

## **Academic Identity of Module Leadership; facilitating staff to lead and develop curriculum delivery in a global teaching community context. (0049)**

This paper explores the key challenges for staff managing the delivery of cross border education and considers how universities empower and develop the capacity of staff to lead global teaching teams. Over the past decade there has been a move towards significant expansion in transnational education activity, specifically in terms of opening international branch campuses (Naidoo, 2010). This changing context impacts on the working reality of academic staff in their development and delivery of the curriculum. Staff working collaboratively across borders need to develop programmes which are relevant to and accessible by a diverse range of students located around the world. Whilst there is discussion in the literature to explain how relationships will work at a strategic level, for example at university and programme administration level, there is little evidence of discussion around the day-to-day working context of an academic whose curriculum is delivered at branch campuses.

It is difficult to find exact data detailing the scope of transnational education in the UK as, until recently, there was no standard format for reporting the activity. Consequently published statistics can exaggerate the growth as university's return data that on face value may indicate new activity but actually represent previously unreported activity. That said, HESA (2010) figures indicate that transnational education activity in the UK doubled between 2007 and 2009 from 196750 to 388135 students registered at UK institutions whilst studying overseas for the UK award.

This paper focuses on international branch campuses, which according to the Observatory on Borderless Education have increased by 43% in the three years between 2006 and 2009 (Becker 2010). The definition used of an international branch campus is an off shore entity that operates in a nation other than the one in which the home campus is located and which is at least part owned by the home institution. It offers a form of program mobility in which an entire qualifying award of the home institution is offered across borders in another host country (Croom 2011). In the authors context, growth in international branch campus delivery means that most staff are now expected to effectively lead modules and teaching teams in a complex context.

The UNESCO and OECD (2005) code of good practice for transnational education articulates an expectation that the providers are 'responsible for the quality as well as the social, cultural and

linguistic relevance of education provided in their name'. Ziguras (2008) and Lovett (2010) explain the tension this creates in trying to replicate home campus conditions in off shore campuses whilst maintaining pedagogic principles of tailoring the experience to suit the culture and context in which students are learning. Module leaders are at the forefront of managing this tension impacting on their perceived academic identity as both curriculum developers and facilitators of learning.

This small scale study initially focussed on the views of UK staff involved in international branch campus delivery and was cross referenced with views of colleagues at an international branch campus. The UK based staff were all module leaders responsible for designing the content, delivery and assessment of the learning outcomes on a module. A focus group methodology was used for initial data collection to provide an opportunity for staff to exchange and develop their views in a social milieu which comprised of their peers. Initially the groups were conducted within departments to create a tone of collegiate enquiry with staff that know each other and work in similar contexts to encourage active debate. Cross-departmental focus groups were used at the next stage to determine if this dynamic affected the responses. One-to-one interviews were used in the final stages to facilitate deeper discussion on key points and reflect on the authenticity of earlier data. The resulting data was content analysed and common themes and emerging theories identified. We believe this methodology has produced data which is rich in the personal challenges and triumphs experienced by academics resulting in a depth of understanding of the key enablers of effective working relationships between remote teaching teams.

The paper reveals that academic staff are not always fully aware of their University's aims for the expansion of transnational education and, as a result may feel a element of dissatisfaction with the impact this has on their working reality. Similarly, with the common practice of design and development being located in the UK the communication between the collaborators is heavily prescribed from the UK. The dominance of e-mail perpetuates a communication culture based on instruction rather than discussion and debate. The paper explores some solutions to these issues and makes recommendations on how to empower staff to effectively lead and manage international delivery to realise the opportunities and benefits for all staff involved in the team, regardless of location.

Complex dynamics are shaping the maturation of the relationship between UK staff and those delivering the curriculum at the international branch campuses. Understanding these dynamics is fundamental to effectively supporting and developing this activity. There is a necessity to develop a team culture in a work environment that often rewards individuality. Ensuring staff are equipped with the skills necessary to lead and communicate effectively with complex remote teams is essential to ensuring the success of international delivery.

(860 words)

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