How do introductory psychology texts present science, and the scientist-practitioner model?

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The design of psychology programs in Australian universities is guided by the principles of the 'scientist-practitioner' model. According to this model, practicing psychologists are expected to be able to contribute to the creation of knowledge through research as well as utilising effective, evidence-based, procedures. Accreditation guidelines thus emphasise research-skills development throughout undergraduate psychology programs, and the importance of the honours-level fourth year as a capstone experience for Australian students. The AUTC-funded project, Learning Outcomes and Curriculum Development in Psychology, will provide an analysis of various sources of influence upon undergraduate curricula, curriculum design, and student outcomes. A starting point for this analysis is to examine how the scientist-practitioner model is portrayed within introductory psychology texts, which form the basis for students' understanding of the nature of psychology during their initial contact with the discipline. We will also be considering the treatment of the general nature of science in these texts, since the meaning of the phrase 'scientist-practitioner' is not clarified unless the meaning of the term 'scientist' is first known. The results of our initial survey of introductory texts will be provided, along with a description of our intentions to further.

AUTC Biotechnology Educators' Network

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There are more than two-dozen undergraduate degree programs in Australia in the relatively new area of biotechnology. Programs cover disciplines ranging from fundamental chemistry to ethics and intellectual property. The nature of these programs has been characterised by a national study funded by the Australian Universities Teaching Committee and conducted by principals at the University of Queensland, Flinders University, and the University of New South Wales. This effort has now moved into a second phase, which includes building a biotechnology educators network to share 'best practice' approaches to teaching biotechnology—from single teamwork assignments to industry placement schemes.

One challenge in building an educator's network in this new area is that there are many more lecturers who 'teach into' a biotechnology degree program than who call themselves 'biotechnology educators'. Nevertheless, all are welcome to our network. This conference session is meant as a network-building exercise for those of us who contribute to the education of students in biotechnology. The results of the national benchmarking study will be shared, and ideas for networking and network building will be entertained. The conference session then leads toward a national gathering of biotechnology educators coordinated by the AUTC Biotechnology team at the AusBiotech conference in Brisbane in November 2004.