

Understanding academic microcultures within a department in a research-intensive university: An exploratory study

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ABSTRACT: This presentation provides an insight of how a study was conducted to examine microcultures within the Alice Lee Centre for Nursing (ALCNS), a department at the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore (NUS). Preliminary findings of the study will be shared.

Microcultures were defined as local work-context where members over time develop traditions and habits in different collegial context (Mårtensson & Roxå, 2016). Overtime, a microculture will become visible in the organisation and possible to identify with the phrase, ‘That’s how they do things over there.’ (Roxå and Mårtensson, 2015). For this study, we adopted Roxå & Mårtensson’s argument (2015) that ‘socially constructed and institutionalised traditions, recurrent practices and tacit assumptions in various microcultures influence academic teachers towards certain behaviour.’ Research question for the study is “What is the profile of academic teachers at ALCNS in terms of microcultures?” According to Roxå and Mårtensson (2015), such findings on microcultures would ‘assist academic developers to fine-tune their strategies while engaging with colleagues’ In the context of NUS, an improved understanding about the various types of microcultures within a department, such as ALCNS, would provide a better insight to academic developers on how to refine their strategies in engaging academic teachers through a more holistic evidence-based approach, instead of merely relying on findings from formal programmes evaluations. This study adopts the categorisation of four basic types of microcultures, as suggested by Roxå (2014) to help examine the types of microcultures that exist within ALCNS. An ethnographic approach would be adopted for the study where participatory observation and interviews would be conducted.

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