



Practice What You Preach: What Students Report as Quality Practices for Counselling Teachers.

Nicky Jacobs, Brett Furlonger, Andrea Reupert.

Monash University,(Australia)

nicky.jacobs@monash.edu

Abstract

Literature on the attributes of higher education teachers has largely been extrapolated from course evaluation questionnaires whereby students rate their teachers, according to a certain set of predetermined questions and criterion focused on student perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching [1, 2]. In response to Devlin's [3] criticism of this methodology whereby she argues that it is limiting, controlling and does not allow students to explore teaching practices in depth, Delaney, Johnson, Johnson and Treslan [4] used an open ended survey instrument to capture students' perceptions of effective teaching practices. Delaney et al. [4] also addressed their additional concern that most studies do not consider possible differences in the learning requirements of students completing their studies in different modes, such as on-campus (face to face) or by distance education (online). They found that regardless of mode of study, students identified the same nine characteristic behaviours of effective teaching, however a differentiating feature between modes was not in the type of behaviour identified, but rather the different emphasis placed on the significance of each characteristic [4]. Although their study focused on generic qualities of teacher effectiveness, lacking was a consideration of teaching attributes specific to certain fields of learning.

Accordingly, the aim of this qualitative study was to identify the specific attributes necessary for good teachers of counselling and whether these attributes differed from those of teachers of other types of courses, as ascertained in previous research. Additionally, this study investigated whether these requirements differed among students according to mode of delivery by comparing the opinions of students studying on-campus, by distance and by off-shore (a mixed mode of both face to face and online). Examination of focus group interviews indicated that regardless of study mode, students reported wanting their counselling teachers to exhibit the same behaviours and skills towards them as students, that teachers deemed essential for effective counsellors, or in other words that they 'practice what they preach'. Students also reported the importance of counselling teachers having extensive professional counselling experience, as students reported the sharing of anecdotes as an essential aspect to their learning and as a differentiating feature specific to counselling teachers, not previously reported in the literature.

References

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