

Mapping influence: highlights from an investigation into nationally funded learning and teaching projects in Australia

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The post-completion achievements of funded projects are often obscure, without a clear place. Higher education practitioners routinely have a mental map – built up with contour lines of experience, anecdote and common sense – but it can be difficult to replace this approximation with a robust, evidence-based understanding of the impact of funding learning and teaching research. This showcase shares insights from a 2012-2013 study that systematically examined completed projects through a jointly-constructed exploration of the project, with a particular focus on influence and change. In Australia, this study is one of the first to do so. The research takes a constructivist approach where knowledge is developed iteratively ‘in the minds of constructors’ (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 104). The use of language is important in constructivism. It ‘inherently shades perceptions, defines ‘reality,’ and affects mutual understanding’ (Patton cited in Kirkhart, 2000, p. 7). For this reason, the study uses semi-structured research conversations, member-checking and online feedback surveys to create space for participants to discuss influence in their own words. This approach is within the qualitative interpretivist paradigm, grounded in a belief that because ‘reality is constructed by those participating in it’ the researcher’s role is to understand the lived experience of the research subject (Hathaway, 1995, pp. 544-545). This showcase, in addressing the sub-theme *research and policy*, shares key findings from the study and invites reflection about the place of learning and teaching research, and how it can improve learning and teaching in participating institutions and beyond.