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The Development of Teachers' Key Competences for Student-Centred Teaching and Learning.

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The Development of Teachers’ Key Competences for Student-centred Teaching and Learning

Presentation at Rectors’ Conference, Slovenia
2014
Frank McMahan
Focus on Student-centred Learning

• Broad distinction between Teacher-centred and Student-centred teaching
• Emphasis on what the teacher does or emphasis on what students do
• The move towards a Learning Outcomes Approach to curriculum design
• The influence of the Bologna Process
Differences of Approach

• Difference between input of teachers and the learning activities of students
• The “Sage on the Stage” v “Guide on the Side”
• Differences in how the objectives of the teaching are written
• A paradigm shift towards Student-centred Learning
Key Features of SCL

• Seeking Active rather than Passive learning
• Emphasis on deep learning and understanding
• Increased responsibility for the student
• Greater sense of autonomy for the learner
• Interdependence between teacher and learner
• Mutual respect between teachers and students
• A reflexive approach to the teaching process by teachers and learners

[Adapted from O’Neill and McMahon, 2005]
Designing Programme for SCL

• Programme outcomes to be designed first
• Statements of what a graduate should know, should understand should be able to do
• May be based on the *Dublin Descriptors* for first, second and third cycle awards
• Represents a radical change away from the traditional approach to starting with what the university will put into the programme
Abbreviated Dublin Descriptors

- First cycle degree awarded to students who have demonstrated knowledge and understanding
- Can apply their knowledge and understanding in a professional way to their work
- Can gather and interpret relevant data
- Can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions
- Have learning skills to continue to further study
Teaching Skills to Implement SCL

• Teaching methods that lead to understanding
• A Teaching Strategy is a plan for someone else’s learning
• Exercises and activities for students
• Materials which will be supplied for students to work with
• How evidence of their growing understanding will be collected
Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education

- Many universities now have LTC to offer training to new/inexperienced teaching staff
- PGCert may be mandatory for all new staff
- Part-time, requiring attendance half day per week
- Include reflective piece, tutor observation, peer assessment and micro teaching
- Required before a teacher gets tenure/promotion
- Mixes staff from different disciplines
- May involve staff from other universities
MA in Higher Education

• A follow-on from the Postgraduate Cert/Diploma
• Part-time, 2 years
• Involves modules in year 1, preparation of a dissertation year 2
• Topic chosen by the participant
• Develops research skills as well as the Teaching and Learning skills
• Each participant must produce a journal paper at end of the programme
Benefits of Formal Programmes

• “I became a more reflective teacher”
• “Discussions about educational theory useful”
• “Learned new methods and techniques”
• “Provided stronger theoretical underpinning”
• “Coverage of things like what do you consider to be knowledge and learning” very useful
• “Enjoyed working with colleagues from different disciplines” (Skelton, 2013)
A Poisoned Chalice

• Some course participants experienced negative reactions from colleagues
• One participant advised by boss not to spend too much time on dissertation because there is pressure on research aspect of his job
• Threat of being marked out as a teacher in a research-intensive department
• Course seen as good for individual but no benefit to the department (Skelton, 2013)
Programmes for teachers to be voluntary or mandatory

- Difficult to introduce mandatory training for long-established teachers
- Easier to teach participants who have chosen to be there rather than forced to be there
- Could start with some short voluntary courses
- One can make a strong case for at least some training to be mandatory for all new staff
- Evidence suggests that most staff enjoy courses in pedagogy and assessment
Developing Student-centred Learning

• Consulting students about their learning
• Emphasis on deep, not surface, learning
• Involving students in process of learning
• A sense of autonomy for the student
• Mutual respect between teacher and student
• Greater choice for student in study path
Building in Choice for Students

• Make it obligatory that each semester must have 5 ECTS for free electives
• Distinguish between core/compulsory subjects and electives
• Organise the timetable so that it is feasible for a student to take an elective subject
• Construct programmes so that all modules carry 5 or a multiple of 5 ECTS credits
Building in Choice (2)

• May need a university-wide policy that Wed. and Friday afternoons are kept free for electives
• Advertise the benefits to students of having choice of a free elective “something you always wanted to study”
• Promote the benefit of a humanities module for scientists/engineers and vice versa
Assessment for SCL

• Emphasis should be on formative assessment, not summative
• Feedback to students should be timely (the quicker the better)
• Can include both self-assessment and peer-assessment
• Assessment related to the key aspects of the subject
Training in New Technologies

• Some universities offer MSc programme in use of new technologies to support learning
• Duration 2 years, part-time
• Modules in year 1, project in year 2
• Core modules in Learning Theories, Instructional Design and Research Methods
• Optional modules including Trends in eLearning & Creativity
• All must prepare eLearning Portfolio
Teaching Fellowships

• Member of academic staff selected by each faculty
• Work on a topic chosen by the sponsoring faculty
• Hold feedback sessions in home faculty periodically
• Present findings at annual showcase on L & T initiatives
• Links faculties/schools with LTC
Annual Showcase

• A day dedicated to highlighting developments in L & T
• Includes presentations by holders of fellowships
• Includes an invited keynote speaker
• Other staff can present
• Poster exhibition
• Encourages collegiality
Teacher of the Year

• Can be University Teacher of the Year or one per faculty/school
• Possibility of student nomination or staff nomination?
• Award presented at graduation ceremonies or other public occasion?
• An external chair of panel of judges
• Cash prize or funding for research/travel
Support to Faculties

• Finance made available to each faculty/school to enable it to design new approaches to teaching or assessment
• Guidance provided by LTC
• Presentation made by each faculty on results
• Results published on website of LTC
LTC Workshops

• Short workshops (half day to 2 or 3 days) popular with staff
• A wide variety of topics
• Can be even shorter e.g. lunch-time presentation; (“bring your own sandwiches, free coffee”)
• Encourages interaction with LTC
• Gets academic staff to interact across disciplinary boundaries
• Need to be in central location
Perspectives on Education

• Once a month debate on an educational topic
• One speaker for, one against
• Involve internal staff and external staff
• Held at lunch time
Organisation Structure for LTC

- LTC should be seen as available to all faculties/schools
- Should be neutral between faculties/schools
- LTC could report to Head of Academic Affairs or similar
- Desirability of having staff of LTC seconded from faculties.
- Collaboration, internally, nationally and internationally is key to success
Summer School

• LTC can organise a summer school on a selected topic e.g. eLearning or Assessment
• To take place when all teaching in the university has ceased
• Duration one week (5 days)
• Available to all academic staff of the university and possibly other universities
• Include an element of training in the programme e.g. how to develop eLearning resources
Heads of Learning Development

• There is a need to ensure faculties and schools implement new teaching approach
• Appoint Head of Learning Development (HoLD) in each faculty/school
• HoLD to serve as link between LTC and staff in faculties
• Benefits of nation association for Learning and Teaching.
National Level

• Need for a national body to share Learning Resources developed for eLearning
• Need for HEIs to agree on a preferred eLearning platform
• Desirability of opening up programmes to staff of other HEIs
• Possibility of a single LTC to serve Maribor region
• A national conference each year on developments in L & T
What is Teaching Excellence?

• High level of competency in a wide range of teaching skills
• Commitment to integrity of subject matter
• Deep appreciation of the importance of various stakeholders’ needs
• Genuine interest in continual improvement
• Constructive contribution to curriculum development (Robinson, 2003)
Staffing of LTC

• Depends on funding available
• Desirable to have expertise in teaching, assessment, use of IT in teaching, etc.
• Desirable to have staff with different backgrounds e.g. Science, Engineering, Humanities, Medicine, etc.
• Staff of LTC to specialise in teaching, assessment, eLearning.
• Staff to be seconded by faculties?
Bibliography


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• Skelton, A (2013) Positively Transformational or poisoned chalice? The impact of a course on higher education teaching at a research-intensive institution: *Teaching in Higher Education*, Vol. 18, No. 8, 908 - 919
Questions/Discussion

“All higher education institutions must ensure that all teaching staff are both qualified and competent in teaching and learning, and should support ongoing development and improvement of their skills”.

[Extract from National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030, Ireland]