

## **Disruptive Innovation in Faculty Development**

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The Disruptive Innovation in Faculty (DIF) program objective is to optimize meaningful employment opportunities for business school graduates by developing a new breed of business school faculty.

### **Project Introduction**

There is a global mismatch between the skills and knowledge that business students have upon graduating and the expectations of hiring companies. 53% of recent graduates are either unemployed or underemployed (Blaney). Faculty are the creators of learning experiences that help determine career outcomes for their students, but their preparation for this evolving role has not changed in centuries. Our project tackles this issue from a bold new perspective: recruiting and supporting an international business faculty engaged in the dynamic education of the whole student, fully qualifying that student for a job after graduation. At European Leadership University (ELU) we call this solution Disruptive Innovation in Faculty (DIF).

DIF is a modular learning program for professional business educators that exposes them to new topics and ideas for addressing the market challenges their students will face. Our goal is to create and validate a professional development program for business faculty who will be better equipped to prepare their students for employment by teaching them non-traditional skills and behaviors, including 'soft skills', adapting personal and education disruption theories (Johnson, Christenson & Horn).

An initial pilot workshop was held in Amsterdam (link to video). Introductory workshops of 12-15 participants will lead to additional elective modules, webinars and possible certification or participation in the DIF learning community. DIF is delivered in person and on-line in an inexpensive and flexible format.

ELU's 'greenfield' university model allows us to shake up the status quo. ELU faculty may have recent work and consulting experience that brings industry relationships, networks and credibility to the guidance of ELU students. They may also have deep subject matter expertise and published research. But regardless of their background, our innovative approach to faculty development will enhance their ability to deliver on the promise of 'education for employment' and to better prepare their students for meaningful work.

### **Project Approach**

We see the opportunity for a new breed of professional faculty to help their students prepare for the world of work. They will need several basic qualifications:

- Advanced IT and communication skills
- Hands-on business knowledge and reputation
- Constructivist learning methods
- The ability to personally engage with both students and employers

To help their students succeed, we expect faculty to become coaches, mentors, learning curators and even video producers. Collaborating with corporate employers on real world projects is also important and goes beyond traditional academic interdepartmental course experiments. But to do all this, they need to learn how. Last summer, ELU set out to address this challenge.

Based on our initial DIF pilot research and expert interviews, we now believe successful faculty will also be expected to demonstrate non-traditional skills and behaviors, including:

- Talent advocacy
- Cultural awareness
- Humor and humanism
- Curiosity
- Networking
- Continuous learning
- Influencing
- Drive and entrepreneurship

Opportunities to develop these qualities are absent from most faculty preparation and practice. Some are grouped under the heading of 'soft skills' – a pejorative term that diminishes their importance. Instead, ELU prefers the term *life skills*.

We have designed the DIF program content and delivery to meet the personal demands of professional participants. A small portion of the program will be delivered in person, at a regional location or ELU campus. Participants can then select topics from a menu of experts delivering webinars and video modules on line. The DIF flexible curriculum will employ peer-to-peer learning, on-line knowledge curation and ongoing feedback. The learning community will be supported on line and encouraged to participate in continuous professional development. The DIF community will be invited to convene annually to refresh peer relationships and provide feedback.

## **Initial Research**

Amid the groundswell of recent studies calling for disruption in higher education (McKinsey, Christenson & Horn, Waters, Tapscott, etc.) only a few have focused on the need for changes in faculty preparation (AAC&U, Kezar, Saveri & Chwienut, Albertine & Maxey, Downes). Business schools in particular, while providing faculty with institutional orientation and peer-mentoring, have been slow to embrace changes to their traditional faculty development.

Faculty development varies dramatically by institution. A review of the literature shows that most universities treat faculty development haphazardly, with the majority of effort going to institutional culture and traditional teaching methods (Educause, Diaz, Garrett, Moore and Schwartz). Some initiatives focus on enhancing instructional technology skills while others focus on developing traditional teaching skills. Decisions regarding faculty support are often tied to a number of issues, such as the size of the institution, the focus of related faculty development efforts, and available resources (Educause, Diaz, Garrett, Kinley, Moore, Schwartz, Kohrman).

Forming a career-focused and professionally-eligible graduate is about more than academic or institutional qualifications. Learning is a social as well as cognitive process. Borrowing from theories of TEFL, we know that competency is acquired better through immersion than instruction. Studies show that quickly memorized material dissipates and the content is just as quickly forgotten. Since the '60s Communicative Language Teaching theory has demonstrated the power of socialization, cooperation and peer to peer learning. These are not skills typically acquired in a Ph.D. program or even a management career.

Our first pilot workshop gave us important insights and empirical evidence of the value of our approach. We will continue to explore the best curriculum and monitor success of the DIF program as we work and learn from prospective faculty, tenured faculty and employers in additional workshops.

### **Feasibility Analysis**

The need for innovation in faculty preparation is reinforced by low rates of graduate employment globally. One third of the UK's recent university graduates are employed in non-professional jobs (McLean's). While there's very little good data on how students perform in the labor market once they graduate (Finnie), we know that placement rates are dropping and there is a need to address both the students and the business community differently.

Despite a lack of proof that new and innovative faculty development programs will result in improved employment for students, we know there is a need for major improvement. A vast population of university faculty, 70% of whom are non-tenure track, do not receive relevant development and many protect their jobs by taking few risks in the classroom. (Educause)

The combined experience of our team (former MBA faculty, adult learning scholars and corporate executives) encouraged us to create this disruption in faculty development for ELU. We have designed and implemented international networks, global research projects and professional conferences. We are familiar with the challenges young business graduates will face and the potential of innovation to better prepare them.

We also have years of experience in building on line communities. We are testing virtual and live faculty access to experts, Google Hangout sessions for faculty mentoring, and Echo360 for Action Learning support. These on-line resources will contribute to making the DIF program cost effective and scalable.

In the future, the DIF program may be made available to both individuals and academies looking for new approaches to improving employability. The DIF content and delivery approach are also easily adapted to support secondary school teachers or corporate training professionals interested in better preparation for employees. There are challenges of course. One is defining and demonstrating student employment success. Another is measuring the willingness of faculty to invest in their own development.

### **Next Steps**

The DIF pilot yielded a preliminary profile of the ideal business faculty member and a blueprint for the continuous development curriculum that could contribute to higher rates of employment for their students.

Meanwhile, ELU will continue to research and validate the DIF program approach with faculty who want to improve student success and employability. We are planning a series of follow-on workshops in Boston, Madrid and Istanbul where we will revisit the pilot DIF modules, explore additional developmental topics for business faculty and rehearse their delivery methods with recognized experts and various technologies.

The focus of our Amsterdam pilot was on methods of engaging students and corporate partners. In future workshops, we will look at engagement tools including media and on-line communication and the facilitation of business based Action Inquiry and Problem-Based learning approaches. A sample of proposed modules and candidate experts includes:

- Digital Engagement Strategies – Rahaf Harfoush, digital anthropologist, Sciences Po
- Video Production – Stephanie Munroe, instructor Emerson College and senior editor WGBH
- Thought Leadership Packaging and Promotion – Des Dearlove, Co-Founder Thinkers 50
- MOOC Design – Stephen Downes, specialist in on-line learning and new media
- Building Corporate Relationships – Doug MacLaine, former Xerox executive and consultant
- Implementing Action Learning – Fred Singer, CEO, Echo360 Action Learning Platform

Initially, we will apply the DIF model internally to ELU faculty recruitment and development. We will then make it available for general university faculty. Within five years, we expect that DIF certified faculty could be raising the 'first job' placement ratings of their schools, and not only business schools. If successful, the ELU development program for Disruptive Innovation of Faculty (DIF) can also be adapted for different disciplines, languages or institutions.