

Influence of size and distribution of teaching groups on quality characteristics

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Community-based academic development approaches, such as communities of practice and learning communities, commonly result in strongly positive effects for participating academics. Yet, the overall impact on learning and teaching across higher education institutions is limited, as the participation rates in general are low. Based on this context, the research reported on here investigates a new approach to academic development called ‘teaching groups’. Teaching groups are defined as groups of academics who teach together into subject areas or degree programmes. The research proposes that teaching groups, while not formally recognized, already exist. Teaching groups encompass the vast majority of academics with teaching responsibilities, leading to an approach to academic development with a potential for a much larger participation than achieved with conventional community-based approaches that rely on voluntary participation. The quality characteristics of teaching groups can be determined, with community-like teaching groups providing their members with a strongly supportive context for learning about teaching. Where teaching groups do not already have community characteristics, they nevertheless provide a starting point for academic development that reaches academics who would not volunteer their participation. The article presented here focuses on the influence of size and distribution of teaching groups on quality characteristics.