

## **BEYOND STEREOTYPING: UNDERSTANDING STUDENT READINESS FOR NETWORK CENTRIC LEARNING**

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This paper reports the findings of a comprehensive study of student pre-entry experiences of, skills in, and attitudes towards Information & Communication Technologies (ICTs). The aim of the study was to gain an accurate understanding of students' pre-entry use of ICTs as an evidence-base for making informed decisions about the educational deployment of ICTs at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA).

The paper, by providing valuable evidence about students' pre-entry use of ICTs, helps to identify barriers to the expanding educational use of ICTs and offers valuable insights into opportunities for future developments. We show how defence education and training establishments can make evidence-based decisions on how best to allocate time and resources to meet both rapidly evolving education technologies and the skill requirements of Network-Centric Warfare & Security (NCW/S) environments.

The paper raises the importance of replacing assumptions and anecdotal evidence about Generation 'Y' students with an empirical, evidence-based framework for the design of network-centric e-learning that takes account of their actual ICT skill levels and the need to build ICT related graduate attributes required for competent operation in digital rich NCW/S environments.

The results of the study indicate that a reliance on populist Generation 'Y' stereotyping for deploying virtual learning environments (VLEs) is likely to be problematic in terms of effective student engagement and the targeting of staff development. The findings present a salutary lesson in not stereotyping Generation "Y" students currently entering our military education establishments and points to the value of extending this survey to cover students in other Academies and the academic/instructional staff who role it is to engage them in network-centric learning.