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I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation, and pay my respects to Elders past and present.

Invigorating [directing] pedagogies.

A presentation by Dr Shane Pike
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Queensland University of Technology
School of Creative Practice

AusAct 2024
Invigorating Acting Pedagogies
Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts
Edith Cowan University, Mt Lawley, Perth

Actors, it's not always about you (but it
is...)

Essai

**Moving in a different direction
(directing down under): the evolution
of director training into studies of
'creative leadership' in an Australian
context**

Theatre, Dance and Performance Training, 2023

Vol. 14, No. 3, 320–325, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19443927.2023.2243181>

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group

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- Limited options for students of directing to specialise through higher education in Australia
 - Masters/PhD by research (the research problem)
 - On the job training
 - A director is as a director does
 - Just say the words and don't trip over the furniture (Noël Coward?)

Take a gander: the place of directing in one example of corporatised education

At the Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane, Australia, the directing unit traditionally delivered as part of the Bachelor of Fine Arts (Drama) and Bachelor of Fine Arts (Acting) degrees has been reimagined and retitled 'Leadership in Creative Contexts: Directing Creativity'. The unit has been opened up to students across the university, able to be

studied by anyone enrolled in any course as an elective unit and no longer limited to the study plans of BFA (Drama) or BFA (Acting) cohorts. The unit now follows a modulated learning design, with each learning area segmented into specific themes/topics that have been identified as core directorial skills. These are skills that can be transferred across disciplines and professions, particularly outside of the performing arts. The modules covered within the broader unit are: theory and practice related to leadership and leadership styles, creative and critical thinking skills, concept development and communicating ideas, project management, and entrepreneurship including pitching and artist as small business. Each of these 'modules' is covered through blended learning approaches to reach both on-campus and online cohorts (for which read: markets) of students.



Invigorating, isn't it?

- Student numbers increase
 - But what about the directors?
 - Time (36 hrs contact)
 - Scale – how many, who now?
 - Exquisite pressure...
 - More importantly, what about the actors?!
 - Most importantly, what about the industry?
-

No worries: a conclusion

It seems, within an educational context driven by commercial imperatives, there are limited opportunities to provide meaningful contributions to advanced skills development in the field of directing, particularly in an increasingly generalised undergraduate learning environment. While the

field of directing has much to offer a diverse range of disciplines and industries, there is cause to consider how the field itself may be better maintained, developed, and supported. This is particularly relevant in an Australian context, where there is an absence of specialised, formal avenues of advanced education focused on mastering the practice itself.

It is uncertain whether offering, for example, US-style postgraduate MFA directing programmes, focused on skills and practice and not exclusively research-oriented, would find appeal or relevance in Australia. While there are many aspects of contemporary Australian culture influenced by and inherited from this powerful imperial nation, every region operates within its own unique set of circumstances. Differences in population sizes, comparably scarce professional opportunities for graduate employment, and a waning yet persistent colonial mindset that training internationally is somehow more valued than learning from your own, are just a few examples of how the Australian context may differ in its ability to support inherited models of higher levels of training for directors. Indeed, it is reasonable to consider that if there were a market for this kind of postgraduate study then it would already have established itself in the local ecology. As universities now demand a business case based on market forces (Christopher, Ukwatte, and Yapa 2020), institutions of higher learning would likely have seized the opportunity were it ripe for the picking. Yet it does seem unhelpful to the directing profession and discipline to only offer research-aligned postgraduate modes of study.





The director at work: