SEDA Autumn Conference 2024

Session Title: Leading collaborative curriculum transformation: Educational developers' perspectives

Session Type: Practice Papers (20 minutes)

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Session Summary: Central to curriculum transformation is a commitment to taking a holistic (rather than modular) view of the programme to facilitate collective ownership and coherence (Weller, 2012). In this context, this practice paper explores the multifaceted role played by educational developers at the University of Reading to catalyse enhancements in programme design and delivery across the institution. Reflecting on our journey, we will showcase resources and share practical insights gained in leading curriculum transformation at scale.

Session Outline: We will outline how educational developers (EDs) leveraged effective collaborative, appreciative, and evidence-informed approaches to:

Establish curriculum design principles

EDs were instrumental in defining principles that reflected the diverse needs and aspirations of the university community. These principles were underpinned by EDs knowledge of the local and wider context, as well as work with student partners and staff through listening exercises. This collective approach reflects the capacity of EDs – situated between the demands of institutions, academics and students -- to engage different voices in discussions about educational dilemmas in the interests of identifying 'a sense of a direction' (Ashwin, 2022).

Translate principles into practice

EDs developed a structured, iterative curriculum design process to support colleagues in translating these principles into practice. Emphasising a holistic programmatic perspective, the process was locally led and centrally supported by the EDs. Online guidance, support for academic staff leads, and bespoke curriculum design workshops supported programme teams in navigating complex challenges by offering tailored solutions aligned to University priorities and disciplinary cultures and practices. This approach aligns with Ashwin (2022), who advocates for EDs to prioritise the "collective creation of socially-just curricula" as a more

sustainable way to effect curriculum change, rather than focusing on individual professional development.

Evaluate adoption of principles

EDs developed a rubric-based evaluation framework to evaluate the integration of principles into practice at both programme and module level. This systematic approach enabled the evaluation of more than 300 programmes, sampling 10-30% of the modules within each programme across a four-month period. The outputs of this evaluation informed programme and module approval decisions and provided bespoke 'feedforward' to teaching teams to ensure ongoing enhancement.

In addition to reflecting on our journey, we will discuss how these principles and processes are being embedded as 'business as usual' across the institution, ensuring continuous enhancement.

References: Weller, S. (2012). Achieving curriculum coherence: Curriculum design and delivery as social practice. In Strategic Curriculum Change in Universities (pp. 21-33). Routledge.

Ashwin, P. (2022). Understanding educational development in terms of the collective creation of socially-just curricula. Teaching in Higher Education, 27(8), 979-991.