

Evaluating Open and Distance Education at Central Queensland University:

Three Sites of Evidence-Based
Practice and Reflection

18th October 2004

CQU Teaching and Learning Seminar

TurkishOnline Journalof DistanceEducation

<http://tojde.anadolu.edu.tr/tojde15/mid.htm>

- Special Edition:
- *Evaluation in Open and Distance Education: Retrospects and Prospects* (Nouwens, Erdinc & Danaher, 2004a)
- 12 CQU staff members from 3 Faculties and 1 Division contributed 5 of the 8 articles

CQU Contributing Authors

- Julie Bradshaw and Leone Hinton
- Fons Nouwens, Jan Thomson, Elaine Ross, Bobby Harreveld and Patrick Danaher
- Phillipa Sturgess and Fons Nouwens

(not presenting today)

- Daniel Teghe and Bruce Knight
- Beth Tennent and Paul Hyland

Overview of today's presentation

- ❑ Overview of a proposed framework of evaluation purposes and approaches
- ❑ The selection of CQU's designated online learning management system
- ❑ An online discussion list promoting students' attitudinal change
- ❑ Possible implications for understanding and enhancing the evaluation of teaching and learning at CQU

Evaluation Perspectives: Interrogating
Open and Distance Education Provision
at an Australian Regional University

Fons Nouwens, Jan Thomson,
Elaine Ross, Bobby Harreveld and
Patrick Danaher

What kinds of evaluation are seen as legitimate?

CQU Evaluation Workshop Feb 2004

Problems with student surveys

- Survey fatigue
- Student perceptions of effectiveness
- Cultural interpretations
- Validity and fairness for teacher appraisal
- Poor response rates

The complexity of evaluation

- ❑ Changing and complex academic culture, global phenomenon
Baldwin & McInnis, 2004; Nature, 2004
- ❑ Complexity characterised by a variety of communities of practice, interest and interpretation
- ❑ Useful framework for exploring interests in evaluation

Learning	T/L relationship	Management
develop identity as autonomous and responsible person	development of effective learning support	effective, accountable organisation to support learning
personal experiences, and evidence of critical reflection, self evaluation, self reporting: journals, portfolios	discipline standards of good practice, on negotiation of meaning, dialogue, collaboration, and formative feedback	generalised, objectified evidence, analytical processes, use of quantitative information and summative feedback.

Evaluation practices at CQU

- ❑ Explicit support for students to learn to evaluate their own learning
- ❑ CQU graduate attributes-- lifelong learning
- ❑ Interpretation of and responses to learners' activities in class
- ❑ Student Evaluation of Courses (SEC)
- ❑ Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET)
- ❑ Course and Program Review

Evaluation drives education

We need to balance interests

- Is our evaluation portfolio balanced?
- What kinds of evaluation do we support?

Course evaluations were intended to give the instructor feedback about how well he or she was doing. But they rapidly became a favoured tool of deans, tenure and promotion committees because they were quantifiable. Now there is an implicit understanding that if instructors give good grades, they will not be judged too severely by students.

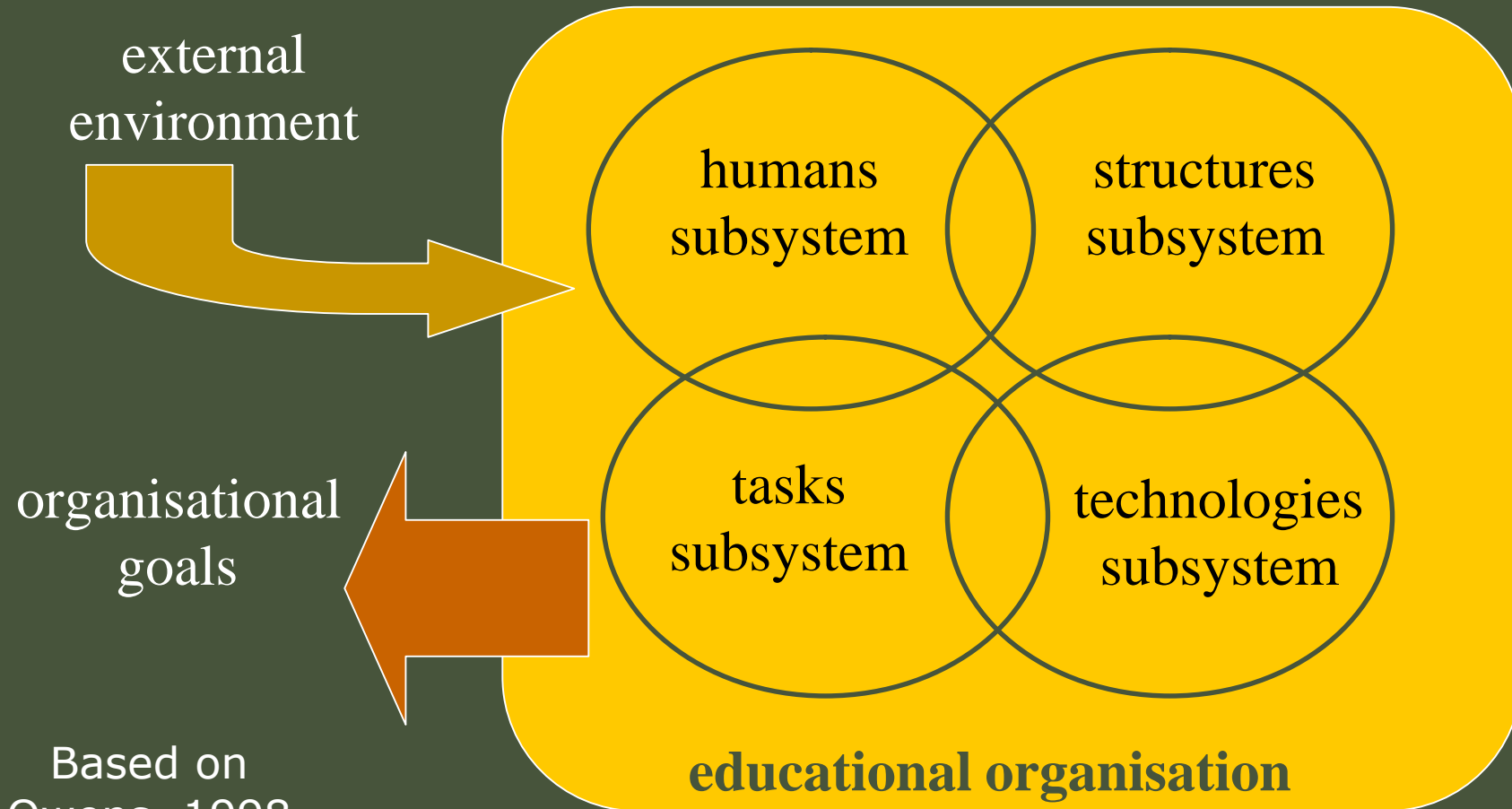
Nature 431, 723 (14 October 2004); doi:10.1038/431723b

Evaluation of Online Learning Management Systems



Phillipa Sturgess and
Fons Nouwens

Decisionmaking in complex situations



Based on
Owens, 1998

18/10/2004

Evaluating Open and Distance Education
at CQU

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Model of Evaluation – Expert

- Summative focus
- Objective view
- Legitimacy of “expert”
- “the meanings and interpretations constructed by the evaluators were not accurate representations of the perceptions of the participants.... There is no one reality of a situation”
(Smith and Lovat, 2004)

Model of Evaluation - Participative

- Participants in the context are supported to participate and control the evaluation process
- Institution culture is not coherent and unitary
- Decision making enriched by multiple perspectives
- (Bonus) Increased ownership of decision

Decisionmaking process

- ❑ Subcultures identified and invited to participate
- ❑ Each sub-culture conducted own evaluation process
- ❑ Reports circulated to all participants
- ❑ Decision made at meeting of representatives of all subcultures

Subcultures - Academic

- Also represented Students
- Identify issues
- Ease of use, product stability, teaching functions

Evaluation methods

- Reflection
- Survey
- Individual trials
- Student usability testing

Subcultures - Management

- ❑ Costs – initial and ongoing
- ❑ Licensing restrictions
- ❑ Support

Evaluation

- Analysis of documentation
- Suppliers

Subcultures – Information Technology Staff

- Stability
- Interaction with other systems
- Technical design

- Evaluation
 - Trials of all systems
 - Review of documentation

Subcultures - Multimedia developmentspecialists

- ❑ Conversion of courses from WebCT
- ❑ Flexibility of design
- ❑ Speed of use

Evaluation

- Trial development
- Trial conversion
- Expert reflection

Recommendations

- Never a “final” decision
- Evaluation with formative focus

Regular colloquia with widespread participation

- All subcultures
- All interested persons

Benefitsof AnOnline DiscussionList in ATraditional DistanceEducation Course



Julie Bradshaw and Leone Hinton

Context

- ❑ This paper analyses and evaluates the use of an asynchronous online discussion list introduced to an established distance education print based course on recreational drug use and abuse.
- ❑ This discussion list was established in order to be able to meet a course objective of challenging assumptions and attitudes about drug use, which were difficult to measure in the previous format.
- ❑ This presentation briefly examines the evaluation of an asynchronous discussion board based on the constructivist model of learning.
- ❑ It demonstrates the benefits gained from adding an online discussion list, including attitudinal change and the opportunity for academic discourse between students.

Guidelines for Student Responses

“Responses needed to be at least one paragraph and should be one of the following:

- ❑ an opinion supported by literature or media discussion
- ❑ a comparison with current or historical issues relating to the topic
- ❑ an opinion based on social norms (Be very careful here to be objective, not to moralise and not to preach)
- ❑ an observation of the issue in relation to the current political climate, national or international events
- ❑ a support or challenge to another person's response. However, the response should follow the previous 1-4-guidelines. Do not be personal. ”

(Source: Drugs in Society Course Profile 2004. CQU)

ContentAnalysis Model

(Developed by Gunawardena, Lowe and Anderson (1997) adapted from McLoughlin and Luca [2001])

Phase 1 Sharing and comparing information	Verbal transactions take the form of statements and observations
Phase 2 Discovery and exploration	Students become aware of differences in views and interpretations. There may be questions, clarifications and elaboration of concepts

Content Analysis Model (cont)

Phase 3 Negotiation of meaning and co-construction of knowledge	Evidence of negotiated outcomes and areas of agreement and disagreement and proposals for shared understandings
Phase 4 Testing and revision of ideas	Interactions would include statements of evidence against criteria, examples and investigating alternative viewpoints
Phase 5 Awareness of newly constructed knowledge	Evidence of metacognitive statements demonstrating new knowledge construction and reflection on areas of agreement and differences.

Content Analysis of Student Postings

Phases indicating level of knowledge construction	2003 - % of total responses in particular phases (n=325)	2004 - % of total responses in particular phases (n=386)
Phase 1	29%	32%
Phase 2	20%	18%
Phase 3	31%	34%
Phase 4	11%	8%
Phase 5	9%	8%

The Evaluation of Teaching and Learning at CQU



Patrick Danaher

Topics included in the theme issue:

- ❑ different conceptual frameworks (learners' technical, practical and emancipatory interests, productivist education versus contextual learning);
- ❑ different course or learning management systems (Blackboard, WebCT);
- ❑ different disciplines (business, early childhood, information technology, nursing);

Topics included in the theme issue (cont)

- ❑ different uses of online learning technologies (discussion lists, examinations, messaging systems);
- ❑ different intended outcomes of such technologies for students (attitudinal change, empowerment, engagement with the university, with a particular technology and/or with one another);
- ❑ different actual outcomes of such technologies for students (positive, neutral and negative perceptions and experiences)" (Nouwens, Erdinc & Danaher, 2004b, pp. 3 of 4).

Evaluationis ...

- ❑ an *educational* process that is crucial to the ongoing enhancement of both student learning and program design;
- ❑ an *ethical* process that ascribes considerable responsibility to all participants and stakeholders to produce accurate and comprehensive data and to use those data wisely;

Evaluationis ...

- ❑ an *ideological* process that reflects multiple and sometimes competing worldviews;
- ❑ a *political* process that is influenced by, and can in turn be used to influence, the exercise of power;
- ❑ a *value-laden* process that is framed by, and can help to perpetuate and/or to transform, particular ideals and principles” (Nouwens, Erdinc & Danaher, 2004b, pp. 3 of 4).