

Preaching the Teaching

Do the Politics and Religion of Teaching Mix?

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Computing Education Research Group
{Clayton, Caulfield} School of Information Technology
Monash University

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Overview

- 1 The Politics of Teaching
 - External Politics
 - Internal Politics
- 2 The Perceptions Project
 - Background
 - Aims
 - Outline
- 3 Staff Interviews
 - Aims
 - Interview Cohort
 - Summary of Findings
 - SIG Group
- 4 Religious Beliefs?

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Government Intervention in Australian Universities

- the Dawkins reforms
 - Unified National System: all CAEs now universities
 - Government dollars down
 - accountability up
 - Quality Rounds
 - Learning and Teaching Performance Fund
 - Research Quality Framework

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- the Research Race
- the Race for Students
- prestige and reputation
- greater use of Ranking Tables
- *commercial in confidence*
- students are now *customers or clients*
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Survey Mad!

- changes in promotion criteria
- the bottom line is that research is still tops
- increased need for quantification of teaching quality
- formative and summative evaluations (Murray)
 - student evaluation forms developed for summative comparison
 - too global in reference to be useful
 - not effective unless accompanied by peer review
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- Arose out of discussions within CERG
- Switch to new degree structures
- Opportunity to take first step in a longitudinal study
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Aims

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- To establish the perceptions of ICT that students bring into their course and investigate the role this has on their progression through the course
- To explore staff understanding of the attitudes and knowledge that students bring into their course and the role this has on unit design and delivery
- To research the associations between these aspects and staff and student behaviour in the teaching-learning context
- To inform and enhance current teaching practice within FIT undergraduate teaching programs
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Outline of Methodology

- Student survey
- Student interviews
- Staff interviews
- Analysis of student results

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- 17 interviews across 4 campuses
- 20-90 minutes in length (avg 45 mins)

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Issues Explored

- Understanding of being a student in an IT course - *most students are not well prepared for university*
- Understanding what an IT degree involves - *unclear and unmet expectations*
- Students' expectations of an IT degree - *majority of students are looking for "a job"*
- Academic ability - *students are generally academically able, but their abilities vary widely*
- Assumed ICT skills at entry - *word processing, internet, numeracy*
- How students can be better prepared - *communication, reading, writing skills; willingness to engage*

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BITS Program Design and Delivery Factors

- **Subject preparation - *flexibility in design and delivery***
- Core unit problems - *little commonality amongst students!*
- Teaching styles - *fewer lectures, more tutorials, better tutors*
- Staff-student contact - *need more! Staff-student meetings*
- Work loads - *12 hours per week?*
- Timetables - *a problem! 2-3hr lectures? timings?*

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SIG Group Members' Preparation of Core Unit(s)

- **A general process can be discerned;**
- Too much workload and content;
- Diversity of different thinking styles, interests and disciplinary approaches affected subject design;
- Designing by committee leads to “lowest common denominator” result;
- Design and preparation process too hurried;
- Identify and emphasise process - more emphasis placed on thinking about how to assess teaching process.

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Why are we here? 1

- Fundamental perceptions about the role of university teaching

Although the university is focused on research and research students, the majority of our students will not head in that direction. Students enrol in IT because they hope it is going to be of interest to them, and because they have no experience that is usually all they can do - hope. They hope for career and job opportunities.

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Why are we here? 2

- Fundamental perceptions on what students want

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Why are we here? 3

- Fundamental perceptions on what is expected of staff

Common Core Units are going to create problems because different student cohorts are not going to have the same interest in the subject. Students doing Information Systems at Caulfield are not going to be so interested in learning how to do programming in C. If they are forced into that situation they will not respond as well as they could academically if they apply themselves based on personal choice and interest.

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