



International Assessment Differences: A Developing Research Topic

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1. BACKGROUND

The School of Information Technology and Electrotechnology at Otago Polytechnic has an on-going relationship with the Information Technology department of Institut Teknologi Informasi (ITI) in Melaka, Malaysia. This relationship is being developed to allow students who have completed the Diploma of Information Technology the opportunity of completing the Bachelor of Information Technology at Otago Polytechnic. The intention is that students will complete a portion of their study in Malaysia under the supervision of Otago Polytechnic and then complete the degree program studying at the Dunedin Campus.

Early in 2002, Mr Krishnan K Ponniah, of ITI, conducted a content analysis of the assessment items that students undertook within certain papers (Ponniah 2002). The aim of the research was to identify the learning objectives that underpinned the assessments. The research used a modified version of Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Domains (Bloom 1956). This taxonomy has the advantage of being well established both in the general educational literature and in the literature regarding the education of Information Technology (e.g. Vitolo and Coulston 2002, Gokhale 1996)

2 RATIONALE

We believe that a comparison between the original research conducted in Malaysia with data gathered from New Zealand will enable both institutions to identify relative points of difference.

It is important that we can identify areas of difference between the two institutions

teaching styles (including assessments). One aim of the comparison is to gain a glimpse as to what the students gain by going through the process of being educated under two systems, by two institutions. If the institutions have a varied emphasis on various cognitive skills then this may be seen as a valuable aspect of the programme. In certain cases the differences are a cause for celebration and a reason for students to undergo an education that spans the two institutions in other cases it may inform the institutions as to areas where one may learn from the other. Identifying the differences in assessment emphasis will also enable Otago Polytechnic to identify areas in which Malaysian students are being extended beyond familiar assessment experiences. Before any comparison may occur however, similar studies must be undertaken that have comparable results. The current research attempts to duplicate the Malaysian study within the Otago Polytechnic environment.

3. METHODOLOGY

The Ponniah (2002) study will be replicated in Otago Polytechnic's B.IT programme.

The assessments from five papers will be analysed. In keeping with the original study, these will be: Object Oriented Programming; Data Communications and Networking; Software Engineering; Fundamentals of IT Systems; Multimedia.

Each uniquely graded item in the assessment will be matched to Bloom's taxonomy according to a schedule that is designed to match the process taken by Ponniah.

The research is currently on-going as a partnership effort between the two institutions. The Otago version of the project is currently in development. It is expected that the results will be submitted for the review of the NACCQ at a later date.

