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Lecturers' transition into novel researcher roles at new universities: The heuristic value of a new developed conceptual framework (0248)

Context and rationale of this study

Since 2001, Dutch Universities of Applied Sciences (U.A.S.) are expanding their core business teaching with research. Lecturers have to engage in novel researcher roles while maintaining their performance in current teacher roles. This places serious demands upon lecturers: as teachers they should enhance the level of research in bachelor programs, while as researchers they should conduct high level practice-based research. Unfortunately, a gap exists between the current and the desired situation. In order to increase the educational level of the lecturers, targets are set by the end of 2014 on 70% of the lectures having a master degree (46 % in 2010) and 10% having a PhD degree (4 % in 2010). The increase of the research competence of lecturers is seen as one of the critical factors for achieving a sustainable research climate (HBO-raad, 2010).

Theoretical perspectives

To address the complexity of this double transition (on micro/meso level), we combine several theoretical perspectives. Ashforth (2001) defines role transitions as the psychological and physical (when relevant) movement between roles, including disengagement from one role *(role exit)* and engagement in another role *(role entry).* A micro role transition involves frequent and recurring movements between roles, e.g. teacher and researcher roles. In Ashforth's view, three attributes of roles are particularly relevant to role transition: *Role identities, role boundaries,* and *role sets.* Ashforth elaborates an identity based perspective on role transition. Since conducting research requires complex skills, we also draw on concepts on work-related learning (Billett, 2001, 2006; Lave & Wenger, 1991). These theories conceptualize organizational conditions for transitioning and learning and take the dynamic interaction between agent and contexts into account. They emphasize the impact of strong situations on the outcomes of agents' transition. Inspired by Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer (2010), we raise the question whether using Bourdieu's *theory of practice* (1977) as a unifying framework, offers a practical way to strengthen an interdisciplinary and multilayered approach in studies on role transition. Three constructs are central to Bourdieu's theory: *Field, habitus,* and *various forms of capital.*

Purpose, research question and method

The ultimate purpose is giving recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of U.A.S.'s, from the perspective of a framework consisting of theories on role transition/learning and Bourdieu's theory of practice.

In order to develop a framework to address role transition's complexity we conducted an integrative literature review (Torraco, 2005), addressing three salient aspects of our research topic: *1) Expansion of the role portfolio of the lecturers; 2) expansion of the core business of the university;* and *3) the dynamic interaction between the lecturers and the domains teaching, research and professional practice.* Our research question was: Which core concepts relate to our three salient aspects and how can these concepts been linked in a coherent way?

In order to explore the heuristic value of our framework, we conducted recently an explorative study in a Dutch U.A.S. We held semi-structured interviews guided by our core concepts with 24 agents in all faculties: lecturers in various researcher roles, professors, education managers, and policy advisors. All interview reports were validated by the respondents. We conducted the data analysis in three stages:

1) Organizing of the interview material into segments based on the interview topics; the first global assignment of keywords was informed by the theoretical topic list.

2) Exploration and analysis: informed by the interviews, the initial topic list has been refined and expanded with new keywords.

3) Drawing conclusions: interview quotes were re-read carefully and interpreted in order to describe the dynamics of role transition.

Findings

First, we explain our framework. The first aspect, *expansion of the role portfolio of the lecturers* entails four sub aspects. *Personal identities of lecturers* may influence the search for opportunities to fulfill novel researcher roles. After an actual start in novel researcher roles lecturers get engaged in *the development of a researcher identity* and *the development of research competence.* Still lecturers are engaged in *the performance in teacher roles.* The second aspect concerns *expansion of the core business with research,* consisting of three sub aspects: *the domain teaching, research,* and *professional practice.* The relationships between these domains, such as the degree of integration (see Brew, 2006), define for lecturers the rules on their playgrounds. The third aspect is: *The dynamic interaction between the lecturers and the aforementioned domains.* The individuals influence the situation and vice versa.

Second, we present two vignettes based on our explorative study. We start with personal identity in relationship to role identities. (Dis)engagement with lecturer-researcher roles can be attributed to differences in personal identities of teachers, to perceived opportunities to be of significance in a certain role, and to the opportunities in a role to develop competence. Lecturers -researchers' experiences with research correspond with their drive to know, to understand and to explain, whereas

lecturers-teachers' experiences are mainly concerned with the social nature of teaching. Lecturers - researchers want to be of significance in their researcher role by improving professional practice and curricula, whereas lecturers-teachers mainly through assisting students in their processes of discovery the profession. Lecturers-teachers also want to be of significance by improving curricula, however, for some of them the timeframes from conducted research to actual change in practice should not be too long. All lecturers call for continuous input to stay up to date and value having an appropriate level in coaching student research. Lecturers' connection with research in the U.A.S. can have multiple forms, such as visiting presentations on research and conducting research with students on lecturers' favorite themes in courses.

We will present a second vignette on the interaction between the lecturers and the various domains. Measures taken (planned/in-progress/implemented) mirror what lecturers-researchers need in their research work. However, to achieve the desired situation, a more comprehensive package of actions is necessary according to all interviewed actors. We also found that lecturers-researchers have to show a high level of proactivity in order to reach their aims. They call for more acknowledgement of this agency. The findings suggest that the situation is still too weak to realize ambitions.

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