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8. AUSTRALIAN-BASED RESEARCH IN HIGHER EDUCATION STUDIES

INTRODUCTION: AUSTRALIA

Australia is a nation of 23.1 million people (ABS, 2013a) occupying the whole of an island continent at the west end of the Pacific Ocean in the Southern Hemisphere. It is a British settler-state based on the forcible appropriation of the land of the indigenous inhabitants, akin in that respect to Canada (the nation it resembles most closely) and the United States. Like the North American countries it is a federation based on the unification of originally separated colonial enclaves. Australia achieved national independence in 1901, though it retains the British monarch as the nominal head of state.

Australia is positioned geographically on the opposite side of the world to the United Kingdom and Europe, conferring both the disadvantages of isolation and the advantages of independence. Australia continues to be patterned by British norms in government, and policy, business, the professions, higher education and science. Nevertheless, Australia is increasingly influenced by its location close to Southeast and East Asia, which has become a region of exceptional economic dynamism. The majority of Australia's trade is with China, Korea, Japan and Taiwan and Singapore; and Asian migration has a growing demographic impact. The UK and Ireland used to be the largest provider of new migrants. India and China now occupy the first two places. The 2011 census found the Asian-born share of the population was at 10 per cent (ABS, 2013b).

In Australia population is small relative to the landmass of 7.7 million square kilometres and is concentrated in a handful of coastal cities. This has implications for the higher education system. First, the bulk of the country's larger and more research-active institutions are in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Second, given the geographic spread, there is some higher education in the larger provincial cities, though no provincial institution is a front rank player in research. Third, issues of distance education are significant, though not as important as might be expected because of the population concentrations on the coasts. Fourth, students tend to be mobile within their cities of birth rather than between them. There is not a national market in the sense of the United States. However, academic faculty and researchers are mobile on the national scale.

Australian higher education was patterned along English and Scottish lines and the sectors in UK and Australia continue to resemble each other closely, from the Treasury-driven polity and the broad policy frameworks in higher education, to cultures of academic work, faculty promotion and the doctorate. In 2011 there were

1.2 million students in higher education, in institutions offering degree programs of at least three years in duration (DIICCSRTE, 2013), and a larger number in sub-degree programs in Vocational Education and Training (VET). More than 90 per cent of all higher education students were enrolled in public institutions constituted by individual Acts of Parliament. The 36 public universities on the federal government's schedule, plus three private universities that are partly regulated and funded by government, dominate the forms of higher education. All of these institutions offer programs at doctoral level and nearly all offer a comprehensive suite of professional degrees. Between institutions there is substantial variation in research intensity. On average the institutions on the principal schedule receive just over 40 per cent of all income from government sources, with almost 40 per cent constituted by all forms of fees and charges. Public expenditure on all tertiary education in 2010 as a proportion of GDP was 0.8 per cent, well below the OECD average of 1.1 per cent. Private expenditure is relatively high at 0.9 per cent (OECD, 2013, p. 193). Tuition is relatively high but supported by a system of tuition loans based on income contingent repayments. This eliminates most price-based disincentives to enrol.

Participation in tertiary education in Australia is relatively high, and more than one third of 25-34 year olds hold degree level qualifications. As in many OECD countries there is much policy emphasis on social inclusion and boosting the participation of students from poorer families. About 15 per cent of the higher education enrolment is comprised by students from the bottom quartile in socio-economic status terms. Official policy is to lift this share from 15 to 20 per cent by the year 2020 but progress has been slow (James, Karmel, & Bexley, 2013). As elsewhere, it has proven easier to expand the size of the system than to redistribute its benefits across the population. Participation is weaker than average for rural and remote students, and indigenous people enroll at about half the rate suggested by their share of the Australian population. Distance education only partly bridges the gap for remote communities. Much official and institutional effort has gone into strengthening indigenous education but so far no clear strategies have been devised that hybridize traditional culture, authority and identity with the modern higher education system. Indigenous families are especially under-represented in STEM and in the more prestigious professions such as Medicine. Women comprise 56 per cent of first degree students and almost half the doctoral students but remain dramatically under-represented in engineering and technologies at about 15 per cent (DIICCSRTE, 2013).

On the other hand, first and second generation migrant families – particularly those originating from China and Vietnam – are sharply over-represented in university education relative to their share of the Australian population, and the enrolment of cross-border international students is very high. Building international education has been a priority of government for 25 years and it has become a vital source of revenue. A large proportion of international students, perhaps a third, become permanent residents after graduation and constitute much of the skilled migration intake. The OECD's *Education at a Glance 2013* notes that in 2011, 20.8 per cent of students enrolled in Australia in degree granting

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institutions had crossed the national border for education. This was the highest proportion of any OECD nation, though UK was not far behind at 18.3 per cent (OECD, 2013, 317). Four fifths of Australia's international students are from Asia, with the largest source countries being China, India, Malaysia and Vietnam. Apart from some scholarships for doctoral students international education is run on a commercial basis, and in 2011 generated 17.5 per cent of the revenue of higher education institutions (DIICCSRTE, 2013). International education at all levels is Australia's fourth largest export industry after coal, iron ore and wool, ahead of tourism and all agricultural sectors. International students in higher education tend to be concentrated in first degree and Masters programs in business and technologies.

On the global scale research activity in Australia is stronger in breadth of activity than in depth. In 2012 there were 19 Australian institutions in the Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities top 500 universities, a good result for a nation of Australia's size. In its spread of capacity the Australian system resembles Canada and the Netherlands. However, the highest placed Australian institution in ARWU in 2012 was the University of Melbourne at 57, whereas Australia's closest comparator Canada had two universities in the world top 40. There were four Australian institutions in the top 100 (ARWU, 2013). In a Thomson-ISI summary of aggregate citations for the 2001-2011 period – this covers research papers produced in government research laboratories and the corporate sector as well as universities – Australia ranked 10th nation in the world on volume of citations but 17th on average citations per paper. The rate of citation was above the European average in five disciplinary areas – Veterinary Science, Energy, Engineering, Earth and Planetary Science and Medicine. In most fields of research the citation rate was between the European average and the world average. In contrast, in the UK all fields of research were above European average (OCS, 2013). While Australia's per capita income is on par with the UK and most of Western Europe its citation rates in science have lagged behind.

THE FIELD OF RESEARCH IN HIGHER EDUCATION STUDIES

As in other countries, scholarship and research in higher education studies is applied in character, draws on a range of social science disciplines, and is closely shaped by official policy agendas and the information and business needs of individual universities, so that academic research and publishing in higher education shades into institutional research and consultancy conducted partly outside the public domain. Higher education studies is a relatively small zone in universities. There is only one developed academic unit devoted to the field, the University of Melbourne's Centre for the Study of Higher Education, founded in 1968, with about thirty doctoral students. Some doctoral students in other disciplines such as political science and policy studies, educational psychology, sociology, history and economics pursue topics related to higher education; and several university education schools have one or two scholars focused on higher

education. Academic development units attached to the universities pursue some research, mostly in relation to teaching, learning, assessment and management.

Much of research in higher education – defining ‘research’ in the broadest sense – is located outside the strictly academic domain. National educational organizations pursue research and publishing that is advocacy related, and there is some research work inside government, but most of this work does not lead to academic monographs and journal articles. The number of monographs published within Australia or by international publishers, and focused on higher education, is very small. However, two of the world journals in higher education studies were developed by national education organizations in Australia: *Higher Education Research and Development*, and *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*. Another organization publishes *Australian Universities Review*. Further, Australian scholars have a strong aggregate presence in the journal literature, relative to the size of the country, and a small number of scholars are very active at global level. Australia has supplied three of the recent and current editors-in-chief of *Higher Education* and *Studies in Higher Education*.

The chapter now examines, in order, research in the national organizations that cover higher education (including government), the work of academic development units, and the University of Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education. It then looks at recent patterns of publishing and scholarship in the field, and reflects on the preoccupations of Australian scholars; and the relation between research contents, and the Australian system and context.

Informal research in national education organizations

Australian higher education is serviced by organizations that foster and pursue the collective interests of all universities *qua* institutions, of differing groups of universities, of university faculty and other employees, and of students and others. As noted most research by these organizations does not enter the public domain. Nevertheless the volume of discussion papers, survey reports, briefing papers and data analyses is large, much larger than the volume of academic publishing, even without considering web-alone data. Though it does not generate codified knowledge of the academic kind this informal research informs practices in the sector. In addition a large number of sector conferences are held, entailing conference papers. Sometimes these become academic journal articles.

The members of Universities Australia are the 39 universities on the government’s schedule. These universities are represented by their Chief Executive Officer, designated the Vice-Chancellor (and often also President). Universities Australia undertakes research and fulfils a policy and advocacy function on behalf of members. For example it conducts policy and advocacy regarding: research, including research students, postgraduate scholarships, research quality assessment, Australia’s intellectual property system, international research engagement, commercialisation, and the future academic workforce. It also conducts surveys into public attitudes to universities and university funding. The

findings of most such research are available on the public record, being normally accessed via the Universities Australia (2013) website.

Alongside and additional to Universities Australia – and sometimes competing with it – are the bodies that cover particular groupings of universities that consider themselves to have common interests. The most important of these, and the sponsor of the largest volume of policy-related research, is known as the Go8 (Group of Eight), which represents the eight leading research-intensive universities. The mission of the Go8 secretariat includes ‘influencing national policies for higher education and university research,’ and ‘providing high quality policy analysis and advice services to its members and their staff.’ It also prepares discussion papers, and factual data about Australia’s research universities, mostly summaries and interpretations of statistics prepared and issued by federal government departments and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (Go8, 2013). The Australian Technology Network (ATN, 2013) represents five designated universities of technology. Its research is largely limited to its advocacy function, producing less of broad policy interest. Likewise the Innovative Research University group, representing seven research-focused institutions younger than the Go8, concentrates on advocacy-related research and data (IRU, 2013); as does the Regional Universities Network (2013), representing seven institutions outside the main cities. The chief executive officers of the Go8 and the IRU universities are active in the higher education studies literature, as are some university leaders, one of whom has co-authored two books on higher education policy in Australia (Coaldrake & Stedman, 2013). That same university vice-chancellor was also the 2013 President of the OECD’s Institutional Management in Higher Education (IMHE) program.

In mid-2013 the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU, 2013) represented 25,000 members in all universities on the public schedule as well as a number of small private higher education institutions. The NTEU undertakes research and policy analysis focused on the higher education sector, and related aspects of public policy impacting on the working conditions of its members. This includes research regarding work and careers, academic and intellectual freedom, casual faculty, research regulation, gender pay equity, workload and occupational stress, and intellectual property. Essentially research is undertaken to inform campaigns and union-activity. Much of it is published openly. However, it rarely enters the global academic literature. The NTEU’s main contribution to academic scholarship is the publication twice a year of the journal *Australian Universities Review*, which carries refereed articles. This journal began in 1958.

The Association for Tertiary Education Managers (ATEM, 2013), which in mid-2013 had 1,350 individual members, encourages institutional research and research skills development among members. It provides awards and grants, including some that support research. It is also the nominal auspicing publisher six times a year of the *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, a refereed journal which operates independently of the ATEM and is oriented to research and scholarship in higher education studies. ATEM also issues occasional research-based working papers; and the website publishes members’ research that meets the criteria for

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inclusion. These cover a mix of academic and institutional research: doctoral work by members, the outcomes of administrative projects, policy-related studies, and reviews.

Government

Between the early 1960s and the late 1990s the federal government was the most important single sponsor of research on higher education. Its own officers, working in departments and specialist education commissions, prepared analyses of issues and problems in higher education, many of which were published. On a larger scale, it sponsored research by faculty in universities and consultants outside the higher education sector. Much additional research-based discussion was triggered by the periodic commissions and boards of inquiry and review that punctuated policy development in Australia. While little of this work became part of the global literature in higher education studies, within the country it fostered a sophisticated policy research culture with an applied focus.

In the last 15 years there has been a substantial shift in the federal government's relationship to research on higher education. Work conducted by its own officials is now rarely made public, and little is sponsored compared to the patterns of the preceding forty years. Government discussion papers tend to be marketing oriented, or focused on regulation, rather than providing evidence-based discussion of issues of public policy choice as previously. The main research function carried out by government and specific to higher education is the compilation and publication of high quality statistical series covering students, employed academic and professional staff, financial expenditures and research activities (DIICCSRTE, 2013). However, specific units of government provide research-based data, information summaries and occasional discussion papers in designated areas. For example, regular data provided by Australian Education International contributes to commercial development, university planning and policy debate on international education (AEI, 2013).

Academic development units in universities

Nearly all of Australia's 39 universities support academic development units. These are primarily focused on teaching, learning and assessment, including educational technologies. Some also engage with management and university organization. Many, especially in smaller universities, provide faculty with one-to-one counseling on teaching matters. While the largest number of such units operate on a central basis and focus on generic definitions of academic work, in some larger universities there are units also at the discipline of Faculty/School level, some of which combine academic development with study skill building among students. As apparent in the literature there are some tensions between generic approaches to teaching and learning, and discipline-based approaches.

Academic development units typically provide short- and long-course staff development, and assistance and advice tailored to the needs of particular

disciplines and university service units. Some focus on graduate employment and related issues, but in other universities this area is handled by a specialist unit separate from the academic development function. While the main focus of academic development units is to the institution, especially the servicing of the university executive and disciplinary units, some academic developers work on policy-related issues and consultancy; some conduct research; and some contribute to the journal literature, mostly in relation to teaching and learning.

All of these academic units produce informal research and conduct action research projects that do not lead to journal articles or book chapters. At the same time, unlike the national education organizations discussed above, most such units have active incentives to produce academic publications. Many academic development staff hold designated academic posts. Publications assist the profile of their units, the publication volume of their institutions, and their own prospects of academic promotion. A minority of these academic staff pursue long term research programs and compete successfully for project grants. The federal government maintains an Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL) that supports applied research in areas like online learning and internationalization.

Academic developers are organized on a voluntary national basis in the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA, 2013). According to its website HERDSA 'is a scholarly society for people committed to the advancement of higher and tertiary education. It promotes the development of higher education policy, practice and the study of teaching and learning.' The HERDSA annual conference platforms much research-based work. The Society publishes *Higher Education Research and Development*, which is the highest cited of the three Australian-origin journals in higher education studies.

The Centre for the Study of Higher Education and others

There have been a number of individual academic scholars of higher education who have been regularly productive in the global literature, though unsupported by centres/units or colleagues in the field. Such individuals have been located in academic development units, the offices of Deputy Vice-Chancellors responsible for teaching and learning, or in general faculties/schools of education, at universities including Sydney, Queensland, Western Australia, Monash, Griffith, Western Sydney and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. From time to time there is also significant work on higher education by scholars in other disciplines. One is economist Ross Williams at the University of Melbourne, the designer of the U21 ranking of higher education systems (U21, 2013).

There have been larger concentrations of academic expertise only in two places – the University of New England (UNE) and the University of Melbourne.

For two decades the University of New England housed Grant Harman, the long-standing editor-in-chief of *Higher Education* who died earlier in 2013, Kay Harman and Lyn Meek. Meek became co-editor of *Studies in Higher Education* in 2012. While at UNE this group and their research associates and doctoral students contributed to scholarship in higher education studies in many areas. They were

prolific in the literature on policy and regulation, the academic profession, research and commercialization, quality assurance, and comparative studies in Asia and Europe. Grant Harman and Meek together provided the base research that underpinned the federal government's development of Australia's first national system of quality assurance in 1999. However, after Grant Harman's retirement and Meek's departure, activity at the UNE wound down.

This left the University of Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE) – always much larger than the UNE group – as the sole academic unit in Australia with a leading role in each of global scholarship in higher education, national policy-related consultancy, and public discussion of higher education matters. The CSHE combines these functions with academic development activities within the university; a strong presence in national conversations about teaching, learning and the student experience; advice and servicing for university executive and committees; and doctoral training. In mid-2013 the CSHE housed four academic faculty in continuing positions, and six more in contract-based positions and supported largely by project funding, in addition to professional staff and a large complement of doctoral students.

The CSHE was founded in 1968 as an academic and university development centre. Its website notes that 'the CSHE is one of the few centres world-wide that sustains a blend of higher education research at systems level with effective service to its host institution.' Among Australian universities it has the major policy research role in areas such as participation and social equity, student financing, the student experience, the academic profession, postgraduate training, globalization and international education. There is significant work also on international education. The CSHE's work is largely in the applied tradition of higher education studies and the volume of its consultancy work, largely for government, exceeds the work published in monographs and journals.

The CSHE conducts some fundamental research in areas such as markets and competition in education, global mobility, university rankings, national and global public goods in higher education, and higher education in Asia. This is primarily carried out by Simon Marginson. In 2012, Marginson was appointed as one of the two Editors-in-Chief of *Higher Education*, with Jussi Välimaa from Finland. Marginson is one of the world's leading scholars in the field, if citations are a measure. Richard James, CSHE director from 2006-2012, is recognized as the nation's leading expert on social equity in higher education, and is also a leading authority on the regulation of academic standards. Present Director Sophie Arkoudis is an expert on English language standards in higher education.

While the CSHE is well networked in Europe and its faculty regularly attend the main conferences on higher education in the UK and USA, its orientation to Asia has increased sharply in recent years, paralleling a more general shift of orientation by Australian higher education. It has developed especially close links with higher education research in Japan. It has an annual research seminar with the Research Institute for Higher Education at Hiroshima University and works with centres at Nagoya University and Tohoku University. CSHE faculty are a frequent presence in Asian regional conferences. Active relations have developed with scholars in the

field of higher education studies in China, Korea, Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore as well as Japan. CSHE is also affiliated with the Pullias Center for Higher Education at the University of Southern California.

The CSHE conducts by far the largest Australian doctoral training program in higher education studies, with 30 students enrolled in mid-2013. Half of these students were from East and Southeast Asia, including a large group from Vietnam. The student projects covered such areas as international and comparative education and aspects of globalization, cross-cultural learning, English language teaching, educational technologies, university management and organization, quality assurance, and institutional benchmarking (CSHE, 2013).

The LH Martin Institute for Tertiary Education Leadership and Management (LH Martin, 2013), located alongside the CSHE at the University of Melbourne, specializes in short and long programs of management training. It is partly financed by the federal government. Its Director Leo Goedegebuure has a long track record of scholarship on higher education, and it has a small number of doctoral students, but it is primarily a training centre, not a research centre. The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER, 2013), which is by far the largest research organization in Australia that is focused on education, conducts projects for government and international organizations. The ACER's expertise is largely in psychology-based approaches and it has a strong role in assessment and the design and management of large scale testing, including the OECD's PISA program. It has an active higher education consultancy led by Hamish Coates.

AUSTRALIA SCHOLARSHIP IN THE FIELD: TWO JOURNALS

One way to trace the role of Australian-based scholarship in the field is to survey it in the principal journals. Here two journals are examined: *Higher Education*, and *Studies in Higher Education*, over the ten-year period 2003-2012 inclusive. Arguably, these are the two leading journals in the field outside the United States, and more inclusive of world scholarship than are the American journals.

In *Higher Education*, 720 articles were published between 2003 and 2012. Australian institutions contributed 111, or 15.4 per cent of these articles—a very strong result for a nation of Australia's size. In *Studies in Higher Education*, 459 articles were published in the time period, with Australian institutions contributing a still higher proportion: 99, or 21.6 per cent of all articles. Annual numbers of articles from Australia fluctuated between 5 and 18 in *Higher Education*, and 3 and 17 in *Studies*. Table 1 summarizes the relative contribution of articles by authors working in Australian institutions. Of the papers by authors working in Australian institutions, 16.2 per cent of those in *Higher Education* and 10.1 per cent of those in *Studies in Higher Education* involved collaboration with at least one author designated as working from another country. These figures indicate that scholars in Australian institutions make a contribution to these journals much larger than would be expected on the basis of system size – even allowing for the fact that Australia is an English-speaking country and thus enjoys some advantages in academic publishing, this does not explain the strength of the performance of

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Australian-based scholars – but Australian rates of international collaboration are lower than for scholars from Europe. This latter is partly a function of Australia’s geographic isolation and the absence of a regional context of the kind found in Europe or Latin America.

Table 1. Contributions by Australian-based scholars to Higher Education and Studies in Higher Education, 2003-2012

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2003-2012
HIGHER EDUCATION											
Australian articles*	5	8	6	11	13	14	18	10	11	15	111
All articles	45	48	49	53	81	84	91	83	90	96	720
Australian as % of total	11.1	16.7	12.2	20.7	16.0	16.7	19.8	12.0	12.2	15.6	15.4
STUDIES IN HIGHER ED.											
Australian articles*	7	12	5	3	11	8	11	12	17	13	99
All articles	26	38	40	41	40	44	58	56	56	60	459
Australian as % of total	26.9	31.6	12.5	7.3	27.5	18.2	19.0	21.4	30.4	21.7	21.6

* Articles generated from Australian institutions irrespective of the nationality of the author

Balance of themes

[Table 2](#) considers the broad contents of the Australian-origin papers in the two journals under consideration.

A large group of articles in both journals were primarily focused on teaching and learning – 32.4 per cent of those from Australian institutions that were published in *Higher Education*, and 30.3 per cent of those in *Studies in Higher Education*. This reflects the strength of academic development units within higher education studies in Australia, as well as the centrality of this broad topic area to research in higher education studies as a whole. When it is remembered that Australian contributors are also responsible for much of the content of *Higher Education Research and Development* it is apparent that teaching, learning and assessment are the main strands of research on higher education in Australia. However, it is difficult to identify any really major Australian-based contributions to the field of knowledge in the period under review, on teaching, learning and assessment, as indicated for example by citation levels. Many perhaps most published Australian studies in the sub-field are small and localized and have been derived from practical research tasks at institutional level. The result is a reflexive

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culture of teaching and learning, widely shared, but one that makes a limited contribution to seminal thinking at global level.

Table 2. Principal contents of articles by Australian-based scholars published in Higher Education and Studies in Higher Education, 2003-2012

Principal contents	Number of Australian* articles in <i>Higher Education</i>	Proportion of all Australian* articles in <i>Higher Education</i>	Number of Australian* articles in <i>Studies in Higher Education</i>	Proportion of all Australian* articles in <i>Studies in Higher Education</i>
		%		%
Globalization, international education, comparative education	21	18.9	2	2.0
Higher education policy, funding and regulation in Australia	6	5.4	1	1.0
Quality assurance and standards	1	0.9	5	1.0
Research, research training, innovation, commercialization	8	7.2	37	37.4
Institutional leadership, management and governance	2	1.8	4	4.0
Teaching, learning and assessment	36	32.4	30	30.3
Academic faculty	18	16.2	7	7.1
Student services, experience, engagement and satisfaction	12	10.8	9	9.1
Business activities and organization of institutions	1	0.9	1	1.0
Indigenous higher education	1	0.9	1	1.0
All other topics	5	4.5	2	2.0
Total, all topic areas	111	100.0	99	100.0

*Australian = at least one author based in an Australian higher education institution

Another large group of articles – 10.8 per cent of those in *Higher Education*, 7.4 per cent of all articles from Australian institutions in *Studies in Higher Education* – were primarily about aspects of research, including performance evaluation, research training, innovation policies and commercialization. This reflects the growing emphasis in Australia, as elsewhere, on research performance, the innovation (knowledge) economy, and the role of research in university rankings. Also, recent Australian policy has focused more than previously on improving quality in research training (Palmer, 2013) and there has been focus likewise in institutions. Again, though it is difficult to identify, there are no really major Australian contributions to our thinking about research.

In *Higher Education*, other important areas included globalization, international education and international students, and comparative education (18.9 per cent of Australian-based papers). In terms of quality, this cluster of research is perhaps the strongest Australian sub-field, perhaps reflecting the need for isolated Australians to reach out to connect, coupled with the multiple character of their connections. As noted, history drives them to connect to UK, USA and Europe while geography positions them on the edge of Asia. A number of scholars have made significant contributions to comparative education, including Tony Welch, Phil Jones, Ravinder Sidhu, Martin Hayden, Harman, Meek, Marginson and others. Some Marginson articles and chapters on globalization attract strong world attention, particularly a 2006 paper on national and global competition in higher education, his 2002 argument with Gary Rhoades about the ‘glonacal’ (global/national/local) character of higher education, and later work for the OECD; and Fazal Rizvi, Bob Lingard, Jane Kenway and others have also made prominent contributions to the world discussion about higher education and globalization. A number of scholars have contributed to broadly cited research on international education, including Marginson, Welch, Rizvi, Chris Ziguras, Simone Volet, and others. Australia’s large international education sector generates a significant flow of research, some marketing related, and some designated in [Table 2](#) as teaching and learning-related, and some falling within the category of critical social science and policy studies.

In addition, in *Higher Education* there is some work on academic faculty (16.2 per cent), student services, experience, engagement and satisfaction (10.8) and Australian policy, regulation and funding (5.4 per cent). It may be surprising that there is not more work on Australian policy and related areas, given the attention in the 1990s literature to reforms in higher education in Australia.

In *Studies in Higher Education*, other important topic areas were student services, experience, engagement and satisfaction (9.1 per cent) and academic faculty (7.1 per cent). Work on globalization, international education and international students, and comparative education played a relatively minor role in *Higher Education Studies*. This may reflect the preoccupations of that journal’s editors, but it is also a function of the availability of alternate outlets for research in the broad topic area, including the journals *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *Comparative Education*, *Comparative Education Review*, and *Compare*.

CONCLUSIONS

Higher education studies in Australia is dominated by applied research, shading into institutional research and a large volume of other activities that draw on research techniques but do not generate lasting contributions to the academic literature. The informal and action research agendas are much larger than the scholarly agendas. The number of active academic research scholars is relatively small compared to the number of institutional researchers and of academic developers who use action research methods, and compared to the large bulk of advocacy-related research and policy analyses produced by the organizations representing institutions and academic and professional staff.

Of the academic research bases only the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Melbourne has achieved a level of research concentration akin to that of the large centres in the field worldwide in Netherlands, Japan and the United States. As with other academic development units, the bulk of even that Centre's work is localized and service related; and much of its consultancy work for government does not lead to published academic monographs and articles. The CSHE is distinctive, however, in that alongside the conventional applied research and consultancy activities, it maintains a basic research program and vigorous publishing by a small group of faculty, is active globally, and houses a large cohort of doctoral students.

Government no longer commissions published research at scale or sponsors large numbers of projects leading to published research, as it did in the period 1960-2000. In aggregate less is published on Australian higher education than during those years. However little of that previous work found its way into the academic literature and the volume of academic writing, in the form of journal articles and monographs, may have expanded since then, particularly in relation to teaching, learning and assessment. Academic faculty have stronger performance incentives to publish now than at any previous period; that is one reason for the large volume of relatively localized studies of teaching and learning.

The lists of articles from *Higher Education* and *Higher Education Studies* are also notable for what is not there, or is underplayed. In the period under review, in these two journals there was relatively little published on online and distance education, which one might expect to be a strong theme in Australia given the geographic spread. However, there are specialist journals working in that topic area. It is disappointing to see that there were only two articles on indigenous higher education, one in each journal. More generally, there was relatively little work on access, participation and related issues of social equity, themes of long-standing importance in policy and institutional provision in Australia, that received renewed government attention in 2009 and after. (Some such work is included in [Table 2](#) under the student experience.)

The relative weakness of work that reflects Australia's particular circumstances of geography and history, as outlined in the opening of this chapter – with the exception perhaps of research on international education and the growing interest in Australia/Asia interaction – is intriguing. It suggests that Australian work tends

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to fall between schools: either localized work that is often free of national context, and work in the world literature that tilts towards universality rather than reflecting a nuanced Australian location. Arguably, on its own, neither kind of work enables sufficient effective purchase on the national context. Nevertheless the globalized work can contribute to the field more broadly; and a small number of productive individuals have disproportionate impacts on the world stage and occupy positions of scholarly leadership.

Perhaps this failure to explore the middle ground, in which work is both nationally and locally sensitive *and* connects to the global conversation, reflects a lacuna in Australian identity. Though the point has yet to be investigated in detail, it is likely that there are close parallels between research on higher education in Australia and the corresponding body of work in the UK. Certainly, many leading researchers move seamlessly between the two jurisdictions, such as Paul Ramsden and David Boud. It may be that knowledge creation in higher education studies (as in many other research fields) in Australia still bears close relations with the colonial origins of the settler state. The neglect of indigenous higher education, a savage outcome of the colonial legacy, emphasizes the point. One senses that the field definition of Australian work in higher education studies is an unfinished project. It is likely that in the coming decades Australian work in this field, like many others, will be reshaped in the encounter with East Asia.

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