

Professional socialisation of valuers: Program directors perspective

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An examination of the professional socialisation process is critical in changing the way graduates are trained and how they are supported post graduation. This article summarises key mechanisms to facilitate socialisation from recent socialisation studies undertaken in the fields of medicine, physical therapy nursing, occupational therapy, and certified athletic coaches. The article outlines the design of a survey of undergraduate university property program directors in the Pacific Rim to determine their awareness of professional socialisation and how the development of graduates' professional socialisation is accommodated at orientation and in subsequent years of their program.

Valuers, professional socialisation, property education, appraisers, program directors

INTRODUCTION

Professional socialisation refers to the acquisition of values, attitudes, skills and knowledge pertaining to a professional subculture.

This article summarises key mechanisms to facilitate socialisation over which universities are considered to have an influence. This has been determined from recent socialisation studies undertaken in the fields of medicine, physical therapy (physiotherapy), nursing, occupational therapy and certified athletic coaches. The review concentrates on what the studies offer in the development of the graduate, the role of the university and a graduate's first few years in the workplace. These disciplines have been selected since, like property, they are seen as new professions and graduates require field experience and examination before becoming full members of the profession.

This article outlines the design of a survey of undergraduate university property program directors and provides preliminary findings with regard to research into what universities are doing to socialise valuation students. The survey and analysis were informed by the literature review.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The main socialisation mechanism over which the universities have some influence has been identified in the literature on professional socialisation of the graduate at university and their work as a novice professional include early context, role models, placements, reflection, ceremonies, and curriculum.

It is important to provide students with an early understanding of the end point of their studies and also to provide them with an understanding of why students are learning particular content. If they understand 'why', there is a greater chance that in depth learning will take place. Meyer et al, (2005) found that providing the end point early improved socialisation in the Doctor of Physical Therapy. Carter et al, (2000) and MacKinnon et al, (2001) both reported the benefits of providing an introductory context and course in pharmacy programs. Bozich-Keith & Schmeiser (2003) developed materials to support early socialisation of nursing students and Sellheim (2003) found that students were more likely to deep learn, rather rote learn if they understood the end

point. Pitney (2002) advocated the need also to provide an end point for new staff. This was based on problems faced by certified athletic trainers whose only induction was in how to fill out forms. They did not have clear role statements and it is essential to clarify the roles of the people entering the workplace.

Role models can have both a positive and negative influence. Teschendorf (2001) advocated positive role models in all aspects of student interaction, including program administration as students read the staff behaviour and not what the staff said. Mostrom (2004) also advocated the necessity of providing positive role models in the teaching of physical therapy students. Maben et al, (2006) reported on the sabotage to the Project 2000 in which the nursing curriculum was changed to provide a more holistic and patient centred care. Socialisation into the new care model was destroyed by the hospitals role model and work practices when the graduates entered the hospital. Aperk and Eggly (2004) reported similarly of medical curriculum changes that were destroyed in the medical internships. Pitney (2002) lamented the lack of any role model for certified athletic trainers. Teschendorf (2001) also promoted the importance of expecting professional behaviour from students including taking responsibility for their own learning and gradually increasing this expectation. Coupled with this is the staff practice of frowning upon students' non professional behaviour.

Field and clinical placements provide significant socialisation. Gallimore (1991) noted the development of practice skills in the placements and it was seen as essential that positive role models were provided and people had clear expectations. Dunn et al, (2000) made several recommendations about ensuring the field experiences provided a positive socialisation experience, for example, for university staff to play a proactive role in supporting students' learning in the field experience. Koenig (2003) reported on an instrument developed to predict performance in these placements. Often placement students were provided with little supervision so it was important to identify those who were having or likely to have trouble and support them. Clouder, (2003) also noted the need to help those that did not have the appropriate skills in these placements.

Brown et al, (2001), Pitkala and Mantyranta (2003), and O'Loughlin (2005) all promoted the value of reflection in the socialisation process. The keeping of diaries or use of professional development plans, aided this reflection. It is critical that students have time to reflect and it is important not to overload the curriculum.

Pharmacy and Medical programs had commonly included white coat ceremonies in the early stages of programs. This reinforced to the students that they were becoming professionals. Carter et al, (2000) reported on the anecdotal evidence from the academic staff that this increased the professional attitude of the students to their study. The curriculum should contain content and values that were expected of professionals. Significant efforts had been made to change the professions by changing the curriculum. This had been done in pharmacy, nursing and medicine. However, as indicated earlier, this could all be sabotaged if the right role models and resources were not provided afterwards. The benefits of university socialisation could also be lost if a graduate entered the workplace without induction or clear expectations. Providing mentors what represented the practice wanted in the new organisation was considered important.

The evidence suggested that good early socialisation would provide benefits both at the start of a graduates' working career as well as later on. Page (2004) reported on studies that showed good socialisation provided benefits later in the career as well as first up. Poor socialisation could also be longstanding and Page (2005) also reported on the inference that the Harvard business case study method was responsible for the over reliance of businesses and investment house decisions on short term objectives rather than long term sustainability

PROGRAM DIRECTOR SURVEY

Two surveys were designed to investigate the influence of the university on the socialisation of property and valuation graduates: one survey of the program directors and another to gain graduates' perspective. The design of the graduate survey was reported in Page (2007). The program directors survey questions were focused on short term objectives and were divided into six categories. Guiding questions were designed for each category to elicit information on aspects that influenced the socialisation process. The questions are provided in Appendix 1. The following sections describe the rationale for each category.

Program History and Market

The program content is likely to be influenced by its location within the university organisational structure and whether the program emerges from a business finance background or from a construction background. Page (2005) reviewed the nature of programs and their location within the university structure, which showed that the age of the program was likely to influence current program structure as it would have evolved from a period when certain trends in university education were taking place. The timing of program review was significant in determining if a program had undergone change or whether it would have to change soon as a result of university or government directions. If the program was in a transition phase this would be a pertinent factor as it could influence the findings of this study.

This study is specifically about the socialisation of valuers. However, many university programs have shifted their orientation over the last 20 years from being valuation only to having a broader property context. For example, the University of South Australia had three specialist streams for a decade, in valuation, conveyancing and property management and agency. Students interested in marketing or finance was encouraged to undertake either a second major or a double degree. In many cases property programs in Australia have provided elective streams of courses which allow students to specialise in a number of property fields.

The program mode can also impact on how students are socialised, for example, full-time versus. Part-time mode can influence the opportunity for students to undertake work experience or gain employment. The option of external versus internal can also have an influence over how students interact and the influence of the staff over the students' socialisation.

Program Design

Questions in this category aim at identifying which key aspects of professional socialisation are taken into consideration in developing the program design. The questions also aim at identifying constraints preventing the development of the ideal property program and, specifically, what the difference is if some of these constraints do not exist. The university influence on program design is also important at the macro and micro levels.

The influence of the professional bodies on program design is also of interest, as it is expected that this can have a significant influence. In order to understand this influence further, questions are asked of program directors about differences if the professional guidelines do not exist.

Program Management and Control

The questions in this category aim to identify what quality controls exist both internally and externally over the programs. The questions also target identifying the proportion of the program that is taught by property staff and industry professionals relative to staff from a non-property background. This is likely to influence the socialisation process.

Program Implementation

Implementation questions are included to discover what aspects of socialisation occur at specific stages of the program. The questions also aim at identifying whether students' socialisation

opportunities differ and if different teaching and learning is used to aid other students' socialisation. The questions also examine some elements of potential socialisation that can occur with industry links, such as work experience and mentoring schemes.

Three programs in Australasia were longer than three years, as they had specific industry placements within their programs, and additional questions are included in the questionnaire to discover more about the socialising influence of these placements.

Program Success and Challenges

This section aims at obtaining the program directors perspective on the strengths and weaknesses of their program and to generate information to assess the key socialisation aspects such as knowledge, values and attitudes. There is also a question on when they believe their students become valuers, which allows triangulation with the graduate survey.

Program Directors

The questions in this section are to identify the program directors and leaders property knowledge, field or work experience and teaching experience relative to the program as the program director or leader can be perceived to have a significant influence on students.

PROGRAM DIRECTOR SURVEY RESULTS

All property program directors or program leaders, as listed on university web sites for undergraduate property programs in the Australia and New Zealand, were invited to participate in the discussion. Eight people participated in interviews that took place in November and December 2006. The interview questions listed in Appendix 1 were the basis for the discussions with program directors. The interviews were transcribed and common factors were identified from these interviews. This section reports on the early findings from this survey.

Program History and Markets

The property programs were not designed only to train valuers. Different end points were possible and different classification systems were used with one program identifying 11 different markets for their graduates. Programs were mainly dominated by school leavers (approximately 80%) and generally had a balance of 60% male 40% female. Most program directors provided comments that the trend over the last decade was for more females to be undertaking property programs.

The majority of the programs were designed around a full-time internal mode, though some did have a small amount of web material available to support internal students. Two programs had an external option and a third program had its material delivered at more than one site. The organisational location of property programs varied across the universities represented in the interviews, but the majority of property programs are within either a business or a construction faculty. In New Zealand, programs were offered by two faculties, though the viability of the agricultural programs was questionable. The survey discussions concentrated on the more viable business versions. Irrespective of the program location, most students faced a common first year.

The program length varied between three and four years with the programs in excess of three years having an industry placement component. The programs of three years duration generally had no formal industry placement component. In one case, industry experience could be recognised for one course if the appropriate diaries were kept. Another program was contemplating recognising industry experience and the program structure allowed for credit to be given.

The property programs were now very close to being prescribed programs with students having very little choice over which courses they studied. Program directors indicated that choice of courses had gradually been reduced and in most cases the number of elective options was those mandated by the university.

Program Design

All program directors indicated that they complied with the professional body's education requirements and that these requirements did not have a significant influence on program design. Most program directors indicated that they were likely to keep their programs the same even if there were no educational requirements from professional bodies. There was some variability with regard to how items were presented for the benefit of the professional body and in some cases program directors emphasised the importance of using the right language to show that values or content was incorporated into courses in other ways, for example, materials. The current proposed change in the Australian Property Institute's (API) compulsory academic requirements might influence the amount of rural content presented in the future, as rural studies were likely to be no longer compulsory. One program director indicated that the program was a compromise between what the staff wanted and what industry and professional bodies wanted, and what the staff wanted tended to reflect their expertise. Interestingly the program contemplating removing the rural aspects had recently lost its rural staff member.

Curriculum overload is a recognised issue. When program directors are provided with suggestions for extra content, then they indicate that this results in discussion over what can be dropped to enable the new aspects to be added. There is also the issue of work load for property courses compared to other courses in the faculty. The clear impression is that many property courses contain more assessment and expectations than other business courses and this is a concern.

The accreditation of business programs by other authorities also impact on property programs. The needs for business students to have capstone units, international perspectives or other graduate qualities in some cases reduce the amount of property content. These alternative accreditations have weakened the influence of the professional bodies which was reflected in that it was property content that was deleted to ensure the other authorities accreditation requirements were met.

Many of the property programs had an advisory committee that met at least once a year. These advisory committees provided feedback to program directors on proposed changes. The advisory committees had no formal functions and, in some cases, they were there as a response for money provided by industry or a conduit to industry hopefully to obtain resources or cooperation.

The program directors with short experience were frustrated by the extent of influence of university policy and procedures on program design. The longer term program directors just saw them as factors that had to be worked with. The new research framework was also perceived as a threat by several of program directors. They perceived that it could reduce staff-student interaction, which they believed was important.

Program Management and Control

The property programs all had to undertake annual internal university reporting and annual reporting to the relevant accrediting professional bodies. The programs also had significant reviews every three to five years. These quality control measures were not seen as a threat to the professional socialisation of students. In several situations, the licensing board also participated in an annual review. The licensing authorities that participated probably had a greater influence than the professional bodies and this might have arisen due to these authorities having full time staff. Several universities held focus groups with students on a twice yearly basis and they took notice of the feedback. They believed this was the reason why their programs were rated highly in student evaluations.

The property courses were mainly taught by full time university staff with industry personnel being used as guest lecturers on specialised topics. Industry personnel were not used as tutors or as markers. It was commented that some industry individuals wanted to assist the industry and they frequently offered to give some specialist lectures. In one program 50 percent of the property

courses were taught by industry practitioners with this program only having a few permanent university staff.

Program Implementation

Most of the programs had a common first year, which meant that property teaching was generally only minimal in the first year. In some cases, a property course or part of a property course was incorporated into a core course. In one program, common first year courses were moved to second year to allow property courses to be included as part of first year studies, which allowed the students to be provided with an endpoint and larger context within the first year. Most program directors accepted that a common core was an economic necessity. In most cases, there appeared to be no concern that a property course was not undertaken in the first year of study.

In most programs there was some interaction with the profession in the first year. This often involved a couple of presentations and drinks but few program directors saw these events as being important. In this situation, the students were exposed to recent graduates who discuss what their job entails. Many program directors commented favorable on these interactions between students and industry.

Program directors were keen, however, to provide further student interaction with industry and the professions later in the program during the second and third years of the programs.. This was implemented through mentor schemes or specialist guest lectures. As part of one course, one of the institutions invited past graduates to discuss their work with students over a three to four week period. Two program directors commented that students were encouraged to participate in the young version of the Property Council of Australia Events. Several program directors also discussed their mentor or buddy schemes. Three spoke highly of the value of these schemes and they indicated that they had been evaluated and would continue with some modifications. One program director was extremely keen to restructure their mentor scheme to ensure that it did provide a positive contribution to professional socialisation. The program directors believed that the practicum component within programs had a significant positive effect on the socialisation of students but did create some difficulties. Employers who had invested in the students generally wanted to keep the students in their employment. This meant the students must finish in a part-time mode, which creates some difficulties for the students in finishing study and working. Conflict arose whether the students should be at work or at the university. The directors of programs with a practicum made no formal efforts for this socialisation to be shared with fellow students. One program director noted the experience might have been shared informally and might have influenced tutorial answers.

Program Success and Challenges

The students of most property programs were made aware of the relevant professional body guidelines. A small amount of program time was allocated to developing professional values. There was, however, some skepticism that the desired professional values could be taught and that students either came with them or did not. One program director indicated that the demonstration of professional values by staff and program directors was essential in developing student professional values and he also flagged the importance of not accepting unprofessional behavior and, in particular, cited plagiarism.

Program directors indicated that they made students aware of the professional practice guidelines and also expected students to undertake some valuations within the program. It was acknowledged that the programs only provide limited opportunities for students to undertake valuation, due to constraints on the volume of assessment. It was seen as industry's responsibility to develop these skills after graduation. In some programs a six month (minimum) industry practicum provides an opportunity to gain further professional practice skills. An understanding of professional practice was also picked up by mentoring and buddy schemes, which involve

students shadowing those in industry for a short period of time. This was done with the expectation that students will know more about work tasks and industry practice.

The professional knowledge required to be a valuer was generally taught over several courses in the final two years of the program. Program leaders believed this was done well but there were issues about how much could be provided within the programs. There was clearly no difficulty in finding material and it was easy to overload the curriculum.

Program leaders did not indicate any specific challenges that were common across all their programs, though there was some commonality in that the profession and industry had to be realistic in what could be achieved in a three year undergraduate degree. There was also some lamentation of the amount of students' commitment to their studies with competing interests taking priority.

DISCUSSION

The preliminary review of these results indicates that socialisation of valuers is occurring satisfactorily from the program directors perspective. In considering the socialisation literature and the key components over which the university has some control, the main inconsistency is the provision of a clear end point in the early stages of the students' study and data from the survey indicates that very little about property is taught within the first year of the programs. The linking with industry and profession in the first year appears to be largely superficial.. However this again raises questions about what is the end point when program directors identify up to 11 career end points with most programs clearly producing graduates for several property careers.

Program directors talked enthusiastically about the professional socialisation that occurred for students when they undertook work placements, part-time property work or formal practicum. Program directors did not, however, try to utilise or formalise in any way the sharing of students' experiences with students who had not participated or had participated in different experiences.

The main elements of socialisation in the field of valuation provided through universities are the body of knowledge required and an introduction to valuation practice and values. All these elements are further developed in the workplace. The socialisation of valuers is largely achieved with the universities providing most of the knowledge and an introduction to valuation practice and values that are further developed in the workplace.

CONCLUSIONS

The socialisation of valuers is dependent on many influences including the universities and the first employers. The universities are highly accountable to the profession in undertaking this role. The only significant variation from the professional socialisation literature on the running of property programs is the lack of providing clear end points at an early stage. This is difficult to do when common first years course are dictated in universities and programs contain students heading for multiple end points including valuation practice.

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APPENDIX 1

Guiding questions for discussion with Program Director (course coordinator)

Program history & market

Outline

- 1) name of the property program
- 2) how long has program run and when was program last reviewed
- 3) what are the target markets for the graduates & does this effect choice within the program
- 4) is the program the same for all modes of study, fulltime, part-time, external and online.
- 5) How many students are undertaking this program and what is there general profile with respect to age, experience, study mode and gender.

Program design

Outline

- 1) what are the guiding principles in deciding content of program
- 2) how is the professional values developed within the program
- 3) how is an industry orientation built into the program
- 4) how do you get your students to understand professional practice
- 5) what role does the API , RICS ,SISV, NZPI guidelines have in the design of your program

- 6) if the guidelines did not exist, would your program look differently and what would be different.
- 7) what parts of the program are designed specifically for those graduates going on to become valuers.
- 8) constraints on design of program through university policy
- 9) role of faculty/ division in design of program

Program Management and control

Outline

- 1) what % of program is taught by property staff
- 2) what % of program is taught by industry practitioners
- 3) what involvement do professional bodies play in checking quality of program on annual basis
- 4) what other checks do you have on quality control both annually and periodically

Program implementation

Outline

- 1) what do you do in the program/course in the first few months to orientate the students to the profession
- 2) what do you do in the subsequent periods.
 - a. Year one
 - b. Year 2
 - c. Year 3
 - d. Year 4
- 3) Do you vary this for students with different backgrounds in property
- 4) Do you do anything to share the property work experience of students with fellow students
- 5) Do you involve the industry in orientating students towards industry.
- 6) Do you encourage students to be involved in industry activities-if so how is this encouraged
- 7) If industry placement program-discuss its operation, success and challenges
- 8) What different, needs to be provided to valuers relative to other property graduates

Program success & challenges

Outline

- 1) the success of your program in preparing graduates for work in the property industry with respect to
 - a) Knowledge (or content)
 - b) Professional practice –would they be able to undertake work in line with professional requirements
 - c) Professional values-would they act ethically and not be pressured /seduced to meet clients need
- 2) what are the weaknesses of your graduates
- 3) can you separate your answers for this for valuers vs other property professionals.
- 4) for the valuation graduates, at what point do you believe they become a valuer.

Program director

Outline

- 1) years teaching
- 2) yrs as program director
- 3) property education
- 4) Property experience