

Title: Preparing masters students for teaching in higher education: a new route to enhanced employability?

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Abstract:

Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will have:

- i) Discussed the implications of the initiative by reflecting on a range of issues currently impacting on the sector
- ii) Discussed its contribution for scholarship and the future of educational development in HE
- iii) Considered and reflected on key findings from the evaluation relative to its applicability within participant's own contexts
- iv) Suggested enhancements/amendments that may be used to inform future delivery of the course

Session Outline:

This paper describes an innovative programme which delivers the Postgraduate Certificate of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PGCLTHE) to students taking taught masters courses in a range of disciplines at a UK university. It goes on to report on an ongoing evaluation which provides insights into some underlying issues, particularly around employability, educational development and the potential impact the course may have for enhancing broader sector knowledge. Taught postgraduate students account for approximately 20% of the student population in UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (Universities UK 2009) and the significance of this cohort as: "tomorrow's leading academics" has been emphasised (Higher Ambitions 2009:14), which raises questions about how the sector can better prepare this group for becoming the staff of the future and what this means for the sector.

In 2007, the PGCLTHE course director was approached by faculty representatives from a range of disciplines to discuss the possibility of delivering the programme to taught masters students. This was viewed as having potential for their continuing professional development and subsequent employability upon graduation, as they would qualify for a teaching qualification in addition to their disciplinary award. Initially three courses were offered which attracted 12 students and this has increased to 30 for the current cohort. To facilitate teaching requirements for completion of the PGCLTHE they delivered sessions to undergraduates within their disciplines including workshops, lectures, seminars and tutorials. For two cohorts the PGCLTHE element of the overall degree was integrated into the MA course comprising

60 of the 180 credits required for completion of the MA, for others the 60 credits were taken in addition to their MA. Some of the issues this posed will be discussed, including: time management, differences in access to teaching opportunities, comparison with staff cohort experiences and delivery of the course as a pre-service rather than in-service model.

Evaluation of the initiative incorporates analysis of data from student records in addition to interviews and focus groups with staff, current students and course alumni. The preliminary findings will be highlighted to prompt discussion and reflection on the impact of the programme for students, staff and the wider education sector.

Key issues to be addressed are:

How and whether this course has the potential to enhance the employability of students.

What are the implications in terms of funding increases?

What developmental opportunities does it incorporate for the sector?

Should it be delivered face to face or via a mode of e-learning/ or both?

Could/should it be adapted for an international audience?

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The session will commence with an overview of the course and discussion with participants about key findings from the evaluation (20m). The presenters will then use small group techniques in the style of a 'world café' to generate discussion around specific issues identified by the audience and presenters, feedback will then follow with the whole group for comments and insights (15m). The key points arising from this part of the session will then be discussed in the context of participants' own work/institution (10m).

Potential questions might include:

What are the implications of this course for students and staff?

How does this model fit with your institution?

Do you deliver anything similar? If so, what is it and what are the similarities/differences?

What kinds of issues can you foresee with rolling the programme out either locally or nationally?

Should it be (re)designed for an international audience?

References

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2009) *Higher Ambitions. The future of universities in a knowledge economy* London: BIS [online] Available from: <http://www.bis.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/publications/Higher-Ambitions.pdf> (accessed 27/01/11)

Universities UK (2009) *Taught postgraduate students: market trends and opportunities*. London: Universities UK [online] Available from: <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Pages/TaughtPostgraduateStudents.aspx> (accessed 27/01/11)