

Education - Why Is It Important?

Paul Kenny (Australia)

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SUMMARY

EDUCATION – WHY IS IT IMPORTANT.

The first line of a Pink Floyd song ‘Another Brick in the Wall’ is ‘we don’t need no education’. Taken literally this is so far from the truth in any profession or trade that we might enter. Education is fundamental for those wanting to move ahead in life. Whilst university education is not suitable for everyone, many choose to study at TAFE or choose to gain employment in order to maintain a living standard and to learn.

We all have choices to make and these choices may change as we grow older. The days of staying in a particular job or with a company have changed and over a lifetime we may have as many as five new jobs or more.

University education is for those who want to study for a profession at a higher level. This might be medicine, pharmacy, architecture, law, surveying (geomatics) or some other profession. The available study units is quite extensive.

Some universities have introduced a five year qualification which involves studying an undergraduate course such as science and then going on to study a Masters in an area. This is the case at Melbourne University in Victoria Australia, where students undertaking surveying for example, are required to first take an undergraduate course and then a Masters Course to complete their qualification.

The view from academia seems to be that the undergraduate course is a general qualification leading into a Master’s course. However, students have spent a total of twelve years working through secondary schooling in order to gain entry to a university so they can undertake studies in a

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Orlando, Florida, USA, 28 May–1 June 2023

specialised area. They do not need another generalised course to move into a specialised area. They want to study their chosen profession and then move into the professional arena to practice it.

One of the views from a head of department is that some of the basic attributes of a profession need not be taught during a course but learnt by the student offline in their own time. A couple of examples may help to highlight this as a problem.

a) Students undertaking the Cadastral Law Unit need to know how to use the various instruments in order to be able to collect the right data for the assignments. Without this basic knowledge a large amount of precious time is spent on teaching procedures which should have been taught and practiced through the years of study. For final year students, not knowing these processes is disastrous for their working opportunities.

b) Imagine if medical students were not able to learn basic procedures during their course and had to learn them on You Tube for example. They are at university to learn these procedures and applications from experts in the various fields.

Universities value research and there is no doubting their ability to undertake this course of action. However, research can only be undertaken by students who are aptly qualified in their professional areas. Being qualified and working are fundamental in facilitating research avenues. It is difficult to understand how a student who has just finished a qualification at university can then go straight into a research program without first gaining valuable experience in the work force. This experience is the basis of the research.

Universities seem to be more focused on research and the financial and prestige standing in the world than on the basic premise for educating students in relevant professions and making them work ready when they have finalised their studies.

It should be emphasised from the beginning that surveying (geomatics) encompasses a wide range of qualifications, not just cadastral and therefore the courses taught need to take these qualifications into account when designing course structure and practical work.

This paper is designed to investigate what are the issues behind teaching practices and study units at universities and determining if the qualifications are fit for sending students into the available work force. For those employing graduates they do not want to be spending time training them in basics which should have been covered in a university course.

In preparing this paper, various qualifications have been assessed from different tertiary institutions including universities and TAFE (Technical and further Education). It needs to be mentioned that TAFE has a significant number of students, some of whom use it to migrate to universities to gain

further qualifications.

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