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Editorial: Development of study programmes

1 Challenges for universities after Bologna

A lively discussion about the development of study programmes can be observed in recent times. Bologna represents a starting point that led to a comprehensive structure reform in the Higher Education system in Europe. It is, among other things, reflected in an outcome-orientation, the introduction of Bachelor's and Master's programmes, and their modularization. After 15 years of Bologna, the process of the implementation of the structural changes is almost completed (cf. NICKEL, 2011). Moreover, critical remarks about the effects of Bologna can be noted. It is pointed out that Bologna had led to an increase of 'school-like' structures and a decrease of academic freedom for the students; students also often have a reproductive conception of learning and use mostly rote-learning strategies (cf. e.g. BARNETT, 2012; KEHM, MICHELSEN, & VABO, 2010).

Nevertheless, Bologna represented rather an educational policy reform concerning the reconstruction of study programmes. Bologna presents a framework which opens a broad design scope for learning and teaching in several universities. Therefore, the critical remarks should be related to the processes during the switch to the new structures. It is precisely that Bologna set new alignments on the meso-level of universities: The structural requirements of the educational policy (macro-level) and the ideas of learning and teaching on the micro-level should be designed on the meso-level. A discourse is currently taking place at this level which can be described with the term 'after Bologna': The focus of attention is on the coherent design of study programmes and the module development to adequately support the learning processes of students (cf. GERHOLZ & SLOANE, 2013; EULER, 2013; REINMANN, 2012). The emphasis is placed on the instructional design as well as the teaching methodology, and how this is coherently anchored in study programmes. This also refers to questions concerning the main objectives of Higher Education. One discussion regarding Bologna is the fostering of employability by the students, although the aim of employability should not be reduced to only preparing the students for future working situations. Moreover, Higher Education aims to promote the students' ability to act adequately in societal situations. The study process should be supported by scientifically based skills. The students will be enabled to identify problems and to apply scientific techniques and methods in order to cope with these problems. This also includes the personal development of the students (cf. GERHOLZ, & SLOANE, 2011; BUSCHFELD, DILGER, & LIENTHAL, 2010). Therefore, the several lecturers in a study programme should come to an agreement as to how these aims can be clarified for a single study programme.

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To implement an educational design with these aims in mind, instructional clarification concerning the individual study programmes must be made and also be realized in the corresponding faculties. The primary goal is to achieve a coherent process of competence development of students, accompanied by the professionalization of the lecturers responsible in order to assure the quality in these study programmes. The implementation of such concepts also leads to organizational changes. Thus, the development of study programmes is accompanied by change processes at the organizational level of universities or faculties (cf. GERHOLZ et al., 2013; BRAHM, & JENERT, 2013). While this is taking place, the factors of the organizational development of the study programmes have to be more precisely analysed. Consequently, it is important to look at the theory of the organizational modelling of study programmes.

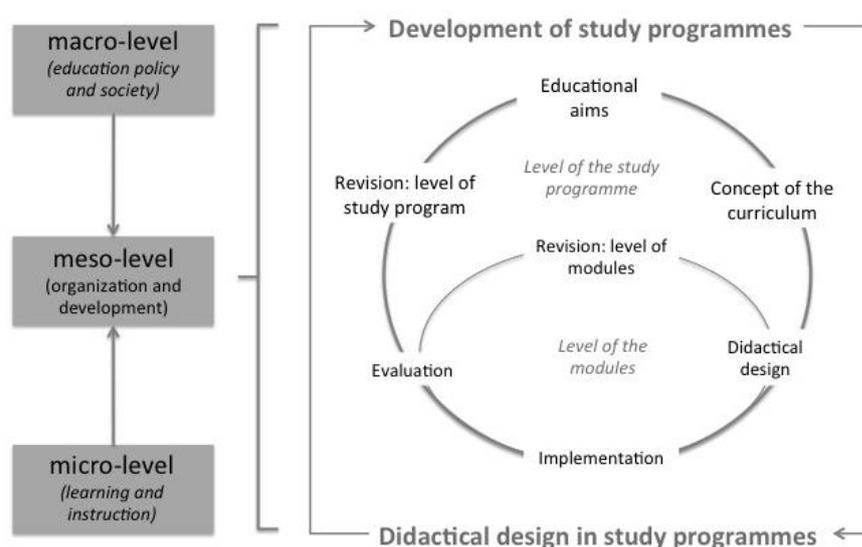


Figure 1: Elements and regulation levels of the development of study programmes (cf. GERHOLZ, & SLOANE, 2013)

Figure 1 presents the main elements of the development of study programmes and the connection to the different levels of regulation. The macro-level refers to the requirements of society and the educational policy. The micro-level represents the didactical ideas for the design of learning and teaching. The development of study programmes is anchored on the meso-level – the organizational view. In this view, the development of study programmes is a problem-solving process of the lecturers. They should reach agreement concerning the educational aims and the curriculum concept of a study programme. Based on this, the didactical design of the modules should be arranged. The terms of revision in Figure 1 refer to the fact that a study programme and the didactical concept of modules is to evaluate, and has to be improved based on the evaluation results. It is a question of the quality assurance in a given study programme. However, the remarks and connections of the development of study programmes outlined represent the starting point of this issue. The focus is on the interaction of instructional and organizational design of study programmes and their modules as the main unities of study programmes.

2 Priorities of the issue

The issue is about a theory-based structuring of the field of the development of study programmes. Four priorities can be differentiated.

Priority 1: Organizational design of the development of study programmes

The instructional design of study programmes has to be looked at in connection with the organization of the study programme itself. A coherent design of study programmes also means establishing appropriate organizational mechanisms. Traditionally, the routines of people at university are characterized by collegial and democratic self-administration. Independence and liberty are the norms that are consistently experienced as being meaningful for people in the university (MUSSELIN, 2007; GERHOLZ et al., 2013). Thus, the organizational mechanisms of the development of study programmes need an atmosphere where a co-operative and collegial relationship is ensured. Keeping this in mind, the development of study programmes sometimes requires negotiation processes between the lecturers which should be moderated. Exemplary questions, however, in the field of organizational design are: Which concepts exist for the organization and the further development of study programmes? How can an educational profile in a study programme be worked out among the lecturers? How can processes of change be described and designed on the level of study programmes and what could be helpful concepts of reference (e.g. management or sociological models)? Which organizational design options of modules in study programmes exist? Which people and structures are to be considered when developing educational processes?

Priority 2: Quality management in study programmes

The development of study programmes is accompanied by the issue of quality development and assurance. This involves the description of objectives in a study programme, their specification and implementation at module level, and their outgoing effects (cf. REICHERT, & TAUCH, 2005). Apart from the perspective of the students, the professionalization of the university lecturers also has an influential role. Moreover, it is important to implement a quality management system. This is a strategic challenge and requires the development of a common understanding of quality in a given study programme (cf. WILBERS, & WITTMANN, 2013). Therefore, the following exemplary questions arise: How can the quality of a study programme be identified and clarified? How should evaluation instruments on a module and study programme level be designed? Which concepts exist for the professionalization of university lecturers on a study programme level? What significance do the number and type of assessments have for the development of quality?

Priority 3: Coherent design of learning processes in study programmes

The development of study programmes also includes a coherent design of learning processes. As already shown in Figure 1, it is necessary to have an educational target, respectively profile, as the main emphasis of the study programme. The precondition of educational profiles has an effect on the entire study programme. It can be observed that educational profiles of study programmes represent objectives

rather than always fulfilling this necessary precondition. Instead, instructional concepts are put into practice on the module level, without having extensive effects on the whole study programme. The focus has to be on describing which conditions of implementation exist for a coherent design of study programmes. Exemplary questions are: How are modern learning concepts in study programmes organized and how can these be converted to an extensive concept for all modules within a study programme? How do the study behaviour of the students and the educational profile of a study programme correspond to each other? Which didactical concepts exist that accompany the study process? How should the modules be sequenced within a study programme according to the process of competence development?

Priority 4: Design of transitions in and from study programmes

The question of transitions arises from the introduction of Bachelor's and Master's degrees and the support of the mobility of students. This is connected to the design of the starting period of study, the periods of specialization in a study programme, and also to the final period of study as well as the transition between Bachelor and Master study paths. The analysis of transitions can be structured from both the institutional and the individual perspective. The former goes into the question of how the Higher Education institutions and the given social rules influence the transition. The latter focuses on the individual and how they perceive a transition (cf. KUTSCHA, 1991). Therefore, transitions can be described as situations which have to be overcome by the individual. It is a question of how the individual acts and reacts in the transition process, as well as how the institutions can accompany this process through didactical arrangements (cf. GERHOLZ, 2011). However, exemplary questions in the field of transitions are: How can the challenges of the transitions be described? What concepts and experiences are available for the design? How can the introductory and final periods of study programmes be designed? How can the transition of Bachelor to Master be designed?

3 Overview of the contributions

The priorities shows various approaches to the field of the development of study programmes. The contributions of the issue reflect on these approaches and can be structured on the priorities.

Organizational design of the development of study programmes

Jenert examines the question of the sustainable implementation of study programmes. In his analysis, he explains which understanding of the academic disciplines in universities and faculties has a high significance for the development of study programmes. However, he shows that several stakeholders and his demands to study programmes should be interrelated for the implementation of outcome-oriented curricula. In order to realize this, two main steps are presented.

Bernstorff deals with the consequences of Bologna, such as the 'schoolification' of study programmes, given timetables and workloads. He argues that it is possible to implement 'free workload' on the level of curricula. 'Free workload' enables the students more freedom and individuality in their study programme. Therefore, the

author illustrates some examples of 'free workload' and what kind of elements have to be considered by its implementation.

The contribution of *Niethammer, Koglin-Heß, Digel & Schrader* focuses on the process of curriculum development in study programmes. Based on the professional theory as well as on the curriculum theory the authors develop a framework for the construction of curricula in universities representing a step-by-step guideline. In the following, the authors explain these steps of creating curricula including the relevance of the institutional background.

Schäfer, Kriegel & Hagemann illustrate a concept of a co-operative curriculum development. The aim is to create study programmes which fit the needs of students and the requirements of the future working contexts. The concept is characterized by dialogue between the several stakeholders as well as feedback loops during the development process.

The contribution from *Felbinger* also aims to describe the development of study programmes. She argues that the development of study programmes comprises instructional and educational policy factors. Furthermore, several stakeholders are taken into consideration. Based on these results, Felbinger shows that the process of development has a complex structure and requires different perspectives. How to organize this process and to arrange the perspectives is shown by a processual approach with different phases.

Quality management in study programmes

Happ & Zlatkin-Troitschanskaia go into the question of assessing the quality of Higher Education by observing students' study performance in the field of business and economics. The authors examined the learning success of students by measuring the increase of content knowledge in comparing the study models of BA/MA degree courses and diploma degree courses. The empirical results show moderate differences between both study models. However, the authors discuss the results at the end and show the potentials of the instruments used for process-oriented diagnostic during study programmes.

Pietzonka examines the process of modularization in study programmes. Therefore, empirical results of a qualitative survey concerning the problems with modularization are presented. The examination shows that the modularization is completed in a formal structure, but a coherent design of study programmes is rarely reached in an activity structure. The reasons for the lack of coherence are diverse and are discussed at the end of the contribution.

Gilch, Bauer & Ogbonna illustrate the process of the development of study programmes exemplarily at a whole university. They show a participative approach combined with instruments of project management. All in all, the several steps to find solutions for the whole university are described. The advantages of external consultants in the development of study programmes can be discovered.

Coherent design of learning processes in study programmes

Hellmann, Teigeler & Seifert present a concept of practice-oriented project learning during Bachelor programmes with the 'Leuphana College studies'. The starting

point of their contribution is the question: How should competence-based learning environments be designed to foster problem-solving abilities by the students? The 'Leuphana College studies' offer the possibility for students to work in interdisciplinary groups at real daily-life problems in companies. Therefore, the authors present 'best practice' for the development of the personality of students during study programmes.

The contribution of *Roth, Mitsche, Pass & Endler* illustrates a curricula-oriented approach in part-time study programmes which enables students to integrate their skills from the study process into their working contexts. The approach shows action-oriented curricula that are organized in learning areas. Based on these learning areas, the authors describe the development of learning environments by using blended learning and psychological elements. The potential of these teaching and learning settings for other universities are shown at the end.

The potential of evaluation data for instructional changes in study programmes is presented by the contribution of *Winzker, Grein, Himmel, Kaul & Luppertz*. The authors argue that it is important to improve study programmes based on using empirical data rather than on the opinions of the people involved. Furthermore, the empirical data help to open a debate during which the lecturers could find adequate principles of teaching in study programmes. This is illustrated in the contribution at the study entry phase.

Design of transitions in and from study programmes

Kremer & Rüschen focus on the transition of Bachelor to Master study programmes from a student's perspective. In this way, the authors follow an action-oriented approach. Therefore, their research focus is on how students act throughout the transition. The empirical results show that a transition from Bachelor to Master programmes can be divided into several phases and the students have different motives and strategies to manage these phases. One conclusion is that different instructional designs to guide the students through the transitions are needed.

4 Outlook

The contributions represent conceptual approaches, empirical findings and practical implementations. They offer a systematization of the field of the development of study programmes and give orientations for further development. In addition, we should like to express our warm thanks to the reviewers of this issue. We hope that, with the help of this issue, the discussion of the development of study programmes will be ongoing.

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