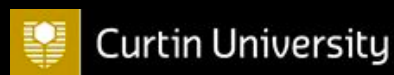




VirtualPREX

Changing directions through VirtualPREX:
engaging pre-service teachers in virtual
professional experience



The VirtualPREX team

**Sue
Gregory**



**Yvonne
Masters**



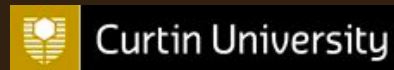
**Barney
Dalgarno**



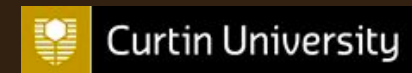
**Matthew
Campbell**



**Torsten
Reiners**



**Heinz
Dreher**



Geoff Crisp



Vicki Knox



2011/2012



VirtualPREX: Virtual Professional Experience ALTC Grant 2010-2012

- Practise teaching skills prior to practicum placements
- Use the space synchronously or asynchronously, by themselves or interacting with peers, academics and/or bots (non-player characters)
- Machinima, for self, peer, formative and summative assessment
- Practise teaching skills with the bots programmed to react to certain triggers
- Experience a range of scenarios in a risk-free environment
- Assessable tasks, using bots to teach, peers to role-play teaching and/or machinima to reflect, assess and provide feedback



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<http://www.virtualprex.com>

VirtualPREX: Virtual Professional Experience

ALTC Grant 2010-2012



- Assist pre-service teachers in acquiring a better range of professional skills and confidence before being placed in a real life classroom
- Provide diverse professional experience options for pre-service teachers
- Create awareness about virtual worlds as a pedagogical and social networking tool
- Compare different methods of interaction to enhance student learning and teaching



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VirtualPREX Classrooms



<http://www.virtualprex.com>

Focus Group Role-Plays

- Getting up and down, wandering around and never still
- Calling out all the time
- Know-it-all – beyond putting their hand up, they just want to get the answer out
- “Goody goody” – just want to please the teacher all the time – going beyond being helpful
- Behaviour Disorders – may not have taken medication
- Tattletale – dobs on fellow students
- Over-achiever – knows answers beyond capabilities of other students – potential of becoming bored
- Noisemaker – tapping the desk, whistling, humming
- Under-achiever – does not understand and is always asking questions
- Does not pay attention and is always asking what is going on or getting the teacher to repeat things
- Slow learner – always behind in their work and often off-task
- Language Disorders – these children may be a bit slower
- Dominator and defiant – takes the teacher on
- Non-responsive student – withdrawn, sulky, non-cooperative, disengaged
- Eye-roller
- Attention seeker

Workshops



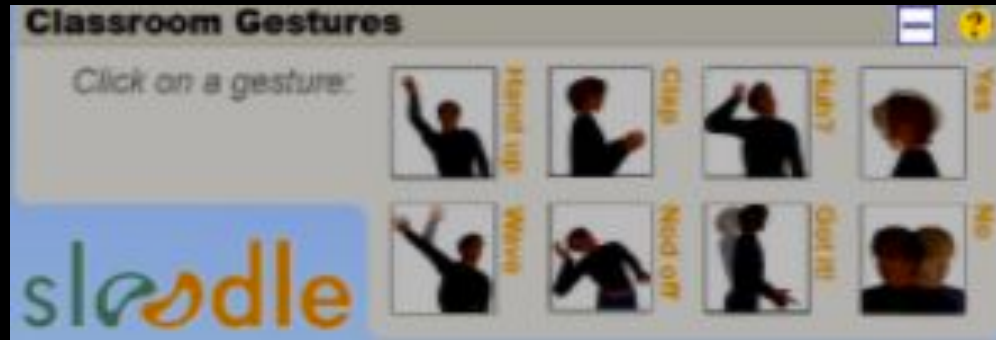
- Role-play in a virtual world as:
 - **Teacher** - (presented a seven (7) minute teaching episode or idea on teaching – focusing on preferred KLA)
 - **Primary School Student** – role-play as either good or naughty student (these roles were given to students and rotated – they were provided with different roles for each scenario)

During Workshops



- Pre-service teachers were provided with an avatar to use – either teacher or school student
- All text was recorded and on-screen video was taken of all classes (to be later used for self, peer, formative and summative assessment through machinima)
- Pre-service teachers had to keep to protocols of a real classroom
- Text was used for on-campus pre-service teachers
- Off-campus pre-service teachers used audio when role-playing as teachers and text for primary school students

Pre-service teacher instructions



- Pre-service teachers used a Sloodle HUD (Heads Up Display)
- A window on their screen (HUD) enabled them to click on a button to generate a gesture from their avatar)
- They could clap their hands, raise, or wave, their arm if they wanted to speak
- The teacher could use it as a method for classroom management

Reflection and Survey

At the end of the role-play:

- Pre-service teachers reflected on their reactions to the role-play activity (their role as a teacher or student were discussed)
- Pre-service teachers in the role-play activity were invited to complete a survey

Role-play in a virtual world

VirtualPREX

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University of
New England

Virtual Professional Experience
Role-play in a virtual world



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DEHub.edu.au

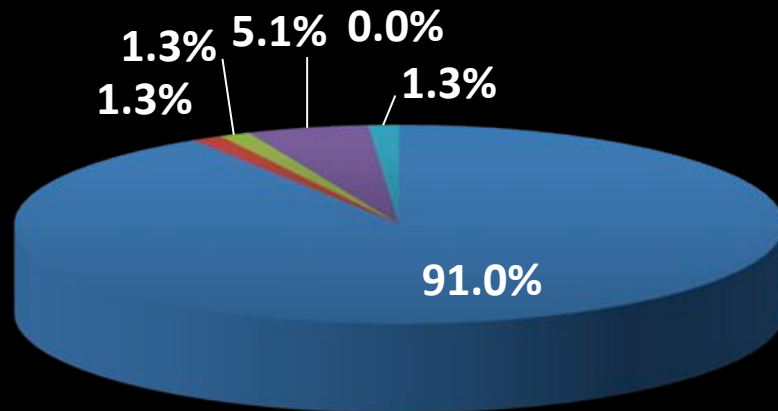
Innovation in Distance Education

Funded by the
Australian Government
Department of Education,
Employment and Workplace Relations

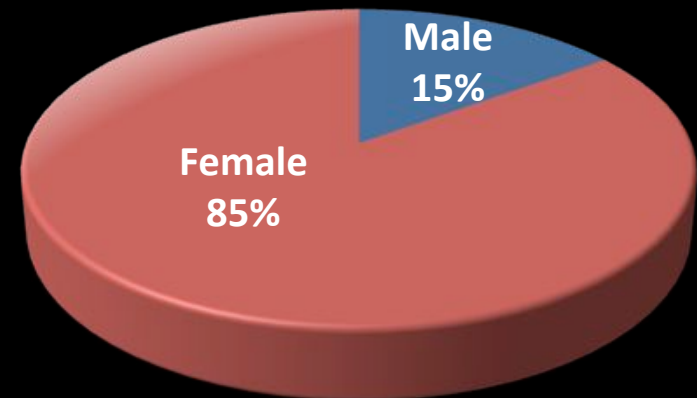
Demographic Data



Age

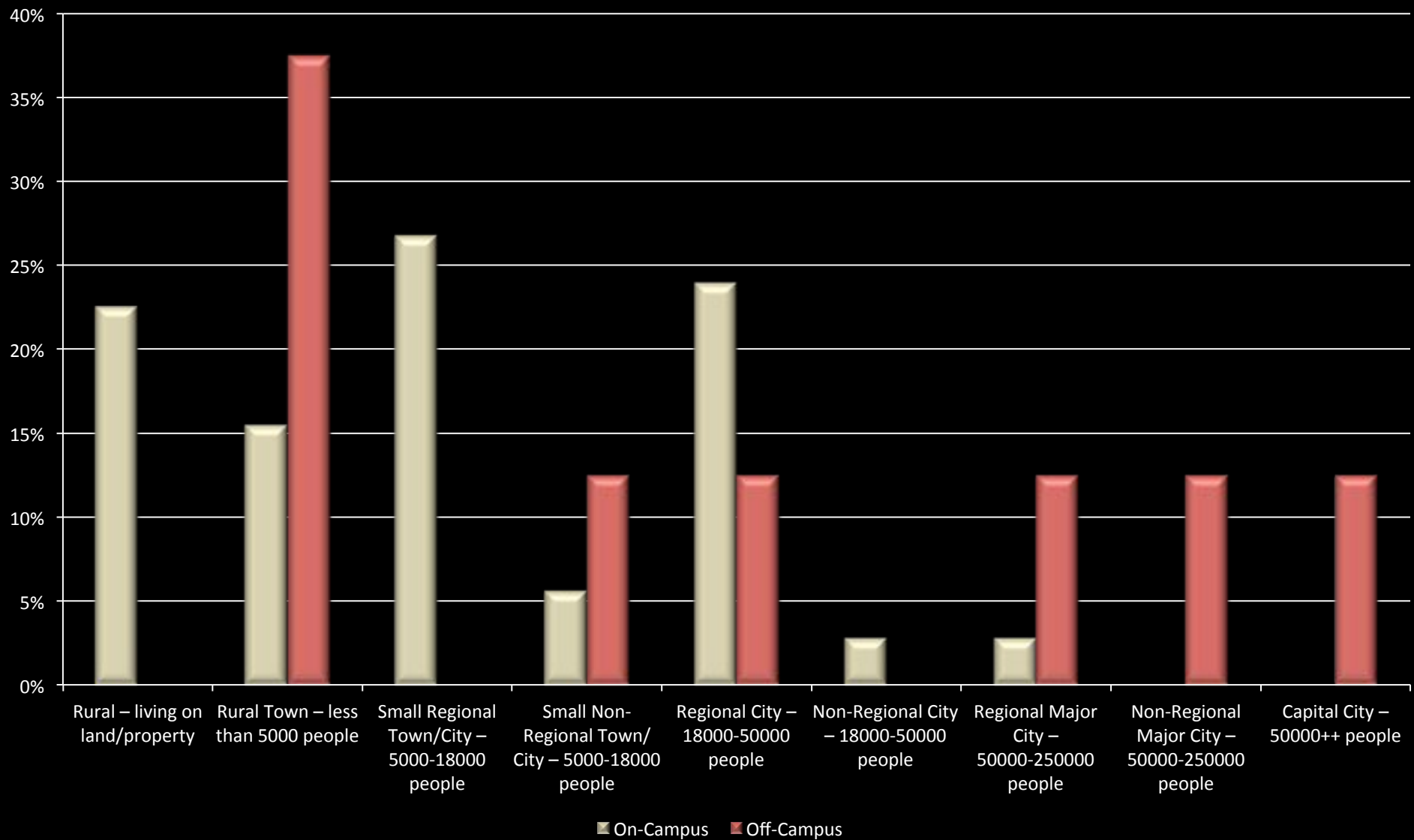


■ under 26 yrs ■ 26 to 35 ■ 36 to 45 ■ 46 to 55 ■ 56 to 65 ■ Over 65

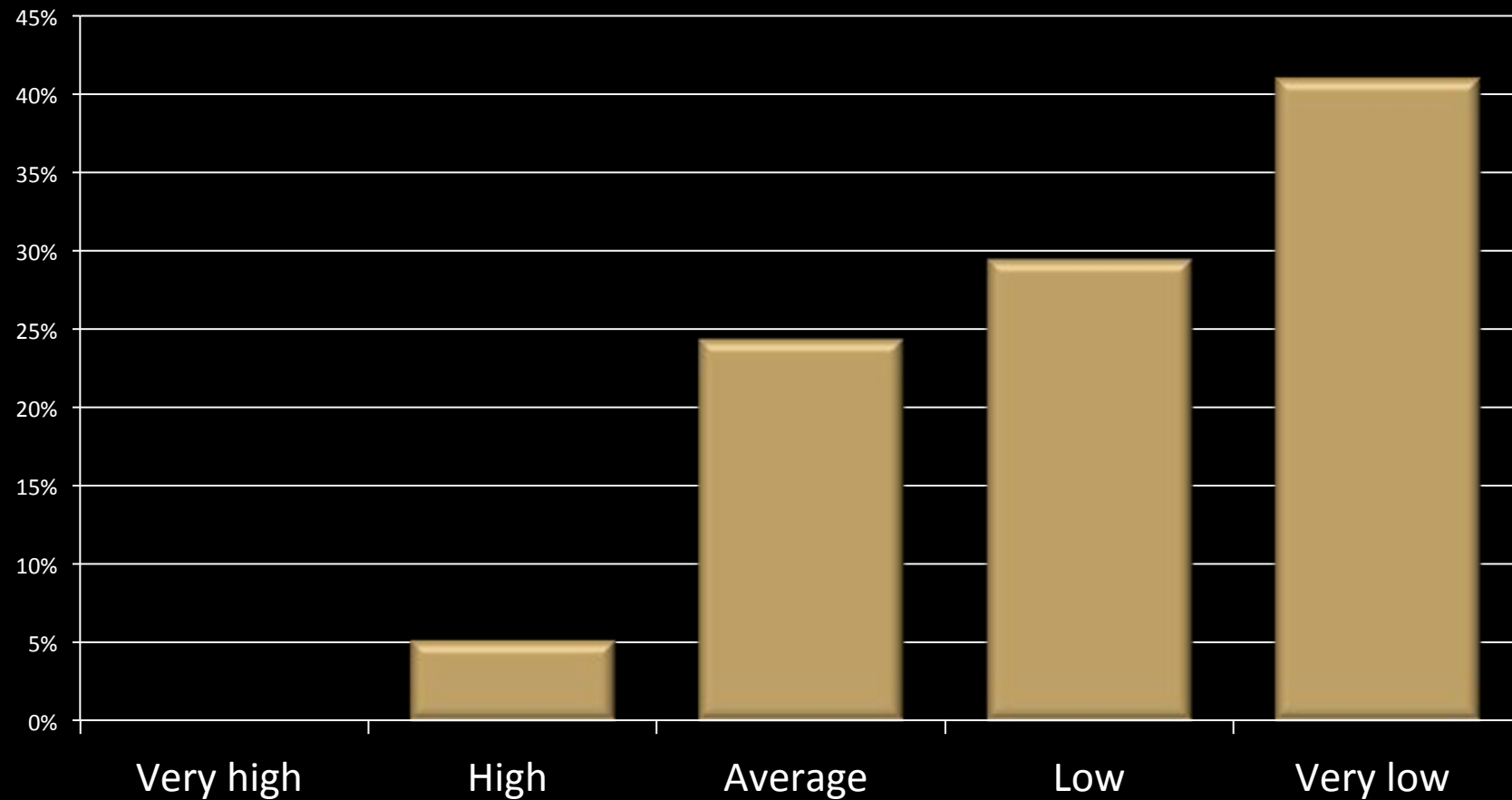


Gender

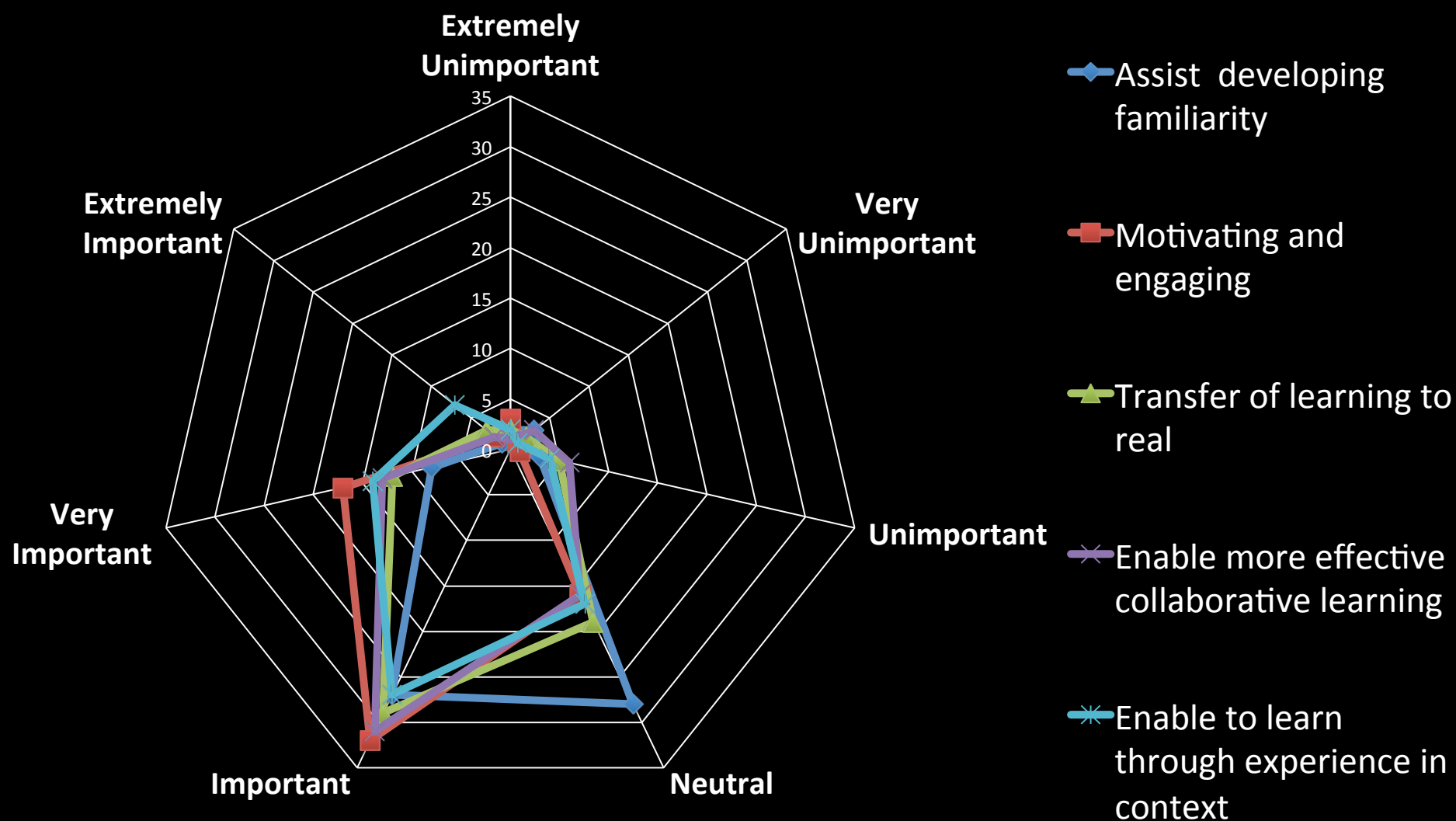
Place of Residence



Skill level in relation to virtual worlds prior to commencing University



Importance of learning benefits of virtual worlds



Some student comments on their experience with the role-play

On-Campus

I enjoyed being the teacher and having to come up with strategies to deal with students that would not follow instructions

Trying different things to keep the students in task, gave us a chance to practice teaching.

Off-campus

It gave me an insight into other people's teaching strategies and also to what had me switch on and be interested when I played the student role.

Enjoyable to see what others did and how they coped with the situation in a safe environment where you could make mistakes and learn from them.

Weighted average of perceptions of the role-play activity

1=Not at all – 7=Extremely (n=80)

Irrelevant

Boring

Difficult

Confusing

Useful

Easy to Use

Enjoyable

Interesting

3.13

3.23

3.25

3.56

4.30

4.60

4.64

4.92

Blanka Vlasic, Croatian High Jumper



How the pilot progressed

- A number of technology problems were encountered:
 - In the first on-campus workshop only – the world didn't rezz, group chat didn't work and the Internet worked spasmodically (an institutional problem)
 - In the off-campus workshop one student couldn't hear and use audio – a scribe was needed
- Most students had the opportunity to role-play the teacher

Student Perspectives

Response	Not at all						Extremely	Mean
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Confusing	7%	15%	18%	28%	20%	8%	3%	3.75
Difficult	13%	20%	23%	15%	20%	8%	1%	3.41
Irrelevant	17%	29%	13%	14%	13%	9%	6%	3.26
Interesting	1%	7%	13%	18%	30%	14%	17%	4.77
Easy to use	0%	9%	16%	26%	23%	24%	3%	4.47
Useful	3%	13%	21%	24%	23%	10%	7%	4.08
Boring	13%	17%	19%	30%	7%	10%	4%	3.49
Enjoyable	1%	7%	24%	24%	11%	19%	13%	4.44

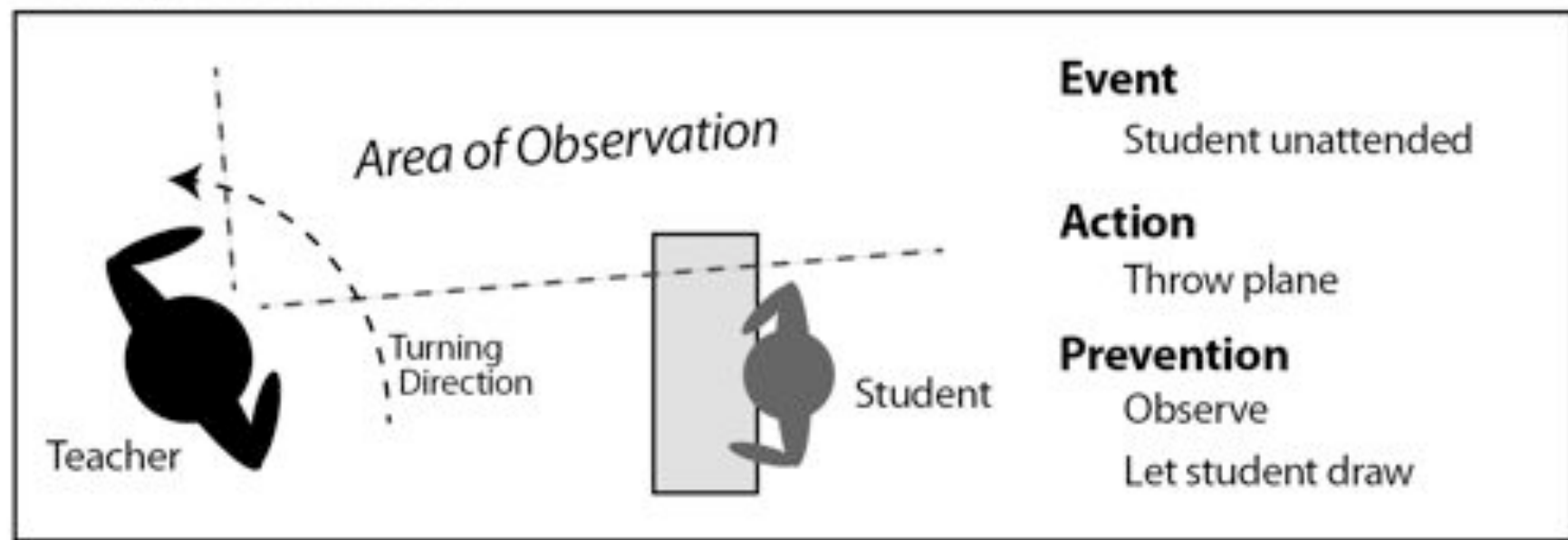
Student Perspectives

- Best things:
 - entertaining;
 - novelty of the experience,
 - value of role-playing a teacher or particular types of student
- Worst things:
 - problem of everybody talking at once;
 - having to type made things move slowly and consequently they found it boring at times
 - difficulties in obtaining control of the class as a teacher (arguably a good thing)

Next Steps

- Minor improvements planned:
 - Changing appearance from teacher
 - Role-plays being just all “good” students
 - Audio
 - Machinima
- Major enhancement: use of children ‘bots’:
 - Simulated children will allow the activity to be undertaken by distance students without the need for a group of other students to be present (bots);
 - The question of whether sufficiently realistic children behaviours can be simulated is an important one to be explored through our evaluations

The future of VirtualPREX



Contact Details



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Vicki Knox
Yvonne Masters**

**Heinz Dreher
Geoff Crisp**

*With
thanks*
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