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Design thinking frameworks as transformative cross-disciplinary pedagogy: Final Report

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Research Statement

Research Background

This report, on an Office of Learning and Teaching seed project, aimed to examine the way design thinking strategies are embedded across various higher education discipline areas, to scaffold the development of generic graduate attributes in problem solving and creativity, in order to enhance the nation's capacity for innovation.

Research Contribution

A critical literature review was used as a lens to interpret feedback from over 300 academics attending events in Brisbane, Darwin, Melbourne, Perth and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, providing clarification on the definition of design thinking and rationale for the diversity of approaches used to scaffold the process. 8 case studies from 4 Australian universities, present initial empirical evidence and transferable strategies for innovative practice in various subject areas and wider curriculum development, to support the application of design thinking frameworks for enhanced student learning in higher education, as recommended in the National Cultural Policy (2012). The report recommended further work to improve awareness and address misconceptions about design thinking, and the creation of a 'Higher Education Design Thinking Toolkit' to document categories of strategies and case studies to illustrate their contextualised implementation.

Research Significance

This report contributes to the OLT 'Innovation and Development' research priority of 'Curriculum Renewal and Teaching Approaches', promoting cross-, inter-, or trans-disciplinary programs and pedagogies. Although the project started as a single institution grant, a multidisciplinary, multi-institutional team of 4 national universities was formed, and an EOI to expand the pilot into a larger study was endorsed by the OLT in Feb 2014 (but grant application not funded). Anderson was invited to speak on the report to Australian Council of Deans (ICT) Forum at UTS in May, 2014. A series of 7 publications were generated, as noted on the project website.

