ABSTRACT
Title of the paper
How to Improve Teacher Mobility? – Developing Qualitative Teacher Mobility

Author
Antonella Storti

The theme of the paper
Quality Assurance in Higher Education
Cross-cutting issues: Internationalisation and Transnational Collaboration

The purpose is to present simple model that would improve international teacher mobility between partner universities and at the same time act according the quality assurance principles of TUAS. Benefits of international teacher mobility have remained modest in most universities. We have partners around Europe but we seldom invite exchange teachers to teach. The common excuse is we don’t know well enough partners’ study curricula and their teachers. So occasionally when you’ll get to your email an offer to have exchange teacher the courses have been fixed and there’s no room to fit exchange teacher. As we’ve come across number of times to this situation we started to think would there be a way to make teacher mobility more effective and systematic?

First we defined our target: 1) to have continuous teacher exchange which is integrated as part of our study curriculum. 2) To learn more about our partners’ study curricula and find best practices which could be adapted as part of our own practices. Then action plan and follow-up how to do all was made. The process followed the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) which is an iterative four-step management method for the control and continuous improvement of processes and products.
1 Introduction

The teacher and student mobility have been key elements of internationalisation from the very beginning of Bologna process and Erasmus programme. However the mobility of teaching staff has been more or less modest in Finland. The decrease of mobility has been notified by the Finnish Ministry of Education too. A year ago (2012) in Arts Academy at Turku University of Applied Sciences we started to think how we could improve teacher mobility? In what way a professional from the partner university could be integrated to our teaching process and how we all could benefit and share best practices we have? In addition how we would learn more about our partner universities and their professionals? The questions above inspired us to think how to improve teacher mobility1 here resulted a simple model via the mobility of teachers and researches could become regular.

The well-known fact is that the statement in the bilateral agreement to agree to exchange teachers and researcher in not enough to increase and make mobility systematic. It seems to be obvious there should be a model or frame via we could learn more about the teachers and study curricula among the partner universities. The paper at hands wishes to present practical and flexible model that could help to improve mobility of teachers as well as integrate it to the study curriculum more systematic way. The model process consists of four elements: 1) Planning (setting goals), 2) Doing (practical application), 3) Checking and assessing (evaluation), 4) Acting (improvement). The four-step improvement method is based W.E Deming’s (1986) cycle of continuous improvement. Deming’s cycle is the core framework for quality assurance which is overlapping strategic planning and management. The teacher mobility model is planned by Ms. Taina Erävaara, head of Fine Arts and Ms. Antonella Storti, International Relations, Arts Academy at Turku University of Applied Sciences. The pilot model has put into practice in the department of Fine Arts recently.

In addition the purpose is to give overall description of Finnish context regarding to the internationalisation of education. Next chapters will give a brief and general background to the internationalisation which can be considered integral part when reasoning the need to increase and improve mobility among teachers. Quality assurance is considered integral element when developing assessing and improving internationalisation of education. Therefore developed teacher mobility model will be monitored via the four step improvement cycle.

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1 Teacher mobility, here, refers to teacher staff, researchers and professionals who facilitate students learning process. Later only “teacher mobility”
2 On Internationalisation

The term internationalisation appeared within the context of higher education in the early 1980s. Nowadays internationalisation and its definitions have broadened to include a wide range of activities in higher education. When internationalisation is understood in broader sense it can take place between higher education institutions (later HEIs) and individuals working higher educational intuitions. When collaboration takes place across national borders there will include teaching, studying, learning and research at the HEIs. The key point is how internationalisation will influence HEIs activities and how HEIs will change their activities in order to become more international. It is crucial how international activities will be integrated with and made part of the activities. (Välimaa et. al 2013:13).

The justification for internationalisation in Finland is stated already in the legislation where defined the aim of the degree provided by university of applied sciences. In addition internationalisation is one of the educational policy goals. In order to promote and strengthen internationality Strategy for Internationalisation for Higher Education Institutions 2009-2015 was published by Ministry of Education in 2009. The purpose for the strategy is to set goals for the internationalisation of the higher education institution system which is under reform. In the strategy there're stated out concrete measures and guidelines for internationalisation in a rapidly changing educational environment. The aim is to facilitate mobility and cooperation among higher education institutions. The strategy consists of 5 primary aims for internationalisation which will be briefly referred below (Ministry of Education, 2009: 10-11):

- **A genuinely international higher education community**: The Finnish higher education institutions offer in their field of expertise education which provides competence to work in international environment. Higher education institutions utilise international cooperation opportunities within the EU and Nordic countries. The aim is to increase considerably the number of international teacher, researches and degree students and working environment have become genuinely international

- **Increasing the quality and attractiveness of higher education institutions**: Networked higher education institutions support internationalisation, competitiveness and well-being.
• **Promoting the export of expertise**: Finnish higher education institutions are reliable partners engaging to mutually beneficial international research, education and cultural cooperation.

• **Supporting a multicultural society**: Multicultural in the higher education community is supported. Foreign exchange and degree students, teachers, researchers and other foreign personnel are the resource promoting internationalisation at home.

• **Promoting global responsibility**: Research and expertise are ethical and sustainable.

Beside the strategy referred above the education policy priorities are outlined in the Government’s five-year Development Plan for *Education and Research for 2011-2016*, adopted on December 2011 refers the internationalisation of the education as way to be competitive in global environment. These central documents underline the importance and necessity to have more mobility, to head for genuinely international higher education community, increase quality and attractiveness, export expertise just to name few factors. These central features prove that Finnish policy makers see internationalisation of higher education as central aim but also part of improving the quality of Finnish education and competitiveness. The strategy can be considered instrumental as internationalisation will help Finnish society and education to become more competitive. On the other hand internationalisation is expected to be included in the strategy of HEIs and follow the guidelines expressed in national internationalisation strategy (Välimaa et al, 2013: 14-15). TUAS has adopted central features from national internationalisation strategy and educational policy plan into its strategy and the elements have been filtered to the operational level; performance agreement of each faculty, study curricula and implementation plan. Each faculty will produce follow up and evaluation material by reporting and doing self-assessment on their activities, development and results in the strategically important areas.

### 3 Developing Qualitative Teacher Mobility

In Turku University of Applied Sciences quality is understood as the ability of the university to fulfill its mission in its environment or of a study programme to fulfill its aims. The quality assurance system is an essential tool to develop its activities covering the entire operation of TUAS. Continuous improvement is applied in all activities in quality assurance, within research, development and innovation, support processes and education (Kettunen et. al 2010). The definition is parallel with FINHEEC (2010) statement:” … QA system refers to the procedures, processes or
systems that the HEI uses to maintain and develop the quality of its activities. In accordance with the principle of autonomy each HEI decide independently on the aims, structure, operational principles methods and monitoring of its own QA.”

TUAS goals are set in the strategy, action plans, curricula and project plans and the success is mirrored towards the achievements gained. The quality in TUAS means to support and enhance the implementation of the strategy, action plans and curricula. The quality assurance system is based on a model of continuous development by W.E. Deming. The basic framework of QA is the PDCA cycle with four elements: setting goals (Plan), practical application (Do), evaluation (Check), and improvement (Act). Quality system is to ensure continuous development and learning in the organisation via feedback received on activities and results. When planning the model of teacher mobility above described method was followed in order to be able assess and improve the activity.

**Developing Teacher Mobility**

**Planning (Goals)**

The justification and context for the planning teacher mobility model is stated in Finnish education policy but also EU Bologna Process declaration. In Finland it is assumed that internationalisation is included to HEIs strategy and HEIs follow general guidelines of national internationalisation strategy. Like the other higher educational institutions Turku University of Applied Sciences has integrated these policy statements to its strategy. When looking from international, education and research point of view the following aims are named in TUAS strategy (The Strategic Plan of the Turku University of Applied Sciences 2010-2013, 2010):

**“Domestic internationalisation as a stepping stone to abroad**

Domestic internationalisation is supported by increasing studies offered in English through the Open university of applies sciences. All degree programmes will include a module on internationalisation so that it can be implemented flexibly as an international educational offering of high quality or as common studies within the degree programme. The number of foreign students and personnel will be increased. International counselling and tutoring will be enhanced.

**Strategic collaboration will be increased**

TUAS will deepen its strategic collaboration with Hogeschool Utrech and, together with business and other institutions in Southwest Finland, broaden its network of strategic collaborators to geographical areas that are important for exports.

**Teaching, research, and development activities reach and demonstrate high quality internationally**

The number of international degree programmes will be increased. International initiatives of exporting know-how increase external funding and improve international
competence. International professional books and journal articles will be increased.”

The strategic plan, among others, states the principles for internationalisation and teacher mobility. It is up to the faculty/department to include into its action plan how and in what way internationalisation will be implemented so that the qualitative and quantitative criteria stated will be met.

*Do (Practical Application)*

It has proved out that when in bilateral agreement there is agreed to exchange teachers the mobility will seldom take place and be systematic. The common excuse for this sporadic mobility is that we don’t know well enough partners’ study curricula and their teachers. So every now and then when getting an email with the offer to have exchange teacher the courses have already been fixed and there’s no room to fit exchange teacher. When experienced number of time this kind of ad hoc situation we started to think how we could improve teacher mobility so that it really would be integrated as part of the study curriculum?

Brainstorming produced 2 sketches. First was to realise a course/workshop with a specific theme (like sustainability) which would meet the learning outcomes stated in the study curriculum. A teacher would be in touch in advance with the colleague in the partner university and they’d jointly make draft for one/two week course including the assignments. Student would get in advance preparatory assignments which would be discussed and treated during the course/workshop. Teachers would agree how they deal teaching and coaching. The second or alternative model is to offer course content with learning outcomes to be realised by the partner university teachers. The teacher would make a draft for the implementation plan and possible assignments for the students which could be sent in advance. In both cases the guest teacher’s work should meet the minimum criteria stated in the Erasmus agreement.

However, the both case models presented above would require contacting the partner university prior the course would be implemented. In order to learn more about the study curriculum, methods and philosophy of the partner university one should visit the partner (for instance during the period when your student is on exchange). Therefore alongside modeling -- how the teacher mobility would fit to the study curriculum -- formed a check list for a teacher how to prepare oneself prior the visit and what would be the key points to be discovered during the visit:
• Get in touch with the partner university and ask for the study curriculum and pedagogy in advance or ask for the presentation of the curriculum in situ.
• Prepare a short presentation of own study curriculum and the courses wished to be taught by partner university colleague.
• Observe the teaching and teaching arrangements in host university
• Assess similarities and differences in the study curriculum and pick some good practices you could assimilate into your own working.

The degree programme manager presented models and check list to the teachers and substantiated the importance to improve mobility with the partners significant to the programme profile. Degree programme manager and the teachers agreed an action plan where the teachers would visit a partner university in order to learn more about them and agree about the course cooperation. If possible the aim was to link the visit to the period when our student is doing exchange period in the partner university. The emphasis would be in the strategic partners at the UAS level but also in the key partners relevant to the faculty and degree programme.

Check (Evaluation) and Act (Improvement)

In order to develop activities it is essential to stop and monitor if actions made meet the goals set in the strategy. Does the plan and check list support and activate for teacher mobility so that it results more systematic mobility and deepen the collaboration and mutual understanding between our partners? How the course models inspire teachers to do cooperation and how the implementation worked out? How the process and impact results have been documented in business intelligence systems of TUAS? In brief purpose is to find out how the modeling process meet objectives set in the strategy of UAS and should it need any improvements made in order to respond to the requirements more accurately.

4 Concluding remarks

Teacher mobility is underused source especially in current educational climate which require us to increase cooperation transnationally. According to the EU and national level policies special emphasis should be paid into increasing education and research cooperation at transnational level in order to improve quality, export of expertise, and support for multicultural society and promote global responsibility. The new ERASMUS+ programme, for example, emphasises in the Key
Action 2(Co-operation for Innovation and Good Practices) transparency, innovation and the exchange of best practice across Europe. The activities supported in this particular action will be very much project oriented and therefore would require us to know more than what’s stated in internet about our partner university. By developing teacher exchange we’ll get acquainted more in depth our partner university’s pedagogy, methods and specialties. In addition a guest teacher can give new sights and ideas for the students and teachers during the visit but also get now approaches to be experimented at home university. When learning more about the study curricula, coaching and teachers of the partner university there will be a real opportunity to create joint courses and research projects.

But if we count on only what has agreed in the bilateral agreement the teacher mobility won’t become as integral part of the study curriculum In addition mobility rates won’t increase and we do not learn in depth the expertise our partner has. However if there is a systematic frame and process how, in what way and when teacher exchange will take place there will better chance to integrate mobility as part of the study curriculum, develop cooperation and increase mobility rates. A clear and simple model will help us to assess and improve activities and results. The four-step PDCA – cycle can be useful tool in managing the success of the mobility.

**Literature and Reference Material**


