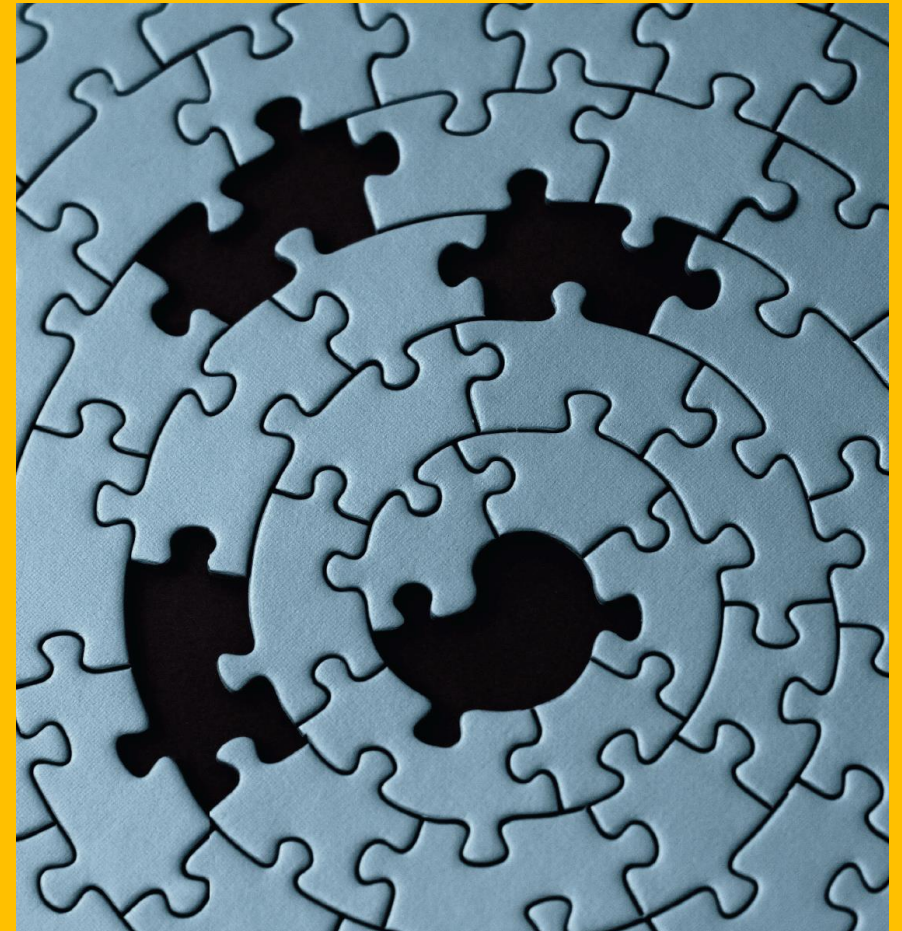


# Using student voices as a catalyst for pedagogical reflection and redesign

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# Potential of student voices as a pedagogical catalyst...

- The understanding of the role and function of the student voice in influencing the pedagogical practices in higher education remains **underdeveloped when compared to other educational environments** (Canning, 2017; Seale, 2009, 2013)
- The complex **imperatives and ideologies that frame the characterisations and use of the student voice** are not often understood, particularly by those who advocate its use (Freeman, 2016)
- Student voices have a potential to provoke difficult questions and pedagogical change when used as a mechanism for improvement, being a counterweight to ***deadly pedagogical habits*** (McWilliam 2005, Darwin 2020a)

# Engaging students (especially at a distance....)

- The current COVID-19 pandemic has brought into sharper relief one of the key contemporary challenges of higher education: how to most effectively engage students
- The move to online teaching has increased the potential distance between teachers and students, amplifying the challenges of designing conditions for meaningful learning (Marinoni, Land, & Jensen, 2020; Rapanta, Botturi, Goodyear, Guàrdia, & Koole, 2020)
- This development has also forced more questions about how academic teachers can most effectively capture and harness student perspectives on their learning experiences to enhance current and prospective approaches to learning design

# On the Chilean higher education context....

- Recent research undertaken across Chilean universities (Darwin, 2020b) suggests that most institutions **place largely instrumental value on the student voice**, with most universities relying primarily on end-of-semester, student ratings-based surveys to quantify student responses to their learning experiences
- Moreover, existing (and anticipated) systems of institutional and program-level accreditation overseen by the *Comisión Nacional de Acreditación* (CNA) place little emphasis on the need for universities to better understand or more effectively evaluate student learning

## Some preliminary outcomes...

- **Student voice in higher education is under-theorised** in literature and its primary manifestation—student ratings—has a common sense, taken-for-granted status in research
- In contemporary higher education, the **student voice performs a predominantly instrumental role**, primarily seen as contributing confirming evidence toward the quality assurance or discriminating levels of student satisfaction with university teaching and levels of institutional support
- The **evaluative object has moved** from pedagogy, to the teacher and increasingly, to the product

# Some questions about harnessing student voices....

- So, how has this unique reliance on student surveys evolved in higher education—including Chilean institutions—and why have these been adopted as a legitimate proxy for understanding teaching quality?
- Are there alternatives that have emerged as a potential more substantial and effective means of understanding student perspectives on their learning experiences?

# On student ratings in higher education

- Even before the pandemic, serious questions emerged as to the capability of student ratings-based surveys to meaningfully contribute to improving the quality of teaching (Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Uttl et al., 2017).
- The comparative logic behind the quantitative design of student surveys—though ensuring validity and reliability—equally has imposed a rigidity of design that is potentially unresponsive to diverse or transforming teaching environments (Okupe & Medland, 2019).
- This limitation is of even greater significance in the current period of online and more flexible forms of pedagogy, where now traditional survey questions can be rendered increasingly irrelevant by the circumstances forced by teaching in a time of the pandemic.

# On student ratings in higher education

- Long history, but student ratings mainstreamed in global higher education in quality assurance (1980s- )/institutional ranking eras (2000- )
- Valid and reliable in broad terms, but serious potential limitations:
  - **condense student voices** to a homogenised, singular perspective (for quantitative comparison)
  - **vulnerable to potential biases** (e.g. gender, ethnicity, subject design, levels of response rates)
  - increasingly used as a **mechanism for academic performance management** and institutional evaluation



# So...are there viable alternatives to conventional student rating models?

<i>Collaborative</i>	<i>Qualitative evaluation</i>	<i>Student Collaboration</i>
	Formative qualitative evaluation	Collaborative Inquiry
	Summative qualitative evaluation	Student-as-partners (curriculum/pedagogy)
<i>Generic</i>	<i>Traditional surveys</i>	<i>Classroom-based research</i>
	Student experience or engagement surveys	Empirical research
	Student satisfaction surveys	Action Research
<i>Quality Assurance</i>		<i>Program Improvement</i>

# Taxonomy of the contemporary student voice

## **Democratic voice: students-as-partners, learning collaboration**

Provocation for critical reflection and dialogue, heightened pedagogical responsiveness, catalyst for pedagogical reform or transformation

## **Assurance voice: comparative SET ratings, student engagement, standards**

Regular opportunities to express opinion, evidence of pedagogical responsiveness to feedback, institutional regard for outcomes in decisions around teachers and teaching

## **Consumer voice: student satisfaction, value for money, employability**

Expectations of regard for investment, services/support consistent with institutional commitments, ability to complain/seek redress for failure

# Primary tensions

## Democratic form (blunt)

Autonomous professional action-developmental drive *versus*:

Student expectations-institutional learning outcomes

## Assurance form (pronounced)

Localised responsibility for pedagogy-outcomes *versus*:

Requisite level of student satisfaction-comparative standards of expected practice/performativity

## Consumer form (sharp)

Collective pedagogical action-individual performativity *versus*:

Student-as-consumer value assessments-growing use of rankings/league tables

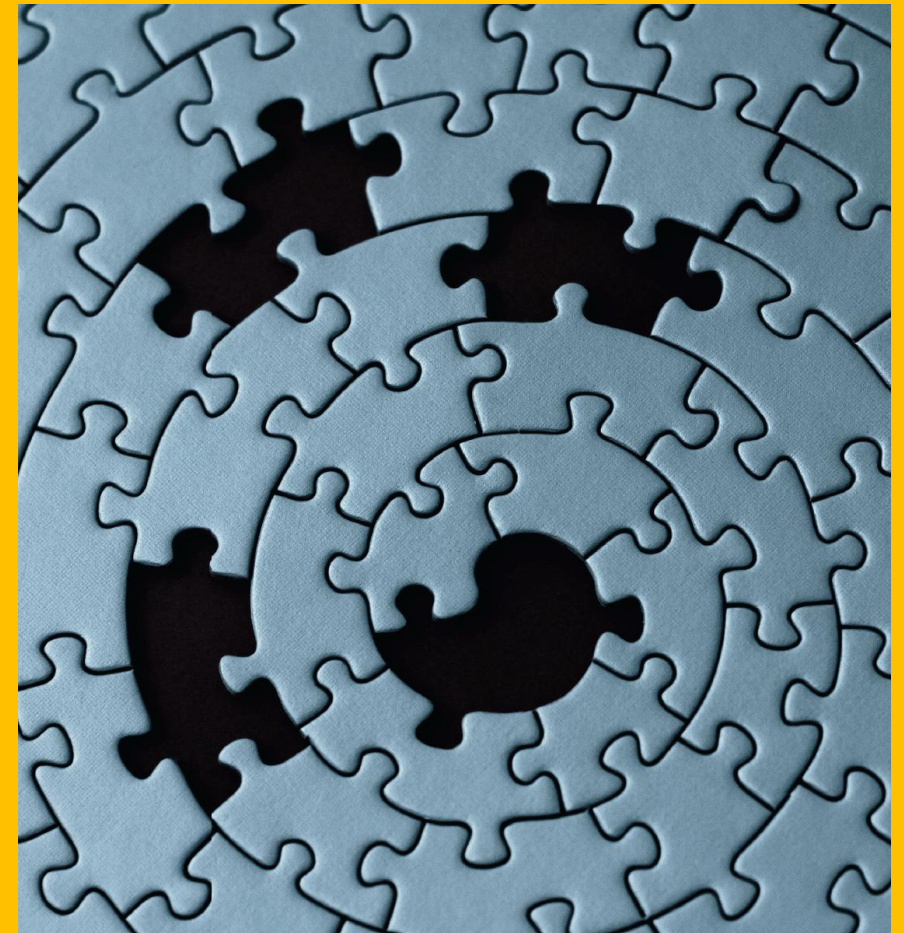
# Some emerging questions....

- Are ratings metrics a suitable means of capturing a (homogenised) student voice? What alternatives are there?
- What are students most capable of in rating or evaluating curricula, pedagogy and assessment?
- How is diverse forms of student agency and local cultures understood when standardised, static measures are the core epistemology of ratings?
- How can the student voice become a more influential actor in academic dialogue around curriculum and pedagogical design in higher education?

More details....in the  
conference paper

*More effectively harnessing  
student voices in higher education  
(especially in pandemic times)*

<https://tinyurl.com/yyortf3l>



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