

Assessment strategy underpinned by curriculum practice

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Abstract

The in-depth institutional research which provides the data for this symposium arose from a three year national ARC Discovery project using case study methodology which investigates the growth of higher education in publicly owned vocational institutions. The project draws on Bernstein to foreground ‘message’ rather than ‘system’ and this paper undertakes investigation of what distinguishes VI degrees in relation to their messages about evaluation and assessment. It looks at how these messages are presented in marketing materials and how they play out in practice.

Vocational institutions had long hosted degree provision but historically it had involved a university’s degree being taught within the ‘junior partner’ of the vocational institution. It is only within the last two decades that policy and regulations have enabled vocational institutions to develop their own courses and have them validated by the higher education regulator (TEQSA). This opening up of higher education to institutions previously engaged in vocational institutions has seen the emergence of new degrees and in one case a new field of study that operates in no other type of provider.

This paper draws on interviews with senior staff and educators in 9 of the total of 11 Australian institutions that were providing higher education during the project. The research project focused on five specific Bachelor degree areas that were taught across different case studies and representatives of the accrediting bodies of each of those degree areas were also interviewed. This data was contextualised by analysis of 56 interviews with students on the five Bachelor degree programs.

The longstanding traditions of vocational institution linkage with industry were leveraged to create new engagements in the accreditation of degrees. This paper considers these new approaches to the creation of higher education degrees focusing on the development of a specific and unique course to public vocational institutions, the Bachelor of Nursing. Vocational institutions propose that as their assessments originate in an industry context they find new ways of answering questions about how higher education meets work place needs particularly what skills and disciplinary requirements specific industries have. By engaging with the construction of a specific course, messages about evaluation and assessment and the relationship between theory and practice in forms of knowledge can be

considered in detail. The analysis raises question about the family resemblances of degrees of the same discipline taught in different types of providers.

Presentation

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