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Open Practices in Academic Professional Development Programmes

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Open practices in academic professional development programmes

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Strand: Reflective practice

Descriptor: Reflective practice offer a contribution towards the practice of open education, e.g. case studies, descriptive accounts, but with a reflective and critical component.

In this reflective practice work, we will examine critically the process of evaluating and redesigning academic professional development programmes through the lens of open educational practices and resources. For over 15 years, the DIT’s Learning Teaching and Technology Centre (LTTC) has offered a suite of accredited postgraduate programmes and modules for staff. Demand for these programmes and modules has increased since 2013 with 187 participants graduating and a further 221 completing modules for continuing professional development (CPD). DIT was the first higher education institution (HEI) in Ireland to state a requirement that newly appointed lecturers complete a postgraduate qualification in teaching and learning. During 2018, formal evaluation and review of these programmes has taken place, and we are now redesigning and revalidating our offerings. The evaluation and redesign process has followed a formal methodology inclusive of a desk study, data collection with graduates and other stakeholders, an institutional quality assurance review and ongoing reflection by the team.

Academic professional development programmes offer institutions the potential to address openness at several levels and respond to conceptualisations of open educational practices such as those discussed by Cronin and MacLaren (2018). First, programmes can introduce the topic and outline its evolution and importance to participants. Second, we can use open educational resources (OERs) as part of teaching which is valuable in and of itself, but also models this practice to other educators and demonstrates the range and potential of OERs. Third, we can critique and explore open education in terms of open pedagogies and open teaching, inviting other educators and stakeholders into that conversation. Through reflective writing, which is a cornerstone of our programmes, we can encourage responses to openness, for example in Teaching Philosophy Statements and e-portfolios. Ultimately, through formal and informal academic professional development we seek to open longer discussions with our colleagues in relation to teaching, learning and assessment. Part of this process is opening up a discussion about openness in our institution and within the higher education sector in Ireland.

In this study, we will explore the outcomes of our evaluation in terms of where and how open educational practices and the use of open educational resources were reflected in our programmes and modules. Then, we will discuss the changes made during redesign and revalidation, including a renewed focus on collaborative pedagogical practices, use and reuse of OERs, and the design of a new module on open education specifically for educators in higher education and beyond. These changes reflect the growing importance of open education in

terms of academic professional development, as a field of research and practice, and as an opportunity for our institution.

Reference:

Cronin, C. & MacLaren, I. (2018). Conceptualising OEP: A review of theoretical and empirical literature in Open Educational Practices. *Open Praxis* 10(2), 127-143.