Quality Culture and Excellence in HE – Some Lessons learned from a Norwegian perspective

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Disposition of the presentation

• The Norwegian Centres of Excellence schemes

• Centres for Excellence in Higher Education:
  ➢ Background, aims and conditions for the SFU-initiative
  ➢ Selection criteria
  ➢ How to document excellent Educational Quality?

• Changing attitude towards education

• Impact of the SFU-initiative

• Creating a culture for Quality Enhancement
Norwegian Centres of Excellence schemes

- Centres of Research-based innovation
  - Technology transfer, innovation and value creation
  - R&D-performing companies and research

- Centres of Excellence in Research
  - Promote scientific quality in Norwegian research at high international level

- Centres for Excellence in Higher Education
  - Development of excellent quality in higher education
  - Encourage outstanding research and development-based education
Different priorities

Education:
• Bachelor and master’s level

Innovation/Research:
• PhD and master’s level
SFU - Centres for Excellence in Higher Education

• Established by the Ministry 2010, managed by NOKUT

• National prestige arrangement for educational activities in higher education – BA + MA

• Parallel to Centres of excellence in Research
SFU - Centres for Excellence in Higher Education - Aims

• To identify and reward excellent education
• To offer excellent R&D-based education
• To support innovation in education
• To stimulate the dissemination of excellent educational practices across the higher education community
• Encourage student engagement and ownership of learning
• Contribute to stronger interaction between higher education and the relevant societal and professional fields
SFU - Centres for Excellence in Higher Education

- Pilot phase in 2011-2012 related to teacher education
  - ProTed (Centre for Professional Learning in Teacher Education) was appointed as Norway’s first Centre of excellence in December 2011 (University of Oslo and the University of Tromsø)

- First open call for all disciplines in 2013
- 3 new Centre's appointed in November 2013:
  - Norwegian Academy of Music - Centre of Excellence in Music Performance Education (CEMPE)
  - University of Agder - Centre for Research, Innovation and Coordination of Mathematics Teaching (MatRIC)
  - University of Bergen - Centre for Excellence in Biology Education (BioCEED)
SFU - Centres for Excellence in Higher Education

• Second open call for all disciplines in 2016
• 4 new Centre's appointed in November 2016:
  ✓ University of Oslo – Center for Computing in Science Education (CCSE)
  ✓ Lillehammer University College – Centre of Excellence in Film and Interactive Media Arts (CEFIMA)
  ✓ Norwegian University of Science and Technology - Centre for Engaged Education through Entrepreneurship (Engage)
  ✓ Norwegian University of Science and Technology – Centre of Excellence in Computing and IT (EXcITed)

• There are currently eight Centres for Excellence in HE
SFU – Centres for Excellence in Higher Education

- Each Centre will receive an annual top funding of NOK 4 to 8 million for a five-year period
- Considerable funding from the HEIs own budget
- An evaluation will be carried out after three and a half year
- Based on the outcome of this evaluation, a centre may be granted funding another five years
- A successful applicant will accordingly, receive NOK 40 to 80 million over a ten-year period
- According to the plans, new bids will be announced every three years
Selection criteria

3 main criteria

1) Document excellent quality in the established educational provision

2) Centre plan: Present good and innovative plans and strategies for further enhancement of the educational provision.

3) Dissemination: dissemination of knowledge, good practices and results and the centre’s plan to support and stimulate educational enhancement.
Educational Quality = Quality and Relevance of the Students Learning outcome

- Leadership and program design
- Civic Skills
- Working life Relevance
- Didactic competence
- Network (at home and abroad)
- R&D-based education
- Vocational Training
- Network
- Civic Skills
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- Vocational Training
- R&D-based education
- Network (at home and abroad)
Documented Educational Quality in Existing Provision

• Quality in education is contextual and multifaceted

Important preconditions for innovative quality work include consideration of:

• The knowledgebase
• The learning environment
• Programme design
• Internationalisation
• Educational competence
• Student involvement and learning outcomes

All quality aspects must be seen in development terms and as interrelated
Excellence in the SFU initiative

• Is multifaceted and contextual
• Innovative R&D based education (inquiry based)
• Student engagement and ownership of learning
• Integrative educational models/work where there are strong interaction between students, academic staff, support services, the labour market, professional bodies and the wider society
• Based on knowledge, developed in an scholarly and critical way- scholarship of teaching and learning
What is excellence?

• “... still ambiguities and contention around the definition of teaching excellence” (p6)

Teaching excellence:
• Dynamic engagement
• Inspire & motivate
• Respect for students as individuals
• Active learning
• Critical & scholarly
The two academic cultures:

**Research**
- Research groups
- Cooperation, taking benefit of complementary strengths
- Scientific methods
- Writing and publish new results
- Sharing results and experiences
- Assessment of colleagues
- Adopting new methods and technology
- Being up-to-date with literature

**Teaching**
- Alone behind the teacher’s desk
- Everyone doing the same, everyone does it all
- ‘Experience’
- Everything ends up in the desk drawer
- One’s own experiences
- Student evaluation
- Conservation of methods, the ‘Lecture’
- Pedagogical course when employed
Changing attitude towards education

• More analytical approach towards teaching
• Arenas to discuss and evaluate teaching efforts and methods
• Higher priority and status to teaching and related R&D at their institution
  – More attention and prioritization of teaching and learning
  – Deprivatizing teaching
Example: bioCEED

Centre of Excellence in Biology Education (bioCEED) at University of Bergen, CoE-Education

BA-biology:

• Practice training included in curricula
• R&D (PhD and postdoc) to study effects on learning and motivation

• Preliminary results:
  ✓ Highly motivating for students
  ✓ Significantly reduced drop-out rate from 1st to 2nd year
Impact of the SFU-initiative (I)

- Time and money invested in students provide the centres with better results
- Social and academic integration of staff and students

- Changing focus at Centres for Excellence:
  - Creating a culture for Quality Enhancement
  - Professional development activities related to teaching and learning

Source: CHEPS/CHEGG 2016
Impact of the SFU-initiative (II)

• The SFU arrangement increases the attention paid to quality in education and to more innovate teaching methods and student-centred learning

• Quality enhancement efforts more systematically anchored in the institutional leadership

• Priority of resources for quality enhancement

• More cooperation between faculty and administrative staff
Impact of the SFU-initiative (III)

• Academics across Norway are increasingly discussing with each other about the way they teach, and they are more involved with both the administrative staff and pedagogy units

• An increase of the status of teaching compared to research

• More research on teaching practices and dissemination of results
Creating a culture for Quality Enhancement (I)

• Common values and norms that defines high quality in teaching and learning

• Teaching and learning should have the same characteristics as research activities

• The provision of resources, especially linked to time

• Communication: creating a shared language and baseline of shared values

Source: CHEPS/CHEGG 2016
Creating a culture for Quality Enhancement (II)

• Quality enhancement requires leaders with clear vision and careful timing
  – Effective leaders are those that commit themselves to implement changes with careful timing and convincing narratives
  – A blended leadership style – bottom up collegial initiatives combined with a managerial vision – is particularly relevant

• Institutionalizing regular reporting and reflecting on achievements

Source: CHEPS/CHEGG 2016