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The Contribution of ‚Hochschuldidaktik' to Academic Staff Development

Abstract

'Hochschuldidaktik' includes more than Academic Staff Development and vice versa. But there is one point, however, where both converge: The professional development of teachers in higher education. In 2003 a network of offices and centers of 'Hochschul-didaktik' in Northrhine-Westphalia was founded to agree upon a modular training program for university teachers and to get adapted to European standards of professional qualifications in higher education. The contribution of 'Hochschuldidaktik' to Academic Staff Development involves a wide range of items: the improvement of teaching and learning to develop competence in communication, advising, presentation, publishing and reflecting, the establishment of faculty development in order to develop quality standards for teaching, grading and communication skills, the assessment of quality through evaluation and needs assessment, and student integration and faculty commitment to the institution to reduce anonymity and decrease student attrition.

Keywords

Academic staff development, faculty development, teaching and learning, professional development, higher education, university teachers, quality standards

Der Beitrag der Hochschuldidaktik zu einer Personal-entwicklung für den Wissenschaftsbereich an Hochschulen

Zusammenfassung

Hochschuldidaktik ist mehr als Personalentwicklung – und vice versa. Beide Themen überschneiden sich in einem Punkt: die Professionalisierung akademischer Lehrtätig-keit. In 2003 hat sich in Nordrhein-Westfalen das Netzwerk hochschuldidaktischer Zentren und Arbeitsstellen gegründet. Das Ziel ist, gemeinsam ein modularisiertes Qualifizierungsprogramm für Hochschullehrende zu entwickeln, das sich außerdem an europäischen Standards orientiert. Neben der Vorstellung dieses Programms wird in dem vorliegenden Beitrag herausgearbeitet, welchen Anteil die Hochschuldidaktik an einer Personalentwicklung für den Wissenschaftsbereich hat, und welche Rolle sie in der Qualitätsentwicklung und Qualitätssicherung spielt z.B. von Lehre und Studium, in der Entwicklung von Qualitätsstandards, Prüfungsstands und Kommunikation innerhalb des Lehrkörpers und in der Hochschulbindung von Lehrenden und Studierenden.

Schlüsselwörter

Hochschuldidaktik, Personalentwicklung, Professionalisierung, Lehre, Studium, Qualifizierung für die Lehre, Qualitätsentwicklung, Qualitätsstandards

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'Hochschuldidaktik' and Academic Staff Development: Two Sides of One Medal

Very often 'Hochschuldidaktik'[2] is understood as a teaching methodology or as instructional training for academic teachers. This, however, is a reduced understanding of 'Hochschuldidaktik'.

'Hochschuldidaktik' brings together many subjects. It focuses on the teaching and learning processes in higher education from an academic and from a vocational perspective such as

- Individual and collective student learning process,
- interactions between academic teachers and students,
- the preparation of academic teachers for university teaching,
- influences on student motivation and student behavior,
- testing and grading.

Metz-Goeckel calls this the micro-perspective of 'Hochschuldidaktik' (METZ-GOECKEL, 1999).

The macro-perspective contains aspects of 'Hochschuldidaktik' that are connected to higher education policy:

- Analyses of structural or institutional conditions,
- evaluation of courses,
- transition to the job market (Metz-Goeckel 1999).

'Hochschuldidaktik' often also is related to Academic Staff Development (WILDT, ENCKE, BLUEMCKE, 2003). Academic Staff Development involves elements such as:

- Staff recruitment, i.e. selecting that staff whose qualifications, potentials and competences suit the requirements of the job,
- Staff qualification including education, training, coaching, mentoring to offer the staff the opportunity to develop job qualifications or to get qualified for other jobs.
- Staff assessment to evaluate the staff's knowledge, abilities and performance and
- Evaluation of Staff Development Efforts to review their effectiveness (such as surveys of participants, audit analysis of the overall environment of the personnel e.g. resources).

At first glance these topics seem to have only little in common with those of 'Hochschuldidaktik' but in fact there is one field where 'Hochschuldidaktik' and Academic Staff Development converge:

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[2] The German word 'Hochschuldidaktik' has along tradition and cannot easily be translated in to English. I therefore would rather use this term as a term by itself.
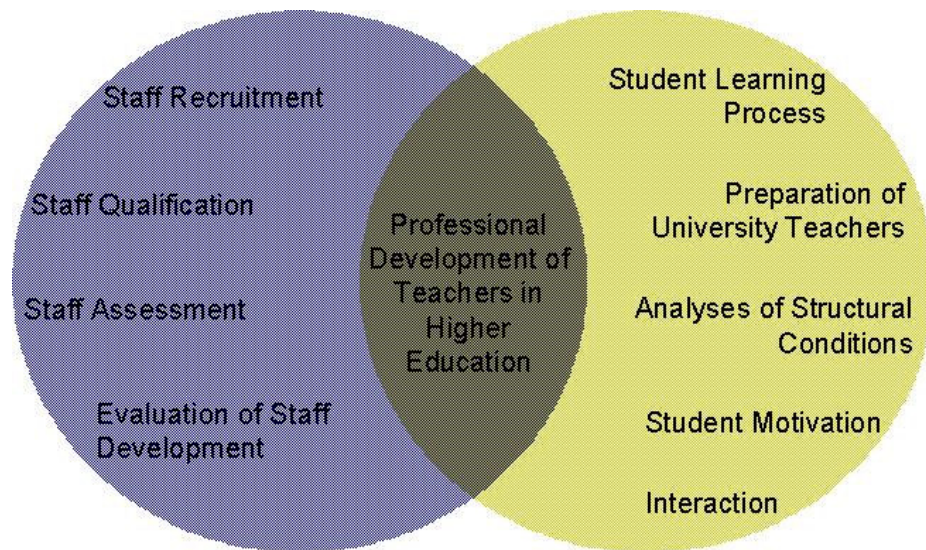
Figure 1: The professional development of teachers in higher education in Gemany

In 2004 offices and centers of 'Hochschuldidaktik' exist in 40 universities and 14 universities of applied sciences in Germany – which includes approximately 14% of higher education institutions (BRENDEL, KAISER & MACKE, 2005; DUZ spezial 2003 ; www.hochschuldidaktik.de). I want to confine myself to Northrhine-Westfalia.

Academic Staffdevelopment in NRW

In 1999 there was a regional revew of all 'Hochschuldidaktik' offices and centers in higher education in Northrhine-Westfalia. As a consequence of this review these office and centers decided to cooperate more closely and to learn from each other's knowledge and experience. A network was founded and one result of this network is an agreement about a modular training program for university teachers. The aim of this modular training is the professional development of teachers in higher education. Different from Great Britain where such programs have existed for many years (FRY, 2006) this graduated training has existed in Northrhine-Westphalia for three years approximately only and is still being developed.

Five Main Subjects

The modular training for university teachers is divided in 5 main subjects:

1. Teaching and Learning
2. Testing and Grading
3. Consultation
4. Evaluation
5. Developing innovative teaching projects.

Beside "Teaching and Learning" the participants of this modular training must study at least three of the following four main subjects in order to guarantee a qualification as broad as possible. The complete modular training is made up of three modules; there is a certificate after each module.
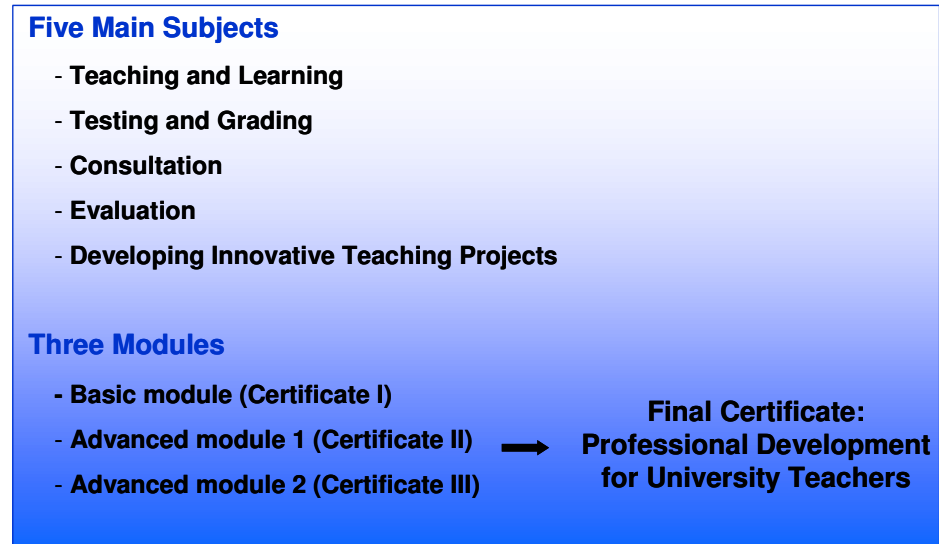
Five Main Subjects

- **Teaching and Learning**
- **Testing and Grading**
- **Consultation**
- **Evaluation**
- **Developing Innovative Teaching Projects**

Three Modules

- **Basic module (Certificate I)**
- **Advanced module 1 (Certificate II)** ⟶ **Final Certificate: Professional Development for University Teachers**
- **Advanced module 2 (Certificate III)**

Figure 2: Main Subjects and Modules of Academic Staff Development in NRW

Three Modules

Basic Module I (Certificate I) – includes introductory classes on basic university teaching skills. Teaching and Learning form the center of this module. The basic pedagogical question is: How can students' independent study be organized (e.g., learning environment and the courses themselves) and promoted. When talking about teaching and learning the emphasis is placed on (student) learning.

Advanced Module II (Certificate II) –In this module, the subjects of module I are either continued or new subjects are added.

Advanced Module III (Certificate III) – gives the participants the opportunity of pursuing a subject or project of their own choosing. Mostly the participants decide to choose development projects for innovative teaching (e.g., problem based learning, student advising or e-learning).

Final Certificate

Each module includes 60 - 80 academic hours. When the participants have completed all three modules, they obtain the final certificate "Professional Development for University Teachers" stating that they completed 200 academic credit hours of training for university teaching.

Even though the curriculum of each module is discussed and agreed upon among the various Northrhine-Westphalian 'Hochschuldidaktik' offices and centers there is something special in Dortmund. Since 1995 we offer a 3-day-orientation program

for junior faculty (academic staff) called 'Start in die Lehre' at the beginning of the winter semester as an obligatory part in the Basic Module I.3.

Adaptation to European Professional Qualifications

The Bologna Declaration aims to the comparability of students' degrees or diplomas across the EU. The Bologna Declaration does not refer to a comparable professional qualification in university teaching. Nevertheless, I think that it is very important to aspire to this aim. In Europe university teachers are getting qualified in quite different ways. We know that, for example, in the UK and in the Netherlands there are programs to develop university teaching for many years. The final certificate "Professional Development for University Teaching", fulfills a minimum standard of teaching qualification for higher education. It may help when a German faculty member wants to apply for a position with a British university.

For some years we have noticed a change in the German regional legislation for higher education. More and more junior faculty are advised to prove some educational training when they apply for a university job. A listing of all the courses they have taught is no longer regarded as sufficient proof of an educational qualification. To speak as an academic staff developer: When future faculty are chosen, more attention will be given to their qualifications and whether they meet the requirements of the vacant positions.

Quality Assessment of University Teacher Training

The last item of this essay deals with quality assessment of university teacher training. In Northrhine-Westphalia the responsibility rests with the individual 'Hochschuldidaktik' office/center. In Dortmund, the quality assessment of our university teaching training consists of the following components:

- Self-Evaluation and Needs Assessment
- Evaluation by Participant
- Program Evaluation

Self-Evaluation and Needs Assessment

Every semester we meet in a conference to discuss and to reflect on our experiences in the previous semester and to plan for the following semester. Our program is based on a needs assessment survey of the Dortmund faculty (AUFERKORTE & BLUEMCKE, 2001), and of faculties in Hamburg (ARNOLD et al., 1997) and Bielefeld (WEBLER, 2003). It is also based on the curriculum of the German Network for Academic Development (BERENDT, 2003).

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[3] I was inspired to establish such an orientation program at the University of Dortmund after visiting the teaching centers resp. office of professional development of the universities of Berkeley, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Stanford and Syracuse as a research associate.

Quality Assessment of University Teacher Training

Self-Evaluation and Needs Assessment
- Regular conferences to discuss and to reflect the program
- Needs Assessment Survey of the Faculty and Academic Staff

Evaluation by Participant
- Questionnaires help to reflect on the design of the workshop and on the individual instructor

Program Evaluation
- Combination of feedback on the overall program from the participants and evaluation of individual workshops within the program

Figure 3: Levels of Quality Assessment

Evaluation by Participant

We hand out questionnaires to the participants of our courses which help us to reflect on the design of the workshop. It also helps the individual instructor to reflect on him/herself.

Program Evaluation

At this point in time our center conducts one program evaluation since, until recently, we only offered one program – "Orientation program for junior faculty". This program evaluation combines feedback on the overall program from the participants as well as their evaluation of individual workshops within the program. Thus we are able to continuously discuss and taylor this program as well as individual workshops to the needs of the junior faculty (DANY, 2004). For some time Sinah Piekarek, who works as a research assistant in our center, has conducted an online follow-up-survey. She questioned all the participants of this orientation program over the last five years (appr. 300) on their experiences with the program and whether they were able to transfer their newly gained knowledge and skills to their every day teaching situation. The return rate was 28% which is a very good result for an online survey. It shows the high degree of interest of the new faculty in this subject. 70% of those who answered stated: "Yes, what I learned in this orientation program was very valuable for my teaching and I was able to transfer it to my everyday teaching practice" (PIEKAREK, 2006).

The following summary gives answers to the question: "What is the contribution of 'Hochschuldidaktik' to academic staff development?"

The Contribution of ‚Hochschuldidaktik' to Academic Staff Development

To improve teaching and learning which also leads to
- Development of competences
- Preparation of students for an academic and vocational career

To establish Faculty Development in order to
- Develop quality standards

To assess quality through
- Self-Evaluation and Needs Assessment
- Evaluation by Participant
- Programm Evaluation

Student integration and faculty commitment to the institution lead to
- Reduction of anonymity
- More skillful faculty will be better able to connect students and help decrease student attrition

Figure 4: The contribution of 'Hochschuldidaktik' to Academic Staff Development

Outlook on Future Projects

For some time research projects on the impact of university trainings have been initiated. These projects are making good progress and. The outcomes will lead into the development of academic staff developers.

One desideratum surely is that the Network 'Hochschuldidaktik' of Northrhine-Westphalia may develop one common evaluation tool for all university trainings, courses and programs. Such a tool is very important to get benchmarks which are obligatory for all 'Hochschuldidaktik' programs.

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