Faculty Mentoring within a Community of Practice as part of Professional Development in Teaching at NUS

A. M. Lee and J. L. F. Choy, *National University of Singapore (NUS)*

ABSTRACT: We will report on a new initiative at NUS that will support the internal, ongoing transformation of professional development for early career academics. The current programme consists of three components: a 3-day Core intensive series of workshops culminating in participants engaging in a micro teaching session, 16-hours of Elective Workshops, and a Practicum in which participants devise an educational research project. There are three major concerns with the current status of the programme. First, there is a lack of programme evaluation, both in terms of its effectiveness and its impact on student achievement. Second, the Elective Workshops do not capitalize on the collegiality developed during Core, and further do not necessarily meet the strategic needs of the participants or socialize informed reflective practice. Third, the programme has largely avoided implementing assignment tasks, such as tasks that would require participants to reflect on their teaching or on the benefit of the programme to their teaching.

During this presentation, we will outline an evaluation protocol adapted from the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework (Garrison et al., 1999) as a lens to examine the quality of the programme in fostering a deep and meaningful learning experience. In addition, Hall and Hord's (2006) levels-of-use concept will be used to identify how well concepts discussed during the Core component are implemented in classroom practice. For participants, the greatest struggle is not in learning new skills, but in implementing them. Although the Core provides a theoretical framework to understand and reflect on teaching, participants need opportunities to practice in the classroom, to observe student outcomes and to discuss changes and make adjustments with the help of their peers (Sturko and Holyoke, 2009). We intend to replace the ad hoc Elective Workshops with a faculty mentoring model within a Community of Practice (Wenger, 1998) that leverages on the collegiality established during the Core component (Smith et al., 2013). This model will be implemented in the first year following completion of Core. During this year, participants will be mentored both in their classroom practice and implementation of Core skills, and in the development of a course portfolio.

REFERENCES

Garrison, D. R., Anderson, T. and Archer, W. (1999), Critical inquiry in a text-based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education, *The Internet and Higher Education*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 87–105.

Hall, G. E. and Hord, S. M. (2006), *Implementing change: patterns, principles, and potholes*, Boston: Pearson.

Smith, E. R., Calderwood, P. E., Dohm, F. A. and Gill Lopez P. (2013), Reconceptualizing Faculty Mentoring within a Community of Practice Model, *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 175–194.

Sturko, P. and Holyoke, L. (2009), Evaluating professional development that prepares teachers to integrate academic skills into technical curricula, *Professional Development in Education*, Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 211–225.

Wenger, E. (1998), *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.