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PEER SUPPORT FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPERS – A TOOL AND A FORUM

1. Purpose and outcomes

The aim of the workshop is twofold: 1) to describe the possibilities of peers in the work of university teachers and educational developers as a way to support professional development and well-being in work 2) To offer an authentic forum and experience of collegial peer support for staff in different positions. This support is given in trustful atmosphere in groups of 3-4 persons.

After the workshop the participants are ready to utilize the method in their own contexts.

2. Content and scholarly basis

Teaching in universities can be very isolated work. This is especially odd, because in many domains research is done in close cooperation. When it comes to educational developers, coordinators etc., the situation is often schizophrenic. They are in between different organisations, different domains, and different expectations. This situation is described "third space". The reorganizing of educational development units has made the situation even worse: there are maybe not colleagues facing the same situations and problems in own university at all.

Peer consultation is based on reflectivity and dialogue between small groups of participants. Participants are encouraged to discuss the actual "everyday" challenges and problems they have in their work situations. It is also assumed that the dialogue about work challenges or actual questions with other peers helps participants to see their own behavior in working situations from different perspectives (*"through the lens of a critical friend"*; Costa & Kallick 1993). Feedback from peers is believed to help participants take more responsibility of their own working. One of the main purposes in peer consultation is to create a situation where working problems can be examined in a safe and confidential atmosphere. Consultative method is based on collaborative learning.

3. Design

1. Warm-up and presentation of the idea and the participants in the workshop (15 min)
2. Former experiences of peer feedback in different contexts (20 min)
3. Group work: participants will be divided in groups of 3-4 persons. Each participant ("teller") will describe a real life case or problem from their own work. The other persons ("listeners") in a group will ask questions, clarifications etc. (20 min). After this phase the listeners will have a dialogue

- where they will chance ideas of the teller's situation (5 min). In the end the teller will tell what ideas and interpretations (s)he made during the session (2 min) (this phase altogether 90 min)
4. Conclusion: "Do you think this would work in your own context?" (35 min)

4. 75 word advertising text

The workshop will offer a forum to concentrate in your everyday work challenges and problems with the support from your colleagues. This will happen in a trustful atmosphere. Our experiences from different contexts have shown that even in a short period of time the participants have gained a lot from the ideas of their peers. The method can also be utilized afterwards in participants own contexts.

Reference:

Costa, A.L. & Kallick, B. 1993. Through the lens of a critical friend. Educational Leadership 51, 2, 49-51.

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/oct93/vol51/num02/Through-the-Lens-of-a-Critical-Friend.aspx>