The changing role of ALL educators: from student to staff capability building

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Outline

Context:
  tertiary sector
  RMIT

RMIT Study and Learning Centre:
  evolving approach
  staff capability building
  strategy - benefits
The current tertiary environment is characterised by multiple agendas including:

- globalisation and massification of education
- digital transformation
- employability
- diversity
- sustainability

We are operating in a time of changing roles and uncertain futures.
As the tertiary sector tries to respond to a rapidly changing environment and competing agendas, it is undergoing something of an identity crisis.

What exactly is the role of higher education in the global, digital economy where knowledge is available in many forms and developing at a phenomenal rate?

**Shifting roles and expectations** on all ‘players’ --> blurred and changing boundaries
Both the focus of, and the way we work are changing.

**The university**
At the core, universities are no longer the bastions of knowledge creation.
e.g. role change: RMIT’s VC - high level global, corporate, digital business background - not an academic

**Academics**
From content delivery to capability development

**Students**
Expectations are changing
Multiple roles: learner, customer/client, co-creator
Multiple careers

**AALL practitioners**
Part of the ‘third space’ professionals (Whitechurch 2013)
(Incl. educational developers, L&T professionals, librarians, career consultants)
Working across blurred boundaries, in multidisciplinary, short and long-term projects
RMIT
- global: multiple campuses around the world as well as many formal links with global industry
- large: 80K+ students of diverse backgrounds and pathways to entry
- dual sector: both VE and HE, with articulation between the two

Strategic focus on students at the centre and employability/life skills
The SLC has three main focusses:
- student-facing
- online delivery
- staff-facing

These equate roughly to teams, but there is overlap and considerable collaboration between these areas.
Over the years, the SLC has moved from putting its greatest focus on face-to-face, one-to-one, drop-in and workshops, towards increasing it online support, and most recently to a greater involvement in professional development, strategic projects, and curriculum development.

- Moving towards more capability building activities, with systemic reach, which is a more sustainable approach.
i.e. trying to do more with less for longer
However, sometimes it can feel like ...

So we need a multi-pronged approach.
Just looking at staff capability building, which is our main strategy within the staff-facing team, our activities can be divided into two approaches:

1. **Top down** / push
institute wide strategic projects with objectives around
- employability
- global online delivery
2. **Bottom up** / demand-driven / pull

**online staff development**
- e.g. LL resources for staff
  
  [https://emedia.rmit.edu.au/learninglab/content/resources-staff](https://emedia.rmit.edu.au/learninglab/content/resources-staff)

**professional development**
- formal (Essentials course for new academic staff)
- informal/requested

**consultancy**
- assessment design, rubrics, teaching strategies

**workshops**
- customised to course/assessment task
- teaching package (lesson plan, materials, activities, etc.)
Both approaches have benefits and issues:

**Top-down**
+ systemic
+ reach
+ funded

- buy-in?
- hard and slow to do in large and complex organisations
- limited control over direction of projects

**Bottom-up**
+ needs-driven
+ buy-in, commitment
+ just-in-time

- too little too late
  - e.g. workshop request before assessment due, when would have been better to be involved in assessment design
- limited resources
- limited lifespan
  - e.g. staff leave
So our overall strategy is to undertake a mix of activities.

**Reactive** activities are bottom up.

**Proactive** actions may be based on reactive work and extend it to be more sustainable.

**Predictive** activities (which can also be seen as proactive) include work that pre-empts requests and aims to minimise the need for reactive work in that area.
From little things, big things grow
Reference