



A Personal Reflection from a Former QUT Academic who knew Peter when she was a Doctoral Student at QUT

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While I was doing my PhD under Steve Ritchie’s supervision, I met Professor Peter Fensham. He had moved to Brisbane from Melbourne to be close to his grandchildren and had begun adjunct work at QUT for 2 days/week.

Peter never missed the opportunity to attend a day on campus. He was often in Steve’s office where we would sit together having a cup of tea talking about science education research. As an ECR, this was an opportunity for valuable learning for me. During this time, Peter showed a keen interest in my PhD on context-based chemistry education.

Towards the end of my PhD, Alberto Bellocchi, who was still teaching in secondary schools, had the opportunity to collect data from a student who had completed year 12 chemistry through the traditional approach and then repeated year 12 when the new trial context-based syllabus was implemented. In the second year, the student learnt chemistry through the context-based approach. Alberto collected data from the student and we used these data to write our first paper for RISE which is titled “[Making connections: Learning and teaching chemistry in context](#)” (King et al., 2008). Both Steve and Peter were very generous with their feedback and I recall Peter saying to me “I can only review a paper atomistically.” It was the atomistic feedback on a draft of that paper that enabled improvements and eventually it was accepted for publication. This is still my most cited paper and provided a valuable learning opportunity for me about the amount of work, multiple revisions and peer-review process required for a Q1 publication. In hindsight, I am forever grateful for the “atomistic” review.

During Peter’s time at QUT, I frequently gave him a lift home since he lived near my house. I treasure those conversations where Peter shared so many “gems” about science education and stories about teachers, colleagues and academics. One insightful story that I remember was when we were talking about “situated learning” and he explained a colleague who would teach from the front of the classroom leaning with one hand on the teacher’s desk. When the teacher was asked to teach from another room without a teacher’s desk, he was unable to recall the content in the same way. His situatedness was grounded in the material structure of the teacher’s desk and the familiar classroom environment. I understood situated learning a little better after that conversation.

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Peter was a mentor and friend to me and he generously gave of his knowledge and wisdom to help me succeed as a new academic. I will be forever grateful for his time at QUT, the many dances at ASERA conferences and the conversations I was privileged to be afforded.

Rest in peace Peter,

Regards,

Donna King

Declarations

Competing interests The author declares no competing interests.

Reference

King, D., Bellochi, A., & Ritchie, S. (2008). Making connections: Learning and teaching chemistry in context. *Research in Science Education*, 38(3), 365–384.

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