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EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING – A PARADOX?

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Research on gender and career in academia

Examples from Social sciences

1. Divisions in academic labour- structures, gender

Structural conditions in higher education

2. Women academic lecturers in teaching work

Changing career conditions and academic identity.

3. Doctoral students negotiating space in Research Education

”Subjectivity and transgression in Research Education”



The Field of Higher Education

- "The Competitive University" (Bologna, EU etc.)
- Policy on efficiency, performance, marketization
 - More is more- or less? How to manage quantitative goals with qualitative?
- *Autonomy and* strategic areas of specific importance?
- Split between different careers in academia
 - Merit speed, research time, teaching, administration, third assignments.
 - Partly new value hierarchies
- Performance, quality, widening participation – colliding ideals?
- Career capital – accumulation of capital in career



Swedish Higher Education

- The general admission to higher education is differentiated. Region, gender, social background, age etc.
- Research funds unequally divided between areas, disciplines, institutions, regions
 - State regulated research funds more often to large universities, and stable research groups, - homogenous networks.
- Academic career is becoming more divided, between paths of administration (middle management), teaching and research.
- Women do more teaching, are less career "effective", move in less prestigious areas, and are less recognizable in career (than most men).
- The excellent researcher is young, male, in strategic areas, move fast and do very little teaching. Older mentors.



Women researchers in teaching

/.../ I wanted to become a researcher and do research /.../ Even if I try to be wary of my research hours (funded for 10% of the work per term), I still need to do a lot of teaching, and the result of that is that I work a lot of hours every week. I do at least 50 hours a week, sometimes due to the hours I spend doing teaching. The hours we get for the programs we are in never covers what we actually do. (Leslie)

I would like to focus on research, but there are so many other things that I have fallen into /.../ I have no time to develop my research, however. /.../ I have to go back to teaching in the teacher education programs. (Elisabeth)



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It is tragic really, when you think of it, because teaching is something we need to do, to get a position here. I mean, in order get employment we have to teach, but /.../ at the same time teaching is often seen as the opposite of research, as something we don't really value, as being of less worth. (Gunnel)



“Teaching excellence” needs to be addressed!

Maybe even more important to understand, investigate, discuss than ever.

- Important for the academic boundary work – between science, society, disciplines, interests, related to identity, ground work.
- Investment for the future – where are we heading?
- Partly differs from “merit-driven”, competitive research practises
- Mostly women (compare with all education systems)
- Larger task than ever before (marketized higher education system)
- Loosing status, importance, relation to discipline and science.



Can "teaching" in Academia be the "new excellence"?

Standards of excellence are emerging in regard to teaching (as related to research excellence). These raise several questions:

1. Is it possible to measure teaching quantitative (bib.metrics)?
 - Context? (compare mass-education – research supervision)
 - Formative knowledge process?
 - Critical, intellectual work?
2. How to reclaim academic quality, knowledge based academic skills, autonomy?
 - How can formal criteria be used as general tool?
 - What is general and specific, for whom?
 - What is actually included in the academic profession?
 - What is a good academic teacher- good examples?



Excellence: how to stimulate excellent teaching and learning environments?

in studies by Ryan, Bendix Petersen or my own, teachers refuse the "academic zombie" culture (which they see dominate), and instead want to work- collaborative towards a strong "*knowing why*" that:

- is based on academic discipline, directed and critical,
- reclaim the rationale of intellectual work of academia
- resist *only* quantitative measures (and strong competitiveness)
- involve "education" in teaching, not only specific subjects -
 - Being academic means "understanding" *and* explaining
 - Philosophy of science
 - What does "teaching" mean?



Summary

1. The “competitive university” is becoming more research consensus orientated, divided, and fragmented. Consequences?
2. Teaching is made into a second career choice, why?
 - Related to care, service (femininity?) etc.
 - Not competitive, easily comparable.
 - Becoming more standardized, which affect scientific value?
3. Teaching seems to come with many strings attached, creates worries that lead to feelings of entrapment- as if teaching is seen as something that drains other opportunities
4. *Paradox?*
How (why) is knowledge production standardized – as something given?
What do we mean by excellence in teaching?



Questions for debate:

- How come high achieving researchers often lack time to teach- or even lack good teaching skills? (see Drennan, Babcock)
- How come some researchers actually talk about teaching as a form of quick sand, as if when “in you don’t get out”?
- Dilemmas with standardized conception of excellence in teaching (as if easy in research)?
 - Can teaching become as competitive, merit-driven, as research merits?
 - What do we mean by excellence in teaching?
- Could more teaching, or learning about teaching, affect research excellence? (What could come out of that?)