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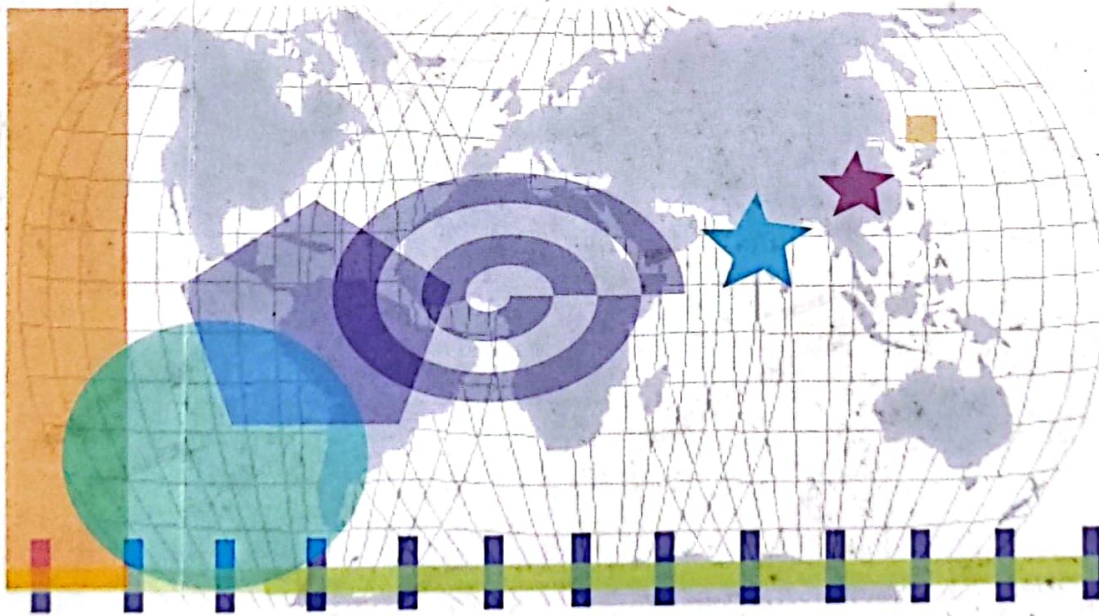
Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst
German Academic Exchange Service

University Staff Development Programme
Witzenhausen

Towards a Shared Vision for Higher Education

Cross-Cultural Insights
& Projects
Vol. IV

edited by
S. Amini
M. Fremerey
M. Wessler



ISOS Institute for Socio-cultural Studies

U N I K A S S E L
V E R S I T Ä T

University of Kassel

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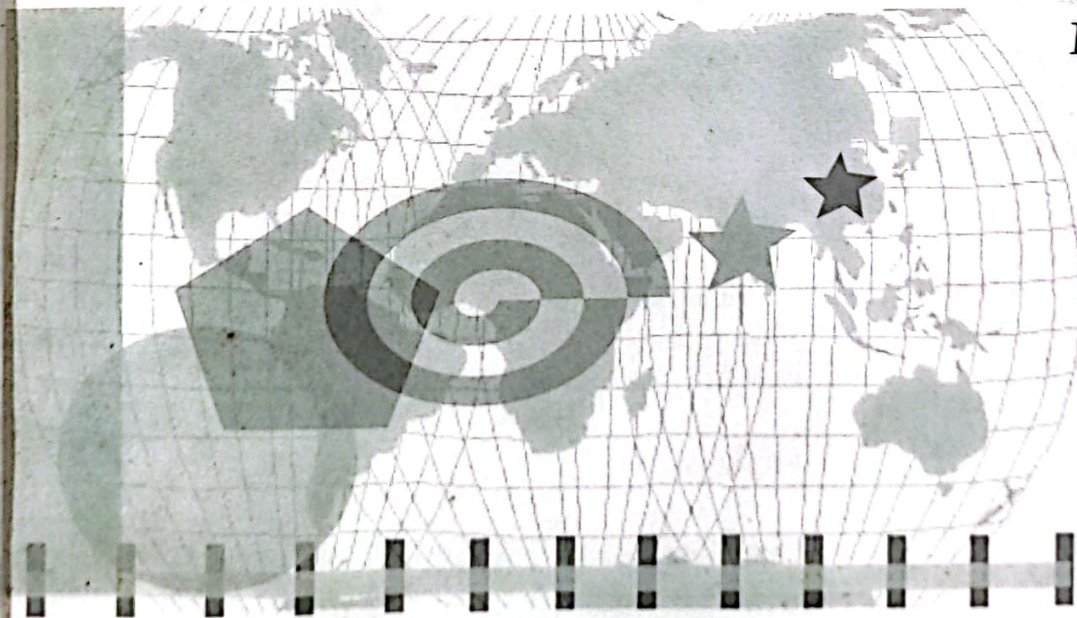
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Foreword

With this reader, we submit the fourth volume of relevant project-papers, written by participants of the University Staff Development Programme Witzenhausen (UNISTAFF), 2001 - 2004. The three previous volumes, published in 1997, 1999 and 2002 contain projects elaborated by UNISTAFF-participants in the years 1994-1996, 1997-1998 and 1999-2000 respectively. The basic objective of this series of readers is to support the emerging transformation of universities into institutions, which are responsive to the growing demands for change in the fields of organisation, curricula and teaching, and research management.

Many people have contributed in one way or the other to this book. First of all our thanks go to the authors of the various articles, who impart their highly relevant experiences and visions to a wider public. It was not possible to include all project papers since some of them had a distinct domain-specific focus. We did not try to polish the English language of the papers, but maintained the individual peculiarities of every author's text. Further more, we would like to thank International Further Education and Development (InWEnt) for its significant financial support, without which the Institute for Socio-cultural Studies (ISOS) would not have been able to publish this volume. Not least, we would like to acknowledge our debts to Susanne Bierwirth who provided invaluable support to the outlay of the manuscript and to Anthony Alcock for his proof reading.

We hope that this volume will meet with the same favourable response as the previous ones and thus helps to further contribute to the development of a climate of change in our universities.

Siawuch Amini
Michael Fremerey
Matthias Wessler

Witzenhausen, July 2005

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I Introduction

In its readers on "A Shared Vision of Higher Education", the Institute for Sociocultural and Socio-economic Studies (ISOS) submits a selection of project designs which have been elaborated by participants of the University Staff Development Programme (UNISTAFF).

The work on an individually relevant project constitutes an important part of the 2½ months training. It is meant to be a preparatory step towards a meaningful intervention in the university context, once the UNISTAFF-participant is back in his/her working environment.

From this it elucidates that the project designs published in these readers are not meant to be fully elaborated analyses or descriptions of a given university sector. They rather evolve a utilitarian function for the individual project implementor. Two aspects, however, have led ISOS and International Further Education and Development (InWEnt) as funding institution to submit these project designs to a wider group of readers:

1. The provisional character of the designs notwithstanding, they constitute an interesting survey of present day problems at African, Asian and Latin American Universities. Of particular importance is the fact, that it is the perception of the actors themselves (i.e. university teachers, researchers and administrators) which is highlighted, not the expertise of any external policy or funding institution. This holds true for the definition of problems as well as for the proposal for adequate solutions. In individual cases, the shared views and suggestions may need further consideration and elaboration. They add, however, a badly needed participatory component to the ongoing discussion on university development in Africa, Asia and Latin America.
2. In their very character as project designs, these contributions may serve future UNISTAFF participants (as well as other scholars and planners) as cases for own project work. This intention has to some extent influenced the selection of papers, as their "didactic value" has been taken into consideration. Thus, we have been particularly looking out for the elaboration of individual steps of project - covering such points as the description of the general context, definition of the problem, alternative modes of action, organizational implications, time schedules, costs involved etc.

In accordance with the overall structure of the UNISTAFF courses, the project work has been subdivided into three main fields of university practice: organisation development, curriculum development & evaluation, and research management.

The ownership as well as responsibility of the projects are remaining with the respective authors.

Stimulated by findings in education, communication and systems research, organisation development has evolved a growing general interest in recent times. It is increasingly recognized that the shaping of communicative and interaction processes is largely determining a successful and sustainable functioning of organizations.

The "academic aura" - going hand in hand with a marked individualism - has, up to this day, prevented many universities from perceiving themselves as "organisations" which are in need of a critical assessment of their communication, interaction, planning and management processes. Recently, however, the development of universities into mass institutions, going hand in hand with shrinking public spending, the establishment of private (mostly industry-based) competitive institutions of higher learning and research, and growing doubts as to the effectiveness and relevance of university education, have opened the minds for different perceptions.

Organisation development has started to enter the confines of the campus as an issue which is closely linked to growing effectiveness, or even institutional survival. It covers a wide range of issues in the university routine, starting with developing communicative skills, team work capabilities or patterns of conflict management, and ending with increasing the efficiency of leadership on department or faculty level, or introducing a university wide management information system.

This shows that organisation development in universities is by no means restricted to the management and planning staff, as it is often assumed. On the contrary, in its aim to shape attitudes and improve skills in the context of communication and interaction, it does not least concern those staff members, who, in their teaching and research activities, are constantly involved in interactive processes.

Many universities, all over the world, are becoming increasingly concerned about the quality of teaching. This is certainly a very complex challenge. It cannot be reduced to the quality of the individual teacher's performance or to the availability of sufficient resources. Quality of teaching comprises also the design of curricula, the efficiency of evaluation systems, and the whole "culture of teaching and learning" of a department or of a faculty. Therefore, the purpose of publishing some of the project designs on teaching, learning and curriculum development is to share experiences and insight and thus, to contribute to an emerging culture of teaching and learning within our institutions.

The need for such a culture which facilitates professional exchange is predominantly based on the current changes of the social, economic, and technological contexts universities are working in, including structural transformations of the employment markets for our students. For many decades now, it were "domain specific" knowledge and skills, which were decisive to get an appropriate position. Accordingly, the main focus of university teaching was on transmitting specific disciplinary knowledge and building adequate skills. Amidst of globalisation and dramatic changes however, there is an emerging need for more "strategic" competencies or so-called "key"-qualifications. Correspondingly, university teaching needs to shift its focus towards contributing to an effective balance of cognitive and meta-cognitive qualifications.

Introduction

This constitutes an essential challenge for higher education, since what is at stake, is its social relevance. University teaching therefore, is increasingly understood as a scholarly and substantive intellectual work, which asks for continuous quality improvement - and for appropriate recognition at the individual level as well as for conducive organisational conditions and curricular designs at the institution's level.

It becomes increasingly obvious that autochthonous research and research management are essential for the development process. Research training, which supports the ability to select, create, modify, adapt or to efficiently use advanced technologies is considered to be of crucial importance to this process. The qualitative and quantitative need for trained research manpower in countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America is increasing according to the growing complexity and rapid changes in technology and society.

Although at a global level it is evident that 80 percent of the world's population account for only 2 percent of the global expenditures on scientific research and for an even smaller share of the research output, at the local and university level the individual endeavours are very strong in many countries. Thus it is the basic objective of the Research Management module in UNISTAFF to strengthen individual research capabilities.

The projects on research management in this volume are elaborated by scholars exploring and making sense of human action and experience as UNISTAFF participants.

The projects are carried out according to the individual research needs of the participants and deal with a wide range of topics. However we expect them to provide some ideas and guidance to many other local research projects which are in a planning stage.