Mapping organisational structures against actual teaching collaborations

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Academic development, learning about teaching, is important

Not all academics participate sufficiently

Two observations on academic development

- Community approaches provide participating academics with a supportive environment highly conducive to learning about teaching.
- Community approaches reach only a limited number of academics and are not creating impact across whole institutions.
Instead of

Asking academics to step out of their environments (and volunteer into communities)

Focus on

The existing, most relevant contexts around academics
No academic teaches in isolation

Academics know which colleagues are most relevant to their teaching

Individuals might be part of several most relevant contexts

Most relevant contexts are named ‘teaching groups’

(In research one can choose one’s collaborators, in teaching usually not ... )
Community approach

Communities of volunteers that provide a strongly supportive environment for learning about teaching

Hope that communities survive long-term and draw in others
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Teaching group approach

Groups that include most academics in an institution

Research the degree of community-likeness of groups and work towards transformation of groups into communities
How can teaching groups be categorized

Tight-knit, functioning and individualistic

Mapping organizational structures against teaching groups

Focus of this short paper

A closer look at specific teaching groups

Interviews with 30 members of four teaching groups

Aims

To increase learning from each other, to bind in more ‘reluctant’ academics

To keep the ‘how’ and ‘what’ at teaching group level
Survey

Members of one institute of Massey University surveyed
All staff targeted – teaching and research academics, technician, support staff
29 respondents out of population of 97 (30% response rate)

Research question

How do organizational structures map against organizational boundaries
56 distinct teaching groups were identified

- 14 contain members from outside institute (but part of university)
- 6 contain members from outside university

Of staff named in teaching groups

- 47 have job titles that imply teaching responsibilities
- 32 have job titles that do not imply teaching responsibilities
In the unit studied, organizational structures and teaching group boundaries do not match well. This impacts on how teaching group (members) can be encouraged. It highlights basics like different office locations.
Discussion

Goals are to re-balance the powers that affect teaching

Pressures in higher education
  Dominance of research
  Limited reward structures
  Lack of grounding in pedagogy

  Negative effect

Intrinsic motivation
  Teaching groups
  Supportive management

Positive effect
Analyse the data on the four teaching groups collected

How close to communities are these groups?
Why have they developed their characteristics

Teaching groups should be able to set their own agendas

Avoiding a bureaucratic approach ...
Creating meaningful contexts ...
Drawing in most members ...