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**Developing expertise in higher education administration and management:
Perspectives of alumni students (0062)**

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Research Domain: Academic Practice, Work and Cultures

Summary

This paper analyses the interaction of research, teaching and expert work in the context of the Finnish national continuing education programme, Higher Education Administration and Management (KOHA). The goal of the KOHA programme is to enhance and deepen higher education experts' understanding of higher education organisations, their administration and management and their leadership. From the outset, the pedagogical idea has been based on the firm interaction between research and teaching from the point of view of teachers and students. Students learn in research-led environments, building linkages between theory, research and their expert work and professional knowledge. Teachers are supervisors providing research-based teaching and supporting students in their research-led learning. Using an electronic survey, this study collected feedback from the KOHA alumni students. This paper will present preliminary results of the survey (n = 68, three student cohorts) in a relational frame between teaching, learning, research and expert work.

Background: While the academic functions of higher education institutions (HEIs) extend, diversify and internationalise, the professional staff of the administration and management of HEIs tend to specialise in and face new challenges originating both within and outside the institution. New and dynamic circumstances require the professional development of knowledge on university administration, management and leadership (Whitchurch, 2008; Yelder & Codling, 2004).

The KOHA programme (40 ECTS) is a student-focused, non-degree study programme at the University of Tampere in Finland (UTA). KOHA has research-led and research-based teaching and learning environments (cf. Brew, 2010). Students are professional staff working in HEIs and other professional organisations in the field of higher education. Hence, KOHA students have prior knowledge on and experience in higher education administration and management.

Interaction between research, teaching and expert work: Students study in multiple learning environments and KOHA's pedagogical idea is to facilitate the interaction between teaching, research and expert work (cf. Brew, 2010; Mulcahy, 2011; Yelder &

Codling, 2004). Teacher-student interaction takes place during lectures, seminars and workshops as well as online. An important way to develop expert work is to meet fellow actors (Eraut, 2005; Trigwell, 2012). In KOHA, this takes place as student-student interaction in contact teaching, specifically in small group practices and online. Furthermore, the work and working organisations of the professionals are an elementary part of the students' learning process. Teachers have a crucial role to link the relevant research approaches to KOHA modules. KOHA students are engaged in research by making small scale research-related activities in small groups. In these practices, students apply different theoretical and conceptual frameworks to real-world cases in their work.

Preliminary results

Reasons to apply to KOHA: The most important reason that higher education experts acquired KOHA education is their desire to develop and extend their knowledge and skills ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 0.51$). The programme introduces various theoretical frameworks and research-based approaches to develop an understanding of higher education organisations and their administration and management. Accordingly, improving one's understanding of higher education administration ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.80$) is the second most important reason to attend the programme. The third most important reason is managing various areas in their expert work ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.80$).

Main contribution to students: The main contribution of KOHA is its ability to provide a comprehensive understanding of higher education institutions and their management ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.81$). Students are able to achieve improved and extended expertise and competencies in their work ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 0.81$). They are also able to apply their education to their work ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.93$).

The majority of respondents identified the benefits of KOHA as enhancing the understanding of an HEI, its administration, management and operating context. "KOHA was closely linked to my work" and "KOHA facilitates understanding of structures and background; it has been almost indispensable when working with administrative issues" are examples of the respondents' perceptions of the value of KOHA. Learning analytical thinking and new approaches to management and administration and widening one's perspectives were the concrete measures the respondents value in KOHA. This implies developing the fundamental frameworks of learning (Barnett, 2011).

"The link to research was strong" and "[KOHA] provided a theoretical background" are examples of the direct research linkages. The desire for further learning was also one of the main benefits of KOHA. Small group assignments and small group works were regarded as successful in supporting learning ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.15$). According to one of the respondents "Reflection during the group works, collection of data and becoming familiar with the literature were the most useful for learning."

Suggestions to improve KOHA: In response to an open-ended question regarding suggestions to improve KOHA, the respondents highlighted teaching and learning

environments, contents of modules, lectures and other teaching practices. The respondents wanted to develop further the small group works because of free-rider problems. One suggested way to avoid free riders is to assign pair work instead of small group works. Groups also face challenges in adjusting to tight timetables of individual group members.

The respondents suggested enriching the contents of modules by inviting more senior professionals as visiting lecturers. KOHA teachers fall under three categories: UTA teachers/researchers, teachers/researchers from other HEIs and higher education professionals working in the field. However, many visiting lecturers implied that some of the lectures overlapped. Therefore, the visiting lecturers need careful coordination in advance. Overall, alumni students were satisfied with the teaching personnel ($M = 4.28$, $SD = .071$).

Conclusion

KOHA is a long-term, research-based continuing education programme that enhances knowledge and knowledge creation capacities (Eraut, 2005) and reconceptualises the work of Finnish higher education professionals.

KOHA is a model that acknowledges the diversity and prior knowledge of students. The education has reflective practices where students construct their understanding (cf. Cornelius et al., 2011). It focuses on the interaction between teaching, learning, research and practice (Mulcahy, 2011; Yelder & Codling, 2004). The most efficient method of learning is students' engagement in research in small group works. One major outcome of KOHA is a change in the students' ways of thinking. Students are encouraged to combine theoretical approaches and apply them to the practices and issues in small group assignments. Students also have active interaction with their peer colleagues. The programme supports students' in-depth research, teaching and work-related learning experiences.

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