Developing ‘the ideal teacher’ for the transnational classroom

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Outline

• Two research projects
• Characteristics of ‘the ideal teacher’
• Developing the ideal teacher
• What does this mean in relation to ‘keeping our promise to transnational students’?
Introduction

• The research projects – Australia and Hong Kong in 2003-2004 + Singapore in 2004-2005
• Focussed on internationalisation of the curriculum and professional development for transnational teaching
• Provided insights into what transnational students expected of their teachers
• Obvious implications for professional development

Project 1: Results

• Importance of internationalisation of the curriculum in transnational programs
• Transnational teaching is a unique and challenging teaching environment for academic staff – both for those based in Australia and for those based offshore
• General framework developed for staff development - explored and developed further in Project 2 with DEST funding
Project 2 - introduction

• Purpose was to develop a professional development framework to ensure Australia-based and offshore-based staff are appropriately inducted and developed for the offshore teaching and learning environment.

• $100,000 in DEST funding

Project 2 – research process

Stage 1: Scoping
  – Literature review
  – Three online surveys (n=100)
  – Follow-up interviews in Hong Kong and Singapore (n=61)
  – Identification of 15 characteristics of ideal transnational teachers

Stage 2: Formulation of the framework
  – Literature review and surveys identified key understandings and abilities
  – Interviews confirmed characteristics and identified four themes for staff development
  – From both three guiding principles emerged

Stage 3: Development of materials and resources
Stage 4: Communication of outcomes
Profile of participants

Academic staff, administrators and students
- 3 partner institutions of UniSA
- 2 offshore locations
- 6 programs across 3 disciplines (health, engineering and business)
- 1 postgraduate program (taught in both HK and Sing) and 4 undergraduate programs

Literature review – findings

- Limited work thus far completed on Transnational education
- Diversity of programs - multiple people, roles, settings, programs, modes
- Importance of the intercultural setting and internationalisation of the curriculum
- Identified 15 characteristics of offshore teachers – which were ‘tested’ in surveys
Staff profile

- Policy and procedural knowledge
- Cultural knowledge
- Teaching skills

Cultural knowledge
Understanding of:
- local cultures including political, legal and economic environment
- social, cultural and educational backgrounds of students
- how teacher’s culture affects thoughts, feelings, actions
- how culture affects how people interact

Policy and procedural knowledge
Understanding of:
- UniSA/’home’ institution
- local provider
Staff profile

Teaching Skills

Ability to:

• include local content in the program
• change the teaching approach
• adapt learning activities
• communicate with other staff on the program
• use different modes of delivery
• **provide timely and appropriate feedback**
• engage students from different cultural backgrounds in discussion and group work
• evaluate feedback from students
• reflect on and learn from teaching experiences

What did the students say?

Students

1. Teaching skills
2. Cultural knowledge
3. Policy and procedural knowledge

Teaching skills items were ranked as the top 7 items by students.
What is the promise?

Transnational students expect the ‘Australian degree’ to

- provide an educational experience that prepares them for their future lives as global professionals and citizens (Project 1)
- be delivered with reference to their personal needs and the cultural and professional contexts in which they operate (Projects 1&2)
- will be expert teachers (Project 2)

How can we keep it?

- Recognise that the cultural context of transnational teaching highlights importance of good teaching skills and internationalisation of the curriculum
- Support their development in this very specific intercultural context
- Focus on themes and guiding principles emerging from the research in professional development for transnational teaching
Themes for staff development

Offshore teaching staff need to:

- be experts in their field
- be skilled teachers and managers of the learning environment
- be efficient intercultural learners
- demonstrate particular personal attitudes and attributes

Guiding principles

Principle 1:
Both Australia-based and offshore-based tutors need to be involved in professional development.

Principle 2:
Professional development for academic staff needs to address the intercultural nature of offshore teaching.

Principle 3:
Professional development activities and resources need to be flexible and sensitive to the experience, knowledge and situation of the staff involved.
## The framework

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## In summary
- Offshore teaching is an intense intercultural and educational experience which requires specific teaching skills
- We need to consider these when we select and train transnational teaching staff
- We need to implement processes for ongoing and flexibly delivered development of transnational teachers onshore and offshore
Full report and materials

FULL REPORT

FULL REPORT AND SAMPLE MATERIALS

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