

An appraisal of the de-centralised professional development model adopted by a South African higher education institution

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Presentation Outline

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Background

Demands on the current higher education enterprise

- inadequately prepared students
- throughput - 5% of black African and coloured students graduate in regulation time (CHE draft report, 2013)
- Insufficient resources
- academia valuing research not teaching

Higher Ed response

Put in place structural arrangements aimed at improving teaching excellence and enhancing student learning

- creation of 'spaces' for making T&L central to institutional strategic goals
- adoption of various **models of professional development**

Models of professional development

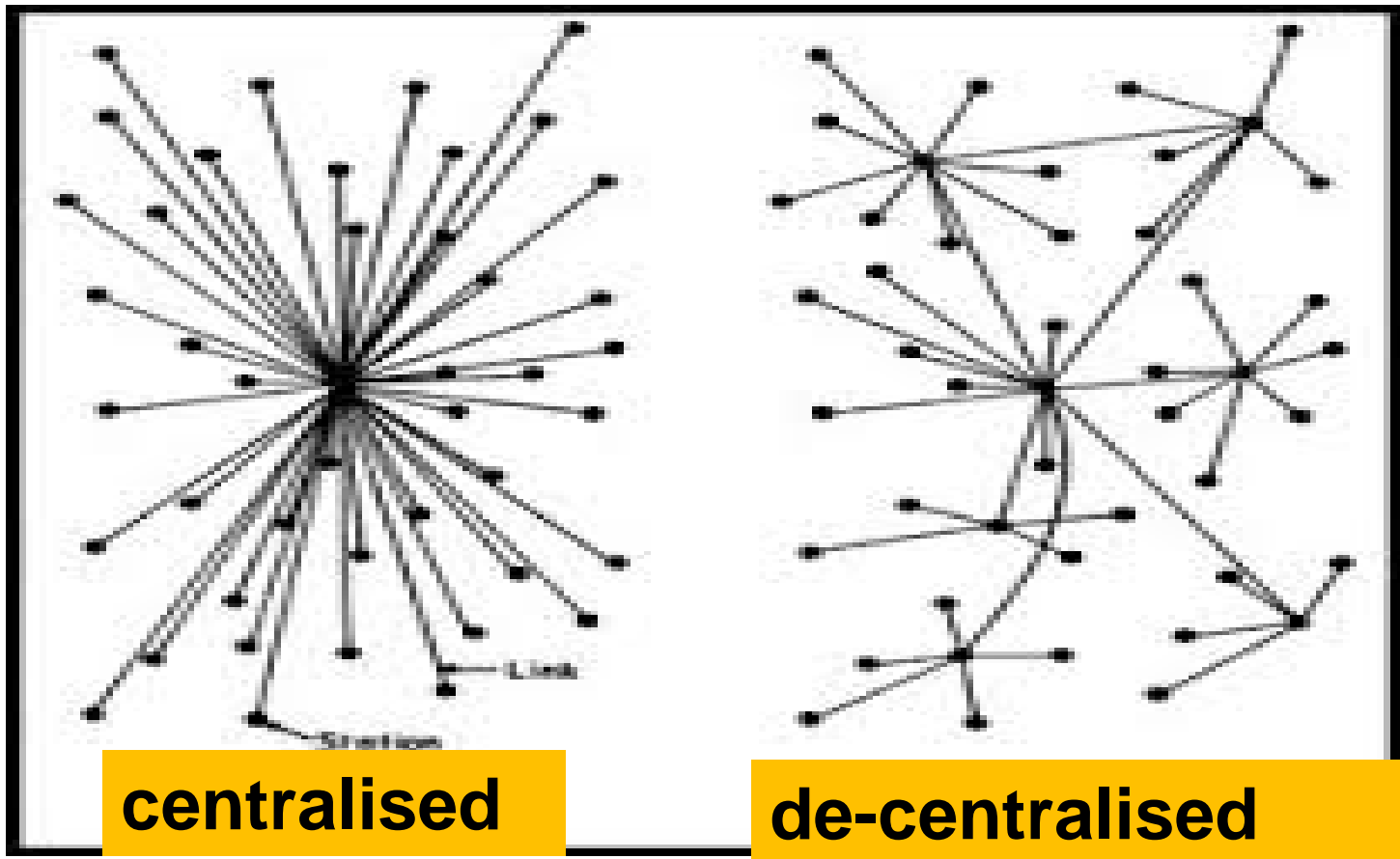
"You are not good enough so I am here to show you how it should be done!"

"a deficit model"
(Sandholtz, 2002).

"...opportunities for individuals to work with and learn from others; collaboration in group work and learning; chances to work with and learn from others in similar position; and variation, autonomy, and choice in work roles and tasks"

(Smylie, 1995 as cited in Sandholtz, 2002, p 816) –
"a constructivist/adult learning model".

Models of professional development



Aim of this project

To examine how the de-centralised model of professional development is being implemented and received at a South African university in the Science and Economic Management and Science faculties

Our goal

Conducting an appraisal of the de-centralised model in two parts:

- (a) a document analysis of Senate Teaching-Learning Reports (from 2012 -2013) and ;
- (b) Focus group interviews with faculty-based teaching-learning committee members and selected HODs to determine staff understanding and perceptions of the teaching development initiatives of the Directorate of Teaching and Learning.

This paper is a report on the first part of the study.

Challenges

- Current approaches to professional development for university teachers are “failing to help produce solutions to the educational problems of the contemporary context such as the challenge of developing students from highly diverse educational and linguistic backgrounds, or the growing demand for e-learning “(Scott, Yeld & Hendry, 2007, p.60).
- “...the discourse about professional learning and development itself is characterized by conceptual vagueness” (Clegg, 2003, p. 37).

Research Questions

- What are the main characteristics of a decentralized model of professional development for university teaching?
- How has the decentralized model of professional development been received by EMS and Science academics? Which professional development activities were they involved in from (2012 to 2013)?
- What changes/adjustments, if any, are needed to ensure that the goals of the UWC Teaching and Learning Strategic Plan are realized?

Methodology

- Interpretivist research paradigm
- **Data Collection:** -*Document Analysis*, “ entails finding, selecting, appraising (making sense of), and organising data into themes, categories, and case examples specifically through thematic and content analysis” (Corbin & Strauss, 2007).
- STLC minutes analysed (2012- 2014) to address the following question: Which PD activities did lecturers participate in during this period? Priority areas, appraise model, ‘appropriation’

Cont...

- Document Analysis used in combination with *Focus Group Interviews* 'to supplement, complement, verify findings or corroborate evidence' (Bowen, 2009), from the document analysis. (second phase of the research).

Data Analysis

- **Review protocol** in the form of *tables* used to capture the forms of PD activities staff participated in from June 2012 – to May 2014.
- **Preliminary round of analysis** ...data organised according to the following **categories**: needs-based faculty initiatives; university-wide collaborations; external and off-campus teaching –learning initiatives, challenges and successes, centrally-organised and coordinated workshops.

Results/Findings

An Appraisal of the Decentralised Model of PD

- A **comprehensive and eclectic model**: *variety* of PD activities (on-campus needs-based seminars, consultations, workshops, CoP include partnerships with regional universities , faculty-based initiatives) focuses on implementation of S- Plan for teaching and learning... 9 strategies for promoting T-L,
- PG Diploma (HE) (TL)...blended delivery mode
- Mandatory induction for newly-appointed lecturers

Results/findings

- Tutorial provisioning (tutor training and mentoring, lecturers and staff working collaboratively to ensure that students derive maximum benefit).
- Teaching Portfolios used in the PG Dip.and Induction course to promote reflexive practice,

Results/findings

How Academics have Received the Model

- Uneven participation of staff in teaching – learning activities in both faculties - some departments more active than others,
- Constraining factors: unfavourable teacher-pupil ratios; a lack of resources; time constraints, pressure to publish in their disciplines,
- Very little evidence of research into university teaching(SoTL) in both faculties.

Recommendations

Possible Adjustments to the Model

- Cascade/ripple –down model has its shortcomings ... HoDs to play a more active role in CPD, identification of needs and who should participate, CoP
- UWC Model to include a moderation and evaluation component
- Accredited and credit-bearing faculty-based modules... RPL... PGDiploma.

Recommendations

- Mentoring models
- Consciousness-raising about policies and strategies... buy-in... increase in participation levels

References

- CHE *Report of the Task Team on Undergraduate Curriculum Structure* (discussion document), (August 2013)
- Scot, I., Yeld, N., Hendry, J. (2007). A case for improving teaching and learning in South African
- Clegg, S. (2003). Problematizing ourselves: Continuing professional development in higher education. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 8 (1-2), 37-50.