

ELEARNING STRATEGIC PLANNING 2020: THE VOICE OF FUTURE STUDENTS AS STAKEHOLDERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Most universities are undertaking information technology (IT) strategic planning. The development of those plans often includes the voices of academics and sometimes engages alumni and current students. However, few engage and acknowledge the voice of future students. This paper is situated within the *Griffith University 2020 Strategic Plan*, and refers directly to the *Griffith 2020 IT Strategic Directions* document. Specifically, this paper reports on a research project involving primary school students, aged 10-14 years old, who might be expected to participate in university studies in 2020. The students' ideas about studying in university in 2020 were used to complement other voices to inform the *Griffith 2020 IT Strategic Directions* plan. Data were collected using semi-structured focus groups at three schools located in close proximity to the university. The paper provides insights into future university students' views on the use of technologies in their future studies.

KEYWORDS

Higher Education, Student Voice, ICT, IT Strategic Planning, Scholarship

1. INTRODUCTION – FUTURE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND IT STRATEGIC PLANNING

Many organisations including universities have realised the benefits of strategic planning and, more recently, have understood the importance of information technology (IT) strategic planning. This paper specifically refers to a university in Queensland, Australia. In August 2012, that University's Council adopted a strategic planning document to guide the university over the next ten years. As part of building this strategic roadmap, it was recommended that an IT Strategic Plan be developed to position the university's IT through to the year 2020 (O'Brien, 2012a).

In the development of the university's IT Strategic Plan, the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Information Services) who led the process, called for participation from all stakeholders across the university (O'Brien, 2012b). It was suggested that a group of stakeholders not represented on the university campus should be consulted as part of the ITSP process. This group represented *future students* and was the catalyst for the initiation of this research project. This paper provides a summary of the views of future students gained through this research project aimed to inform the university's IT Strategic Plan.

2. CONTEXT OF THE FUTURE STUDENTS RESEARCH PROJECT

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Information Services) prepared a background paper (O'Brien, 2012a) which discussed the following five key trends and eight challenges and opportunities that could influence the IT Strategic Plan.

Key Trends

- Ubiquitous connectedness - mobile technology and wireless availability;
- Convergence - Separated devices morphing into one and increasing functionality;
- Information abundance - Online availability of information, big data collection and always available;
- Access over ownership - Owning vs accessing and cloud based services; and
- Consumerisation - Takeup of innovations; e.g. iPhone Challenges and Opportunities
- Shrinking innovation cycles - Faster, smarter, cheaper
- Open everything
- Digital content
- Collaboration and crowdsourcing
- Easier for people to work together
- Growth in social media use
- Data mining and analytics
- Opportunities to collect big data

The intention of the discussion paper, together with the formation of an advisory group, was a starting point for discussion about futures and possibilities for envisioning the role of IT directions in shaping the future of the university. Funding was provided for the employment of a Research Assistant to conduct this research project to go beyond the usual activities for strategic planning by engaging with future students – students currently aged approximately 10-14 years old - who might become students at the university in 2020. This was supported as being an excellent idea which was respectful of young people use of technologies and views about possible scenarios for their future studies at university.

3. REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE – THE VOICE OF FUTURE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

While there is considerable literature which has sought the views of school students about the use various technologies for learning in school settings, and there is literature about university students perceptions about access to and use of technologies in their studies, there is little research which directly sought future university students' views on technologies and their use in future university studies. However, the literature review conducted revealed three key themes around student voice that related to this research project, and this guided the conceptual framework of this research; namely,

Theme 1: Student voice and its potential value and importance;

Theme 2: Student voice about using ICT; and

Theme 3: Student voice to inform IT strategic planning.

3.1 Theme 1: Student Voice and its Potential Value and Importance

While student voice is not a new topic, and that there have been various contributions to research made over the last thirty years, research tended to be interested in seeking students' opinions about a range of educational matters, but there was little research about how those opinions influenced school decision-making (Rudduck & Fielding, 2006), and evident in the following literature review, much of the research focused on schooling, rather than university. Levin (2000) suggested that students should not be at the bottom of the reform agenda, but should be given a 'voice' in reform agendas, as students need a voice so "that reform will be more successful...that education reform cannot be successful unless students are more involved" (Levin, 2000, p. 156). Furthermore, Levin suggests five arguments for the inclusion of students in reform change. Firstly, "effective implementation of change requires participation by and buy-in from all those involved, students no less than teachers" (Levin, 2000, p. 156).

This argument comes from organisational change theory and makes sense for all parties involved to be a part of the decision-making process for it to be successful. Secondly, "students have unique knowledge and perspectives that can make reform efforts more successful and improve their implementation" (Levin, 2000, p. 156). Students can explain from their perspective what it means now or they can speculate for the future.

Thirdly, “students’ views can help mobilise staff and parent opinion in favour of meaningful reform” (Levin, 2000, p. 156). This is consistent with organisational change theory which suggests that if the change is initiated from within with a positive message then that acceptance can be reverberated through others. Fourthly, “constructivist learning, which is increasingly important to high standards reforms, requires a more active student role in schooling” (Levin, 2000, p. 157). Constructivist learning requires the learners to be more engaged and in control of their own learning. It suggests that students use their voice to negotiate their learning in the classroom. Finally, “students are the producers of school outcomes, so their involvement is fundamental to all improvement” (Levin, 2000, p. 157). For Levin, schools are where students learn, and have a significant impact on student learning. Therefore, Levin argues giving students a voice in a reform agenda in the school can have a large impact on the success of the reforms.

Beattie (2012) asserts that “students are not the problem; they are part of the solution” (2012, p. 158), as student voice is the missing ingredient in school transformation. In an article discussing “the Youth and Adults Transforming Schools Together (YATST) initiative to provide training and support for students and educators, working as partners to transform their schools” (Beattie, 2012, p. 159), students aged 14-18 years were encouraged to participate in transforming schools as ‘a peaceful revolution’ by instigating a cultural shift in their school where these students had a say in the school decision-making process. This initiative expanded to include over twelve schools in the network. While Beattie suggests that “authentic youth-adult partnerships in school transformations are uncharted territory...(with) few prototypes to inform the work” (2012, p. 140), this initiative highlights the success of allowing student voice to participate in decision-making to transform schools.

The previous research by Beattie reflects acknowledgement of the importance of students from within a school context, where those students are part of a school. Mitra (2006) goes further to show that the position of the ‘challenger’ can influence the success of student voice with school decision-making as part of a reform process. Three cases were discussed where the position of the voice was within or outside the school system. The outside school example provided by Mitra was an independent group that represented the student body to lobby for change. In that example, student voice is not restricted to current students but voice from outside is considered, and this can include lobbying for students or representing their voice. In this instance, this lobby group were passionate outsiders presenting their views of student voice, but there was no discussion of how the voices of students were actually captured and there was no indication as to whether or not the lobby group included future students. Mitra (2006) explains that, “the concept of student voice must gain legitimacy among powerful stakeholders in the school” (p. 315). This research also proposes that student voice from outside of the university can influence strategic planning decisions and has the potential to gain different perspectives, as well as confirming perspectives held by current university stakeholders.

3.2 Theme 2: Student Voice about using ICT

In Australia, there are examples where data are collected seeking student perceptions of their use of ICT. An example is through Australia’s participation in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) involving fifteen-year-old students. Conducted every three years, this has included items relating to access to and use of computers. For example, in 2000, PISA reported that 91% of students had access to a computer at home with 98% having access to a computer at school (OECD, 2005), which was above the OECD average of 78% and 87%. In 2003 Australia students recorded access at home of 97% and 100% reported access at school (OECD, 2005). In 2009, around 470,000 students participated from 65 participating countries. The questions changed to students who *use* a computer at home and at school with Australia recording 96.7% for home use and 91.6% for school use (OECD, 2011). Australia scored highly in these results well, above the OECD average, and these data, while giving some insights into students’ current access and use of computers at home and at school do not ask students about their perceptions of their possible future use of technology for university studies.

While not directly requiring student responses, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) collects data through surveys every four years through a national census. Data were published by the ABS in 2011 together with data from the “2009 and 2006 Children’s Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities Survey and the household use of information technology topic in the ABS 2008-09 Multipurpose Household Survey” (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). This reported interesting information, such as “In the 12 months prior to 2009, an estimated 2.2 million children (79%) aged 5-14 years reported accessing the

internet, up from 65% in 2006” (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011, p. 2). The ABS reported that Internet use changes depending on the age of the child, with younger children using the Internet for entertainment, but when they are older, they tend to use it primarily for information and socialising. The majority of children (59%) were found to spend less than 4 hours a week on the Internet, but time spent on the Internet increased with age. To illustrate, “An estimated 841,000 children, almost a third (31%) of all children, owned a mobile phone...only 4% of children had used their mobile phone to access the internet” (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011, p. 3). Again, the ABS census does not ask students about their perceptions of their possible future use of technology for university studies.

Research which more directly acknowledges student voice is evident in the work undertaken by Moyle and Owen. For example, two major reports which were provided for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) (Moyle & Owen, 2009a, 2009b) asked a variety of students about their thoughts on learning with ICT. Moyle and Owen’s (2009a, 2009b) research was undertaken with Australian school students, VET, university and early career teachers. Over half of the survey responses (n=654/1082) and focus group participants (n=209/299) were from primary and secondary students with data collected in 2008. The goal of the research project was to “gain an improved and contemporary understanding of the expectations and experiences of learners...of how information and communication technologies may be utilised to improve learning outcomes”(2009b, p. 7). Themes identified in the research suggest that students reported:

- high levels of computer and internet use from home and schools;
- high level of mobile phone ownership;
- low level of use of computers and Internet at local libraries and internet cafes; and
- technologies assisted their studies and they felt confident in using technology.

Their research, conducted approximately 5 years ago, provided valuable insights through student voice about using ICT. Interestingly, their research provided some findings in relation to the students being asked about their future expectations, and those expectations related to the use of ICT. Generally, the students wanted faster, better and newer technologies for home and in school, and they expected that their teachers were able to use them (Moyle & Owen, 2009b, p. 50). In research presented by Sheehy and Bucknall (2008), a variety of differing aged children were asked about their thoughts about how technology might be used for future education systems. The conduct of a focus group allowed students to express their ideas as interactive discussion, drawings and flip charts. Four groups of students (n=24) were selected and participated in these focus groups. The students were various ages from 10-17 years old and the conclusions suggested that the students were limited to their current educational experience “where ICT is used to support or allow these practices to occur but the underpinning model of learning remains the same as their best current experience” (Sheehy & Bucknall, 2008, p. 111). They found that students were interacting with technologies in new ways but that, interestingly, students did not count that as learning. Sheehy and Bucknall (2008) indicated that, “If we wish to move towards innovations in our use of ICT and to incorporate this into our imaginative blueprints for the future, then we need to equip learners with the conceptual tools to reflect on learning and how it occurs” (pp. 112-113).

Nearly all of the data presented in the studies above is over five years old. Since then, we have seen new technologies such as iPads, smart phones, and students living in an increasingly networked world. It would be reasonable to suspect that students now have greater access and use of computers, mobile phones and the Internet than when those studies were conducted. Furthermore, the Australian studies were limited to the student voice about their views of their use of ICT rather than asking their perceptions of possible future use of technologies. There seems to be some scepticism and reluctance about asking students about their views on the future.

3.3 Theme 3: Student Voice to Inform IT Strategic Planning

The third theme relates to research where students have been involved in IT Strategic Planning. Walker, Sloan, Boyle, and Walsh (2011) employed a methodology for informing information technology strategy through suggesting that a top-down, middle-out and bottom-up approach can be used to inform a technology enhanced learning approach. As part of the top-down approach, they explain that student voice was collected as part of an annual eLearning survey. This survey was delivered by the Students Association and included only current students. The middle-out approach used a more formal forum with various representatives

involved including students. No details of the student involvement were discussed. As part of the bottom-up illustration, the authors presented strategic planning as an informal “Friday fry-up” to allow staff the opportunity to informally participate. For their example, student voice was included as part of the strategic planning process, but there was no discussion of whether or not that voice was asked about the current situation or future scenarios. As strategic planning involves thinking about the future, a limitation of involving the current students involved, it is unlikely that they will experience the impact of the decisions made by the current student population if their views inform the IT strategic planning.

Elsewhere, and more aligned with the orientation and purpose of this paper, Haywood, Macleod, Haywood, Moge, and Alexander (2004) talk about student views of ICT at the University of Edinburgh and how those views have influenced the university’s strategic planning process. Over thirteen years of data were collected from beginning and second year students through various methods, including surveys, interviews and scrutiny of the data server information. The data highlighted clear trends that were developed into a set of statements about their students and their views, attitudes and expectations. They termed this “consumer consultation” as their student expectations “may not align to those of the university...measuring change helps decision-making by enabling some prediction of the near future”(Haywood et al., 2004, p. 229). This view was used as “the evidence-base to inform our development of ICT skills and e-learning strategies within the university”(Haywood et al., 2004, p. 30). The data were collected about current practices including access to ICT, ICT use, and views of teaching and learning with ICT. However, no discussion around the future ideas for ICT could be located. A limitation recorded in the results suggested that students had a rather limited exposure to ‘well-developed or sophisticated’ e-learning and that could influence the student voice views about appropriate IT strategies for the future. This could be dismissed as a limitation for any project asking students about their views of the future, unless specific cohorts of students are asked; e.g. post-graduate students who have studied at different universities and/or worked in different environments and would have a wider view of what was possible.

Davies (2011) presents details of an action research project undertaken during the 2009-2010 academic year at an independent school in England. The students of the school were aged from 14 – 19 and from an international background. The project was designed to understand teaching and learning with ICT at the school. Twenty-five student researchers participated in the study through multiple cycles of research, with the project culminating with a presentation to the whole school. This presentation contained details of the data collected and possible improvements to the school ICT learning. Interestingly, “During this event they made it known that the students want to be involved in school decision-making and have a right to do so” (Davies, 2011, p. 76). A key aspect of this research project is that it was managed and driven by the students. Two students were invited to join the committee that made decisions on ICT purchases at the school. The student commitment to drive this innovative change in school decision-making highlights that students are capable of making effective contributions.

Collectively, the literature reviewed has highlighted that there is little research which focuses on student voice in relation to future IT strategic planning, but there are signs that there is a growing acknowledgement that there is value in students participating as stakeholders in the IT strategic planning process.

4. THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This research project aimed to capture the ‘voice’ of future university students to inform the university's IT strategic planning for 2020. Along with a series of associated activities to gain other university stakeholder input, the voice of future students were sought. Students in the age range of 10-14 years old participated in a series of focus groups to obtain their thoughts about what a university should be like in 2020. This age range was selected because these students could potentially be commencing or continuing studying at university in 2020. In accordance with timelines for the compilation of the university’s strategic plan, this project was completed in a six-week timeframe from its initiation, ethics approval, requests to the schools involved and associated approvals, data collection and analysis, through to the preparation of the final report. The guiding research question was - *How will future students engage in higher education in 2020?*

Ethical clearance was appropriately requested and approved by the university prior to the study commencing. The university granted human ethics approval after the submission and review of consent forms for the schools and the parents/caregivers of the students. Students were invited to participate by their

school and only those students who returned signed consent forms were allowed to participate in the focus groups. On the day of the focus group, it was explained to the students that they had the option to elect not to participate. At a later date, students were given a small university gift for participating and contributing their ideas.

Thirteen schools located in reasonably close proximity to the university were invited to participate in this research project, with an understanding that the timeline was important. Four principals accepted the invitation, but only three schools were able to participate in line with the project timeframe. Each school identified the students who were invited to participate in this project. Consent packages were sent home for parent/caregiver approval. At each of the three participating schools, one forty-five minute semi-structured interview was completed with the students following an approved protocol. A total of 48 students participated in the interviews. There was a mix of male and female students. A member of the research team led all interviews with a school representative (class teacher or head of school) in close proximity either in the room or just outside. The questions were organised according to three areas – *About the Students*, *About the Technology*, and *About the University*. These themes were intended to scaffold the students through thinking about themselves as students, then thinking about and discussing their use of technologies, to then be able to consider and propose their ideas *About the University* in 2020. Examples of the questions *About the University* included the following:

- How will you attend university? Where should the university be?
- Should you attend in person? Should there be people from all over the world?
- Should important people give lectures? Should you be able to join lectures at other universities anywhere in the world?
- Could you be anywhere in the world and join lectures? How will you attend lectures?
- How will you access textbooks? How will you keep your notes?
- What do you think assessment should be?
- What should a library look like? Should there be books? When can you access the library?
- Should the content be available to anyone? Do you need to have access to get the content?
- Do you think you should be able to use your own devices at university? Who should own the software? Hardware? (eg: printers) Should we use printers? Do you think you will use paper?
- What can the university know about you? If you visit their website? Search about university in Google? Collect information about the websites you visit? In order to know what to send you?

The students were also invited to add additional thoughts they might have about studying at a university in 2020. No identifiable data about students were collected during the interview process, and participants were assured that they could not be identified in the report or in any other publication. The focus group interviews were audio recorded with recordings transcribed by a research team member. Each school used a different approach to identify potential students. Age was not confirmed formally as part of the process as the expectation was on the school to select or nominate students in the 10-14 age group.

5. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings are summarised here, using three broad themes used in the interview format - *About the Students*, *About the Technology*, and *About the University*.

5.1 About the Students

Firstly, the students were asked about their knowledge of university to understand if they knew about universities, if they were aware of the local universities, and if they thought that they wanted to attend university in the future. This theme was used to prepare the students to think about their future and to confirm if they were planning to attend a university. The schools nominated students whom they thought might be potential university students, and the students were aware of many local universities. They generally conveyed why thought it was important to study at university. For example, they could see the benefits for future employment, reflected in comments such as:

- *If you go there you might get a better chance of a better job.*
- *You get a better job with more pay so you can live in a big house.*
- *You study a lot so I can get a job.*

Some had already visited campuses with their family, because a parent was studying. The majority of the students interviewed indicated that they had aspirations to go to university.

5.2 About the Technology

Students were then asked a series of questions about ICT to obtain their understanding of ICT and how they use it at home or school. They were asked about the software they use at home and what was available at school. They were asked if they liked using ICT and what they would like to use. They were asked why they liked using ICT and what they think ICT would be like when they finished school, which will be close to being 2020 for most of the students interviewed. Student responses confirmed that the students were using a variety of ICT at home and in the classroom.

They provided an extensive list of suggestions about what ICT would be like in 2020. Students built those suggestions based largely upon their current use of ICT in the classroom and at home. Current classroom examples included Interactive WhiteBoards/SmartBoards, iPads, data projectors, iPods, gaming websites, eBooks, and school Internet-based resources. They were aware of a variety of different software, with most frequently referred to as being Microsoft Office products. Students provided a list of Internet-based ICT they were using with most comments being made about educational or non-education gaming websites.

Students explained the variety of ICT that they have access to at home, and they referred predominantly to gaming devices. Students believed that there should be more ICT at school and they liked using ICT. Students want to use ICT because “it is fun”, “educational”, “easier to concentrate”, “better than going to the library and having to borrow books. It is easier than having to read a whole book to find what you want”, “faster than writing”, “like in writing assignments it is easier, than having to hand write them”, and “helps me understand”. Furthermore, the students cited that they access websites for gaming, social networking (“for example, Facebook”), convenience (“like if we all got like iPads then everyone would work and then you could do everything on there. Take it home and bring it back”), and that they were motivating (“makes you want to learn”).

The students offered some interesting ideas for ICT in the future including that it would become easier to use computers with touchscreens, there would be individual whiteboards, and there might be robots teaching or serving. They considered that they would be using laptops in the future, which is consistent with their current expectations as many of the students were already attending or expected to attend a school where a 1-to-1 laptop program was offered in the senior years. It is worth noting that it seemed that some of the responses were influenced by movies examples, such as drawing and manipulating a screen in the air shown in the Iron Man series of movies.

5.3 About the University

Students were asked how they would attend university and a question was posed if they would attend online or in person. Students very quickly responded that they still wanted to attend in person, with example responses such as:

- *Cause I think you learn more when you hear or watch it being done rather than listening.*
- *I reckon it would be good if you were there in person.*
- *It would be better if you went to it as you easily get distracted at home.*

However, there was the caveat provided that the students wanted the option to attend online, but they wanted personal contact with other students and their university teachers as they thought that you would not be able to learn as well at home as reflected in the examples of responses, such as:

- *I think you should attend the university in person because then you get to see the face.*
- *Should have personal contact.*
- *If you didn't know then you could ask someone else.*
- *Should be good to go to university because it's easier to land. You get an explanation on how to do things.*

- *I think you should get a university as a person instead of other computer because if you just use computers you won't learn much. But if you go to university you meet more people and you can learn more.*
- *I think you should go to the university because if you look at up on a computer you might not understand. At the University you can ask people.*
- *In a way it's better to go to university but in a way sometimes your friends will be there and you can get more help, teacher. But if you're at home you can have more concentration and you but you might not understand the questions real good.*

Students could see the value of having access to lectures given by important people using ICT to deliver the lecture (“Yeah that would be pretty cool”, “You can see how differently they teach”). They were also supportive of being able to access lectures from anywhere in the world. They were interested in attending university in other countries and offered reasons for this such as “experience”, “travel” and “like better course than what is offered”. Students suggested that it should be easy to travel to university from their home. Interestingly, some students hinted at networked schools by highlighting that universities might be connected with schools (“one in each school”, “more university so much closer”, “consider school so that parents don't have to travel far”).

Students wanted access to textbooks online “because you could take it home” and “if you lose the hardcopy you can still use it”. Students could see the benefits of online assessment but didn't want assessment to be online. Students want the traditional library with books, though they also indicated that they didn't like traditional library environments because “they are usually brown and black and boring and depressing”. They provided a comprehensive list of ‘wants’, including:

- access to technology in the library, whether it is supplied or they bring their own devices;
- communal workspaces and individual areas, places to talk and places to be quiet;
- colourful interesting spaces where they can bring drinks and food;
- big comfortable furniture that is flexible to use;
- people to help and those people to be like sales people rather than being behind desks;
- environments where they could take drinks and food;
- quiet spaces plus also noisy spaces but the two separated so they could decide; and
- the library should be accessible 24 hours a day and with longer opening hours.

The students thought that you should only have access if you were connected to the university; e.g. as a student or worker at the university. The students highlighted that, because you have to pay to be a student, then the library should only be available to the people that pay. Students thought that you should be able to bring your own device, and mentioned computers, laptops, phones, iPads, e-readers, tablets, kindle, but that the university should provide devices for those people that don't have their own. Students said that the university should provide access to software and hardware but that they were prepared to pay for it as part of their fees or as an extra. They also said that if it was part of a specialised topic then the university should supply it. Students are used to a Resource Scheme annual fee that their parents pay at the beginning of the school year.

Students were conscious of conserving paper because of the impact on trees. They also suggest that you need computing equipment to be able to show and edit documents such as on a laptop or iPad. They also highlighted some technology reliability issues with using USB's and the risk of losing documents on a computing device. Students said that they were generally happy to share their personal details with the university if they visited on an Open Day or visited the website.

- *so they can understand that you were there from a young age and that you always wanted to go to uni to study that course...they have that perspective of you.*
- *that you have a genuine interest in it not just in the moment thing that you want to go to university is a genuine interest.*

They believed that this would help them build a relationship with the university, especially if they were going to study that course. Some students disagreed, because they thought that it was private information and they were afraid of how it could be used, especially for negative contact. Students saw that using information about website visits and tracking was an invasion of their privacy as they did not want the university to know what they were using the Internet for.

6. REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCESS AND CREDIBILITY OF STUDENT VOICE

Rudduck and Fielding (2006) contend the ‘big issues’ that underlie the credibility of student voice are power relations, the commitment to authenticity, and the principles of inclusiveness. Power relations in their context relate to student teacher interactions with “teachers being prepared to ‘see’ young people differently” (Rudduck & Fielding, 2006, p. 225). This means seeing students with a level of maturity to be able to offer serious, courteous and constructive contributions. A common theme of student voice literature is based on school interactions between students and teachers for school governance. The teachers in this case hold the balance of power and students can feel anxiety to provide honest feedback to improve school regimes. For example, “Younger students are concerned because commenting on what teachers do is seen as ‘rude’ or ‘wrong’; older students, however, are more inclined to be anxious because they fear retaliation” (Rudduck & Fielding, 2006, p. 226).

The teachers involved in organising students for this research played different roles in assisting in collecting the data. In one class, the teacher participated with the researcher in conducting the interview, in another interview the teacher sat at the front of the class during the focus group, without participating verbally but listening and showing some minor non-verbal responses. Another teacher separated the participating students and let the interview proceed without being present in the room, and was located outside the door with the other students. In each of these three interviews, the power relations between the students and the researcher were different and this was reflected to some extent in the quality of responses from the students.

As Ruddick and Fielding (2006) suggest, “Authenticity is about ensuring that the process of consultation and participation seems credible to students” (p. 226). They go further to suggest that authenticity rests on three things:

1. students involved in determining the focus of consultation – the topic seen as significant and permitted by the students;
2. the interest of the adults is real; and
3. discussion of their suggestion and active follow-through.

Students involved in this research process were not involved in determining the stimulus for the interview but it was felt that the questions and content could generate valid responses. A simple question format and approach was taken to allow the students to interact with the researcher. The interview approach of asking the students as ‘future’ students allowed an opportunity of respect for the students to show that there was a belief that they could attend university and the university was interested in what they had to say. Due to the process of the research, there is no opportunity for the students to see where their feedback was used in the IT strategic planning development, although they were each provided with a certificate of participation, a reward gift with the university logo, and a summary report given to the participating schools.

Upon reflection, an important principle is to create a strong sense of inclusion whereby all students voices are heard, rather than only the voices of those students who have the confidence and linguistic competence to participate effectively. For this research, a limitation is that not all students in the specified age range were invited to participate because of the timeframe in collecting the data for the university IT strategic plan. The schools were asked to identify students aged 10-14 years who would possibly be attending university in 2020. This restriction on participation or purposive sampling was chosen to access the ‘knowledgeable people’ when “there is little benefit in seeking a random sample when most of the random sample may be largely ignorant of particular issues and unable to comments on matters of interest to the researcher” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 157). This provides some tensions between being inclusive of student voice and being selective through purposive sampling.

7. CONCLUSION - IT STRATEGIC PLANNING AND STUDENT VOICE

The resulting *Griffith 2020 IT Strategic Directions* (Griffith University, 2013) involved wide consultation and views from various stakeholders were often conflicting, and there is an explicit acknowledgement that we can not predict what the university might be like in 2020. The authors of this paper believe that the

resulting document is carefully crafted, cognizant of IT trends and challenges, and provides a construction of students as scholars in 2020:

As we move towards 2020 the world of a scholar has fundamentally changed. Global mobile access to scholarship, in all its forms, is the norm. Collaboration across disciplinary, organisational and national boundaries is easy. Research, teaching and learning are significantly multimedia digital endeavours. Griffith's competitors are undeniably global, offering flexibility of time, place and approach in the ways in which a scholar can learn, teach and research.

Griffith's students are creators of new forms of content, which informs future teaching, and changes the relationship between teacher and student. (Griffith University, 2013, p. 6)

This engagement with young people who might be university students in 2020 demonstrated that the students, aged 10-14 years old, are already thinking about university and have a desire to attend university. Therefore, their views can add value to university IT strategic planning processes. A success factor identified by Ward and Peppard (2002) in looking at successful strategic planning for information technology is to "understand the customers" (p. 36). In the case of a university, prospective 'customers' could be defined as the current school students. Ward and Peppard explain that we need to understand "what they do with the product or service: how they obtain value from it, and the problems they may encounter in gaining that value" (2002, p. 36). Consequently, how the students might wish to use ICT at the university, how it might benefit their study, and any problems they have with using the ICT are relevant.

The key message provided by the students in this research project was the importance of the physical connectedness when they envisioned in attending university in 2020. They wanted to see their lecturers/tutors in person, they wanted to socialise on campus in friendly spaces, and they wanted access to a range of ICT. In the last eight years there have been major improvements in ICT and it is unknown what ICT would look like in 2020 but this student voice message fundamentally suggests that students want to be social, as well as university students undertaking studies. As universities strive to take advantage of learning online environments, it is important for universities to understand that these school students who might be attending university in 2020 want to physically be there to enjoy the experience.

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