



INHERENT UNCERTAINTY: 30 YEARS OF ATEM

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Where I'm Coming From...

- Joined ATEM in 1982 when my boss suggested it.
- Attended Victorian Middle Managers Program in 1987 – watershed for me in terms of career and ATEM
- Joined ATEM Victoria 1987 as Secretary
- ATEM Vice-President in 1996
- President 2001-2003
- Now represent ATEM on the AUQF Steering Group
- Recently re-joined the Council as Member-at-Large

- Have an emotional attachment and strong commitment to ATEM which underpins my work with the Association

Approach

- Existing work
 - 1989 paper
 - 1995 Masters thesis
 - 2002 Giles Pickford's paper
- Archives search
- Members
- Presidents

Some Milestones

August 1974	CITAOA formed at Caulfield Institute of Technology, Victoria by Maurie Blank
October 1974	Meeting held to establish Victorian association of administrators
October 1975	Australian Institute of College Administrators established
30 April 1976	AICA AGM – AITEA established with one Branch in Victoria
1979	Journal established
1991/92	Future Directions Review
1995	Carfax (now Taylor&Francis) takes over publication of Journal
1996/7	Change of name to ATEM
2000	ATEM Foundation established
2002/3	Structure and Financing Review
2005	Partnership with AVCC



Branches

Victoria	1976
New South Wales	1977
ACT (now Canberra)	1977
South Australia	1978
Queensland	1979
Tasmania	1979
Western Australia	1980
Northern Territory	1981
New Zealand	1990



Establishment: 1974-1976

- Maurie Blank, Registrar at Caulfield Institute of Technology, now part of Monash University
- No existing professional body or bodies existed to meet the demanding and distinctive needs of those engaged in tertiary administration



And ...

- Where should Maurie Blank's bust reside in perpetuity?
- The Victorian Branch might wish to consider taking over ownership of the bust; and taking it 'home' to Monash?



Original AITEA Objects

- Create a **fellowship** to **raise the standards of professional practice**
- Aid personal development and uphold ethical standards
- Provide **meeting ground** and forum for discussion
- Publication of **learned papers**
- Promote and encourage **research** in Tertiary Education Administration
- Foster **professional interests** of members
- **Recognise** outstanding contributions

A TEM Logo



- Intended to represent symbolically the relationship between post-secondary institutions and those who manage and administer those institutions.
- The institutions are represented by the figure enclosing the trencher on the left-hand side, and the right hand figure represents administrators of the institutions.
- The relationship between the figures indicates the role of the manager and administrator in nurturing the growth and fostering the interests of the institutions.
- The unbroken line which creates the logo represents the inter-dependence between the institutions and their administrators.

Developed by J. Trigg, University of Melbourne, 1979

Birthing Pains

- Birthing pains: university vs college
- "People connected with AITEA seem to have considerably more time to pursue their interests than any university administrator ... I am of the opinion that much of the material AITEA is putting out is to say the least not only not useful to University administrators but harmful to the profession of university administration ... there is a fundamental difference between the 'two' administrations and this must be clearly pointed out constantly and continuously ... that the interests of a university administration may be best served by a separate and restricted organisation ... Any university administrator who wishes to join (AITEA) may naturally do so but no encouragement should be given"
- (Hugh McCredie, Deputy Registrar, University of Sydney, 1978).



Volunteers

- Volunteer association
 - Established and built because of passion and commitment of individuals.
 - Has always relied on the goodwill of individuals and institutions.
 - Can ATEM continue to rely on goodwill and individual champions?



Individuals

- Individuals
 - Some big personalities
 - Personality based decision making
 - Personal attacks at times
 - Game playing and politics
- All underpinned by passion and a commitment to ATEM ... but mired in the detail and confused by ego, with only occasional big picture view apparent.



States and Branch Rights

- ATEM established as one branch in Victoria.
- Historical focus has been the branches
 - Professional development best delivered locally
 - Funding to support Council
 - Squabbling – again, the details rather than the big picture
- Recent shift to ATEM as a single organisation – necessary to be able to position ATEM in the sector



States and Branch Rights

- Never better seen than in Future Directions Review in 1999:
- ...while a listing of the issues which may be of interest to AITEA members elsewhere was of interest, it seems to have been not particularly critical to the Branch (Queensland Branch, 19 June 1991)



Professional Development

- ATEM's core business
- Undertaken in the branches; occasional attempts at 'national' programs but difficult to sustain with volunteers
- Runs well, and is generally profitable
- Established and recognised provider where ATEM is known



Professional Development

- Professional Education and Training
 - Maintaining competence.
 - Standards missing, but being considered – what knowledge do we need to do our jobs effectively?
 - We need to define it, or we are at risk of institutions doing it for us.



Journal

- Always had a Journal, and it costs money.
- So, often a topic of discussion at Council, particularly when new members arrive on the scene.
- Members have indicated several times they want the Journal, and it is a critical element of a professional association – it lets us articulate our knowledge base.



Association Operations

- Finances
 - Council operations
 - Branch operations
- Roles viz-a-viz Branches
 - 'central', 'national' role
 - branch roles
 - relationship between Council and Branches
- Membership
 - Major source of income for ATEM
- But ... Council and Executive have often spent years talking about the same things.



Membership

- Only around 1300 members – has been fairly stable since 1990s
- Membership levels originally, then removed, and now back again.
- Members join to:
 - keep up to date with the sector
 - network
 - do professional development
 - belong to a professional association
- But, they also join because someone suggested or recommend they join.



Membership

- TAFE and academic membership often discussed during 30 years:
 - ATEM has never been able to attract significant numbers of TAFE and academic staff
 - But ... why would they join ATEM?
 - What do we offer them?
- Why would an academic staff member want to do ATEM professional development? What else does ATEM offer?



Terminology

- Language is important, but we have always allowed ourselves to get bogged down in the detail.
- Administrator or manager?
- Profession or not?
- Non-academic or what?



Broader Role

- Slapped on the wrist by the AVCC in 1992 (post Future Directions Review)
- Now recognised by government as a group to consult
- Partnership with AVCC
- But ... the profile is low in the sector
 - the major reason members join ATEM is because someone tells them to, not because it is well recognised as **the** professional association for administrators and managers.



Lessons for the Future

- In 2006, success in:
 - Operations
 - Professional development
 - Networking opportunities & fellowship
 - Sharing of information and knowledge

- And the goodwill, friendships and bonds formed through ATEM must be taken into the future.



Lessons for the Future

- Still need:
 - Full-time executive support/head office
 - Strong vision
 - Positioning and recognition in the sector beyond official and formal consultations
 - Ability to move beyond individual champions



Questions for the Future

- What is the role of ATEM?
- Do we just do professional development?
- Are we concerned with the broader issues of the role of our members and promoting their professional interests?
- Are we concerned with recognition?
- Where is our spot in the division of labour? Do we want it?
- If we do, how do we claim it?



Lessons for the Future

- ATEM's history is marked by 'inherent uncertainty' about:
 - our role
 - our position in the sector
 - what knowledge underpins our work
 - how loudly we can speak up (history is marked by a clear fear of being criticised)
 - what it is we offer the sector.



Beyond Inherent Uncertainty

- Time to move beyond the inherent uncertainty of our past.
- Time to move beyond the detail and embrace the big picture and the ideals of ATEM's founders.
- Time to be bold and articulate our value to the sector – as a group, not as individuals, and as an association, not as Branches.



Beyond Inherent Uncertainty

- The core of our future has been with ATEM since its establishment in 1976.
 - Professional interests of members
 - Professional development
 - Fellowship
 - Recognition of individuals and the profession



Beyond Inherent Uncertainty

- But the next stage of our history will require us to move above the detail, see the big picture, and work out where ATEM fits in the sector.
- We have known this for a long time, but we have allowed ourselves to get distracted by the detail.



Beyond Inherent Uncertainty

- The expectations of membership revolve around professional development and fellowship, but there is a view that the Institute should do more for the recognition of administrators as professionals by promoting the importance of their role with higher education. This could be achieved through the Institute being a more public organisation, liaising with peak bodies and government as appropriate, expressing views on major issues and participating in the development of public policy...
- Future Directions paper, 29 July 1991



Beyond Inherent Uncertainty

- If ATEM is a 'professional association', it either:
 - represents a profession, or
 - it is an association that is run professionally.
- If it represents a profession, then WE are members of the profession.




Beyond Inherent Uncertainty

- How will WE define that profession?
- Because right now, others are defining:
 - the content of our work,
 - the way we work,
 - the nature of our roles in institutions,
 - the professional development and training we need; and
 - the knowledge underpinning our work.



Beyond Inherent Uncertainty

- And we will continue to risk being at the mercy of our Vice-Chancellors:
 - if they think general staff are professional, life is good
 - but, if they think general staff should be seen and not heard, life is not great
- By the way, which group of staff has the majority in universities?



Beyond Inherent Uncertainty: A Challenge for the Future

- In 2026, when we are 50 years old, will we still exist?
- If we do, what will we look like?
 - Accredited profession?
 - Expertise recognised?
 - ATEM is a single organisation?
 - Or ... ?



Beyond Inherent Uncertainty: A Challenge for the Future

- How do we now move to the stage where ATEM is truly greater than the sum of its parts?