

Concurrent Session J
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11.10am – 12.00noon



Session 7

Higher Education Policy Technology and Process Innovation in Three Different Worlds: United States, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea

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Brigid Freeman is a University of Melbourne Research Fellow for an ARC funded project ('Humanities in the Asia Region') in partnership with the Australian Academy of the Humanities (AAH). Previously, Brigid worked with Professor Simon Marginson at the Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE), on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) policy globally and Professor Fazal Rizvi on diaspora and international research collaboration projects; both sponsored through the ARC and Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA) for Australia's Chief Scientist. Brigid was a Visiting Scholar at the Centre for Studies in Higher Education (CSHE) at the University of California, Berkeley and American Council of Education (ACE) in Washington DC where she led an international research project. Brigid has a Masters of Education Policy (International) and is undertaking a PhD. Brigid has worked for a number of Australian universities in both academic and professional positions.

The Institutional Policy Project was initiated to explore higher education institutional policy across fundamentally different contexts, while identifying innovative organisational processes, technologies and practices progressively professionalising this emerging area of institutional strength. Internationally, massification of higher education systems, coupled with contracting financial and human resourcing is increasingly requiring higher education systems and staff to respond in innovative ways. The "efficiency and effectiveness" agenda has well and truly permeated the academy. Corporatisation and increasing managerialism are changing the very nature of collegial governance at the heart of higher education institutional decision-making processes. The project involved interviews and surveys in the United States, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea, and built on doctoral research focussed explicitly on the Australian university sector. The research involved a fruitful collaboration between the University of Melbourne, University of California – Berkeley, Otago Polytechnic, Pacific Adventist University and Island Research and Consultants.

The project explored technology-based solutions to communicate and maintain institutional governance instruments, and considered the relationship between institutional policy and institutional research derived from business intelligence systems. More fundamentally, the project explored policy process, frequently discussed using a "policy cycle" heuristic alongside descriptions of "messy" and incremental processes. The project also explored the relationship between institutional policy, processes, planning, data systems, decision-making (and associated workflow systems), and risk.

Despite fundamentally different contexts, organisational structures and missions across institutions in the United States, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea, and internal variation in these jurisdictions, the research revealed surprising commonalities and key points of differentiation. The presentation is intended to communicate key findings to practitioners, including examples of good practice, to support ongoing technology and process innovation.