

Australian Studies in the Global Curriculum

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Professor Kate Darian-Smith visited Otemon Gakuin University on 14 March 2009 to participate in the seminar on higher education in Australia and Japan organised by the Centre for Australian Studies. She was very grateful for the opportunity to participate in the seminar and to exchange ideas with colleagues at Otemon Gakuin University.

Australian Studies in the Global Curriculum

This paper discussed the place of Australian Studies as part of the humanities and social sciences curriculum within Australian universities, and in an international context. In particular, this was framed in the context of the higher education sector in Australia, which at that time had been under review by two government committees: the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' Review of Higher Education known as the 'Bradley Review' and the so-called 'Cutler Review', the Review of the National Innovation System conducted by the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research.

Professor Darian-Smith also outlined the distinctive features of the University of Melbourne's shift in the structure of its undergraduate degree education, known as the 'Melbourne Model'. This model concentrated undergraduate education into six generalist degrees: Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Commerce, Bachelor of Environments, Bachelor of Music and Bachelor of Biomedicine.

Each of these undergraduate programs offers students a chance to study specific disciplines in depth, while providing the opportunity to undertake subjects from other areas. Together with increased prospects for internships, study abroad and participation in industry projects, these degrees offer students the chance to explore a range of interests before committing to a particular career path. In particular, students undertaking one of the 'New Generation' degrees choose 25 per cent of their subjects from areas other than the ones that make up the core disciplines of their degree. By studying subjects beyond their major discipline, students have the chance to develop different skills, expand their knowledge, learn complementary ways of thinking about issues and problems, and challenge their perceptions.

Under the Melbourne Model, New Generation degrees are then followed by an expanded

range of postgraduate professional qualifications in areas such as Education, Law, Engineering, Architecture and Medicine, as well as broader Masters-level training in areas such as International Relations, Development Studies and so forth. The Research Higher Degree structure of the University of Melbourne remains central to the university's research-intensive profile, with plans to expand this cohort.

As a publicly funded university with the issues of government regulation of the sector, the University of Melbourne has sought to offer an alternative degree structure to Australian and international students. While several universities have professional degrees at postgraduate level, and indeed this is becoming more common, the University of Melbourne's program is innovative in the Australian context. In essence, it has some features of the US Graduate School system, as well as similarities with the European 'Bologna' model of higher education. The Melbourne Model complements student mobility between universities within Australia and, most importantly, between Australian universities and universities in other countries.

Professor Darian-Smith spoke at some length about the significance of international students to Australian universities. To a large extent, universities were financially dependent on international students, especially since the cessation of full fee places for Australian students under the Rudd Federal government. Such dependency was tied to the low levels of government funding of Australian universities, especially in comparison with other OCED nations. The largest cohorts of international students in Australia came from China and India, although there was a range of countries of origin. At the University of Melbourne, for instance, 27% of total student enrolments were international students in 2008. 175 of those students were Japanese, studying in a range of disciplines and in graduate and undergraduate levels. For international students studying at the University of Melbourne (and indeed at other institutions in Australia), Australian Studies has provided an introduction to Australian society in national, regional and global contexts and levels.

Professor Darian-Smith also discussed the move to a more structured curriculum in the Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne. This has involved a restructuring of the subject areas available for students to undertake as majors to ensure that each discipline offers a clearly linked program of major study across the three years of undergraduate education. It has also involved a launching of the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, which will support new pedagogical methods for teaching students undertaking graduate coursework degrees. Australian Studies as a cross-disciplinary program has been strengthened as an undergraduate major within the Faculty of Arts, and is also attracting graduate students through overarching MA programs like those in International Relations.

Professor Darian-Smith also spoke about the role of Australian Studies as a subject area that links Australia with its Asia-Pacific region and with the world more generally. In particular, she reflected on the linkages between the University of Melbourne and Otomon Gakuin through their re-

spective Australian Centres, and the possibility of extending these in the future.

Australian Studies Seminar

In the afternoon of 14 March Professor Darian-Smith contributed a paper, entitled '**A Warning to the World': Australia, Japan and the Second World War**' to the Australian Studies Seminar on Australia and Japan during the Second World War, held at Otemon Gakuin University. This was an excellent event, and highlighted the importance of the relationship between Australia and Japan across the twentieth century and the ongoing importance for Australian and Japanese scholars to exchange their research and ideas.