

Title: Faculty Engagement in Ontario, Canada – a Provincial response

Presenter: Celia Popovic
York University

Session Learning Outcomes

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

- List the key issues faced in Ontario educational development
- Consider their own situation in light of the approaches taken elsewhere to address faculty engagement
- Reflect on developments in the UK in the last 10 years or so, to identify what has worked, and what has been less successful in engaging faculty

Session Outline

Key issues to be addressed are:

This session is based on a paper to be submitted for publication after the conference. The article examines faculty engagement from the perspective of change management and community engagement literature. It explores models for engagement, specifically from an Ontario perspective, but touches on issues of concern to all involved in educational development.

We know that organizational change is not easy (Boyce 2003). Universities are complex, messy organizations, with particular cultures, unclear lines of authority and an inbuilt resistance to change (Cristensen and Eyring 2011). Educational development is an evolving field, which according to Gibbs tends to move from a focus on the individual to an institutional, or wider, strategic approach over time (Gibbs 2013).

Faculty engagement is of prime concern in Ontario and more widely in Canada where we don't as yet have a framework for university instructor attributes, few institutions have formal courses, relying on individual consultations and workshops, and no development is mandatory.

The Council of Ontario Educational Developers (COED) is examining the feasibility of a framework somewhat similar to those in the UK and Australia as a way to encourage increased faculty engagement. However in a highly unionised environment where academic freedom is loosely defined and fiercely defended this is not without contention.

This presents a prime opportunity to learn from practice in the UK, Australia and elsewhere, to direct institutional and provincial activity to achieve meaningful and sustainable faculty engagement aimed at improving the student experience. As well as learning from other jurisdictions, we can learn from fields beyond educational development, including change management, for example the Heath brothers focus on the rational and the emotional (Heath and Heath 2010), and community engagement. I am interested in learning from these tangential fields, to bring best practice into the educational development field.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

25 minutes overview of the approach taken at York University and a wider provincial approach by COED.

20 minutes discussion

Indicative questions:

- Is mandatory training a blessing or a curse?
- Has the UK's National (Provincial) Framework proved effective, should others do the same?
- Academic freedom – what does this mean in Canada, UK, elsewhere?
- The threat of managerialism – is it real or imagined?
- For UK participants- if you could go back 10 years, knowing what you know now, what if anything would you do differently?

References

Boyce, M (2003) 'Organizational Learning is Essential to Achieving and Sustaining Change in Higher Education', *Innovative Higher Education*, 28 (2).

Christensen, C. M. and Eyring, H. J. (2011) *The Innovation University: Changing the DNA of Higher Education from the Inside Out*, Jossey-Bass.

Gibbs, G. (2013) 'Reflections on the changing nature of educational development', *International Journal for Academic Development*, 18, 1 pp 4-14.

Heath, C. and Heath, D. (2010) *Switch : How to change things when change is hard*, New York, Random House.