Insights into doctoral teaching assistants' views of teaching: Conclusions from a systematic analysis of scholarly teaching projects

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ABSTRACT: At the 2015 conference, we shared our plans for integrating scholarly teaching projects in the educational development programme for doctoral teaching assistants (TAs) at ETH Zurich, a research-intense technical university. More than 100 teaching projects have been published by ETH doctoral teaching assistants since then. This paper seeks to gain insights into doctoral assistants' teaching realities (see Mårtensson & Roxå, 2015) by systematically identifying the specific aspects of teaching and learning that ETH doctoral TAs choose to explore in their projects. By doing so, this work contributes to the study of TA teaching, which has found little attention in research despite their significant contribution to undergraduate education in the STEM disciplines (see Gilmore, Maher, Feldon, & Timmerman, 2013). We analyse doctoral TAs' teaching projects in two ways. First, we identify teaching and learning themes in the project abstracts. Second, we analyse projects in terms of the frequency of individual words and word clusters. We will interpret our findings along the following dimensions: (1) clusters of teaching and learning themes frequently addressed by doctoral TAs in their projects and (2) words and word clusters indicating either a teacher-centred or a student-centred perspective (see Kember, 1997). In so doing, we reveal doctoral TAs' views of teaching and the aspects of teaching and learning they prioritize in these projects. In this way, our work contributes to a better understanding of doctoral teaching at our institution and in the STEM disciplines.

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