

ICED 2020 proceedings: How to support faculty in educational innovation

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Abstract

NHL Stenden has developed and is now implementing a new educational concept, called Design Based Education (DBE). DBE requires faculty to adopt and apply a new vision on education, which implies new roles, and therefore new competences and a new mindset. The question is how to support faculty in developing this new mindset and these new competences. Here it is important to focus on personal beliefs and behaviors to really achieve the desired educational innovation. A specific way of learning aimed at designing and implementing the new educational concept as a team in which faculty learn inquisitively in communities, like students in education, could be an answer to this. Management must facilitate this in terms of time and coaching.

1 Introduction

NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences has seized its recent merger (NHL with Stenden) as an excellent opportunity to reconsider its educational concept. Together with staff, industry, students and external experts, the concept of Design Based Education (DBE) was developed (see below). Study program teams are responsible for the educational design of their own programs, so the concept of DBE needs to be adjusted to their specific contexts. Therefore, it is necessary to develop both a personal and a shared vision regarding DBE and its implications. Faculty are challenged to reconsider beliefs and behaviors concerning learning and teaching. This should trigger a learning and development process. However, support and guidance in this process is needed. In a complex changing environment, it is important to recognize the need for support (Rafferty & Griffin, 2006). In the elaboration and implementation of DBE, it then becomes clear that the concept not only means a new way of learning for students, but also that faculty must take on different roles and acquire a different mindset concerning their teaching. For faculty, this can mean a fundamentally new professional identity, which may be a logical step for one person but an unbridgeable gap for another. When it comes to educational renewal, it is essential to involve lecturers; educational renewal has no chance without support (Bergen & Van Veen, 2004). For the educational staff and professionalization department of the university of applied sciences, this calls for reflection on how lecturers can best be supported in this process of changing beliefs and behaviors.

2 Educational innovation at NHL Stenden University

2.1 The meaning of Design Based Education (DBE)

With the educational concept of DBE, NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences wants to help students develop future-proof competences in order to solve, reduce or prevent the problems of present and future society. DBE is based on social-constructive learning. The learning environment is focused on the development of a solid knowledge base and the ability to transfer knowledge to different and currently unknown situations. The learning process

therefore focuses on the adaptability of the student and the development of the student's own professional identity and thus has a lasting, sustainable impact. Of great importance is the interaction between faculty, students and industry. The quality of their relationships can be influenced by proper coordination within learning environments.

Design Based Education is characterized by iterative processes based on the principles of Design Thinking, in which steps are repeated to achieve change and improvement, in other words development and learning (Geitz & de Geus, 2019).

2.2 The role of faculty in DBE

The role of faculty in education is crucial, and in DBE faculty perform in a specific, versatile and rather complex way. Faculty help students to learn by creating learning environments in which they can experience guidance and facilitation in several ways. However, many faculty find it difficult to navigate in this new professional identity, which requires new competences in order to support the student learning process such as asking the right questions, providing sustainable feedback, and organizing authentic practical assignments (Woudt-Mittendorff & Visscher-Voerman, 2019). That is why they should be guided and facilitated in their learning and development, so that they can facilitate the learning of their students in the DBE way we desire.

Faculty who succeed in continually redesigning their teaching environments as a self-managing team also train students who manage their own learning processes and continually rethink them. Faculty who learn as a team also help students to learn more as a team. Team learning can also be called collective learning. One form of collective learning by lecturers is that of the investigative dialogue (Assen, 2018). Teams learn by working on an innovation, with a supervisor as facilitator instead of an expert (Walsweer, 2015). By focusing on participation, learning can be viewed in a clear way, leading to a changing way of supporting learning (Coenders, 2008). By using these forms of learning, the entire system, and the entire organization, learns (Fullan, 2009) and participants (lecturers) feel emotionally supported (Lankveld & Volman, 2009).

Collective learning by faculty could support them in reducing the gap between their beliefs and their behaviors. As faculty are used to solving their teaching problems individually, it is important to stimulate and encourage collective learning, integrating the four factors shared vision, dialogue and research, collective action and evaluation/reflection (Assen, 2018). These four factors encourage faculty to reflect on their beliefs about teaching and learning, and to become aware of whether these beliefs are consistent with the learner-centered approach to teaching that most of them advocate. Reflective capacities are of great importance for the development of the professional identity of faculty.

An integral and transparent vision of education should be developed by school leaders and their study program teams, because this will influence the way in which the approach to education is embedded in the curriculum. Curriculum standards, i.e. learning outcomes, curriculum design, workplaces, active learning methods, lecturer competences and program evaluation should therefore be developed, using an integrated approach (Assen, 2018). This can be achieved by facilitating Communities of Practice, with a supervisor as facilitator. As stated before, this supervisor is a person who facilitates team learning. The HR department of NHL Stenden can provide teams with these specifically trained coaches.

2.3 Organisation and leadership in educational innovation

Collective learning assumes that there is a learning culture, which involves transformative learning (Ruijters, 2015). This requires a focus on joint knowledge building, resulting in the innovation itself. Faculty are key to developing a clear vision of the student-centered approach

to education. Involvement and motivation must be supported through broad participation, stimulating experimental behavior, learning from mistakes and giving and receiving feedback (Oreg, 2006; Miedema & Stam, 2008; Coppoolse, 2018). Creating support is mainly about emotional aspects. In the event of change, faculty give meaning to the information in their own way, so that everyone constructs their own reality (Oreg, Vakola & Armenakis, 2011). Emotions about culture, identity and core values give meaning to it. People go along with a change when they understand it with their heads (cortex) and feel it with their hearts (limbic system). The emotions (limbic system) give change energy (Bartunet, Rudolph & Depalma, 2006; Thieke & Leeuwen, van, 2013).

Transformative leadership can stimulate a learning culture in which faculty can innovate, commit to a shared vision and experiment with student-centered interventions. The implementation of the new educational concept requires a great deal of effort from educational experts and faculty. This must be strongly facilitated by management. It takes time to go through several iterations to make things really work and achieve the quality desired. John Dewey already described communication as the process of sharing experience until this experience becomes common property (Geitz & de Geus, 2019). Lecturers and their teams need to be coached in this process to help them conduct the right dialogues, make the best decisions and use and develop their competences (Woudt-Mittendorff & Visscher-Voerman, 2019).

3 Conclusions

The transition to Design Based Education requires lecturers to make changes in terms of competences and behavior, but this also involves shifts in feelings, culture and identity: educational innovations only have a chance of succeeding if faculty really understand and support the change. Faculty will have to become much more than “knowledge carriers”, as is already commonly agreed upon. They must also become more than coaches of learning processes: they must become designers of learning environments which they optimize in continuous iterations. By doing this together, by giving space to emotions and by reflecting, they can also be said to practice Collective Learning. This requires a lot of commitment and intrinsic motivation on the part of faculty. Through involvement in every aspect of education, though, this can be achieved. Support and coaching will help faculty in this major change. Enough time and consideration must be invested to make it a success and in turn help to develop graduates of great importance for the future world.

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