



2014 and Beyond: Innovative Thinking in a Changing Environment

Changing the policy and administrative environment to incorporate new technologies, new ways of thinking and undertaking administrative work.

After working 18 years in the sector, I believe there is still considerable scope for further improvement in the use of technology, processes and systems to support innovative administrative work in this sector.

Professional administrative work is based very much on the student lifecycle: from recruitment and application, through admissions, enrolment, assessment and finally graduation. Linked to this work is that of the IT, HR, Finance, marketing and Campus Services depts, all supporting the core academic endeavours of teaching and research. Add to this mix the Teaching and Learning, Research, governance and property services and you will find an enormous mix of services, information and processes within each institution.

The complexities of this environment are enormous and have far reaching effects on staff workload, resource management and job satisfaction.

Professional administrative work has changed significantly in the past 30 years. Szekeres, Whitchurch and others have researched the changing nature of this work. Szekeres (New Professionals in Higher Education) noted that administrative staff found it difficult to describe what they did on a daily basis. Greater work pressure and declining resources was described in Gillespie and Walsh's research (2000). In the hundreds of workshops and other activities that I have either participated in or presented, three of the most common complaints I hear are 'I like my job but some parts of my work drive me crazy'; 'we can't change anything so why bother trying' and 'central units don't understand the work of Faculties and schools'.

This presentation will identify some solutions to these complaints. They are based on common themes found within most administrative staff work: processes which are inefficient, that create bottlenecks and duplicated effort; information management systems and other technology which are unwieldy, not user friendly and do not provide information in a timely or logical manner; and a lack of coordination and communication between areas to produce consistent, timely and useful information and outcomes.

Using several case studies as examples, this presentation will focus on providing some practical solutions to these age old problems.