

From Rhetoric to Reality - Piloting the Faculty Pedagogical Framework from a Participant Perspective

Teacher educators have a responsibility not only to ensure that teachers are responsive to the changing face of schooling, but also to model these new constructions of pedagogy and shared leadership within their Faculty. In order to do this there is a need for teacher educators to re-examine their own pedagogical and organizational structures. In the Faculty of Education under study, this need was conceptualised as a 'Faculty Pedagogical Framework', which emerged from an extensive research based review. This paper describes and analyses initiatives that have facilitated the implementation of selected sections of the Pedagogical Framework.

Introduction

In the new 'learning organisation' of the post-industrial era, the collaborative team rather than the individual, Hough (1997) argues, is the basic unit of work. Such organizational structures foreground the fundamental democratic principle of shared values including inclusivity, collaboration and social responsibility. In the context of a Faculty of Education, addressing changes to organizational and management structures and pedagogical approaches to enhance learning outcomes for students is a significant challenge.

Datnow and Stringfield in a large study in schools found that change was more effective when the processes were characterized by shared purpose and significant staff participation. Furthermore, it was documented that "reform adoption, implementation and sustainability ... are the result of the interrelations between and across groups in different contexts" .

Reconceptualising Pedagogy in a Faculty of Education

The rate of change in what-we-know and what-we-need-to-know puts pressure on educators to focus on the construction of knowledge - teaching skills for investigation, interpretation and communication of understanding. At the tertiary level there is recognition of the need to strengthen the interaction and integration of teaching and research (Zubrick et al, 2001 and FASTS, 1999 cited in Reid, 2001:12). Teacher educators have a responsibility not only to prepare teachers for the changing face of schooling but also to model these new constructions of pedagogy and shared leadership within their Faculty. In order to do this there is a need for teacher educators to re-examine their own pedagogical and organizational structures. In the Faculty of Education under study, this need was conceptualised as a 'Faculty Pedagogical Framework'.

Background

The Faculty of Education at this institution recently engaged in a cross-department re-accreditation of its undergraduate Bachelor of Education Programs. It became apparent during this process that there was a need for a faculty-wide review. Faculty comprises of 75 full time academic and general staff within three departments, across two campuses that are geographically distanced from one another. Factors cited as contributing to the need for a review of the faculty were:

- the way in which Departments had evolved had left one department as a non-cohesive group of staff 'left-overs' from the two new departments,
- changes in staff as the post seventies expansion staff retired,
- influx of new staff and growth in part-time staff,
- expansion and change in courses and clientele,
- growth and changes in areas of strength in research,
- changes to modes of course delivery, and
- changes in the field of teacher education and education generally.

There were several profound learnings for the Faculty as outcomes from the process, which demonstrated the significance that faculty educators placed on collaboration. These included:

- The Importance of Shared Responsibility for Leadership
- Celebrating the Value of Diverse Perspectives
- Importance of Dialogue Above Organisational Structures
- Personal Practices Informing Knowledge Construction
- Creating New Paradigms

The Faculty of Education Pedagogical Framework (see Appendix 1) emerged from this extensive research based review. The post review action was to develop a number of initiatives that exemplified selected sections of the Framework. This study is an analysis of the participants' perceptions of these initiatives within the Collaborative Teaching and Learning strand of the Framework. For the purposes of this research, not all initiatives will be considered. However, we would argue that this analysis will provide a snapshot of the post-review activities and will indicate current perceptions of the relevant stakeholders.

The Initiatives

1. Collaboration in first level, first semester courses

This group of staff comprises the examiners of the four courses offered as standard enrolment to students in their first semester of the primary course. They have met to discuss the objectives, content, teaching and assessment. The examiners have agreed to encourage students to take responsibility for their learning - a consistent approach that will be promoted in orientation discussion with the students - and to focus on maximum student engagement in their studies.

Each course examiner has undertaken to share full course specification so that assessment types and timing can be negotiated to make them most meaningful and manageable for the students. Investigations are underway to look at how common elements e.g. information literacy, can be seen as a transferable among, and supported across, courses.

Examiners created an opportunity to use the same piece of assessment for both courses, with modifications to address criteria specific to each particular course.

2. Shared assessment

Concern was expressed regarding the quality of student planning within the field and as assessment within the Primary program. The aim is to have a shared assessment item for students in 3rd year primary program across 3 core courses. This assessment item is a curriculum plan for a series of activities or a unit of work that would indicate how students intend to integrate literacy and technology. The shared assessment item is only 1 piece of assessment; all other assessment items will remain separate. It is anticipated that student

will hand in one assessment item and each course would be responsible for marking one element of the item.

3. Authentic classroom planning

Students in the secondary program completing their final curriculum course will be linked to a specific year 8 - 10 class (preferably at their professional experience school) to plan a unit for term 2 2002. Students will be asked to assist the practicing teacher in implementing that unit during tutorial times for the first 3 weeks of term 2. Students will be encouraged to plan cross a disciplinary unit with an authentic task at the completion of the unit and will use the new QSCC syllabi.

4. Catering for International students

Organising opportunities for international Doctoral students to interact with peers and academic staff within the Faculty of Education. Taking advantage of technology available to provide flexible meeting structure and times to cater for differing time zones, technology access and student diversity.

5. Students networking with community and schools

Students in Environmental Education elective were invited to liaise with a specific class and an environmental mentor from the community to develop an environmental unit of work which will be implemented in the classroom. The outcomes will then be presented at the Science Expo in Toowoomba in August.

The Research Questions

The primary research question was:

What contributing factors to Collaborative Teaching and Learning are evident in the trial initiatives of the Faculty Pedagogical Framework?

This was answered by addressing a series of sub-questions:

1. Was the initiative worthwhile?
2. What aspects of the trial initiative would you consider to be successful?
3. What factors contributed to this success?
4. What aspects of the trial initiative would you consider to be unsuccessful?
5. What factors contributed to this?
6. Would you consider adopting this initiative in the future?
7. What changes would be necessary to improve the success of this initiative in the future?

Methodology

This research falls within the qualitative paradigm. A Case Study approach was used to describe and analyse several initiatives in relation to their contribution to the Faculty Pedagogical Framework.

An Audit/Mapping procedure was used to establish the extent to which the Collaborative Teaching and Learning component of the pedagogical framework has been operationalised within the current initiatives in the faculty. A Reflective dialogue approach within the context of semi-structured interviews with participating staff was used. The interviews were transcribed and coded to allow for the easy identification of common themes. Partial triangulation has been achieved by conducting semi-structured interviews with two volunteer students in each initiative area. These volunteers were drawn randomly from a pool of volunteers, so the data is more reliable and unbiased. These interviews were similarly transcribed and coded.

The data was collected and analysed from a participant perspective. The researchers are both subjects and analysers of the data, therefore the information gathered from other participants in each initiative is used to validate what the researchers themselves say about the initiative.

Results

REFERENCES

Datnow, A., & Stringfield, S. (2000). Working Together for Reliable School Reform. *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk*, 5(1&2).

Hough, M. (1997). Paradox: A way of explaining in a post-industrial society. *Hot Topics*, 1(March).

Reid, I. (2001). *What is Needed to Make Australia a Knowledge-Driven and Learning-Driven Society?* (5). Melbourne: Business/Higher Education Round Table.

APPENDIX 1

Faculty of Education - A Pedagogical Framework

Our Pedagogical vision: ***"Educators empowering educators"***

The pedagogical framework is achieved through a shared vision of best practice and a commitment to world-class performance.

We value and we practise:

Inspired teaching and learning

- Designing creative learning environments
- Motivated learning
- Celebrating successes

Inclusivity and justice

- Pastoral care
- Equity and access
- Diversity
- Reconciliation
- Sustainable world

Professional leadership

- Lifelong learning
- Ethics
- Mentoring
- Graduate attributes
- Modelling pedagogy across university
- Continuous enhancement of the pedagogical framework
- Influence on educational policy

The generation of new knowledge

- Research
- Technology
- Professional learning
- Multiliteracies
- "Literate futures"
- Sustaining, enhancing and enriching our faculty pedagogical framework
- Integration of theory and practice
- Transferability of learning, knowledge and skills

Collaborative teaching and learning

- Partnerships
- Collegiality
- Networking (Internal/External)

Learner centredness

- Student engagement
- Responsibility
- Facilitation
- Empowerment

Critical reflection

- Personal theorising
- Authentic dialogue
- Advocacy

Responsive and responsible change

- Adaptability
- Flexibility
- Agents of change
- Innovation