

ARE WE EXEMPLARS FOR THE PROPERTY PROFESSION?

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the present and future roles of the property scholar. It proposes that the property scholar, either in academia or in industry, should be an exemplar for the property profession. Using the think-learn-act framework, the paper considers the role of the exemplar and highlights the rethinking of brain functionality, the findings on blended learning and student engagement as challenging activities of the exemplar. There is an illustration of a property learning case on investment valuation within a blended learning environment.

The paper looks at the future role of the exemplar and includes proposals on the scholarly challenge, virtual learning environments, academic collaboration, market-based research and meaningful industry interaction. The paper concludes with an emphasis on enhanced communication and collaboration. This paper is an edited version of the keynote address presented at the 2010 PRRES conference in Wellington, New Zealand.

Keywords: Property studies, blended learning, scholar, brain plasticity, e-portfolios, authentic learning environments, engagement, collaboration

INTRODUCTION

Property (Real Estate) Studies at tertiary education level is a fascinating field because it examines our greatest national asset “**Land**” and researches the resources and development of land. It is a vast scholarly field that, as mentioned by Pyhr et al (1989), has four dimensions – being the three spatial dimensions and time. Time is highly relevant because human impact on land has been evolving and property has economic, social and environmental values that change over time.

This paper focuses on the role of the scholar in the property discipline field, and, may I emphasise at this stage, that the scholar may be either in property practice, an academic or a hybrid. Clearly the importance of land to human wellbeing makes the

scholarly examination of this interaction a significant and challenging field. But what is the point of the study and research findings unless it leads to positive action that benefits land? My primary contention in this paper is that the property scholar must target activities to enhance land as a resource and focus on the impact of humans on land.

Let's put it more simply. As professionals working in the property (real estate) field, we have a responsibility to manage and improve our most valuable asset and, justifiably, the public will critically examine our actions. Hence I am adamant that we (the property scholars) should be exemplars for the property profession.

As I need to justify my bold statement about exemplars, I will discuss the role and activities of the exemplar. The exemplar may be described as one who is worthy of being copied. She/he should be a holistic person whose actions are derived from the "think-learn-act" cycle. I will therefore consider below the key think, learn and act functions of the exemplar. Within this framework, I wish to emphasise three issues, being: the brain, blended learning, and looking forward.

Under the *Thinking* heading, I will include commentary on the brain. Under the *Learning* heading, I will discuss blended learning and under the *Action* heading, I will describe the property exemplar. Thereafter I will discuss the *Forward Looking Activities* of the exemplar prior to the *Conclusions*.

THINKING

As a mid-life entrant to an academic role, the two greatest rewards for me have been, firstly, time to think, reflect and learn (and being paid to do so) and the satisfaction of helping others to understand property (seeing the lights come on).

Thinking creates awareness. Hopefully our awareness extends from self to our fellow humans and property. I will propose later that all relevant property research examines the impact of humans on property, but let's start with an awareness of our mental ability and consider our amazing brain.

The brain

Current research is proposing that the brain is more complex and more changeable than previously thought. Its ability to adapt, change and grow is well beyond our previously accepted beliefs. The brain contains interconnected neurons (nerve cells) and the connections between neurons (called synaptic connections). The brain functions through these synaptic connections and has the ability to add, change the strength and remove connections. The scale of activity within the brain is phenomenal—

The human cortex alone has 30 billion neurons and is capable of making one million billion synaptic connections ... If we consider the number of possible neural circuits, we would be dealing with hyper-astronomical numbers: 10 followed by at least a million zeros. (Edelman and Tononi, 2000, p.38 – cited in Doidge, 2007)

There is also growing evidence that the brain is highly experience-dependent. Many factors impact on our brain functions. While our DNA must have a major impact on our body-brain system, Jansen (2006) emphasises that “the generic basis does not by itself explain the wide variances of a human being. Social, environmental and developmental factors also contribute to cognition and behaviour, both directly and indirectly”. (p.2)

The ‘in’ word in brain research at the moment is “Neuroplasticity” or “Brain Plasticity”. This is the study of the functioning of the brain based on the theory that thinking, learning and acting actually change both the brain’s physical structure and functional organization from top or bottom (Wikipedia, 17.05.09). It is a fascinating field as it is focused on our individual capabilities, both mentally and physically. Studies show that the brain has an ability to change and grow, provided it has the correct stimuli – it reorganises its maps. The terminology often used in relation to brain plasticity is “use it or lose it”.

Doidge (2007) records the work of numerous researchers into brain plasticity in a readable form. He refers to the work of the 2000 Nobel Prize winner – Eric Kandel: Kandel was the first to show that as we learn, our individual neurons alter their structure and strengthened the synaptic connections between them. He was also first to demonstrate that we form long-term memories, neurons change their anatomical shape and increase the number of synaptic connections they have to other neurons. (p.218)

Jensen (2006) also refers to the pioneering work of Kandel and describes how Jensen exploded the idea of fixed genes, when stating: “The subjective experiences of human consciousness, our perception of free will, behaviour and social dynamics can modulate gene expression and vice versa. The regulation of gene expression by social factors makes bodily functions, including all functions of the brain, susceptible to social influences”. (p.8)

From a scholarly perspective, Merzenich (2001) studied the impact of thinking and learning on our brain and proposed that we can change the structure of our brain and increase its capacity to learn. “The cerebral cortex is actually selectively refining its processing capacities to fit each task at hand. It doesn’t simply learn, it is always ‘learning how to learn’. (p.47)

Highlighting the growth functions of our brain, Doidge (2007) states:

We know that exercise and mental activity in animals generate and sustain more brain cells, and we have many studies confirming that humans who lead mentally active lives have better brain function . . . Physical activity is helpful not only because it creates new neurons but because the mind is based in the brain and the brain needs oxygen. Walking, cycling or cardiovascular exercise strengthens the heart and the blood vessels that supply the brain and helps people who engage in these activities feel mentally sharper – as pointed out by the Roman philosopher Seneca two thousand years ago. (p.255)

And:

Merzenich thinks our neglect of intensive learning as we age leads the systems in the brain that modulate, regulate and control plasticity to waste away. In response he has developed brain exercises to age-related cognitive decline – the common decline of memory, thinking and processing speed (p.85) . . . but . . . Such activities as reading the newspaper, practicing a profession of many years, and speaking our own language are mostly the replay of mastered skills, not learning. (p.87).

Hopefully you can see the importance of the findings on brain plasticity to learning, both your own and those who you assist in learning. We can't afford to slow down our thinking and learning with age, in fact, as scholars, we should accelerate our brain activity to remain up to date. If students are made aware of the incredible ability of their brains, there is a higher probability that they will be motivated to challenge their mental capability and see learning as an essential component of an ideal lifestyle.

We observe that some people are much more mentally active than others. I recently played Bridge against two ladies aged 100 and 95 years who played a much better game than I did. What better motivation could we have to push our brains further – there is too much evidence around us of institutionalised mediocrity and dementia (are the two possibly the same?). Take up the challenge of improving your brain by moving outside your comfort area and learning something different, such as a new language or a new aspect of the property discipline.

Self-reflection is a key part of thinking, it assists us in considering our holistic self and our professional roles. We now know that we should actively stimulate both our mind and body regardless of our age. Through our thinking and learning, we have developed as scholars and we have been given a gift (knowledge) that we are able to pass on to others, provided we keep mentally and physically active.

Let's examine learning in more detail.

LEARNING

Everyone in higher education is well aware of the current emphasis on learning and teaching practice and the universal requirements to update teaching skills and focus on

student needs. Consequently I don't wish to discuss general learning techniques, but it is our responsibility as professional educators or practitioners to provide an authentic learning environment for our students. While new terminology and concepts abound in learning and teaching environments (such as constructivism, situated, work integrated, action-based, cognitive, etc), we should always seek ways of providing an authentic learning environment for our property students. Hence I wish to examine what is appropriate for our property students and where we should go in the future.

Recall that knowledge can be gained in three ways; from scholarly pursuits, professional practice and personal experience. Conzci (2004) refers to the works of the ancient Greeks:

Aristotle distinguished between different types of knowledge. The first is that which is universal and theoretical (called propositional, or knowing "that"). The second is knowledge that is instrumental and practical (and context-bound); this has been characterised as knowing "how". His third category is knowledge that is related to practical wisdom. (p.22)

Ladyskewsky and Ryan (2006) explain knowledge sources in similar terms:

Knowledge as the first domain of competence can be represented as propositional and non-propositional knowledge. Propositional knowledge is derived from research and scholarship ... Non-propositional knowledge is divided into two categories – professional and personal. (p.62)

Conzci (2004) describing the work of Hagen on professional learning proposes that: The learning of proposition is not irrelevant but is part of the wider process of learning which becomes integrated/holistic through the exercise of judgment in the world. This is another way of saying that the development of competence is a holistic activity involving individuals and groups acting in and on the world in a cognitive-affective-somatic fashion. (p.29 and 30)

In property (real estate) studies, the non-propositional knowledge is important and should be integrated with the relevant propositional knowledge. It is essential that the learning environment be structured to relate the theory to its practical application in the property marketplace. This means that property studies require an authentic learning environment.

So what are the key elements for an authentic learning and teaching framework for property students?

I believe that the framework should place emphasis on the facts that:

- I. This is a professional field and the learning should have a sound theoretic knowledge base and incorporate acknowledged professional practice standards
- II. Student learning requires a high level of engagement
- III. Blended learning provides a better learning environment, and
- IV. The learning environment should be supported by enabling systems, practices and partnerships

These four issues are discussed below:

I. Professional Education

Property (Real Estate) Studies are founded on a broad body of knowledge, much of which was originally taken from economics or finance. The knowledge base is broad and vocationally focused. An appreciation of the theory and practice is greatly enhanced when presented in a realistic property context. This requires the delivery within an authentic learning environment, which is the notion of learning, knowledge and skills in contexts that reflect the way knowledge will be used in real life. (McLellar 1996).

Learning activities in Property Programs should be situated in a contextual environment where students are performing real-world property tasks. Macaulay (2000) explains:

Within professional/vocational education, contextually defined knowledge is that which is relevant to the 'community of practice' to which the learner is aspiring to become a member. (p.6)

Within Property Studies, there are many legal documents (titles, leases, etc.), practice manuals, feasibility studies, market studies, town planning applications, valuation reports and the like that can provide the contextual environment for all property courses. In addition, there are International Valuation Standards that highlight the key issues within valuation practice.

Situated learning refers to learning within a range of contexts or communities of practice. It can be enhanced by way of scaffolding, modeling, mentoring and coaching. Gonczi (2004, p. 33) explains: "There will be a need for professional coaches to work with students in workplace settings, professionals who with the help of the university staff can design the scaffolds and contradictions that will lead to knowledge building."

This process of learning propositional knowledge in a practical, and real, property setting is an essential component of the authentic learning environment for property programs. Later in this paper, I will illustrate an example of a contextually based model, with scaffolding and contradictions.

II. Student engagement

Traditional teacher centered approaches used “large lecture theatres, centre-staged by discipline experts, to transmit theoretical knowledge in bite-sized chunks for passive learners to receive and consume.” (Herrington and Herrington, 2006, p.2) Today, it is acknowledged this traditional approach does not encourage student engagement. In the learning context:

Engagement refers to the time, energy and resources students devote to activities designed to enhance learning at university. These activities typically range from a simple measure of time spent on campus and studying, to in- and out-of-class learning experiences that connect students to their peers in educationally purposeful and meaningful ways (Krause, 2005, p.3).

There was a fruitful conference on engaging students at James Cook University in 2005 and it emphasized that effective engagement of students is essential in providing an authentic learning environment. We should consider the current learning environment that we are providing and any evaluation of the learning/teaching process should include a detailed assessment of the quality of the student engagement.

III. Blended Learning

Since 2000, web-based technologies have played an increasing role in learning and teaching. Blended learning, also known as hybrid instruction, is the most prevalent because it possesses the advantages of traditional instruction and e-learning (Horton, 2000).

Krause (2008) explains blended learning:

Blended learning is realized in teaching and learning environments where there is an effective integration of different modes of delivery, models of teaching and styles of learning as a result of adopting a strategic and systematic approach to the use of technology combined with the best features of face to face interaction . . . The defining characteristic of blended learning approaches is that technology will be used to enrich the quality of the student learning experience through interactive learning activities beyond those attainable through face to face classroom interactions. (p.2)

There are obvious advantages of a blended learning environment and the growing sophistication of the digitally enhanced communication media should convert into greater acceptance of e-learning. However, it should be acknowledged that substantial

time and a good appreciation of a digital learning management system are required to redesign existing courses to a blended learning format. Gulbaker and Madron (2009) explain:

For instructors, transforming, redesigning, and publishing information on the Web involves two key demands: (a) decision-making about which content will be transferred to the online environment and how it will be presented, and (b) technical competence in uploading the content or creating new Web documents. Parallel with this process, students have to find new learning and study strategies to adapt to this enhanced learning environment, and they have to develop computer literacy to effectively use the system and overcome technical problems. (p.2)

Educators who enjoy delivering face-to-face courses to higher education students may well question whether there is real benefit in the additional work to provide supplementary online material. Some will argue that the availability of online learning material tends to drive students away from the classroom. Others may question the effectiveness (or cost-benefit) of the additional learning material.

There is strong evidence that a blended learning environment can greatly improve student learning. I recommend that the recent US Dept of Education report on evaluating online learning (US Centre for Technology in Learning, 2009) should be studied in depth. This meta-analysis was driven by “the need of policy-makers to know about the effectiveness of internet-based, interactive online learning approaches and the need for information about the conditions under which online learning is effective”(p.ix). This substantial study of the research literature for 1996 to July 2006 found more than a thousand empirical studies on online learning. Because of strict screening requirements, only 51 studies were finally subjected to meta-analysis. The detailed report includes all the findings and statistics on significance, but I will simply identify their findings, in relation to older learners (not school level). They are:

- Students who took all or part of their class online performed better, on average, than those taking the same course through traditional face-to-face instruction.
- Instruction combining online and face-to-face elements had a greater advantage relative to purely face-to-face instruction than did purely online instruction.
- Studies in which learners in the online conditions spent more time on tasks than students in the face-to-face conditions found a greater benefit for online learning.
- Most of the variations in the way in which different studies implemented online learning did not significantly affect student learning outcomes.

- The effectiveness of online learning approaches appears quite broad across different content and learner types. (US Centre for Technology in Learning, 2009, p.xiv and xv)

The full results of this study make interesting reading but, I should draw attention to one caveat in the report summary, which is:

Despite what appears to be strong support for online learning applications, the studies in this meta-analysis do not demonstrate that online learning is superior as a *medium*. In many of the studies showing an advantage for online learning, *the online and classroom conditions differed in terms of time spent, curriculum and pedagogy*. It was the *combination* of elements in the treatment conditions that produced the observed learning advantages. At the same time, one should note that online learning is much more conducive to the expansion of learning time than is face-to-face instruction. (ibid, p.xvii)

I believe that blended learning provides a better opportunity for student engagement and that this fact is the strongest argument for blended learning. However, the demands on teaching staff for a new level of technical and pedagogical understanding, and the requirements on the student to undertake self-directed learning should not be underestimated. After a rigorous study of online ICT students, Gulbaker and Madron (2009) state:

The findings of this research, together with our review of recent literature, lead us to conclude that there are four major areas (containing several factors) that must be considered when developing a high-quality blended learning environment. These four areas are as follows: technology, instructors, students, and pedagogy. The four areas are equally important. From the instructors' point of view, teaching and technical skills as well as creating a democratic learning environment for students are of vital importance. From the student's point of view, the important factors are becoming technically competent and taking responsibility for their own learning. Pedagogically, students should be provided with technical and visually rich learning and assessment activities and opportunities to increase their technical competence. (p.14 and 15)

While strongly advocating the development of blended learning environments, I believe it is the responsibility of the teaching institution to provide adequate resources for both teaching staff and students to upgrade their competencies. Part of the upgrade requirements are the enabling systems, practices and partnerships, that are discussed below, and I consider that teaching staff should be given "released" time to develop these systems and contacts. It is unrealistic to expect academics to fit these demanding activities into their existing schedules.

IV. Enabling systems, practices and partnerships

The three elements of an authentic learning and teaching framework described above (professional education, student engagement and blended learning) all require specific enabling systems and practices that are different from those available in the traditional learning approaches.

Professional education requires the regular linking to real world case studies and industry practice. Students should be assisted in finding links to industry practice. It is essential that the learning environment embodies partnership arrangements with competent practitioners, who are accessible to the students. This is the important link to the community of practice.

Student engagement will only be improved if there are effective communication and collaboration systems and practices. My experience is that the most common concern of students is the inadequacy of timely and constructive feedback on teaching material and assessment activities. Blended learning requires good communication and interaction systems as well as relevant illustrations and activities.

A few examples of good enabling systems and practices are mentioned below:

- **Twittering in the classroom**

Prof Natasha Neogi's class is a large hour-long lecture style course at University of Illinois but halfway through there is a break where she invites her students to log on to Twitter – and send questions and comments to her. Before the end of the class, Neogi responds to the most common sticking points from the class. (Zac, 2009)

- **E-portfolios**

Students should be given guidance on the use of e-portfolios to help collate their work, reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and strive to improve. “A well-executed e-portfolio program is an incredible tool for higher education. They provide institutions with authentic assessments of student learning and promote the deeper learning that we want from our students.” (Reynolds in Millar and Morgaine, 2009)

E-portfolios assist students in recording progress over time, making connections between different parts of a program and developing an identity as a self-directed learner. Consideration should be given to greater use of e-portfolios, especially when educators are willing to provide timely and constructive feedback.

Millar and Morgaine (2009) describe the benefits of e-portfolios as:

Reflection on work saved in e-portfolios can

- Build learners' personal and academic identities as they complete complex projects and reflect on their capabilities and progress,
- Facilitate the integration of learning as students connect learning across courses and time,
- Be focused on developing self-assessment abilities in which students judge the quality of work using the same criteria experts use,
- Help students plan their own academic pathways as they come to understand what they know and are able to do and what they still need to learn.

- Games

What simulated activities in property can be structured as games? – many can. Monopoly is an excellent example of a property game. Boyd, C, 2009, states: Gaming, once the domain of pimply-faced teens intent on battling each other on screen, is opening up a whole new world for universities and businesses. Many universities have begun to buy real estate in immersive online games, such as Second Life, and host virtual classes there. (p.25).

Some property (real estate) games have been developed but there is great potential, especially if there is strong collaboration between academics and the “community of practice”. Property games would not only be challenging learning opportunities for property students and practitioners, but could be marketable to the general public. There are great opportunities here. Could this be an interesting doctoral research field?

- Cases

A case is defined as “a description of a realistic problem scenario that is relevant to a particular profession or field of study” (O’Neil, 2005, p.7)

Cases can be developed to consider several property management, development, investment or valuation scenarios. Like games, they would require a challenging real life situation that requires consideration of theory and practice standards to arrive at decision processes. At present, several universities within Australia have full moot court procedures that put one team of students against another team. This is an excellent learning environment, the challenge being to ensure that the non-participating students are equally involved.

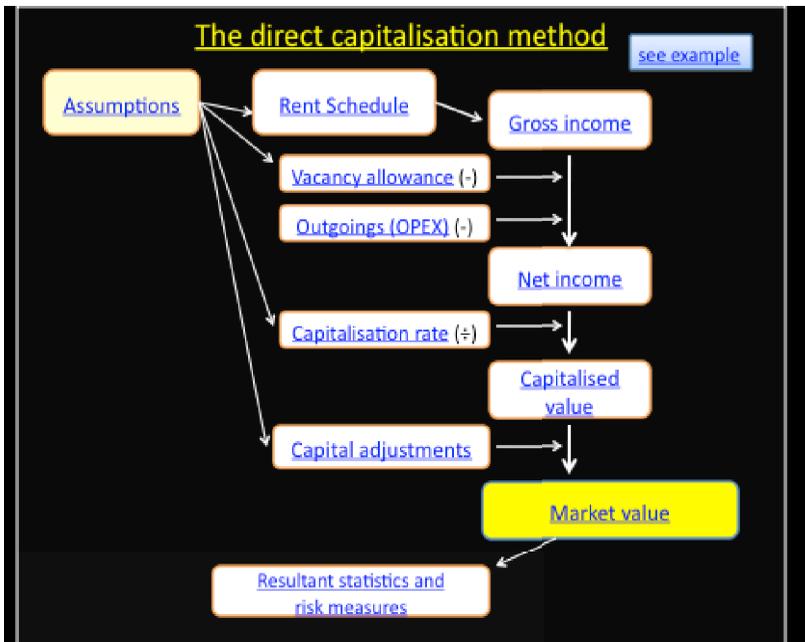
- A blended learning model and case study.

I am currently facilitating an advanced valuation course at CQUniversity (who have a distance/online program) and the university is moving to Moodle (by Pukunui Technology) as its online LEMS (learning and content management system). My experience is that undergraduate students, using distance delivery materials, have difficulty in understanding the complexities of investment valuation methods

because of the variations and contradictions in the marketplace. While providing the students with marketplace examples is helpful, they still have difficulty in applying concepts of investment cash flows and capitalisation when more complicated situations arise. Their situation is often not assisted by practitioners who, similarly, do not have a clear understanding of capitalisation and discounting concepts.

The Advanced Valuation Course is structured as a blended learning environment and the assignments require the students to find and use an actual investment property and engage with the industry and their fellow students in completing the assignment. The primary learning material for the first assignment is an online case in the form of an illustrated model of the direct capitalisation valuation method. The model structure is shown below as Figure 1.

Figure 1: Direct capitalisation valuation method case: the model structure



Source: The author

As part of the scaffolding for this model, each of the eleven components of the model is explained in linked windows and there is a further level of explanation of the items in these windows, so students can examine in depth each element of the model. In addition, the model is linked to an actual industry example.

This case will be illustrated during the PRRES conference, but components of the case are attached as Annexure 1 to 5. These annexure includes the model structure, the linked window of one component, the further linked window for an element of that component and parts of the case study called Steven Street.

This model, with its scaffolding and example, is intended as the first stage of the student engagement in this activity. The student assignment has several components:

- (1) study and understand the model and case study
- (2) identify an actual investment property in your area with multiple leases
- (3) analyse the market data available in your area, including professional opinion, sales data and reported evidence
- (4) raise questions or comments on the chat site for the assignment
- (5) consider the lecturer responses and student commentary on the application of the model
- (6) structure your own direct capitalisation exercise based on, but different to, the model presented. The exercise should demonstrate treatment of a situation where passing rents differ from market rents and capital adjustments are required
- (7) finalise your valuation exercise, provide justification for all assumptions and submit for assessment
- (8) receive detailed feedback from the lecturer on the individual assessments.

Hopefully, this student activity will engage the student, challenge their understanding of all the elements of the direct capitalisation method and develop their self-directed learning. Following this activity, they will undertake a cash flow study of the same property as their second assignment.

ACTION

It is logical that a professional should act competently as a consequence of the think-learn-act nexus. The actions expected of the property professional in practice and in academia are similar as both are expected to be active scholars with property market knowledge.

The **practising professional** is required to use reasonable care, in all their professional tasks, and avoid acting outside their sphere of expertise. As experts, they must be scholars who are continually learning to remain up-to-date with new knowledge or skills in their particular field. I would further add that the practising professional must also be a researcher and be involved in the community. I will deal with research and community involvement later.

The **property academic** working in the higher education sector is a professional scholar who should also have property market knowledge. The academic's knowledge of the market activity will differ from that of the practitioner. The academic should focus on researching an aspect of the property market in depth and have a working understanding of the methods, techniques and rules of thumb used by the practitioners in his/her field of specialisation.

All academics are well aware of the three principal roles of the academic. These are teacher, researcher and contributor to the community. The roles described above are generally accepted, but I believe that the property professional has an additional, and more demanding role as an **Exemplar**.

The Macquarie dictionary describes an exemplar as “an ideal example” or “worthy of being copied or imitated”. It is the second concept of “worthy of being copied” that applies to the property professional. The exemplar is a role model in a professional field. I obtained the idea of an exemplar from a discussion paper by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) (2009). It recommends the extensive use and interpretation of exemplars – referencing the work of Sadler (1987). My reaction was: *shouldn't we, as property academics, whose role is to teach, mentor and facilitate, be exemplars for our students? Then, why shouldn't the same apply to property professionals who have a direct responsibility to clients and co-workers, especially those that they mentor (either directly or indirectly)?*

The role of the exemplar is a very demanding one. It is the opposite of “do what I say, not what I do”. It is particularly appropriate for the property academic who should be involved in the applied discipline that they profess. Realistically, fulfilling the role of an exemplar is a goal and nobody will be a perfect exemplar, but it is a very good measure of our academic performance.

There are great rewards for attempting to be an exemplar. Students want concrete guidance on how they should act. As an academic, you are able to gauge the impact that you have on your students, and there is a great sense of achievement in seeing the professional and personal development of those you have mentored. It is my belief that most students would agree that the persons who have influenced their lives have done so because of their holistic approach rather than the knowledge they have espoused.

In essence, I am proposing that:

If you think, learn and act as a property scholar who, inter alia, has property market knowledge, you will be a worthwhile exemplar.

Let's turn to teaching, research and community involvement activities.

Our **teaching methods** should take account of the potential of our challenging brains, the benefits of online support for our teaching and the feedback from graduates and industry specialists on their experiences. A recent study by McCarthy (2009) provided feedback from graduates and employers on the level of competency of graduates. Careful consideration should be given to feedback from current students, graduates and practitioners and these responses, together with analysis of student dropout rates, should part of the annual review of all property programs.

I believe that both academics and practitioners should undertake regular **research**. It is also obvious that research covers a wide range of activities. I suggest that there can be two categories of research and these are (i) research undertaken to enhance the knowledge base of the individual's specialist field, and (ii) research undertaken to examine, in depth, a property problem or question. Clearly, these types of research may overlap. My point is that the first type of research, which I call personal enhancement research, is essential for every academic or practitioner. The second type of research, which I call property industry impact research, is not essential but is highly regarded in academic circles. In other words, all academics must regularly undertake personal enhancement research in order to retain their standing as a scholar, but some academics will extend their research activity and be involved in property industry impact studies. The academic should, whenever possible, research in collaboration with other researchers and, always, share their research activity by presenting and publishing the research findings.

I have suggested that every property academic should have property market knowledge, as ours is an applied discipline. I would go further and suggest that all property research is an examination of some aspect of the interplay of mankind and property. Our research should examine this interplay and should strive to propose ways that human impact on property can be more beneficial. The academic should be a vocal exponent of how change is impacting on their particular sector of the property market. Clearly, behavioral studies are important in our discipline and qualitative studies should rank equally with quantitative studies - a situation not often found in our high ranking journals. Similarly, the industry practitioner should continuously examine the market performance of their specialist field and can benefit greatly by linking their research to that of the academics.

There are still good opportunities to improve our research output by better communication and collaboration between academics and industry professionals and also through the formation of academic teams. Venues such as this annual PRRES conference should be fertile ground for initiating and advancing joint research. Are we really using this opportunity fruitfully?

When discussing **community involvement**, there are two primary communities. These are the community of practice (the industry players or stakeholders) and the general community (the public). The practising professional should participate in the

community of practice, both giving to and receiving from the knowledge and skill base of the industry. The practitioner and the academic have knowledge and expertise that is of great benefit to the general public and they can assist in providing informed opinions (possibly in the form of games) to the public. We should use the print media when we are able to provide rational commentary on topical issues; too often we may criticise privately without being willing to challenge publicly. I know that I am guilty of this. Undertaking public seminars in your specialist field may be highly beneficial to the community, but ensure that the presentation is reviewed by practitioners to check the appropriateness of the content.

Having considered our roles in the property marketplace, it is useful to consider what challenges are likely to arise in the near future for the property exemplar.

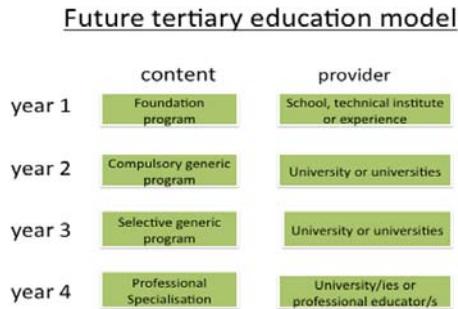
LOOKING FORWARD

The activities of the property scholar going forward will be exciting and challenging. The exemplar must lead the way and, importantly, be positive. There is no place for “when we”s and blanket opposition to change. Change should be selectively embraced and enhanced where appropriate.

In Australia, the Commonwealth Government has prepared a reform agenda paper entitled “Transforming Australia’s Higher Education System” (Commonwealth of Australia 2009) which, in vague political speak, describes how it will “drive comprehensive reforms across the post-compulsory education and training sectors”.(p.5) Without doubt, most countries have similar goals and higher education will be the focus of “comprehensive reforms” in the near future.

I feel there will be major changes in the tertiary sector over the next decade with many more providers being encouraged to compete with the existing universities. In particular, vocationally focused programs will seldom be structured as a dedicated undergraduate degree. It is probable that students will mix and match courses to achieve a vocationally based degree. My concept of how their degree may look in the future is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: A possible professional education structure



Source: The author

The start of 2010 is a good excuse to look forward and consider where you want to go, bearing in mind that others will look to you as an exemplar. Based on the issues described above, I recommend **five personal objectives** of an exemplar that may be pertinent to your going forward. They are a balanced life, the scholarship challenge, embracing technology, industry involvements and academic collaboration.

(1) A balanced life

We have looked at the linked functioning of brain and body and should appreciate that quality of life depends upon the balance between body, mind and soul.

How many of us ever try to understand what our bodies want and need – let alone listen to the wisdom of our unconscious minds? . . . By learning how to pay attention to the many signs and signals from our bodies and inner selves, we can start a dialogue which will pay huge dividends. (Alexander, 2001, p.3)

Connecting with nature, getting regular exercise and setting aside time to think have tremendous benefits for the professional. But another important issue is a balance of commitment to work, family and community. Academics are notorious for being mentally intense and narrowly focused; we should do some self-reflection and strive to act holistically in order to have a balanced life.

(2) The scholarly challenge

Within a balanced life, the professional will have an ongoing scholarly challenge. Recall that the brain has “use it or lose it” functionality. I see the term “research” as synonymous with the scholarly challenge. In industry and in academia, there is the constant need to research the advancement of our specialist field. Having an orderly plan to enhance our knowledge and expertise will fulfill the requirements of good practice and quality research – which are the measures of performance for both

academics and practitioners. I suggest that everyone develops their own e-portfolios as a mechanism to reflect on capabilities, progress and self-assessment.

The single most important scholarly achievement for the academic is a doctoral qualification and I believe every academic should be positively striving for this academic level because of the opportunities it presents. Another opportunity for scholarly pursuits is industry and faculty collaboration, which will be discussed below.

(3) Embracing technology

As mentioned above, a blended learning environment provides the student with the greatest opportunity for engagement. The teacher should provide some form of virtual learning environment dependent upon the facilities available at the learning institution. This learning environment should be authentic and, this too, will involve the use of relevant technology. Consider how the internet and digital communication tools (such as wikis, blogs, podcasts, twitter, etc) can be useful in enhancing learning. One of the initial challenges is ensuring that we are competent in using the learning management system (LMS) or course management system (CMS) available to us.

(4) Industry involvement

Many academics have limited ongoing contact with practising professionals. This is most unfortunate, as we have a vocationally focused discipline. It is futile for the academic to wait for an approach from industry, the academic must be willing to make repeated advances to industry as they are the chief beneficiaries. Industry cooperation can greatly assist the academic who can benefit from practical teaching material, joint research, consultancies and funding for research.

The industry also includes our past students and the professional institutions. Both of these groups are highly approachable and relationships can develop, provided both parties are willing to “give and take”. Graduates and practitioners are seeking further knowledge and skills and graduate upgrade programs and effective continuing professional development programs will be in high demand. I suggest you look at the API’s Future Property Professional’s Program, the RICS’s Assessment of Professional Competence program and Boyd, TP (2007).

(5) Academic collaboration

I am aware that academics may be thinking - how are we to achieve all these scholarly activities within the working day? One way to achieve more is to endeavour to improve collaboration between academics. I don’t believe that I have been a good example of collaboration and I could have used the opportunities presented at the

PRRES conferences to develop lasting joint research or teams more effectively. Hopefully others will not follow my example. Collaborative research can be very effective and it is so important for new researchers. Can I please ask everyone to be open to approaches from other academics and to actively seek out joint projects.

Returning to the future, property will continue as a desirable professional field and there will be a strong demand for positive, active property scholars. The simple truth is that if the teaching academic is forward looking and engaged, the students will follow suit.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, yes I believe that the property scholar should be an exemplar for the property profession. They should set an example that the industry can follow to improve its knowledge and competency. However, unless the scholar has property market knowledge, the industry will struggle to see the scholar as an exemplar. I have suggested that the property scholar has a gift in the form of applied knowledge and that they should share it.

In an attempt to summarise my long-winded message, I feel that the exemplar must examine how he or she is “communicating and collaborating” – those are the crucial activities. My challenge to all scholars is – be positive, enthusiastic and open to students and practitioners.

I would like to end with one last quote, which I believe concisely states what I have been attempting to portray:

The giver and the gift are the same. (Gleeson, 2009)

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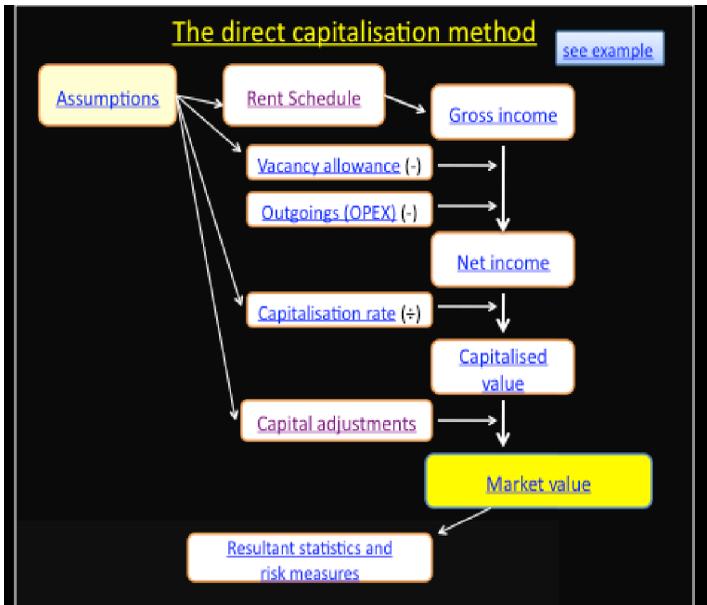
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ANNEXURE 1: Direct capitalisation case: page 1 – the model structure



Assumptions

- [Valuation date](#) [more](#)
- [Market rent level](#) [more](#)
- [Vacancy rate](#) [more](#)
- [Letting up period and fees](#) [more](#)
- [Incentive and fit out allowance](#) [more](#)
- [Capitalisation rate](#) [more](#)

[link to example](#) [back](#)

Market rent levels

Frequently rents are not **market related**. It is crucial to identify both the passing (existing) rent (as a rate per m²) and the market-based rent (as a rate per m²) for each tenant. The market-based rent levels should be assessed from market evidence of similar space leased recently. Analysing market rent levels is a key activity of the direct cap method, refer to *Whipple (2006) Ch.9 pp. 249 – 308*.

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ANNEXURE 4: Part of the direct capitalisation example: Steven Street – assumptions

Simple Capitalisation Model		
Assumptions Sheet		
12 Stephen Street, Tin Town, Queensland		
Prepared by		Steven Boyd
For		Education Purposes Only
Created		25-Aug-09
Valuation Date		1-Jul-09
Current Market Rent Levels (\$psm Gross)		
Ground Floor	\$	400
1st Floor	\$	370
Upper Floors	\$	350
Vacancy Rate - Overall		2.5%
Letting Period (mths)		6.00
Incentive (% Market Rent for Term)		10.0%
Agents (% Market Rent)		13.0%
Market-Based Cap Rate		7.50%
Current Passing Rent Cap Rate		7.25%
Initial Capital Expenditure	\$	85,000

ANNEXURE 5: Part of the direct capitalisation example: Steven Street – capitalisation calculations

Alternatives 1 and 2 (3 is over the page)

Capitalisation Exercises			
12 Stephen Street, Tin Town, Queensland			
Market Income Capitalisation Exercise (Alternative One)			
Total Market-Based Rental		656,350	
Potential Gross Market Income		656,350	
Less Vacancy Allowance		- 16,409	
Less Total Outgoings		- 163,120	
Net Income		476,821	
Capitalised at	7.25%	7.50%	7.75%
Capitalised Value	6,576,845	6,357,617	6,152,532
Less PV of Rent Shortfall (see table)	- 101,999	- 101,439	- 100,885
Less Agents Fees	- 7,280	- 7,280	- 7,280
Less Incentive / Fitout Allowance	- 28,000	- 28,000	- 28,000
Less CapEx Allowance	- 85,000	- 85,000	- 85,000
	6,354,565	6,135,898	5,931,367
Adopt Capital Value (\$)			6,100,000
Reversionary Yield			7.82%
Improved Rate (\$psm Area)			3.288
Passing Income (+Vac) Capitalisation Exercise (Alternative Two)			
Current Passing Income		562,360	
Add Market-Based Income From Vacancy		56,000	
Add Recoverable Outgoings		16,800	
Actual Gross Income		635,160	
Less Vacancy Allowance		- 15,879	
Less Outgoings		- 163,120	
Net Income		456,161	
Capitalised at	7.00%	7.25%	7.50%
Capitalised Value	6,516,586	6,291,876	6,082,147
Less Letting Period	28,000	28,000	28,000
Less Agents Fees	- 7,280	- 7,280	- 7,280
Less Incentive / Fitout Allowar	- 28,000	- 28,000	- 28,000
Less CapEx Allowance	- 85,000	- 85,000	- 85,000
	6,424,306	6,199,596	5,989,867
Adopt Capital Value (\$)			6,200,000
Initial Yield			7.36%
Improved Rate (\$psm Area)			3.342

ANNEXURE 5: Part of the direct capitalisation example: Steven street – capitalisation calculations

Continued – Alternative 3

Passing Income Capitalisation Exercise (Alternative Three)				
Current Passing Income			562,360	
Add Recoverable Outgoings			16,800	
Gross Passing Income			579,160	
Less Vacancy Allowance			- 16,409	
Less Total Outgoings			- 163,120	
Net Income			399,631	
Capitalised at		7.25%	7.50%	7.75%
Capitalised Value		5,512,155	5,328,417	5,156,532
Add PV of Capitalised Rental Overage (see table 1)	1,194,414	1,151,761	1,111,889	
Less Agents Fees	- 7,280	- 7,280	- 7,280	
Less Incentive / Fitout Allowance	- 28,000	- 28,000	- 28,000	
Less Capital Expenditure Allowance	- 85,000	- 85,000	- 85,000	
		6,586,290	6,359,898	6,148,141
Adopt Capital Value (\$)				6,400,000
Initial Yield				6.24%
Improved Rate (\$psm Area)				3,450

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