harm, some benefit for each participant, prompting learning in ways that positively assist their teaching and their students' learning. In academic development, it is difficult to determine which aspects may be beneficial to all, due to the multiplicity of contexts, and experiences. In ADPs enabling timely participant informed-choice may be a key element to actualise real benefits to all. As noted earlier, the notion of 'timely' may require relatively specific, structured guidance initially, for example in an introductory course, with a lower degree of autonomy early in the program for many participants, but continuing removal of scaffolding towards increasingly higher degrees of autonomy; a high degree of 'choice' early on may leave many uninformed or floundering. A conceptual framework of sufficient detail would need to be sufficiently flexible to allow for increasing degrees of autonomy. It seems that beneficence is more likely to be promoted by vision and choice, due to the importance of self-determination of academics, than any other characteristics. Nevertheless, rationales or guidelines, in addition to ethical ones, are needed to determine other characteristics necessary for positive benefit to all. For cross-disciplinary ADPs, developing a conceptual framework from concepts in common across disciplines may promote beneficence through collaborations, collegial conversations, unity of purpose and a developing mutual understanding of standards across a university community.

Justice requires equality and fairness. Contemplations of equality issues relating to gender, ethnicity, culture, language, discipline and academic status in the development of an ADP, are all important. However, accounting for all simultaneously may be more perplexing than informative, and certainly not be conducive to providing a coherent structure of a program. More critical then, is enabling participants to pursue context-relevant directions with appropriate and timely levels of guidance. If a conceptual framework intended to enable autonomy has as its basis, say, social constructivist principles only, then those who adhere to a more objectivist paradigm may be ostracised by the discourse, rather than merely challenged by it. There would potentially be an inequality according to disciplinary ways of knowing. Providing multiple theoretical perspectives demonstrates a valuing of adult learners' capacity to learn and adopt perspectives appropriate to their context. Badley (2005) asserts that having a program aligned with a specific theory is more likely to promote division and intolerance, a result contrary to justice. Fairness, nevertheless, requires comparable

standards for all, and an in-common conceptual framework lacking prescription but with sufficient description may enable this, as well as justice.

Finally, fidelity (honesty and faithfulness) likewise is more likely to be realised when participants have vision and choice, say through a conceptual framework for the whole program. Complete honesty from a program facilitator puts up-front expectations and requirements, allowing participants to see what it is that they are getting themselves into and possibilities of where they may head. It is important for faithfulness that participants understand the basis of such a framework, so that the whole process of program provision is as transparent as possible. This transparency of the program is critical for faithfulness because it shows respect of the program facilitator for participants as learners in charge of their own destinies: this encourages a corresponding respect in return. Faithfulness requires this mutual respect, and also an active mutual obligation to do work that is required for a successful outcome of an ADP. For participants, a conceptual framework may facilitate this by allowing them to determine areas and directions that are appropriate and areas and directions that are inappropriate for the program. For facilitators of ADPs, differences between espoused and practiced educational theories have been shown to be destructive (Trowler and Cooper, 2002) so having a conceptual framework for a program could help avoid this problem if it is used to explicitly keep in sight theory as practised.

The characteristics derived by the application of autonomy highlights its importance in the ADP context; when autonomy is explicitly facilitated, I argue, then the other ethical principles are more likely to be facilitated, but not, of course, guaranteed. Autonomy in an ADP requires participant vision and choice and this may be realised by a sufficiently detailed conceptual framework based on concepts that are not strongly aligned with one theory. Into this structure the fidelity principle breathes spirit, requiring a genuine commitment and care between the program participants and facilitators.

Trowler and Cooper (2002) reached an empirically-based conclusion similar in nature to these characteristics derived through the application of ethical principles:

> The ability of an educational development program explicitly to steer a course through the exploration and critical analysis of different and sometimes opposing TLRs [teaching and learning regimes], without either seeming to promulgate a rigid, preferred model or causing anxiety to novices by offering no value judgements, seems to be the ideal to aspire to (p.238).

Their ideal is a program that steers a course, without rigidity, yet with value judgements. ‘Explicitly to steer a course’ is facilitated by the vision of a sufficiently detailed framework; and ‘without a rigid, preferred model’ makes explicit the requirement that the program not be aligned with one specific theory, but provide participant choice. In the next section an example of an ADP that has the characteristics of vision and choice is presented.

An Example of a Program that facilitates participant vision and choice

The following example is taken from an ADP offered at the University of Adelaide. A conceptual framework was devised as the starting point for the development of a graduate certificate in higher education, to enable participant vision and choice. To provide the big picture for this ADP, an element in-common across the disciplines of the university formed the basis of the conceptual framework, namely Graduate Attributes. 'Graduate Attributes' (GA), is a title frequently given to public statements made by Australian universities about what it is they value and strive to develop in their students. GA statements describe 'skills, personal attitudes and values which should be acquired by all graduates, regardless of their discipline or field of study' (Higher Education Council, 1992, p.20) and their purpose is to depict and facilitate student development in major spheres of life, such as interpersonal skills and ethical considerations, not just in a narrow field of content. Graduate Attributes have a descriptive (Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 2000; Gibson, 2003), non-theoretical (Barrie, 2003) nature, which means that they are not aligned with one particular theory and that they cross disciplinary boundaries by being embedded in university-wide educational statements. Being in-common across disciplines and not strongly aligned with one theory means that they are suitable as the basis of a conceptual framework for a graduate certificate in higher education that may promote autonomy. The graduate certificate program consists of four courses, typically completed at the rate of one course per semester, and during the semester period.

In the conceptual framework for the graduate certificate in higher education, GAs are the labels for successive rows of the framework, represented in a table called the Graduate Attributes Continuum (Willison, 2006; see Figure 1). In this table each GA is elaborated into a continuum of 'degree of impact of each participant' described by five levels:

- Participant's *Awareness* of teaching and learning practices;
- Participant's *Involvement*, utilising teaching and learning practices;
- Participant's impact on *Students*' learning;
- Participant's impact on *Colleagues* and programs; and
- Participant's *Broad Impact* through innovation in learning and teaching.

Figure 1: The Graduate Attribute Continuum (Willison, 2006)

Graduate Attributes Continuum

a conceptual framework for the Graduate Certificate in Higher Education, The University of Adelaide

DEGREE OF IMPACT OF PARTICIPANT

Graduate Attributes	Awareness Personal involvement of the participant, who ...	Involvement Personal involvement of the participant, who ...	Students Impact on student learning, where the participant ...	Colleagues Impact on colleagues/programs by the participant, who ...	Broad Impact Broad impact through innovation by the participant, who ...
Research Skill The ability to locate, generate, analyse, evaluate and synthesise information from a wide variety of sources in a planned and timely manner.	Is aware of sources of information that deal with teaching and learning in the context of the discipline.	Demonstrates familiarity with some teaching and learning concepts, evaluating, synthesising and applying these to their course design and assessment.	Analyses, evaluates and synthesises teaching and learning articles, course documents and student evaluation to inform learning task provision.	Plans, implements and evaluates student research skill development throughout a course and more broadly.	Formulates student research skill development pedagogy which influences practice in the education and/or the research within the discipline.
Knowledge & Understanding Knowledge and understanding of the content and techniques of a chosen discipline at advanced levels that are internationally recognised.	Is aware of strategies that enable students to access and understand discipline specific knowledge.	Provides a range of strategies to students for them to access and understand discipline specific knowledge.	Demonstrates an understanding of the knowledge of learning and teaching within the discipline context and utilises this in courses taught.	Demonstrates scholarship in discipline education with knowledge of learning and teaching within the discipline the starting point and an outcome.	Demonstrates high-level knowledge of learning and teaching at the forefront of their discipline by being accepted for publishing in refereed journals, presenting at conferences, etc., or of a publishable standard.
Problem Solving An ability to apply effective, creative and innovative solutions, both independently and cooperatively, to current and future problems.	Is aware of strategies to independently and cooperatively develop solutions for current and future problems.	Implements effective and innovative solutions to known discrete problems in own courses.	Identifies problems with own course(s), individually and cooperatively devises, implements and rigorously evaluates solutions e.g. in Action Research-type spirals.	Conducts individual and collaborative primary research on students determining present and potential future problems, course specific and broader, and develops appropriate solutions.	Creatively resolves current and future discipline-specific teaching/learning issues of national/international concern, independently and cooperatively.
Teamwork and Communication Skills of a high order in interpersonal understanding, teamwork and communication.	Is aware of the need for interpersonal understanding, teamwork and communication.	Actively involved in small groups in a variety of roles. States awareness of the need to facilitate student involvement in small groups and to utilise inclusive group work strategies.	Facilitates student communication and teamwork utilising inclusive group-work strategies. Evidences teamwork with colleagues.	Demonstrates at a high level a large repertoire of communication techniques in different forums. Adopts multiple team and interpersonal roles in relation to course design.	Participates, and is recognised, as a valuable team-worker and is sought for collaborative educational projects and as a speaker on educational issues for conferences.
Use of Technology A proficiency in the appropriate use of contemporary technologies.	Is aware that contemporary technologies have a role in learning and teaching, can be interactive, may supplement traditional learning or be used as an alternative to it.	Utilises contemporary technologies in a manner that enhances own teaching.	Utilises contemporary technologies to promote effective higher order learning for students.	Uses contemporary technologies integrated throughout programs, informing and inspiring a community of practice.	Evaluates and researches use of contemporary technologies including integration with face to face modes, publishing results in refereed journals and conference proceedings, or of a publishable standard.
Lifelong Learning A commitment to continuous learning and the capacity to maintain intellectual curiosity throughout life.	Is aware of the need for life long learning.	Demonstrates reflective practice. Asks and seeks to answer educational questions posed from own experiences and the literature.	Demonstrates that understandings of how students learn explicitly inform teaching methodology, e.g. in course rationale and curriculum. Makes explicit own preferred modes of learning.	Critically appraises teaching methodology by utilising a variety of understandings of how learning occurs. Promotes intellectual curiosity amongst students and staff.	Synthesises perspectives on how students learn into a coherent framework that informs educators.
Endeavour & Leadership A commitment to the highest standards of professional endeavour and the ability to take a leadership role in the community.	Is aware of the need for collegial support systems as a significant factor in facilitating quality teaching and learning at university	Seeks collegial support within discipline/ area or broader university community.	Involvement in a collegial support system within discipline, focusing on aspects of teaching and learning.	Adopts a leadership role in collegial support system within or beyond the discipline, utilising a built in evaluation component.	Demonstrates leadership with a wide range of practitioners by developing a network with a focus on innovative learning and teaching issues.
Ethical, Cultural & Social Awareness An awareness of ethical, social and cultural issues and their importance in the exercise of professional skills and responsibilities.	Is aware of ethical, social and cultural issues and their importance in the exercise of professional skills and responsibilities	Demonstrates understanding of ethical, social and cultural issues and their importance in the exercise of professional skills and responsibilities.	Explicitly facilitates students' awareness of ethical, social and cultural issues and their importance in the exercise of professional skills and responsibilities.	Explicitly facilitates colleagues' awareness of ethical, social and cultural issues and their importance in the exercise of professional skills and responsibilities.	Facilitates broad awareness of ethical, social and cultural issues and their importance in the exercise of professional skills and responsibilities.

The University of Adelaide is research-intensive, providing an environment where students are encouraged to take responsibility for developing as graduates with attributes of international distinction. Developed by the Centre for Learning and Professional Development, the Graduate Attribute Continuum informs the aims, objectives, assessment, curriculum and evaluation of the Graduate Certificate in Higher Education. Designed by John Willison. Available online at: www.adelaide.edu.au/clpd/lta/attributes/

The framework provides an overall learning vision, allowing participants to see the coherence between the four courses by making it explicit that each course moves participants along the same conceptual continuum. The first course requires participants to provide indicators in submitted assessment of operating in all 8 GAs at least at the level of Personal Involvement. The second Course requirement is that four GAs be demonstrated at the Impact on Students level, and in the third course participants demonstrate the other 4 GAs at this level. The Impact on Students level is the minimum standard of the program for all 8 GAs.

The movement towards a high degree of autonomy is planned from early on in the program as each participant sets their own program goals by choosing to develop one GA to the level of Impact on Colleagues and another to the level of Broad Impact through innovation. These are to be realised in the final fully open-ended assessment of the 4th and final course. This goal-setting provides a vision for participants that influences how they conduct themselves throughout the program, including how they complete more prescribed early assessments. The use of one framework across the four courses of the program greatly enhanced coherence within, and especially between, courses; each course, and its components become explicitly part of a bigger picture. This coherence brings together for participants the past, by understanding in terms of the continuum where they have come from, the present through self-assessment according to the continuum, and the future through insight into where a specific course will take them and by participants setting their program goals.

This vision of past, present and future allows a high degree of informed choice, a critical element as participants, over time, increasingly know best their own personal, professional, learning-facilitation and course-development needs. They can identify gaps in their knowledge or problems and issues that must be dealt with. These gaps, problems and issues frequently form the basis of, and the motivation for, their drive to higher levels of the Graduate Attribute Continuum. Within the scope of this flexibility, the program is initially well-scaffolded. The first course is highly structured, but as participants move through the program the scaffolding is reduced, for example in terms of prescription of assessment criteria and of specification of learning tasks. The self-identified holes in their knowledge also increasingly inform the activities they participate in, and the ways that they complete assessments. By the final course, assessment is completely negotiated, where participants themselves state indicators they will provide for impact on Colleagues and Broad Impact.

The process of increasing flexibility and decreasing scaffolding optimises informed choice by participants. Some participants have provided indicators of Broad Impact by having papers published in peer-reviewed conference proceedings (Parker, Clark & Hall, 2005) and in peer-reviewed book chapters (Al Sarawi, 2005), establishing education group networks at the university (Palmer & Botten, 2006) or making school-level recommendations for inclusive strategies for international students (Falkner, 2006). Fundamentally, the movement in the program is from participant as expert in a discipline towards expert in the teaching and learning of that discipline.

Program evaluation, at the most fundamental level, is informed by the framework, and is based on the extent and frequency of participants reaching their aims and the overall program aims. An external review based on an examination of curriculum documents, participants' assessments and interviews with graduates found that the Graduate Attribute Continuum informs the:

> assessment strategy which requires participants to identify specific personal aims for their study within the Program…The reviewer was most impressed with the many and varied outcomes of participants' study in the GCHE which reflect much credit on the commitment and energy of the participants … Participants described many thoughtful examples of changes to their own teaching practice, which have been evaluated by students and judged to be beneficial (Nightingale, 2007, p.6).

The use of the Universities Graduate Attributes for the Graduate Attribute Continuum rendered evident and traceable the origins of the program including course and program aims, course outcomes and assessment criteria, enabling 'a program which is completely aligned with the University's goals' (Nightingale, 2007, p6). As noted earlier, this element of a sufficiently detailed framework is critical for faithfulness, where it is important for participants to know they are engaging in a program that will guide them in ways appropriate to the institution, yet without restricting their choices.

With the framework, based on concepts not aligned with any one specific theory, participants' vision was activated, albeit at times through uncertainty or discomfort, and genuine choices realised. The equity required by justice is demonstrated by 'the many and varied outcomes of participants', suggesting that, indeed participants took paths appropriate to their own contexts, disciplines and personalities, epitomizing genuine choice. Fairness comes from having the same level of attainment required for all, with a diversity of ways of reaching the levels of Impact on Colleagues and Broad Impact. Fidelity is demonstrated by the reciprocal 'commitment and energy of the participants as well as … the Program' (Nightingale, 2007, p.6)

The extent to which the program was non-maleficent is possibly harder to actually demonstrate. Indeed questionnaires used to gather participant feedback provided data that in some courses one of the participants indicated feeling that 'student diversity was not accounted for', and that possibly that student was left out of the educational process to some extent. I would suggest, however, that the use of the conceptual framework was a systematic attempt to minimise harm, and one that must be supported by day to day care.

One practical consideration for developing a conceptual framework of sufficient detail to enable vision is the time involved. The Graduate Attribute Continuum for the ADP required multiple reiterations over a period of six months of fine-tuning. This included time for stakeholders, including potential participants, to provide input into the details of the Graduate Attribute Continuum, and to ensure its viability with participants from the various disciplines. A graduate diploma in Nursing Science used this approach to elaborate the same Graduate Attributes into a continuum of levels of clinical practice for its conceptual framework (McCann, 2006), and reported that a similar amount of development time was needed for fine- tuning the framework. This was also an example of the advantage of a conceptual framework for the graduate certificate modelling an explicit approach to curriculum design.

Conclusion

This paper set out to answer the question 'What characteristics of ADPs are vital for enacting ethical principles?' Vision and choice were presented as characteristics of ADPs in keeping with the ethical principle of autonomy. It was suggested that vision may be well elicited by the use of a sufficiently detailed conceptual framework, and participant choice requires, amongst other things, that the framework be not strongly aligned with one specific theory. It was further suggested that vision and choice are characteristics well suited to promote non-maleficence, beneficence, justice and fidelity in an ADP. A framework based on Graduate Attributes was provided as an example of one way that these two characteristics could be realised in an ADP. It is relevant that there were similarities between the derivation of characteristics vital to ethical principles and Trowler and Cooper's (2002. p. 238) findings from interviews with participants of ADPs. However, other vital characteristics of ADP need to be identified, possibly by using the perspectives of different stakeholders or other conceptual frameworks. Ultimately, characteristics that are vital to ethical principle fulfilment in ADPs would best be incorporated into the fundamental structure of these programs, not added as an afterthought. The potential for educational benefits to all participants, and ultimately their students, makes the incorporation of ethical characteristics a high priority for those in leadership and for those responsible for program design and implementation. 'If academic development aims to shape new relationships between fragmented aspects of academic work, then the way it does so will depend on a vision of the whole' (Rowland,

2002, p.54). Lecturers in the disciplines need to have a vision of their own educational development and its broader purpose in higher education. As a priority for the design or redesign of academic development programs, consideration should be given to characteristics vital for realising ethical principles, providing academics with vision and genuine choices of how their development will proceed to best enable their own students' learning.

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