Title: Developing staff in effective online tutoring

Presenter: Anne Campbell
Open University in Scotland

Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Consider measures to support staff engagement in online practice
- Plan experiential online activities for staff
- Build in reflective elements to online staff development activities

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

Much of what is learned about traditional university teaching happens 'on the job' and, even in traditional face to face staff development events, much is learned through peer discussion at coffee time, or chatting outside a session. University teaching staff are extremely busy and may engage only in staff development activities which are embedded or are about to be embedded in their own working practices. (Boud,1999; Eraut, 2004). Trying to create these conditions for staff development in the online environment presents challenges! We need to consider how to make such courses engaging and attractive so that staff will persevere.

Many institutions are moving towards running more student courses online or as part of a blended solution, and there is also a move to part-time studying. There is now an urgent need for staff developers to train lecturers and university teachers to work effectively in the online environment, where the students are not physically present.

This workshop will look at how we might plan and create online activities for staff development supported through peer learning. Participants will think about online activity design in their own contexts and consider how to include reflection with peers. Description of a successful online staff development module run by the Open University will be used as a starting point for the discussions (Macdonald & Campbell, 2010). Participant evaluations from this module will be presented to illustrate the reasons for its success.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

Introduction: Brief plenary discussion of challenges facing staff developers in creating online courses in universities. Key questions are about engagement, working practices and context. (5 minutes)

Brief presentation: The OU in Scotland's Tutor Moderator's course, context and the key elements in its success. Presentation of quantitative and qualitative participant evaluations. (10 minutes)

Small group activity: In small groups, describe your own context and identify the sort of learning activities that lecturers and university teachers use or may use in the future to support students in your institution. Choose one context and design an experiential and reflective activity which could help develop staff to work effectively online. Make a list of strategies for encouraging engagement online. (20 minutes)

Conclusion: Plenary discussion bringing together ideas from different groups in order to share reflections. (10 minutes)

References

Boud, D. (1999) Situating academic development in professional work: using peer learning. *International Journal of Academic Development,* 4 (1), 3-10

Eraut, M. (2004) Informal learning in the workplace. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 26(2),247-273

Macdonald, J and Campbell, A (2010) Activity design in online professional development for university staff. *European Journal of Open Distance and Elearning,* http://www.eurodl.org/