ASYMMETRIC KNOWLEDGE
THE PROBLEM, THE THINKING, THE PRACTICE
Sonya Campbell - Perry, Keith Halcro & Margaret-Anne Houston
PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE

- Professional doctorate – Community of Practice (Lave & Wenger 1998) v PhD
- Multi-disciplinary cohort - strength
- Evidence of community in Stages 1 and 2 (Robb, Halcro & Poulter 2016; Halcro, Carey & Poulter 2017)
- Prof Doc v PhD (GCU PRES 2017)
ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT

• Organisational strategy - University for Common Good – required to embed in teaching
• Review 2016 Individual Negotiated Study morphed into Group Negotiated Study
  • Framing device thesis (retained)
  • Organisational strategy (new)
  • Strengthen and explicitly embed Community of Practice within teaching, learning & assessment strategy (new)
STAFF BACKGROUND

- All three authors involved in Undergraduate and Postgraduate teaching where team working an element of the student teaching, learning and assessment

- Benefits of team working highlighted in research and policy documents

- The module team Margaret Anne and Sonya; Professional Doctorate Director Keith
January 2018 - observed some elements had worked, others had not worked
January 2019 - two different cohorts
Intervene using external agent. Why? Bring more objective element to team formation to create more effective teams
ASYMMETRIC KNOWLEDGE

- Asymmetric knowledge: one party knows more than the other party
  - Knowledge management (Doz and Hamel, 1998) - alliances
  - Agency theory (Jensen and Meckling, 1976)

- One party seeks to use knowledge to their advantage
PROBLEM: PUTTING TOGETHER EFFECTIVE TEAMS FOR ACADEMIC WORK
Collaboration, Cooperation, Team Work or Real-World Problem-Solving?

• Davidson et al. (2014) identified the similarities and differences among four models of small group instruction: collaborative learning, cooperative learning, problem-based learning (PBL), and team-based learning (TBL).
• Team working skills are an industry requirement for graduates (Bravo et al., 2019).
• Higher prevalence of group work in HE due to the benefits of academic work groups relating to increased performance levels (Gregory and Thorley 2013).
TEAM

V

GROUP

When your hair is stronger than your legs.
Group learning vs team learning

• Jones (1996) team success in the classroom: (1) understanding of team roles & responsibilities (2) discharge of the responsibilities on an individual level (3) ensuring an early and high level of team interaction.

• Whilst the importance of teaching team working skills is recognised, it is often overlooked (Tucker & Abassi, 2014).

• Teachers can increase successful team-based learning by encouraging team interaction through team meetings and by training students in team dynamics (Bravo et al., 2019).
The Power of Teams

The share of employees who are fully engaged more than doubles if they are on teams.

Not on a team

| Fully engaged | 8% |

On a team

| Fully engaged | 17% |

Source: ADP Research Institute, 2019
Practitioner – understands

Trainer – identifies

Lecturer – best guess
Module’s transferable skills include:
1. Exercise initiative; assume personal responsibility, exercise independent decision-making.
2. Social skills including group working.

Learning Outcomes include:
1. Work collaboratively within group towards an agreed outcome.
2. Evidence appropriate outcome for agreed problem.

Summative Assessment:
• Identify definition of ‘common good’ and real world topic.
• Identify and agree group and individual learning outcomes.
• Output: 3000 word individual essay
THE PRACTICE: COHORT 2018 (1)
TUTOR LED GROUP SELECTION

Cohort traits:
• All year 2 Prof Doc candidates
• Known to each other
• Module delivered at end of week-long block
• 1st time meeting tutor

Group selection - tutor and programme director
decision based on:
1. individual academic skills
2. perceived personality traits and
3. professional positions and backgrounds.

The result of tutor led group selection based on
considered understanding of cohort

Expected....

Actual....
THE PRACTICE: COHORT 2019 (2)
FACILITATED SKILLS LED GROUP SELECTION

Cohort traits:
• All year 2 Prof Doc candidates
• Known to each other
• Module delivered at start of week-long block
• 1st time meeting tutor

Group selection: student-led decision based on:
1. External facilitator run session
2. Behavioural profile questionnaire identified 4 personality dimensions:
   1. Dominant
   2. Influencing
   3. Cautious
   4. Steady

The result of facilitated student-led group selection

Expected....

Actual....
THE PRACTICE: COHORT 2019(3)  
FACILITATED SKILLS LED GROUP SELECTION

Cohort traits:
• All year 1 Prof Doc candidates
• Unknown to each other, 1st meeting
• Module delivered at start of week-long block
• 1st time meeting tutor

Group selection: student-led decision based on:
1. External facilitator run session
2. Behavioural profile questionnaire identified 4 personality dimensions:
   1. Dominant
   2. Influencing
   3. Cautious
   4. Steady

The result of facilitated student-led group selection
IMPACT OF GROUP SELECTION ON GROUP WORKING AND SUMMATIVE OUTPUT

Cohort 1
- Disharmony in group dynamics
- Lack of consistency across group and individual learning goals

Cohort 2
- Mostly harmonious group working
- Lack of consistency across group and individual learning goals

Cohort 3
- Mostly harmonious group working
- High level of consistency across group and individual learning goals
LESSONS? - GROUP WORK, TEAM BUILDING AND LEARNING & TEACHING

Module design, recognition of cohort experiences, learning and teaching strategy all required to ensure successful team working….

... and avoid pitfalls which can result in a group of individuals who lose both motivation and focus on the end goal.
Encouraging team interaction can increase learning (Bravo et al, 2019)
Teams need to recognise the individuals within (Tucker & Abassi, 2014)
However, sometimes, even when offered academic advice and solutions, you still prefer to pick your friends!!