

Coaching for Lecturers at German Universities: An Inventory Based on a Qualitative Interview Study

Authors : Freya Willicks

Abstract : The society of the 21st century is characterized by dynamic and complexity, developments that also shape universities and university life. The Bologna reform, for example, has led to restructuring at many European universities. Today's university teachers, therefore, have to meet many expectations: Their tasks include not only teaching but also the general improvement of the quality of teaching, good research, the management of various projects or the development of their own personal skills. This requires a high degree of flexibility and openness to change. The resulting pressure can often lead to exhaustion. Coaching can be a way for university teachers to cope with these pressures because it gives them the opportunity to discuss stressful situations with a coach and self-reflect on them. As a result, more and more universities in Europe offer to coach to their teachers. An analysis of the services provided at universities in Germany, however, quickly reveals an immense disagreement with regard to the understanding of 'coaching'. A variety of terms is used, such as coaching, counselling or supervision. In addition, each university defines its offer individually, from process-oriented consulting to expert consulting, from group training to individual coaching. The biographic backgrounds of those who coach are also very divergent, both external and internal coaches can be suitable. These findings lead to the following questions: Which structural characteristics for coaching at universities have been proven successful? What competencies should a good coach for university lecturers have? In order to answer these questions, a qualitative study was carried out. In a first step, qualitative semi-structured interviews (N = 14) were conducted, on the one hand with coaches for university teachers and on the other hand with university teachers who have been coached. In a second step, the interviews were transcribed and analyzed using Mayring's qualitative content analysis. The study shows how great the potential of coaching can be for university teachers, who otherwise have little opportunity to talk about their teaching in a private setting. According to the study, the coach should neither be a colleague nor a superior of the coachee but should take an independent perspective, as this is the only way for the coachee to openly reflect on himself/herself. In addition, the coach should be familiar with the university system, i.e., be an academic himself/herself. Otherwise, he/she cannot fully understand the complexity of the teaching situation and the role expectations. However, internal coaches do not necessarily have much coaching experience or explicit coaching competencies. They often come from the university's own didactics department, are experts in didactics, but do not necessarily have a certified coaching education. Therefore, it is important to develop structures and guidelines for internal coaches to support their coaching. In further analysis, such guidelines will be developed on the basis of these interviews.

Keywords : coaching, university coaching, university didactics, qualitative interviews

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