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Enhancing Academic Practice Through Reflection to Promote Inclusive Education

Background

This project represents an ongoing initiative to enhance pedagogical practices through reflective methodologies. This paper focuses on implementing Reflective Teaching Workshops as a transformative mechanism to advance inclusive education within university-level instructional frameworks. Reflective teaching has been established as a fundamental principle of effective pedagogy; however, its sustained integration within higher education contexts continues to pose significant challenges. This ongoing intervention emerges from the University of Kent's commitment to promoting inclusive education as outlined in its Access and Participation Plan and broader institutional strategies. While various interventions have been implemented to support student success, there exists a pronounced gap in systematic support designed specifically for academic staff tasked with delivering an inclusive curriculum.

The Reflective Teaching Workshop aims to bridge this gap by cultivating a culture of reflective practice among educators (Bell Hooks, 2003; Brookfield, 1995). This study aims to highlight the significance of reflective teaching practices as a vital element in fostering inclusive education. The study specifically asks: **RQ1 How do science lecturers understand and engage in reflective teaching practices to enhance their inclusivity and cultural sensitivity? RQ2 How has participation in the Reflective Teaching Workshops influenced your teaching methods and approaches?**

Methods

This study will utilise rich qualitative interview data collected from seven academic staff members who participated in six Reflective Teaching Workshops during the 2023/24 academic year. In addition to the interviews, data will be gathered from participant reflections and discussions held during the workshops, as well as from pre- and post-workshop feedback questionnaires to evaluate ongoing changes in perceptions and practices. The qualitative data from interviews, reflections, and discussions will be analysed thematically to identify shifts in teaching practices and attitudes. This paper ensures compliance with Data Protection and GDPR regulations, and pseudonyms will be assigned to the lecturers' names in all reports and publications.

Results

The study is currently gathering data through interviews with lecturers. The planned analyses will present narratives as case studies for each of the seven lecturers who participated in the Reflective Teaching Workshops. The thematic analysis will explore their experiences before, during, and after attending these workshops, including the resources provided, the Moodle page, and the online community of academic practice designed for participants. Preliminary analyses suggest a notable enhancement in the educators' ability to critically evaluate their teaching methodologies, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and reflective practice within the academic environment. Participants have reported an increased awareness of diverse teaching strategies, a deeper understanding of student learning needs, and a strengthened commitment to pedagogical excellence.

Conclusions

Reflective Teaching Workshops present significant opportunities for enhancing professional practice, enabling institutions to rapidly implement changes that support inclusive education. This initiative emphasises the critical selection of pedagogical approaches, educational activities, and the organisation of content—encompassing lecture materials, lecture slides, examples, and various learning activities within higher education. These efforts are essential to foster academic success and a profound sense of belonging among a diverse student population. Reflective Teaching Workshops have elicited a range of responses from the academic staff, highlighting their transformative potential in pedagogical practices.