

Title of presentation

Curriculum Renewal: Leading the Way

Authors

Romy Lawson, Tracy Taylor, Eveline Fallshaw, Erica French, Cathy Hall, James Herbert, Shelley Kinash & Jane Summers

Body of abstract

Internationally there is pressure for significant change in measuring quality in teaching and learning processes (Krause, Barrie & Scott, 2012). Therefore institutions need to design curriculum that make student outcomes explicit, provide opportunities for students' to develop these outcomes as they progress throughout the degree and incorporates assessment that fosters these outcomes while also allowing for quality assurance.

However, the reality is that mounting daily pressures and operational demands often mean initiatives for improving the quality of academic courses are not achieved or are a low priority among other time demands (Jones et al., 2009). In addition, new curriculum design and quality assurance processes require a cultural change for some academics.

So, in conjunction with curriculum design, leadership strategies to facilitate change must also be adopted. This has been reflected in the work of Scott et al. (2008) who suggest that the extent to which leaders are capable of leading change is a critical factor in developing the quality of programs. Ramsden (1998) also highlighted the key role of academic leadership in motivating and empowering staff to achieve a common direction for curriculum design. Effective leadership and collegiality are paramount to achieving good learning outcomes in the higher education context (Gibbs, Knapper & Picinnin, 2009). Therefore, the role of academic leaders is vital when implementing change initiatives and encouraging cultural shifts in approaches taken to curriculum renewal.

In a recent strategic project funded by the Australian Office for Learning and Teaching (Lawson et al., 2013) it was found that those institutions considered to be successful at implementing curriculum renewal to assure learning had predominantly taken an inclusive approach, employing a participative leadership style. An audit across 25 Australian Business Schools provided evidence of the success of change management processes that promoted cultural change to implement curriculum renewal. These processes include: strong senior management commitment and leadership demonstrating a constant and high level drive for staff engagement until change becomes an institutional norm; developing leadership and champions among unit and program level staff to share practices and promote the benefits that come from engaging in the process; providing professional development opportunities to discuss and resolve difficulties and tensions around change; demonstrating success and effectiveness by selling staff on the evidence that change makes a difference; and making the process inclusive with academics collaborating in the development and

implementation of the process, findings that were found to support Kotter's (2002) model of cultural change.

This presentation will explore the principles behind curriculum renewal for quality assurance and go on to unpack Kotter's model to show how it can be applied to strategically lead cultural change in the higher education context.

Key words

Leadership, Curriculum Renewal, Assurance of Learning, Graduate Attributes, Cultural Change

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Presenter Bio

Romy Lawson

Romy Lawson is an Associate Professor and the Director of Teaching and Learning at the University of Wollongong. She has had an active role in teaching and learning for almost 20 years in both the UK and Australia. Her career has included directing a Masters Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education, leading an Australian Office of Learning and Teaching Project on Strategies for Assuring Graduate Attributes, and research on constructive alignment; the effect of assessment; and leadership strategies for curriculum renewal. In 2013 Romy was awarded a National Office for Teaching and Learning Fellowship to support Curriculum Design for Assuring Learning.