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Embedding personal development planning in postgraduate programs: step one - reflective practice

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This paper presents a case study of the first step in building a Personal Development Planning (PDP) program for postgraduate courses in health promotion. The principles of PDP encourage students to develop deeper learning through reflection, self-assessment and planning for action (Edwards 2005). The study investigated how a reflective practice assessment task assists students to develop critical thinking skills and to link academic study to professional skills and personal development. A purposely designed critical reflection model was employed as a learning resource to assist students respond to the assessment task requirements and to provide a conduit to a deeper level of learning and professional acknowledgment. Narrative analysis of student assessment papers was examined to gather qualitative data on student learning and development. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to further explore the meaning that such an exercise provided when undertaking self-assessment.

The findings highlight that reflective practice provides an opportunity for students to develop skills that equip them to be more active learners, provoke deeper levels of critical thinking and to question and critique. The critical reflection model was a valuable resource in supporting student learning and a key to developing skill sets on critical analysis and problem solving. Encouragingly, the assessment task assisted postgraduate students to be reflective learners, as well as assisting in the development of strong attributes valued in the modern world of work. The study reinforces the merit of undertaking research regarding PDP at postgraduate level and identifies how assessment is a dynamic way to link theory, skills and practice.


Session 3

HD3.009

Leading teaching

Convenor Colin Mason

Does cohort size matter when teaching?

Dr. Rodney Arambewela, John McElvaney (Presenter), Leanne Morris and Associate Professor Greg Wood, School of Management and Marketing, Faculty of Business and Law

Over the past 15 years members of our team have taught Management and Marketing units across all campuses. Over this time, we have noticed considerable change in student engagement with our units. This perception was evidenced in the results of our students. Contrary to the accepted view that higher ENTER scores result in higher grades and, conversely, that lower ENTER scores result in lower grades, this has not been our experience. Factors, other than ENTER scores, we contend, must be contributing to student outcomes.

The study looked to investigate three issues:

- Identify the number of students who respond to SETU requests as a percentage of the total campus cohort.
- Seek out the academic results of students that will be examined by unit/campus and their ENTER scores.
- To compare campus academic results with the SETU findings to determine if there are correlations between the size of the cohort and student engagement and outcomes.

The average score for the SETU Questions 1 and 5 both distinctly improve when moving from Burwood to Geelong to Warrnambool, indicating that students are likely to be more satisfied with the teaching and the feedback they receive from their teachers in the rural and regional campuses where the cohorts are smaller than at Burwood.