

Teaching in Higher Education

Consistency and change in context an role

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The project

- The **Teacher Survey**
- The **interview project**: Teachers' views on:
 - Reforms and changes; their causes and effects; the teachers' response
 - Developments in the practice of teaching
 - Academic leadership in HE teaching
 - «Quality Culture»: A useful term? And do we have it?

The myth of the 'resilient' academic

- The **anti-reform** teacher
 - Structural reforms threaten academic freedom and and discipline autonomy
- The **unwilling** teacher
 - You are 'allowed' to do research and 'obliged' to teach
 - Little enthusiasm for teaching; teaching in the shadow of research
- The **complacent** teacher
 - Discipline knowledge is what matters; teaching follows 'naturally'
 - Faith in direct knowledge transfer from teacher to student
- The **lonely** teacher
 - A lonely king in his own teaching realm

Change in a reform era (after ca. 2000)

- Mass education: a more heterogeneous student population
- Mergers and structural reforms
- «Bologna» reforms:
 - The degree structure: adapted to 'mass education'?
 - More quality assurance
 - Expectations of tighter follow-up
 - Expectations of more 'effective' students
 - The Qualifications Framework

Reform and change: Some perceived effects

- Teachers say:
 - Reforms have had little impact on teaching
 - Instead: reform fatigue – and ‘resilient’ teachers
- The «paradigm shift»:
 - Disagreements over the usefulness of learning outcome descriptors

Change and impact: internal factors

- Teachers say:
 - Top academic management has little influence (and shows little engagement)
 - ‘Close’ academic management has little power but exerts fundamentally important influence on the discipline/programme community
 - Most important changes do not come from outside reforms or top-down management, but from the discipline community itself.
 - This particularly concerns the development of teaching methods in order to handle heterogeneity and teaching efficiency
 - Cuts in time resources: By far the most challenging change.

«Resilient» teachers?

- To sum up the teachers' voice:
- Changes have not come about as a result of national reforms or institutional strategies. Or: as often in order to alleviate effects of these reforms. Teachers 'accomodate' to minimize change
- Changes have come about as a result of three factors:
 - Increased squeeze in resources: Less time resources for teaching and increased pressure to do R&D
 - Continued increase in student heterogeneity; the 'instrumental' student
 - General impact of professional debate

Collegial cooperation in teaching

- **Finding in survey:**

Collegial cooperation on teaching seemed more developed than the myth of the «lonely, complacent teacher» would indicate.

- This is **supported in interviews:**

- An open community of sharing and helping seemed to be the general rule (where formerly teachers often «kept their secrets»)
- Teaching often planned in groups
- More advanced team-based approaches to teaching were also common

Enthusiasm for teaching

- **Research** still determines appointments, extra resources and careers, but:
- «**Teaching** is the main part of our job» – in time spent and in importance;
- Teaching does not live in the shadow of research
- Teaching is better now than 15 years ago
 - It has to be, given the new challenges and demands
 - It employs much more varied methods, although the lecture is still a core instrument
- So the «four myths» were largely contradicted by our informants

«Quality Culture»

- What is «quality culture»?
 - A broadly shared attitude towards quality enhancement?
- Quality culture and «close» academic leadership
- Quality culture and (formal) quality assurance
 - Not as connected as it is supposed to be?
 - QA systems are accepted and implemented, but we saw little enthusiasm
- Do we need the term «quality culture»?