

In her presentation, Jan Schapper drew attention to the political nature of the concept of “engaging students through research and enquiry”. She highlighted just a few instances of how this is a highly contested area.

For instance, any attempts to make explicit the research that underpins the knowledge claims of any orthodox theory/ ideology immediately calls into question the assumptions on which the theory is based. Questions such as who funded the research? How was the research conducted? Whose interests are served by the research? Whose interests are not served by the research? Who determines how and where this research is published? Pursuing just a few of these questions with students begins to undermine any claims to neutrality of research or knowledge production.

Jan then outlined a study on research-led teaching she had conducted with her colleague Dr Susan Mayson at Monash University. As part of this study, wherever possible interviews were conducted with Associate Deans (Research and Teaching) at the same time as “group” interviews (if two people make a group). In these interviews there was strong belief that research was privileged in the concept of research-led teaching. From the perspective of most of the senior academic managers this was fair and reasonable; for just a couple of Associate Deans (Teaching) this privileging of research was problematic. In response to a question Jan explained that this meant that teaching was seen to need additional input from research.

Further, Jan suggested that in order to “engage” students it was often necessary to engage academic staff. Unfortunately while academic staff are increasingly being pressured to publish, the importance of teaching is diminishing. At Monash University a former VC referred to the “twin peaks” of teaching and research. A senior academic quipped that too often it was now the “twin solitudes”. While teaching is not as highly valued as research, Jan suggested it will become increasingly difficult to engage academic staff in teaching.

At the same time, and perhaps because the demands to publish now render teaching as an unfortunate distraction/ disruption from the real (rewarded) work, all too often it appears that students are demonized as lazy, stupid, liars, cheats, dishonest and so on. Increasingly procedures are being introduced at the institutional level to control both the students’ and the academics’ behaviours. So for instance, decisions about student welfare or management are being wrested from academics to be made by administrative staff. Citing an example from Monash University, Jan noted that student applications for deferred exams were now handled not by teaching, but by administrative staff. While these measures introduced standardized approaches to individual circumstances, as scholars from

the Department of Management who have researched organisational change, we are conscious that employee resistance is the likely response to imposition of controls by institutional leaderships. This climate of pressure to publish, increased hostility to the demands of students and the tendency to resist efforts to limit autonomy, militate against engagement with students and the encouragement of students to engage with their learning.

Since the Tasmanian Roundtable the privileging of research and the disciplining of those who focus their attention on their teaching has escalated. In late November, 30 staff from the Faculty of Business and Economics who were "teaching intensive" were targeted by the Dean and offered "voluntary" departure packages. Many of these staff had received citations for teaching excellence.

Nonetheless, and despite (or because of) this politicized environment of teaching Jan and two of her colleagues are using the Research Skills Development framework developed by John Willison and colleagues at the University of Adelaide in different disciplines. Jan distributed examples of how research skills development has been used in an undergraduate Tourism class and an undergraduate Human Resources Management class.

Further, she explained how she used it in her own postgraduate unit in Business ethics. In this unit, Jan encourages students to think of themselves as researchers. Both individually and in a group, the students formulate research questions, conduct empirical research and present their results on a poster. The poster is presented to an audience of invited guests and it is at that event that the students really experience themselves as researchers as they seriously discuss both the process as well as the content of their research. Jan has found that this element of providing an audience is essential to student engagement.

The success of the students' work can be assessed by academic measures – to date, two papers from students' research has been published in ERA ranked B journals. Students' responses to the unit have been very positive.