Pedagogical Partnerships and Professionalisation:

Changing work and identities of professional staff at one Australian university

Carroll Graham

A Portfolio submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

University of Technology Sydney

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Certificate Of Authorship/Originality

I certify that the work in this portfolio has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the work presented in this portfolio has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the artefacts has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the portfolio.

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Signature of Student

Date: _____

Acknowledgements

To my sisters in Guiding, who made me feel good (rather than just 'not guilty') about taking a year's leave of absence from Girl Guides – and especially to Shareka, who took the District Leader baton and ran with it – thank you. Thank you also to Dr Gaye Wilson, fellow Guide Leader and professional editor, who proofread my meta-statement for completeness and consistency.

To my family, Nick, Geoffrey, Jenna and Evan, who put up with books strewn over the dining table and who accepted my distractedness during this long journey – thank you. To my husband Nick Roberts and daughter Jenna Roberts, who both proof read many a paper (although any errors remaining are still mine), and to Evan, who took my place on the family cooking roster on numerous occasions (despite thinking that I should *not* be doing a doctorate!) – thank you. A special thanks goes to my eldest son, Geoffrey Roberts, who set up my website (www.higheredprofessionals.info) and maintained the servers on which it resides. He was always on hand to reboot a server or provide other technical advice when I needed it.

And finally, but by no means least, to Ruth Lusty who was my study partner and confidante, and without whom I would not have reached the point of being able to write this acknowledgement – thank you.

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Sadly, Alison was unable to see the end of this project. Along with many other contributions to education, social research and practice, Alison Lee was the driving force behind the introduction of the portfolio approach for the Doctor of Education at UTS. Therefore, I dedicate this portfolio to her memory.

Alison Lee, 1952-2012

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Index of Portfolio Components

Graham, C. 2013b, 'Pedagogical Partnerships and Professionalisation: Changing work and identities of professional staff at one Australian university', Doctoral Meta-statement, University of Technology, Sydney.

This meta-statement describes the portfolio, and its development, for the doctoral research project: 'Pedagogical Partnerships and Professionalisation: Changing work and identities of professional staff at one Australian university'. Within the context of higher education in Australia, this research project addresses the overarching research question: *How do professional staff contribute to student outcomes?* It discusses the context of this research; the methodology used; its contribution to professional, academic and workplace audiences; and the rationale for the choice of portfolio artefacts. It outlines the contribution to knowledge and practice made by this research, linking theoretical frameworks to findings. It also suggests further research and demonstrates the doctoral quality of the research and the portfolio through this meta-statement and the portfolio artefacts.

Graham, C. 2010, 'Hearing the voices of general staff: A Delphi study of the contributions of general staff to student outcomes', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, vol. 32, no. 3, pp. 213–223.

This paper describes the Delphi study that contributed to the development of the Professional Staff–Student Outcomes (PSSO) Framework. As described in Section 2.1 of the meta-statement, the PSSO Framework provided a tool for investigating how professional staff contribute to student outcomes. The PSSO Framework used 13 propositions for support of student outcomes derived in a meta-study by Prebble et al. (2004). These propositions for student support focused on the contributions by academic staff or 'the institution'. The Delphi study used the Delphi method to test the applicability of the propositions for investigating contributions to student outcomes by professional staff.

Graham, C. 2012a, *Report on the findings of the doctoral research project 'Pedagogical Partnerships and Professionalisation: Changing work and identities of professional staff at one Australian university'*, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Technology, Sydney, Sydney.

This management report describes this doctoral research project, its aims, methods and outcomes, in a style appropriate for the workplace audience. This report was made available to members of the Senior Executive at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS): Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Corporate Services), Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning and Equity) and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research).

Graham, C. 2012b, 'Transforming spaces and identities: the contributions of professional staff to learning spaces in higher education', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, vol. 34, no. 4, pp. 437–452.

This paper explores the work of professional staff, focusing on the contributions that such staff make to the design, development and maintenance of learning spaces, both physical and virtual. Following the Delphi study, a case study was undertaken using semi-structured interviews with a range of professional staff. Emerging from this case study was a conceptualisation of the work of professional staff in relation to student outcomes, from the perspectives of professional staff themselves.

Graham, C. 2013a, 'Changing technologies, changing identities: A case study of professional staff and their contributions to learning and teaching', *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, in press.

Drawing on findings from the case study, this paper discusses the changing roles of professional staff in Australian universities, in the context of changing technology for learning and teaching. Using four illustrative case profiles, this paper argues that changes in the work of professional staff are associated with new forms of professional identities. Using the framework of *bounded, cross-boundary,*

unbounded and *blended* professionals (Whitchurch 2008a, 2009), this paper contends that even staff who would traditionally be considered bounded are moving towards the *third space* (Whitchurch 2008b), extending the framework to more junior roles.

Graham, C. in press, 'Professional staff contributions to positive student outcomes: a case study', *Australian Universities' Review*.

Using the findings of the case study, this paper describes and analyses the work of professional staff in relation to student outcomes, focusing on 'behaviours, environments and processes [that] are welcoming and efficient' (Prebble, et al. 2004, pp. 56–58). This paper concludes with three proposals to improve outcomes for students, and to improve the working lives of both professional and academic staff.

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to develop an improved understanding of the work of professional staff in Australian universities. Over the last two decades, external pressures on universities have increased significantly, such that there is even greater need to understand the work of all staff in our universities, and to make the most of their talents. Professional staff comprise more than 50% of staff in Australian universities. Yet little research has been undertaken into the work of professional staff, particularly in relation to teaching and learning. This doctoral research project was undertaken at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS), in 2009–2012, with the aim of investigating how professional staff contribute to student outcomes, from the perspectives of the staff themselves.

Three key conceptualisations emerged from this research project:

1. the *Professional Staff–Student Outcomes (PSSO) Framework*, which defines a new method and framework for the study of the work of professional staff in relation to student outcomes;
2. *pedagogical partnerships*, providing a novel conceptualisation of the ways in which professional staff contribute to student outcomes; and
3. *professionalisation*, with a key theme of *changing professional identities,* conceptualising the growing professionalisation of professional staff.

Professional Staff–Student Outcomes (PSSO) Framework

Using as a basis 13 propositions for student support that had been derived in an earlier meta-study, the *Schmidt Delphi* method was modified to test the validity of these propositions in relation to the contributions of professional staff to student outcomes. Moderate agreement resulted, and further verification was achieved through member checking of results. Replication of my methodology is currently underway in the United Kingdom, where preliminary results confirm my results.

Pedagogical partnerships

It was found that professional staff form relationships – for the achievement of positive student outcomes – with a range of different individuals and groups including other

professional staff, academic staff, students and, at times, external stakeholders. In these *pedagogical partnerships*, learning and teaching occur through activities, undertaken by professional staff in co-operation with these partners, which contribute to student retention, persistence and achievement. These activities primarily occur when professional staff are providing behaviours, environments and processes that are welcoming and efficient, as well as when providing a comprehensive range of services and facilities.

Professionalisation

The phenomenon of changing identities, which is set in the context of growing professionalisation of professional staff, emerged as both an enabler and a driver for the development of pedagogical partnerships. Professional staff who are highly qualified, have specialised knowledge, are experienced networkers, and are confident decision-makers, are both more able to form pedagogical partnerships, and are more likely to initiate such partnerships.

In conclusion, a proposal is made for a *Roles Matrix* and a *single pay spine* system for mapping and equitably rewarding the work of *all* university staff. Together, the Roles Matrix and the single pay spine would facilitate flexible career paths and would permit equal pay for equal value of work. This study indicates that the work of *all* staff is essential to students achieving their learning outcomes, and that all staff need to work together, supportively, valuing the work of their colleagues.

Doctoral meta-statement

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Artefact 1　　Graham (2010)

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This paper has been accepted for publication in *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 2013, copyright Taylor & Francis, available online at: http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13603108.2012.716376.[3]

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Artefact 5   Graham (in press)

Graham, C. in press, 'Professional staff contributions to positive student outcomes: a case study', *Australian Universities' Review*.

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