

Quality of study programs at the University of Vienna: Sensemaking in times of reform overload

Thomas.Pfeffer@donau-uni.ac.at
(Danube University KREMS)

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Danube University KREMS



Introduction

- ,Quality of Teaching at the University of Vienna' organisational development project (2008-09)
- Personal impressions as a project coordinator
- Context: national and institutional reforms concerning organisation and curricula

Agenda

- National regulations
 - Reforms at the University of Vienna
 - Project ‚Quality of Teaching‘
 - Discussion and Conclusions
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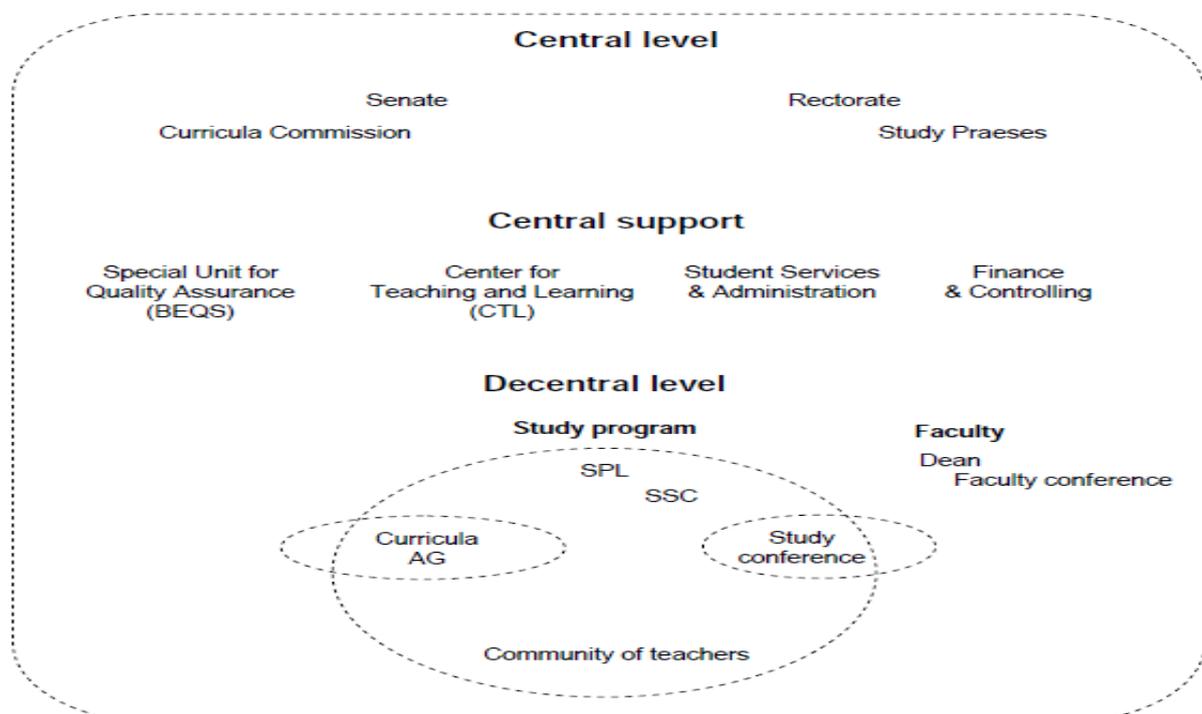
National regulations in Austria

- **Organisational status of state universities**
 - Dependent, subordinated units (till late 1990s)
 - Semi-independent, contracting capacity (late 1990s-2002)
 - Autonomy, corporate bodies of public law (shift 2002-2004)
 - **Curricula regulations**
 - National curricula; Ministry (till 1997)
 - Local curricula (diploma 97, B + M 99); curricula commission
 - Local curricula (B + M, diploma, ECTS); senate (2002)
 - **Implementation of Bologna**
 - Encouraged, but voluntary
 - Information + seed funding, but no strategic concepts or public debates
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Reforms at the University of Vienna (1): Organisation (education)

- **Central decision making bodies**
 - Senate (18), Curricula Commission
 - Rectorate (5)
 - University Council (9)
- **Central support units (education)**
 - Student Service & Administration
 - Finance & Controlling (former Bursary)
 - Special Unit for Quality Assurance (new)
 - Center for Teaching and Learning (new)
- **Decentral: faculties and study programs**
 - 8 faculties → 15 faculties + 3 centers
 - Heads of Study Programs (SPL; 35)
 - Study Service Centers (17)
 - Curricula Working Groups + Study Conferences

Reforms at the University of Vienna (2): Organisation (education)



Reforms at the University of Vienna (3): Curricula reform

- **By 2004: 1/3 of all curricula as B/M (old regulation)**
- **2005-2008: project European Study Architecture**
 - Comprehensive implementation of European Study Architecture
 - Shift from teacher centered to student centered (= ECTS)
 - Shift from content to learning outcomes
- **Activities and structures**
 - Framework regulations (curricula models, modularisation, budgets)
 - Curricula development process (Rectorate, Curricula Commission, Curricula AG, support units)
- **Results in 2008/09**
 - 52 B, 108 M, 7 diploma, 10 doctoral programs
 - Long transition periods, 3 regulations/curricula till 2008

Project 'Quality of Teaching' (1) Context

- **Background**
 - Invitation by the Agency for Quality Assurance (AQA)
 - Jointly commissioned by Rectorate and Senate
 - Consolidation of curricula and organisational reform
 - Plans for institutional audit
- **Objectives**
 - Room for strategic reflection apart from daily business
 - Comparing local and international experiences
 - Joint understanding for the quality of study programs
 - Monitoring existing procedures and instruments
- **Structure**
 - Principals/owners: 2 vice rectors, head of Curricula Commission
 - Project coordinator
 - Steering group
 - Assistance by AQA

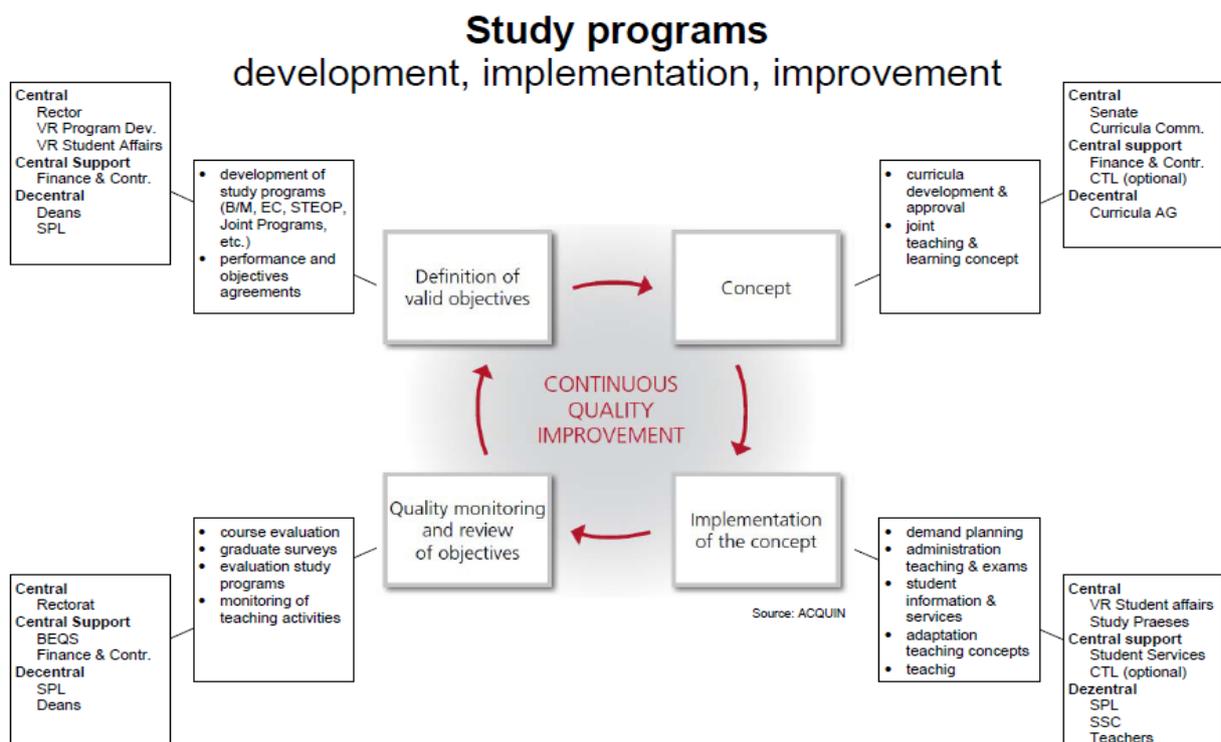
Project 'Quality of Teaching' (2)

Quality of Study Programs

- Conference and Workshop
 - 2 topics: 'research led education', 'feasibility for students and study entrance phase (STEP)'
- Results
 - Relationship between research and education
 - Research led education at all degree levels
 - Research based competencies
 - Research based learning
 - Goals and functions of the STEP
 - Framework conditions for the STEP
 - Study information

Project 'Quality of Teaching' (3)

Quality Development of Study Programs



Project 'Quality of Teaching' (4)

Quality Development of Study Programs

➤ Results

1. Defining quality development as a joint task of the university
2. Clarifying objectives and strategic focus of educational offerings
3. Implementing joint guidelines for quality
4. Operationalising curricula
5. Reducing structural over-determination of curricula
6. Clarifying responsibilities for quality in study programs
7. Creating places and procedures for quality development
8. Strengthening link between research and education
9. Improving feasibility of study programs (res., students, admin.)
10. Linking objectives and monitoring

Conclusions

- 10-15 years of reform overload for state universities
- Paradigm shift to evaluative state from 'state control' to 'autonomy + accountability'
- New (costly) governance structures, but little substance for performance agreements (80/20/1-2%)
- Lack of national concepts and plans, focus on formal reforms and compliance with European trends
- Ambitious institutional management, somehow mirroring national focus
- Need for debates on substance and for 'plausible images' to integrate range of reforms and perspectives