Chapter VIII

New Skills and Ways of Working:
Faculty Development for E-Learning

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Abstract

This chapter analyzes approaches to faculty development for e-learning in post-compulsory institutions. Everett Rogers' (2003) diffusion of innovation theory provides the framework for a review of faculty development strategies adopted by institutions to foster the adoption of information and communication technologies (ICTs) by mainstream faculty into everyday teaching and learning practices. Using examples as illustration, the chapter reviews different approaches to faculty development aimed at achieving a critical mass of staff who are competent working in the e-learning context. These strategies include focusing on the characteristics of innovation; adopting a staged approach to skills acquisition; embedding skills and processes associated with teaching and learning in the e-learning context in formal, accredited courses; fostering peer learning; framing faculty development as project-based learning; and using the online environment to deliver faculty development. The chapter concludes with practical advice concerning faculty development for e-learning practice across institutions.

Introduction

This chapter provides a review and analysis of approaches to faculty development to address the demands faced by teachers in post-compulsory institutions in the adoption and use of e-learning. In my practice as an academic developer, I adopt the view that faculty development for e-learning is a change process aimed at providing faculty with new sets of skills, knowledge, and capabilities in this new and different context for learning and teaching. Thus, the focus in this chapter is on strategies used to ensure that faculty is sufficiently skilled to work in the online environment and to enhance the institution's capability to sustain the integration of the new technologies into learning and teaching practices.

Defining Terms

Throughout the chapter, faculty development is used to mean the provision of opportunities for faculty in higher education to engage in continuous improvement in relation to their role as teachers in the e-learning environment. As a term faculty development is used synonymously with others in use such as academic development, educational development, and staff development. Faculty development is also viewed as workplace learning, defined as "learning from work, at and through work" (Garavan, Morley, Gunnigle, & McGuire, 2002, p. 61).

Faculty development has context, content, and process elements. It contributes to broadening the scope of competence of faculty as learning professionals throughout their careers (Cheetham & Chivers, 2005; Eraut, 2001). It extends the professional knowledge, skills, techniques, attitudes, and understanding of ethical principles that underpin the teaching practices of staff (Beaty, 1998; Brew, 1995). It fosters the growth and development of organizational learning, by leveraging the knowledge assets of the organization at the individual, work group, and organizational levels for the benefit of the learner and to improve institutional performance overall (Boud & Garrick, 1999). Faculty development is also the means by which faculty are afforded the opportunity to challenge their current academic practices and acquire, practice, and adopt new knowledge (Anderson & Kanuka, 1997; Taylor, 1997). The faculty development function is challenged constantly by how best to engage strategically and achieve maximum impact within the institution. It must continually seek to enlist senior management support, assume a "helicopter view" of the organization, and contribute to and help shape institutional goals. Beaty (1995) drew a metaphor of faculty development "working across the hierarchy," balancing organizational and individual

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