



Faculty of Science



# Organizational aspects of designing and implementing educational changes

- experiences from the University of Copenhagen

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## Three aspects

Main focus: How to embed the implementation process of best teaching practice and staff development in an organizational frame.

1. The necessity of a domain-specific approach
2. Balancing centralized and decentralized development
3. Different levels of argumentation and action



## The necessity of a domain-specific approach

- Teaching/learning is (still!) taking place within disciplines, each with its own traditions, epistemology etc. → the pedagogy and the faculty development resources (material, courses etc.) need to be domain/discipline-specific.
- A domain affiliation enhances the legitimacy of the teaching center staff (and the center!). To understand the specific problems of the teachers, to be able to speak their language, to offer subject-tailored examples and solutions → increase the impact of the center.
- Closeness to the disciplines enhances support from faculty/department leadership



## Balancing centralized and decentralized development

The necessity of a domain/discipline-specific approach opens new questions:

Which levels to address, how to secure a coherent development, how to avoid an unproductive fragmentation etc.?

One way of approaching these questions is via an empirical analysis of the concrete situation – which is what we did at the University of Copenhagen.



# UCPH strategy for improving education

University of Copenhagen's first strategy (for more than 500 years!), *Destination 2012*, had a strong emphasis on research.

At the end of the strategy period UCPH launched a project 'Education at its best' with lots of internal discussion on 'what is good education' and 66 specific projects on improving education across the university. This 'bottom-up' project (centrally steered) was an initial step in increased focus on education.

The second strategy, *Strategy 2016*, aims to

- improve education
  - strengthen external collaboration
  - strengthen internal collaboration and a shared identity
- but still with research-intensity as the university 'dna'.



## Educational goals in Strategy 2016

- Reinforce the link between research and teaching (specific objective: all academic staff must contribute to education)
- Secure adequate teaching and supervision for all students (current initiative: minimum of 12 weekly hours of teaching and supervision for all bachelor students)
- Strengthen the possibility for individualized study plans (current initiative: creating a university level course database)
- Increasing flexibility and increasing recruitment nationally and internationally on graduate level
- Increasing internationalization (all programmes must have international components)
- Giving students closer labour market links from day one to graduation (increase the number of external partnerships for students)
- Increasing emphasis on teaching skills/competencies
- Increasing the attractiveness of leadership positions within education (director of study etc)
- Develop the quality of education
- Improving coordination and increasing strength of teaching and learning centres



# The University of Copenhagen Higher Education initiative

To realize the strategy 2016, a task force was appointed by the rectorate to formulate principles and recommendations for an improvement of higher education at UCPH. The task force (with high level participation) mapped all resources within HE, made an evaluation of internal strengths and weaknesses, performed focus group interviews with directors of study and head of departments, and individual interviews with all deans. The *principles* and *recommendations* were based on this material.



# Principles for improving the field of university pedagogy at UCPH

- A research intensive university also need high professionalism within education. Thus, the teaching/learning centres should have a **core of research foundation**.
- A subject didactical focus should be possible and concrete knowledge to the teachers are given high priority. Thus, **decentralised anchoring** is an essential principle.
- Knowledge sharing and joint development across the university secures good resource utilization and possible linking to the overall strategy. Thus, **transverse coordination** and **strategic direction** is also an essential principle.
- The role of the t/l units is – besides contributing to the research base of the field – to develop and carry through activities that improve the individual teacher's (and UCPH's) overall teaching competency. Thus, focus is on carrying through **concrete activities**.
- It is seen as an essential goal for the t/l units to develop a wider 'engaged community' within education, in collaboration with the educational leadership string at the university.





# Recommendations for the University of Copenhagen Higher Education initiative

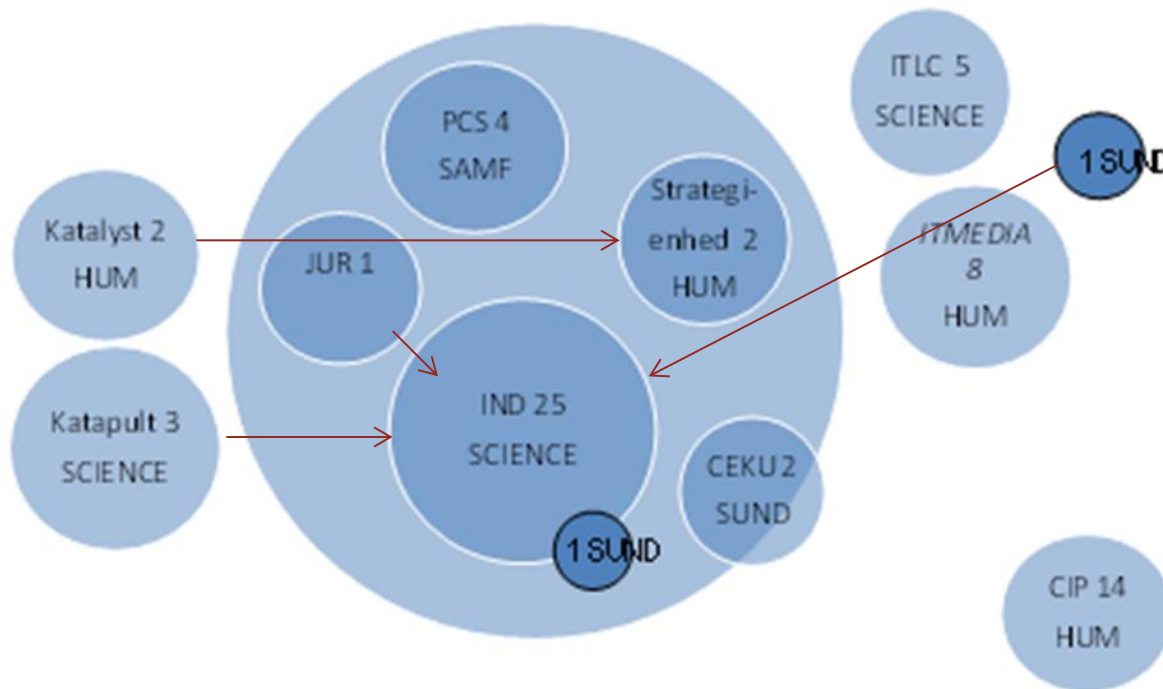
## Leadership focus and incentives

- Strong top-management focus on education and teaching (support and resources)
- The establishment of a Teaching Academy
- All teachers must write a teaching portfolio and a Professional Standards Framework for teaching and learning to be used at the yearly Performance and Development Reviews must be developed



## Organization

A combination of faculty-level units with critical mass combined with transverse coordination and knowledge sharing



(Figures indicate number of staff at units with a teaching/learning mission. The big circle in the background encircles units with a central mission within pedagogical competence development.)



## Strategic projects and capacity building of the units

- Capacity building at the faculties through strategic funding for development projects of common interest
- Five areas of common strategic interest: Teaching portfolios, development programme for directors of study, peer supervision of teaching, practices and tools of research-based teaching, just-in-time professional development – short term courses on specific issues
- The teaching-learning units implement the strategic projects across the university based on contracts with the university.
- Also part time teachers, doctoral students and postdocs must be involved in the efforts..

1. The right balance between a centralized and a decentralized development must be based on a concrete, empirical basis.
2. The t/l units are seen as key drivers in educational development (professional development of staff plus implementation of the educational strategy).



## Ten leverage points for maximising strategic impact (of t/l centres and the university)

1. new visions/new plans
2. preparation of new continuing academic staff
3. compulsory casual teaching development program
4. just-in-time professional development
5. communities of practice
6. strategic funding for development
7. supporting teaching excellence through awards and fellowships
8. disseminating exemplary practices online
9. recognition and use of education 'experts'
10. renewing leadership

Holt et al (2011). Changing perspectives: teaching and learning centres' strategic contributions to academic development in Australian higher education. *International Journal for Academic Development* 11/1.



## A Danish synthesis

At the 2011 conference in 'Danish Network for HE', 100 researchers and developers discussed the theme 'Development of Higher Education – frames, barriers, and possibilities'. The results were synthesized in a white paper with 16 recommendations, including:

- Changing the university funding system.
- Elaborate the taximeter system
- Changing the job structure for university staff
- Cooperation between Danish Universities about a national strategy for competence development
- Establish a central funding system for educational development
- Better, national use of teaching portfolio
- Centers of excellence
- Educational development an integrated part of the yearly Performance and Development Reviews
- Pedagogical upgrading of leaders
- Local resources and tools for development of teaching
- Involving students in planning of education
- Long term organization and research foundation of the higher education efforts



## Different levels of argumentation and action

It will be helpful to be aware of the separate (and intertwined) levels of argumentation and action:

### **A teaching level**

Student, teacher, course

(status of teaching)

### **An education level**

Study leader, department, faculty



### **A policy level**

University, national policy, international trends

(status of teaching)

To secure alignment between the decisions and initiatives on different levels, you need to establish meeting points, build partnerships etc.

