



**BRITISH ACADEMY
OF MANAGEMENT**

BAM
CONFERENCE

3RD-5TH SEPTEMBER

ASTON UNIVERSITY BIRMINGHAM UNITED KINGDOM

This paper is from the BAM2019 Conference Proceedings

About BAM

The British Academy of Management (BAM) is the leading authority on the academic field of management in the UK, supporting and representing the community of scholars and engaging with international peers.

<http://www.bam.ac.uk/>

Teach-Learn-Share: Creating high performance in Teaching and Learning through an Inter-organisational partnership between the Faculties of Management and Health & Medicine

Dr Sarah G Brearley¹ & Dr Casey M Cross²

¹Faculty of Health and Medicine, Lancaster University, UK. sarah.brearley@lancaster.ac.uk

²Lancaster University Management School, Lancaster University, UK. c.m.wilson1@lancaster.ac.uk

Abstract

The Higher Education environment in the UK is changing as a result of political uncertainty and financial tensions. The sector is grappling with cultural changes wherein students see themselves as consumers and Universities have to respond to demands and expectations by continuously improving the student experience whilst not diluting academic quality (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2018). New ways of working, involving interdisciplinary pedagogic collaborations, offer an innovative way to create and sustain the performance necessary to meet demands while maintaining academic quality.

This discussion paper explores an inter-organisational partnership and resulting network within a high-ranking UK University. First, we will present an overview of the current climate and rationale for the need for new ways of creating high performance through inter-organisational pedagogic collaborations. Second, we will describe the resulting collaboration (Teach-Learn-Share) and the mechanism by which it seeks to facilitate new ways of developing and sharing knowledge about excellence in learning, teaching and assessment across Faculties of Management and Health. Finally, we will consider how these new types of initiatives can be sustained and further developed in order to effectively engage and develop colleagues interested in teaching and learning at every level within a collaborative network.

Key Words: Learning and teaching, network, excellence, knowledge catalysts, meso-level culture.

Introduction

The UK Higher Education (HE) sector is currently facing unprecedented challenges within a wider context of political uncertainty and financial tensions. Cultural shifts within HE have led to students identifying themselves as consumers, with concomitant expectations and demands. As a result, Universities are required to respond to student expectations by continuously improving their experience whilst also maintaining academic quality (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2018). At the same time, the focus on teaching and learning (which we argue are core components in achieving high academic quality) has been challenged by the demands of HE metrics and the focus on achieving high rankings (Duhs, 2018, Scott, 2013). Debates about 'excellence' are established around policy initiatives such as the Excellence Frameworks (both Research: REF and Teaching: TEF), and these can shift the focus from the process of creating and sustaining excellence in teaching and learning.

Given the current HE climate it is essential for institutions to recognise at a strategic level the importance of excellent teaching, learning and assessment in genuinely engaging students in transformative learning. Many institutions have fora which bring together academic staff to

talk about teaching and learning issues, but engagement with these within the current context of competing priorities can be challenging. As such there is a need to find innovative mechanisms which bring academic and teaching staff together to engage with issues associated with excellence in teaching and learning. We argue that one innovative mechanism by which the dilution of quality can be avoided is the genuine engagement with synergies across different disciplines (*meso-level issues*). These cross-disciplinary synergies include: i) the pedagogical approaches and scholarship which underpin the design and delivery of curricula, teaching, learning and assessment; ii) the underpinning aim to engage students in transformative learning through excellent teaching, learning and assessment; iii) the desire to maximise positive outcomes for students during their studies; and iv) developing employable, enterprising, digitally literate and socially aware individuals who understand how to work collaboratively in a multicultural and globally interconnected world.

Alongside these powerful *meso-level* inter-organisational synergies, the development of excellence in teaching, learning and assessment performance requires the horizon of focus to also be able to respond to potentially unique teaching and learning challenges experienced by particular groups or departments (*micro-level issues*). We propose that by combining micro and meso-level issues it is possible to create engagement with key scholarly knowledge and recognize and respond to disciplinary differences and teaching realities in order to develop engagement, excellence and performance.

Teach-Learn-Share

The Teach-Learn-Share initiative has been created in direct response to the need to engage with new ways of working which encourage and innovate excellence in teaching, learning and assessment. It adopts the position that only through interorganizational partnerships and networking can educators exchange knowledge in ways that encourage pedagogic practices which deliver a stimulating and inspirational education.

Teaching faculties tend to construct micro-cultures which, through norms, tacit assumptions and taken-for-granted practice influence teaching behavior (Mårtensson and Roxå, 2016, Roxå and Mårtensson, 2015, Trowler, 2008). Teach-Learn-Share challenges this approach by seeking to construct a meso-level culture, drawing on Hannah and Lester (2009)'s framework. Meso-level cultures are large networks, with resources, led by knowledge catalysts, which seek to create semi-autonomous learning networks. The activities of the network and the knowledge catalysts will, over time, develop social behaviour in a multi-dimensional way (Bieri, 1975).

The meso-level social network has a number of implications. First, it facilitates the horizontal sharing of good practice and knowledge about teaching and learning, leading to new ways of engaging with teaching and learning by individuals and micro-cultures within the network. Second, it diffuses knowledge across the whole Institution (beyond the network) and outwith. Third, it has a developmental focus which builds capacity by identifying, creating and developing new knowledge catalysts who are able to further build this (and other) networks and further diffuse knowledge.

In order to create a teaching and learning meso-culture a responsive and agile structure is required. This recognises and develops the network as a whole along with the semi-autonomous learning networks within. The Teach-Learn-Share utilises four core threads (see figure 1).

Thread 1; symposia. This network-focused thread draws on scholarship within the field of teaching and learning in order to develop knowledge within the whole network.

Thread 2; TeachMeet. This brings together the network to critically consider the application into practice of the knowledge from the symposia, by sharing practice. It adopts a TeachMeet structure using micro-presentations (7 minutes), nano-presentations (2 minutes), round-table break-outs (15 minutes) and backchannel discussions, using a # for online conversations to enable further sharing, dissemination and future direction, and to capture outcomes.

Thread 3; Peer-led TeachMeet. These enable and develop semi-autonomous learning networks within the wider network by supporting (with resources) network members to focus on emergent micro-level issues that have relevance to their group or department. This thread aims to empower individuals to responsively lead on developing knowledge.

Thread 4; Communication and dissemination. This thread explicitly acknowledges the importance of capturing and sharing information across the network and diffusing this into the wider Institution and beyond.

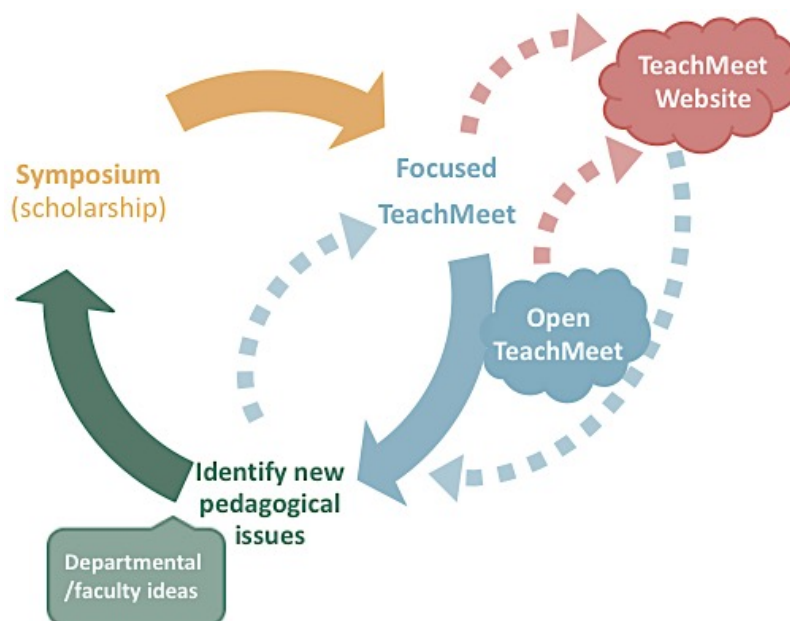


Figure 1: TEACH-LEARN-SHARE mechanism

The Future of Teach-Learn-Share

Early indicators from the Teach-Learn-Share initiative suggest that through the horizontal sharing of teaching practices and the fostering of a transparent culture interdisciplinary collaboration is achievable. Further, the sharing of teaching, learning and assessment

practices within a meso-culture enables knowledge development and can encourage excellence. There is also evidence of an appetite for semi-autonomous networks which work within the wider network, and the potential for new knowledge catalysts. The challenge is to continue to build the network across the Institution in order to develop teaching and learning, to consolidate current and enable new semi-autonomous learning networks, to identify and develop future knowledge catalysts, and to diffuse knowledge and influence at the Institutional (macro)-level.

Conclusions

This discussion paper has explored the importance of developing an inter-organisational partnership within a high-ranking University at a time of political and financial uncertainty. It has been argued that for the student experience to be enhanced without the dilution of academic quality there needs to be engagement with synergies across different disciplines (meso-level issues) which in order to create and sustain the performance necessary to meet demands while maintaining academic quality. In 2017 Teach-Learn-Share was launched with the intention to construct a meso-level culture (Hannah and Lester, 2009) through a cross faculty Management and Health and Medicine collaboration. This uses a four thread approach to i) enables the sharing and development of new and innovative approaches to teaching and learning at the meso-level, ii) includes relevant micro-level teaching and learning issues, and iii) diffuses knowledge and influences to the wider institution and beyond. Looking towards the future, the challenge is to sustain performance, and to further develop semi-autonomous learning networks and future knowledge catalysts.

References

- BIERI, J. 1975. Clinical and social judgment: The discrimination of behavioral information.
- DUHS, R. 2018. UCL Arena and staff development. *Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. UCL IOE Press.
- HANNAH, S. T. & LESTER, P. B. 2009. A multilevel approach to building and leading learning organizations. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 20, 34-48.
- MÅRTENSSON, K. & ROXÅ, T. 2016. Peer engagement for teaching and learning: competence, autonomy and social solidarity in academic microcultures. *Uniped*, 39, 131-143.
- PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS 2018. Managing Risk in Higher Education. *Education Risk Assurance Services*.
- ROXÅ, T. & MÅRTENSSON, K. 2015. Microcultures and informal learning: a heuristic guiding analysis of conditions for informal learning in local higher education workplaces. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 20, 193-205.
- SCOTT, P. 2013. Ranking higher education institutions: a critical. *Rankings and accountability in higher education: Uses and misuses*, 113.
- TROWLER, P. 2008. *Cultures and change in higher education: Theories and practices*, Macmillan International Higher Education.