

Delving into double degrees: The case of Victorian universities in Australia

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Introduction



- ▶ Double degrees (DD) play a key role in meeting future global workforce needs
- ▶ Employers find DD graduates more versatile and well-rounded (Moulton et al. 2011)
- ▶ Today's graduates are likely to have several career changes (Bialik 2010)
- ▶ Pressure on tertiary sector to ensure relevance, currency and breadth

Introduction ...

- ▶ DD are becoming increasingly popular (Knight 2011)
- ▶ There are doubts over the design, effectiveness and legitimacy of DD (Knight 2011)
- ▶ AQF is silent on DD
- ▶ Scant research on DD
- ▶ Two themes explored:
 - How do Victorian /Australian universities present information about DD?
 - How are DD constructed?

What is a double degree?

- ▶ Various terms used including:
 - Joint, double, dual, integrated, collaborative, consecutive, concurrent, overlapping, parallel, simultaneous
- ▶ Awarded by one institution or two?
- ▶ Same discipline or different?
- ▶ No universal agreement



Double degrees defined

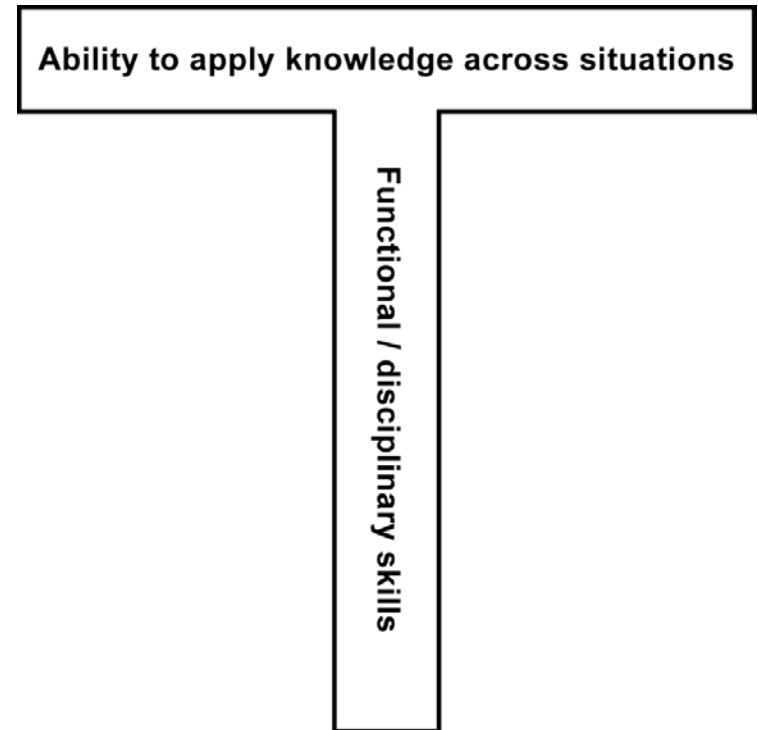
We have defined them as:

- ▶ two separate UG degrees
- ▶ from different subject areas
- ▶ studied concurrently or sequentially
- ▶ at the same institution



I- versus T shaped graduates

- ▶ I- shaped graduate – possess depth of knowledge
- ▶ T-shaped graduate – cross disciplinary expertise as well as developed soft skills



T-shaped professional
Leonard – Barton (1995)

Graduate outcomes

- ▶ Enhanced employment outcomes are a key motivator for studying DD
- ▶ DD graduates 80% chance of employment cf 75.6% for single degree graduates (GCA 2012)
- ▶ Median commencing salary – about \$3000 higher for DD graduates
- ▶ Some employers value relevant work experience more than extra studies (Moulton et al 2011)

Double degrees

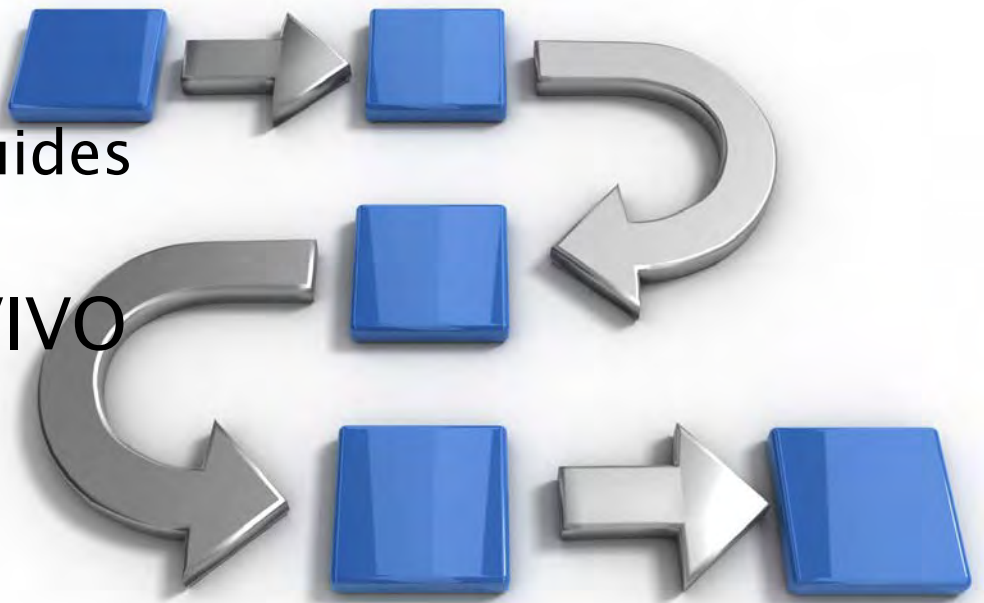
- ▶ **Europe** (Schule 2006):
 - Increase student mobility
 - Improve graduate employability
 - Benefits to collaborating universities
- ▶ **Australia** (Hobsons n.d.)
- ▶ Reasons students study DDs
 - Offers opportunity for broad education
 - Students cannot choose between fields
 - Better suits careers goals

Double degrees...

- ▶ **Benefits** (Russell et al. 2008)
 - Prepares grads for several careers
 - Equips students with unique combination of transferable skills and literacies
 - Opportunity to develop transdisciplinary knowledge
- ▶ **Concerns** (Homewood 2013)
 - Take longer to complete
 - Cost more – time and \$
 - Are they delivering value?
- ▶ DD appear to be a technical and administrative construct

Methodology

- ▶ Content analysis from
 - VTAC
 - Victorian university websites
 - University course guides
- ▶ Analysed using NVIVO



Prevalence of DD – 2013

Institution	No of UG degrees offered	No of double degrees	% double degrees
ACU	48	15	31.3%
Deakin	179	63	35.2%
Federation University	6	1	16.7%
La Trobe	185	73	39.5%
Monash	163	75	46.0%
RMIT	127	30	23.6%
Swinburne University of Technology	108	15	13.9%
University of Melbourne	19	0	0.0%
Victoria University	96	8	8.3%
Total	977	287	29.4%

Purpose and benefits of DD

- ▶ Two different degrees in diverse discipline areas;
- ▶ Shorter duration;
- ▶ Diverse skills, knowledge and competence development;
- ▶ Educational, personal and social experiences enriched and widened;
- ▶ Displays commitment and strong work ethic as DD are more challenging;
- ▶ Graduates are competitive, have increased career choices and greater employment opportunities.

(Source: Summary from web-published information of Victorian universities)

Entry requirements

- ▶ DD are perceived to be more prestigious and desirable
- ▶ No consistent message regarding entry requirements
- ▶ Sometimes:
 - Higher of the two degrees
 - Higher than either degree
 - Lower than requirements for one degree



Structure of DD

- ▶ No consistent approach
- ▶ Often administrative rather than pedagogical design (Russell et al. 2008)
- ▶ Some have integrated units although most have no integration
- ▶ Some but not all preserve structure of individual degrees
- ▶ Moutlon et al. (2011) – critical of DD as they dilute discipline knowledge (ie Engineering)

Conclusion

- ▶ No global understanding of DD
- ▶ 29% of UG courses in Victoria are DD
- ▶ Most common way of presenting basic information about DD
 - Two
 - Careers
 - Skills
- ▶ Inconsistencies have been highlighted
- ▶ Anomalies discovered
- ▶ Now we need to take this research into the field

Thank you

Any questions?

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