

CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE: A QUALITATIVE ENQUIRY INTO STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF A SCOTTISH EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVE

Taylor, N., and Moreland, J. (2015)

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to examine staff perceptions of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) at the University of the Highlands and Islands. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted with staff (n=14) at four of the university's academic partners to uncover: staff attitudes towards CfE; staff understanding of CfE; how staff view CfE as relating to their practice.

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

- Most respondents were positive about the pedagogy of CfE, seeing it as a new way to articulate what is (or has always been) good practice in teaching. In this way, the initiative (and not the underlying pedagogy) was regarded as 'nothing new'
- There wasn't a particularly good understanding of the details of CfE in evidence, but most respondents had a grasp of what CfE was broadly expected to achieve.
- There was some concern as to whether CfE as a broad, general approach to education can fit with the overly prescriptive outcomes of the SQA
- Staff identified some institutional challenges to implementing CfE; they felt that some course teams were better suited to the networking and sharing/creating resources together that is implied by CfE.

IMPLICATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The authors identify three areas that have implications for the university:

Lack of preparedness for CfE

There was little evidence presented that teaching staff had made any adjustments to what they were offering nor to the way in which they delivered it. There were references to some courses being designed in line with the CfE guidelines, but these were seen as being lower level courses directed at students lacking essential skills.

Transition from school to college

Staff were concerned about students' lack of preparedness for HE. CfE can be seen as a vehicle for focusing concerns and approaches concerning transition and making improvements

UHI corporate mission

The implementation of CfE, combined with the enhancement themes, is seen as being an opportunity to draw together the variety of systems and approaches that exist across UHI, to make it function together better as a whole.