Different dimensions of excellence – an international perspective

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Authors of the Learning Excellence reports
Summary of the research

26 case studies under six topics that illustrate dimensions of learning excellence:

- Ensuring graduates are employable (8 countries)
- Assessing learning (3 countries)
- Learning styles of international students (3 countries)
- Responding to new types of students (Widening Participation) (4 countries)
- Improving student retention and attainment (4 countries)
- Co-development of curricula (3 countries)

They were selected by case study authors as locally/regionally recognised and sustainable innovations that are responses to challenges common to the UK.
Case study authors

➢ Professor Robin Middlehurst (Europe), project leader,
➢ John Fielden, project manager and (Canada)
➢ Dr Jamil Salmi (South America)
➢ Dr Madeleine Green (USA)
➢ Dr Andrée Sursock (Europe)
➢ Dennis Murray (Australia)
➢ Erica Gillard (Africa)
This session will involve:

➢ Two cases from Europe: Andrée Sursock
  • University of Maastricht
  • Roskilde University

➢ Two cases from South Africa: Erica Gillard
  • Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
  • Faculty of Commerce, University of Cape Town

➢ Brief summary of the cases from the USA and Australia: John Fielden
  • Covering new models of assessment
  • Describing pedagogical developments required for new types of student
University of Maastricht (NL)

> Context
  - University founded in 1974 (starting with a medical faculty)
  - Political requirement to teach differently

> Description and distinctive features:
  - The Problem Based Learning (PBL) model
  - Based in Europe but focused on the world
  - Interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinarity in research and education
University of Maastricht (NL)

Embedding PBL

- PBL used in all disciplines, with adaptations
- Mandatory staff development
- Self-reflection and faculty ownership
- Commitment to PBL is a criterion for staff recruitment and promotion

Embedding internationalisation

- Recruitment of international staff and students
- The international classroom (internationalisation at home)
- Partnerships within the “Euregion” and beyond, in research and education
Røskilde University (DK)

> Context
  • Founded in 1972
  • A response to calls by students, politicians and employers for a different educational approach

> Description: the Problem-oriented Project Learning (PPL) model
  • Project work
  • Problem-orientation
  • Interdisciplinarity
  • Setting the problems in a wider context
  • Participant-directed learning
  • Group work
Rozkilde University (DK)

>Embedding

- Extensive orientation for first-year students
- Specific support for international students
- Faculty work in teams as tutors to the students
- Staff development
- Physical layout of rooms and “houses” is in line with pedagogical approach
- Adapting the student-centred model to disciplinary cultures
- Responding to changing student needs and faculty and government requirements
- A self-reflective learning environment
Context: a need to

• Increase graduation of Black students and qualified CAs
• Manage very diverse student abilities and backgrounds in the same classes

Description and distinctive features – individual and systemic

• A holistic intervention
• The degree programme has two supportive elements:
  • An extended degree programme plus augmented courses with extra support
  • There are flexible entry and exit points based on student assessments
• Other forms of support are also offered: academic, social and psychological.
UCT: Commerce Faculty EDU continued

Embedding and impact

• 20% of all first year students are now enrolled in this variation
• First year results have outperformed the mainstream for > 5 years
• The graduation rate of c.78% after 5 years is above the national average of 31% for commerce/management programmes
• Approximately 280 EDU students have qualified as Chartered Accountants
• Teaching practices and curriculum design have changed across the faculty
• Support is offered beyond the first year
• There is financial support from major companies; several bursaries require enrolment in the programme
• EDU has had a positive national influence.
NMMU: experiential learning and co-curricular activities

Context: NMMU is located in a poor region with high unemployment
- Many students lack educational capital and study in a second language
- NMMU seeks to be an ‘engaged’ university which serves its community

Goal: to develop student learning in- and outside the classroom and a recognition system for extra curricular activities

Distinctive features of co-curricular activities and record (CCR)
- Approved activities with linked learning outcomes are published annually
- Examples include attendance at leadership development workshops and mentoring
- Students record their activities and learning outcomes
- Students have successfully used their CCR to apply for scholarships and jobs

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NMMU: experiential learning and co-curricular activities

> Experiential learning incorporates work-integrated learning and service learning and is managed by the Co-operative Education Unit

- Work integrated learning takes place at a real or simulated workplaces and is a formal part of the programme
- On-campus learning is funded by some statutory bodies eg. for engineering, school teaching and accounting
- There are partnerships with many external companies etc for off-campus learning
- Students apply and work with a formal contract. Faculty staff monitor the process
- Service learning refers to applied learning which serves under-resourced communities
- If it forms part of the curriculum, it will be formally assessed; if it is voluntary, it is recorded in the CCR
- Service learning is intended to engender a sense of civic responsibility.
NMMU: experiential learning and co-curricular activities

**Challenges** include staff capacity, limited finances to support student work (e.g., travel expenses), withdrawal of some companies with the economic downturn.

**Successes** include:

- 65.5% of all students participated in experiential learning (2013)
- 91% of these students felt this had helped them find employment
- 43.2% of all graduates had participated in co-curricular activities
- Four months after graduation, 51.9% of NMMU graduates were employed (2014)
- An earlier study in 2011 found that 57% of graduates had secured employment before graduation
- Success rates have improved and are above the norm for South Africa.
New models of assessment

➢ Three examples of new assessment models from the USA:

• **Brandman Univy** organises the curriculum around 3 sets of Learning Outcomes:
  • General Education Outcomes; (basic skills and liberal education)
  • Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILO’s) (with five broad competencies)
  • Programme Outcomes (course and programme levels) in Curriculum Maps.

➢ Regular assessments of these in grading/scoring assignments and summatively for the ILOs

➢ **University of Notre Dame** encourages students to use e-portfolios as self assessment and development tools.

➢ Used by advisers for planning and reflection at review stages and to record co-curricular learning and community activities
New models of assessment (contd)

James Madison University has a Centre for Assessment and Research Studies that:

- Organises assessments four times, during and after a student’s time on campus
- Undertakes five yearly surveys of alumni, that feed in to programme design
- Co-ordinates use of a wide range of survey instruments for academic programmes.
- Uses assessment data and feedback in the regular programme reviews
- Researches and publishes on assessment practices globally

Each programme has an assessment co-ordinator who liaises with CARS
Pedagogical developments required for new types of student

At The University of Queensland the School of Chemistry has very large numbers of first year service students from STEM disciplines. The innovation is:

• Based on using interactive learning tasks in scenarios that require active enquiry
• For students working in self selecting interdisciplinary groups of four, who analyse some of their peer’s work
• Backed by a web based management system.

Macquarie University uses blended synchronous learning to teach and interact with remote students in Sydney and overseas.

Students learn from instructors and peers in real time, but the innovation requires technical support and professional development for teachers.

Evaluations showed an increase in participation and sense of connectedness.
You have been patient. Now it’s your turn.

> Over to you for discussion and questions!