

Thinking unlimited: changing learning cultures in Tallinn University

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ABSTRACT: Conceptual frame learning cultures includes individual, institutional and interactional dimensions (Euler, 2010). Based on Feixas ja Zellweger (2010) changing learning cultures in higher education is connected with faculty development. Collie and Taylor (2004), define learning culture as process to promote learning and climate of openness, trust and collaboration to support learning. According to Tallinn University development plan 2016-2020 one of aim is to implement the changing approach to teaching and learning practices. Our aim in design research is to find research-based and sustainable practices, and to support the professional development of academics in Tallinn University. Design research characterized by three phases: preliminary research, prototyping and assessment phase (Cobb et al, 2003, Plomp, 2010, Nieven, 2007). The paper is based on results of preliminary research of the needs of 5 faculties (schools) of the university, context analysis (strategy documents) and review of literature.

The results of the surveys carried out in the five institutes showed the following:

- there is a need for systematic and reflective professional development programme for academics, a cross-institute collaboration, that would enable the sharing of best practices, and a mentoring system that works;
- the in-service training needs of the academics arise from the changes made to curriculums, administrative systems, new developments in the academic field, and in response to the needs and feedback from students and colleagues;
- there is a need to support academics motivation as lifelong learners (their willingness to continually develop professionally) and carriers of university s mission statement;
- from the point of view of the holistic development of the institutes, it is tantamount to include a development programme for both academics and administrative teams

The strategy documents state that in order to embed the changed approach to learning and teaching it is crucial to value on the teaching staff and good teaching skills; this means offering comprehensive support to their professional development, incl. diverse learning opportunities. In addition, in preliminary phase we research best practice s in Estonian Universities and international experience, in order to design the best network model of supporting changing learning culture in Tallinn University.

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