



The Eleventh Annual University of Windsor and Oakland University Teaching and Learning Conference

TOWARDS A CULTURE THAT VALUES TEACHING

PLANNING RESOURCE

INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON TEACHING EVALUATION

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Teaching Evaluation: Some Foundational Ideas

Evaluation is the systematic observation of relevant performance to make decisions (Arreola, 2007), involving four main components:

1. Systematic and thoughtful **collection of data**
 - a. Design and content of **instruments** used, information collected
 - b. **Implementation** and process
 - c. **Reporting**
2. **Interpretation** of data
3. **Judgment** of value
4. **Use**: Development and implementation of a plan for action

(adapted from Wolf, 1987)

A teaching evaluation initiative, therefore, could involve a change to practice in any of these areas. Teaching evaluation also has many different purposes, from teaching and program improvement, to personnel decision-making, to accountability reporting. Typically, evaluation can be divided into formative and summative evaluation:

Summative Evaluation: final assessment, judgment

- Personnel-related decisions – hiring, tenure, promotion
- Information to students – course selection

Formative Evaluation: developmental

- Feedback to instructors – ongoing enhancement of individuals
- Research on teaching – enhance practice through scholarship

There are many **recurring themes in research on effective teaching evaluation**. To be effective, teaching evaluation should be:

1. Multi-faceted, using multiple types of data, approaches to gathering data, and methods for evaluating data
2. Shared understanding of quality teaching
3. Robust feedback cycles
4. Change in teaching evaluation system requires sustained, multi-level, consultative leadership
5. Communications and dialogue are critical

(Wright et al., 2014)

Some Characteristics of “Slippery” Initiatives¹

- Complicated or counterintuitive
- Risky for some or all of the people involved
- Centrally required, but operationally decentralized
- Distinct responsibilities across multiple units with little central co-ordination
- Conflicting layers of interest – what’s advantageous at one level is threatening or potentially damaging at another.
- One process, multiple intended uses

(Raffoul & Hamilton, 2016)

¹ Slippery initiatives are those that are difficult to introduce, implement, or sustain.

Research Underpinning the International Forum on Teaching Evaluation

This Forum will integrate three bodies of research in post-secondary education: practices in effective teaching evaluation; institutional teaching culture; the nature of change and leadership in post-secondary institutions.

An extensive literature review (Wright et al., 2014a) identified four recurring themes required for effective teaching evaluation: shared understandings of quality (Arreola, 2007; Hénard & Roseveare, 2012); multi-faceted data and evaluation (Arreola, 2007; Berk, 2009, 2014; Buller, 2012); robust feedback cycles (Gibbs & Coffey, 2004; Piccinin, 2003; Theall & Franklin, 2001); and sustained leadership for education, engagement, and change (Arreola, 2007; Gravestock, 2011; Hénard & Roseveare, 2012). Although national survey data are not available, the University of Windsor led a provincial survey of Ontario universities' teaching evaluation practices which identified gaps and challenges across all of these themes (Wright et al., 2014a). Research based on successful institutional teaching evaluation initiatives – launched in part to mediate these gaps – will form a core element of the material presented at the Forum. Topics include: adaptation of empirically developed frameworks for promotion and tenure teaching criteria (Chalmers et al., 2014); documentation of instructor strategies for teaching evaluation data (Hativa, 2013); ethical data use and publication; instructor-customizable student ratings of instruction (Gravestock & Gregor-Greenleaf, 2008); visualization tools for the study of teaching evaluation data; annotation tools for teaching dossiers (Graniero & Hamilton, 2016); and the use of teaching dossiers for presenting evidence.

A post-secondary institution's culture consists of its embedded patterns, behaviours, shared values, beliefs, and ideologies (Cox et al., 2011; Kustra et al., 2014), as well as numerous micro-cultures (Mårtensson & Roxå, 2016). For example, an institution's teaching culture might involve a shared campus commitment to teaching excellence (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008). Whether, and how, an institution values teaching can impact critical outcomes such as student learning (Cox et al., 2011), student engagement (Grayson & Grayson, 2003), and student retention (Berger & Braxton, 1998), as well as faculty motivation and behaviour (Feldman & Paulsen, 1999). Implementing effective, evidence-based, fair evaluation of teaching practices has been frequently identified as one of the critical elements influencing whether an institution values teaching, and is an indicator of a strong teaching culture. Teaching evaluation practices are designed, implemented, and employed through that culture and in support of that culture (Graniero & Hamilton, 2016). They are a key practice through which the culture's values are articulated, reinforced, and replicated, and have a powerful though not always linear effect on how people operate within that culture.

Change initiatives intended to improve teaching evaluation are often supported in principle, but are challenging in reality (Hénard, 2010). The difficulty is not so much technical – identifying the right tools and techniques – as it is cultural. Making changes to teaching evaluation practices intervenes in an institution's culture, often questioning and reshaping values, with implications for both patterns of behaviour and identities. As Arreola (2007) puts it: "The real problem lies in getting large numbers of intelligent, highly educated, and independent people to change their behaviour" (p. xxiv). Deeply held beliefs – many of them myths and misconceptions – regarding legitimacy of teaching evaluation, coupled with overreliance on student ratings of instruction as a single source of data, are challenging barriers to engagement (Hativa, 2013). Without systematic mediation, resulting methods and tools often do not reflect instructor experience of what is valuable in teaching, or how teaching works (Allen et al., 2015). More generally Serman (2006) describes the ways in which people understand, interpret,

react to, and evade imposed measures in systems similar to universities, resulting in highly unpredictable and often counterintuitive outcomes. For these reasons, it is becoming increasingly clear that approaches strongly grounded in systematic attention to teaching culture, institutional context, and the nature of effective change leadership in post-secondary institutions are critical to effective and sustained change in teaching evaluation.

Very little has been written about educational leadership in Canadian post-secondary contexts (Wright et al., 2014b). However extensive European and Australian research suggests that “distributed” leadership, which disperses the powers and responsibilities of leadership amongst multiple individuals and groups at multiple levels of the university (see Bolden et al., 2009; Lieff & Yammarino, 2017; Roxå & Mårtensson, 2013; Southwell & Morgan, 2009), is most effective. The distributed leadership model reflects how hierarchies and knowledge networks interact in academic settings. Members of the university work through social and information networks to navigate and make meaning across the system. Over time, emergent leaders develop within these significant networks whether or not they occupy a role of formal authority. Because of the powerful influence of these significant networks, distributed leadership can be an effective way to bring about change in complex adaptive systems: however, these leaders operate most effectively in a context of constructive collaboration with the formal leadership of their institutions. Coordination of “top-down” and “bottom-up” perspectives and activities has been identified as a central challenge of institutional leadership (Bolden et al., 2009). This model matched the conditions and practices found through an environmental scan of educational leadership (Wright et al., 2014b). This event is an opportunity to explore the potential of a distributed leadership change model while focusing on teaching evaluation as a specific element of institutional practice, providing opportunities for institutional change and collaboration, to enhance cultures that value teaching in order to improve teaching and learning across the Canadian and international post-secondary context.

Dimensions of Leadership in Higher Education

Bolden, Petrov, and Gosling’s 2008 study of the development of collective leadership in higher education provides an exceptional summary of the dynamic interplay among five main factors in leadership in higher education: the individual, social, structural, contextual, and developmental (reflective of how the system is changing over time) (Figure 1). In this model, the structural, individual, and social dimensions of leadership are overlapping and interacting. All three are situated within and therefore informed by a specific institutional context. The authors also identify aspects of practice produced by the interplay between the dimensions. For example, while the “individual dimension” includes personal qualities and experiences, its interaction with the social dimension produces professional and personal identity as well as relationships. The model locates organizational culture, formal networks, and communications channels at the interface between the social and the structural dimensions of leadership. The fifth dimension, development, refers to the dynamic nature of leadership, which is constantly evolving and adapting over time. This model reflects the ways in which the nature, activity, and effects of leadership are produced beyond the individual or personal level.

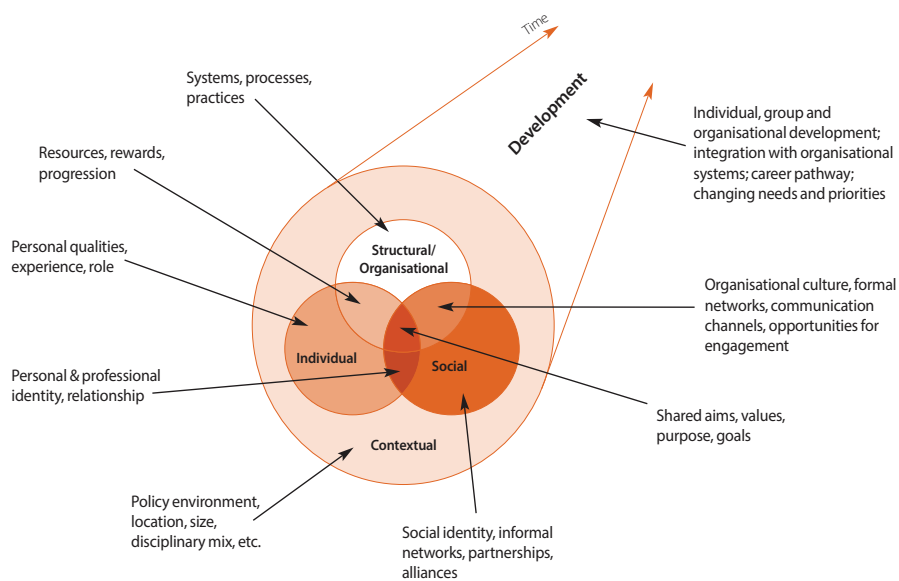


Figure 1: Dimensions of Leadership in Higher Education (Bolden, Petrov, & Gosling, 2008, p. 60)

Bolden, R., Petrov, G., & Gosling, J. (2009). Distributed leadership in higher education: Rhetoric and reality. *Educational Management Association and Leadership*, 37(20), 257-277.

Planning Resource Questions

A) Getting Started	Additional Information/ Source
1. What is your project or question?	
2. What is your goal?	
3. Why does this project or question matter to you or your institution? a) What can't be compromised?	
4. Could your project or question be impacted by conditions that make a change initiative slippery (see p. 3)? If so, how?	

B) Individual ²	Additional Information/ Source
<p>1. What expertise, experiences, or personal qualities are you bringing to this project or question?</p>	
<p>2. What do you know about the people you're trying to engage in the process?</p> <p>a) What hopes, personal priorities, concerns, or resistance might other people bringing to this initiative?</p> <p>b) What don't you know?</p>	
<p>3. How might this project or question affect you or others?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personally or professionally? • How does that impact planning? 	

² Structure of sections adapted from the model developed by Bolden, Petrov, and Gosling (2008).

C) Social	Additional Information/ Source
<p>1. How does your goal reflect institutional values or goals? Are there any misalignments that could pose challenges?</p>	
<p>2. What networks, partnerships, or alliances should be engaged to help move your initiative or question forward? If you don't know, what "plugged in" people might help you find out?</p>	
<p>3. What parts are better spearheaded by people in formal leadership roles? What parts need a more grass-roots approach?</p>	
<p>4. Can you predict any possible tensions that this project might create with specific groups?</p>	

D) Structural/Organizational	Additional Information/ Source
<p>1. Do aspects of this project fall under institutional policy, collective agreements, bylaws, or other documents involving formal governance?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Does achievement of the goal require changes to these? b) Which parts of your goal could be met without making changes to these documents? c) If you don't know, how do you find out? Who can help? 	
<p>2. Does achievement of the goal require changes to broadly distributed procedures (procedures that require input from multiple areas or people)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) What will that mean for planning? b) What about communication? c) How will procedural changes be overseen? 	
<p>3. What do you need access to in accomplishing this goal? What does that mean for your planning?</p>	
<p>4. Compliance vs. engagement? What are the relative benefits or risks?</p>	
<p>5. What kinds of incentives and disincentives are involved in engagement with this project or question?</p>	

E) Contextual	Additional Information/ Source
1. What <i>institutional neighbourhoods</i> (departments, disciplines, institutes, service units) do you need to consider?	
2. What characteristics of your institution are important to take into account?	
3. What are the strengths and opportunities of your institution related to your project or question?	
4. What pressures, risks and opportunities that are external to the institution may influence your project or inquiry?	

F) Change Over Time	Additional Information/ Source
<p>1. What past experiences (yours and others) need to be taken into account in moving forward?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How could you find out more about the past experiences of others? 	
<p>2. Is there a necessary order to making change (do some things need to come first)?</p>	
<p>3. What might have to change to make the project happen? Is there a culture shift needed? How realistic is that? If not, what other pathways could move your goals forward?</p>	
<p>4. What other projects and initiatives could run in tandem with this to strengthen all of them?</p>	

5. What situational factors at your institution currently limit or provide opportunities?

6. Identify any place where you need more information to proceed effectively, e.g., through consultation, discussion, collaboration.

Revisit your goal(s) based on the reflections you made in sections A-F. Is there anything to change?

Making it Work: Planning and Action

Planning and Approach	Additional Information/ Source
<p>1. Clarify, what are you trying to accomplish?</p> <p>Goals:</p> <p>Project or Question:</p>	
<p>2. Who needs to be involved, and how?</p> <p>Point or Lead:</p> <p>Core Team:</p> <p>Champions:</p> <p>Supports or Consultants:</p> <p>Experts:</p> <p>Resisters:</p> <p>Other:</p>	
<p>3. What would a timeline look like?</p> <p>Start:</p> <p>Milestones and evidence of success?</p> <p>Completion and evidence of success?</p>	

Further Timeline Planning Considerations

1. What are the possible barriers and strategies to address them?

Barrier	Strategies to Address Barrier

2. What resources do you need to have or to access? (People, facilities, funds, etc.)

Resource	Provider

3. How will you know if you are succeeding? What data supports that analysis?

4. What projects, trends, successes, or priorities can be leveraged to increase the chance of success?

Making it Work: Further Considerations

1. If someone else is running a teaching evaluation project that's going to involve you:
 - How do you want to be treated?
 - What's important to you?

2. What kinds of lessons have you learned previously about working on challenging projects and questions?

3. Does anything need to be changed in your current project or question?

4. What is still unclear?

5. What are your next steps?

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