

Characteristics of Effective and Sustainable Teaching Development Programs for Quality Teaching in Higher Education

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Purpose of the Study

To gain a better understanding for framing and sustaining teaching development centres

Quality Teaching: What is it?

For the purpose of this study, quality teaching is understood as higher order learning, sometimes also referred to as 'deep learning'

Participants

Twenty-seven participants from:

- **North America** (United States, Canada)
- **Scandinavia countries** (Finland, Norway, Sweden)
- **United Kingdom** (Britain, Scotland, Ireland)
- **Australia**

Guiding Research Questions

Semi-structured interviews, focusing on the following main topics:

- Their faculty development program and key initiatives
- How the centre is positioned strategically within the university and how it does its work
- Challenges they have encountered in their work
- Success stories and key learnings

Overarching theme:

Tension between what teaching development centers are doing and what they would like to do

Themes

The findings identified practices for effective teaching centres.

Theme 1: Be Strategic

- operationalize policy
- recognize the different stakeholders
- the all-powerful middle level
- creating a presence / links within the schools
- **high level support and involvement**
- may have limited power as TL Centre
- tactics when support from the top is not reliable
- the power of a centralized unit
- the impact and inter-relatedness of other university policy
- changes in policy leading to increased attention and focus on teaching and learning

- *The university understands the connection between students, teaching and research. You can't produce research if you don't provide good instruction and support students. So leadership doesn't question the value of the unit to the university's goals and strategic plan. No, this is not an issue here.*

Theme 2: Multilayered Approach

- clusters of offerings
- a multi-layered approach (inter and intra / to initiatives outside and within the Centre)
- workshops and events
- projects
- **awards and recognition**
- working with individuals
- support informal learning
- dissemination
- online presence

- *The other day we had a seminar and gave out the top pedagogical prize and the vice rector gave an opening speech and she said we shouldn't 'just' be one of the top research universities ... we should also be one of the top teaching universities as well.*

Theme 3: Doing the Work

- style
- philosophically
- **relationship with departments – schools – colleges within the university**
- positioning the Centre
- presence
- credibility is critical
- research / evidence – speaking academic talk
- resources
- finding entry points
- who's involved
- F2F vs online
- systems

- *for the consultation work a lot of that relies on experience and knowing the different departments and the study programs. We use a lot of time putting ourselves into the position and the context these people have.*

Theme 4: Drivers

- introduction of technology creates openings
- finding the right mix
- **challenges**
- the Centre dance
- organizational culture
- why do people participate?
- policy

- *But with sustainability – that's part of the challenge getting the right people from the departments working here... but it's difficult to get people with experience and that's what we need here...people who have credibility in their field and in teaching.*

Conclusion: Practical Advice

- Long term view
- Getting initiatives off the ground
- Positioning in the university
- Know how to build the programs
- Organisation of the Centre
- Know what contributes to success
- SoTL

Recommendations

- Integrated and multi-layered approach
- Scalability
- Longer/cohort-based programs
- Forming / collaborating with CoPs
- Flexible and structured
- Connect F2F
- Practice what we preach about technology
- Ensure programs are evidence-based

Corner Stones of Effective Teaching Centres: Doing the Work

Multi-layered

- Personal, social /professional academic
- Informal / formal learning
- Voluntary / mandatory
- Networked, community
- F2F / online

Drivers

- Invested, systematic
- Credible valued
- Embedded, expected

Strategic

- Policy activated
- Visible, accountable
- Leading modeling
- Responsive, reflexive

← EVIDENCE - BASED →

- *We work in a research-intensive university and my aim in all academic development is to provide evidence, it is all research informed or research based, research led.*

Surviving to Thriving

Type I

- Focus on visibility
- Fear-based
- Awareness of disposability
- Reactive
- Restricted
- Remedial focus
- Low expectation /influence
- Current structure seen as immovable
- **Mindset:** being 'done to'

Type II

- Student ratings motivated
- Teaching quality rhetoric
- Research-based reward structures
- Services secured in committee work / subtle / covert
- Work with the willing
- **Mindset:** with and against waves of change

Type III

- Risk takers /
- Innovation
- Compulsory components and incentives
- Enhancement focused; learning from failure
- Less is more, deep, longer term projects
- Proactive
- Redefining success
- **Mindset:** being a force onto

We need to...

do better things

VS.

do things better