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Conceptions of, and approaches to, teaching online : a study of lecturers teaching postgraduate distance courses

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Abstract

This paper presents the outcomes of a study into online teaching. It builds upon previous research and conceptual frameworks produced by Kember and Kwan (Instr Sci 28(5):469-490, 2000) and Roberts (Instr Sci 31(1):127-150, 2003). It advances research on conceptions of, and approaches to, teaching by examining teaching in a novel context: distance-taught courses at the postgraduate level. Lecturers were interviewed from a Faculty of Health Sciences in a research-intensive Australian University. Relationships between conceptions and approaches found in previous research were confirmed in this study. However, it was found that the conceptions of online teaching proposed by Roberts (Instr Sci 31(1):127-150, 2003) did not adequately distinguish between the conceptions held by the lecturers interviewed in this study. Three modified conceptions of online teaching are proposed: for individual access to learning materials and information; and for individual assessment; for learning related communication (asynchronous and/or synchronous); and as a medium for networked learning. Some of the dimensions developed by Roberts to describe

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approaches to online teaching were not applicable in this study setting and needed further modification. Two broad approaches emerged: 'informative/individual learning focused' and 'communicative/networked learning focused'. Contextual influences on teaching reported by Kember and Kwan (Instr Sci 28(5):469-490, 2000) that is, institutional influence, nature of students and subject and curriculum were revealed in this study to have different levels of influence over approaches to online teaching: the first two being the more relevant ones. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Gonzalez, Carlos, E-Mail: cgonzalu@uc.cl