The Key Characteristics of Teaching Excellence Programs for Academic Leaders

A review of high-ranking universities' experiences reflected in international publications

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Abstract. Teaching excellence and academic leadership programs have been emerging and growing in response to the increasing demand for better teaching quality and educational change in universities all over the world. International publications analyzing the experiences of high-ranking universities in developed economies (USA, Germany, Denmark, Netherlands, and Australia) are reviewed in this article to identify the characteristics of successful professional development programs for teaching quality and academic leadership in higher education designed to foster educational change. Some fundamental concepts are investigated, such as teaching excellence, teaching quality, instructional development, and academic leadership; their fuzziness and partial overlapping are demonstrated. The article also describes the characteristics of teaching excellence programs for academic leaders, such as key stakeholders (governmental, institutional, and teacher demands) and major approaches to promoting teaching excellence and academic leadership, which include the concept of reflective practice, andragogical theory, transformative learning approach, self-directed learning, inquiry-based learning, and refocusing from teacher to student. The core design features of teaching excellence and academic leadership programs are discussed, such as selection criteria, frequency and duration, principles and formats of implementation, performance and effectiveness assessment. Special emphasis is placed upon the potential obstacles in program realization, in particular the role of internal administrative policies and institutional environment on program effectiveness and the embeddedness of such programs into the university system of educational quality assurance, teacher performance monitoring, career advancement, and human resource strategies.
Keywords: teaching excellence, academic leadership, professional development, university development, adult education, andragogy.

The quality of university education has attracted educational researchers and practitioners in many countries over the recent decades [Keesen et al. 1996]. Concerns about teaching quality rose [Elton 1998] in the face of a number of factors, such as education massification, growing international competition, university corporatization, economic expectations and demands in education, the ever-increasing socio-geographic heterogeneity of student population [Bain, Zundans-Fraser 2017], and "the need to raise the status of teaching relative to research" [Brockerhoff, Stensaker, Huisman 2014:236]. As a response to those demands, new professional development programs for academic leaders emerged to improve the quality of teaching, foster leadership skills in teachers, and thus enhance the overall learning experience. This article explores international publications of the recent years in an attempt to identify the characteristics of successful professional development programs for teaching quality and academic leadership in higher education designed to foster educational change. In particular, the article seeks answers to the following questions:

1) What are the interests of the key stakeholders in teaching excellence programs?
2) Which of the adult education approaches are the best for using in teaching excellence programs?
3) What are the possible directions of teaching excellence program design and implementation?
4) How can institutional environment promote or inhibit the effectiveness of such programs?

As a first step, the article examines the terms and concepts that are significant for answering the questions asked above, namely teaching excellence, teaching quality, instructional development, and academic leadership. Next, it describes the key stakeholders in teaching excellence programs and their chief demands. Then, it investigates the instructional approaches that have proven to be the best solutions for teaching excellence and academic leadership programs. It also describes the possible methods of program design and implementation, paying special attention to participant selection criteria, the fundamental principles of implementation, possible formats, evaluation procedures, and potential obstacles. Finally, the role of internal and external institutional environment in program effectiveness is analyzed.

1. Approaches to teaching excellence program analysis and the existing limitations

Little data on teaching excellence programs is available in Russian literature, whereas international university practices are abundant, diversified and well-described, so this article only reviews non-Russian publications in the field. It focuses on studies describing the implementation of such programs by high-ranking universities in devel-

oped countries—which is most often the case in this type of literature. The review embraces articles devoted to teaching excellence programs administered by universities featured in the top 200 in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings: Utrecht University, the Netherlands (74th); University of Washington, USA (28th); University of Alberta, Canada (132nd); Maastricht University, the Netherlands (128th); University of Antwerp, Belgium (200th); University of Sydney, Australia (59th); Western University, Canada (190th); and an anonymous U.S. leading research university. In addition, the review includes studies based on large-sized samples, such as those analyzing the performance of 74 centers for excellence in teaching and learning (CETL) in Great Britain, or higher education teaching programs across 20 universities in eight countries, or university initiatives in academic leadership undertaken by members of the Association of American Universities. Of all the possible programs for academic professional development, initiatives in teaching excellence and academic leadership were selected for this review. These two components are regarded as directly interrelated, as new ideas in teaching and learning should result in educational change, e.g. curriculum transformations.

Quality teaching initiatives are very diverse both in nature and in function. Some of these initiatives are undertaken at teachers' level, others at departmental, institutional or country level [Henard, Leprince-Ringuet 2008]. The same diversity can be found in academic leadership programs. This study investigates into initiatives at all levels that share the goal of achieving excellence in teaching quality and academic leadership.

Research articles, books, and reports are analyzed in this review. Literature search was performed mainly in the domains of teaching quality, teaching excellence, academic leadership in teaching, and instructional development at the level of universities and the system of higher education as a whole. Analysis also involves publications on adult education, andragogy, reflexive pedagogy, critical pedagogy, and transformative learning. This study thus relies on the method of critical literature review.

The choice of research questions and analysis method results in some inescapable limitations to this review.

1. Ample literature on academic leadership and abundant publications on teaching excellence do not make it easier to find publications at the intersection of the two fields, so various versions of such initiatives were included in analysis.
2. Publications describing such programs normally use the constructivist approach and offer insight into social structures, relationships, and connections. The teaching approaches are either not disclosed or mentioned very briefly as a framework for those programs.

3. The key goal of this study implies reviewing the main topics and discussion points within them without going into too much detail. Besides, this article does not analyze the program content thoroughly, suggesting that it may vary depending on the institution's demands.

4. In the context of this study, some terms are used indiscriminately as relative synonyms, e.g. educational program / initiative / training, or teacher / instructor / lecturer.

2. Key Terms and Concepts
2.1. Teaching excellence and teaching quality

The concept of teaching excellence has become an important theme in higher education all over the world. Policy initiatives in promoting teaching excellence have emerged and spread in many countries [Brockerhoff, Stensaker, Huisman 2014]. Meanwhile, some authors believe that the very term teaching excellence lacks precision, since "anything can be excellent" [Skelton 2007:265]. Excellence in teaching is approached as a multidimensional concept, of which "the dimensions <...> are of two kinds; first, classificatory, distinguishing the three levels of institution, department and individual, and second, substantive, describing the different ways in which each of the three levels can exhibit excellence" [Elton 1998:3]. At the level of the individual, Lewis Elton identifies the following dimensions of teaching excellence:

- "Being a reflective practitioner (putting self-reflection systematically into practice)
- Being an innovator
- Designing curricula
- Providing a teaching service to the community
- Researching into the teaching of one's discipline
- Conducting pedagogic research
- Being a scholar in one's discipline" [Ibid.:6].

At the level of departments and institutions, teaching excellence involves management of others; management of resources; development of other staff; development, management and review of courses; promoting, leading and supporting change, etc. [Ibid.]. For example, the German education system defines teaching excellence initiatives as being focused on central leadership, structural and cultural changes, and improvement of teaching quality [Brockerhoff, Stensaker, Huisman 2014]. This level is where rewards for teaching excellence are predominantly administered [Elton 1998].

Teaching excellence also has structural and cultural aspects [Brockerhoff, Stensaker, Huisman 2014]. The structural dimension includes provision of infrastructure; provision of information and counselling; use of active learning in class; systematic evaluation (including student evaluation); adjustment of the organizational structure;

and promotion of interdisciplinary teaching [Brockerhoff, Stensaker, Huisman 2014; Frost, Teodorescu 2001]. The cultural dimension of teaching excellence implies creation of communities of teaching and learning practices; provision of arenas for dialogue; teaching evaluation based on recruitment and reward criteria; other staff development; and development of strategies for teaching [Brockerhoff, Stensaker, Huisman 2014; Frost, Teodorescu 2001]. The corporate culture qualities on which teaching excellence should rest include such values as "trust, honesty, free inquiry, open debate, tolerance for difference, and respect for others" [Frost, Teodorescu 2001:410].

Teaching quality is an ambiguous concept, too [Diaz-Mendez, Gummesson 2012]. According to Fabrice Henard and Soleine Leprince-Ringuet, "some scholars regard quality primarily as an outcome, others as a property. Some consider teaching as the never ending process of reduction of defects and so Quality Teaching can never be totally grasped and appraised" [Henard, Leprince-Ringuet 2008:3]. They come to a conclusion that conceptions of quality teaching happen to be stakeholder relative, underlining that it is not only teacher's pedagogical skills but also the learning environment and adequate support to staff and students that determine the quality of teaching. Such definition of teaching quality components is in line with the three-level structure of teaching initiatives. Quality can also be understood as "excellence"—this traditional conception of quality has been dominant in many old elite higher education institutions [Ibid.]. Therefore, the concepts of teaching quality and teaching excellence are closely interrelated and will be used as relative synonyms further on in this article.

2.2. Instructional development

Instructional development—the best term to describe educational programs that are successful from teachers' perspective—can be defined as "any initiative specifically planned to enhance teachers' teaching so that student learning is supported" [Stes, Coertjens, Petegem 2013:1104]. In the recent decades, educational institutions in a number of countries have established instructional development units to improve teaching quality. One should discriminate conceptually and substantially between instructional development and professional/academic/faculty development in higher education, even though the concepts partially overlap. "Whereas instructional development explicitly aims to develop faculty members in their role as teachers, professional development concerns the entire career development of a faculty member and is not limited to teaching, but also considers research and social services" [Ibid.]. Academic development and faculty development are terms related to instructional development, but they also include the aspect of organizational development to foster their processes. The concept of educational development is even broader and indicates the whole range of development activities, such as instructional, curriculum, organizational, professional, academic, and

faculty development [Taylor, Rege 2010]. Publications on instructional development programs was considered relevant to achieving the stated research goal. In addition, teaching excellence also involves development of leadership skills in teachers, so academic leadership is another key concept in this review.

2.3. Academic leadership

Academic leadership is regarded as one of the key outcomes of training programs. Literature on leadership in education is abundant, yet few publications explore the relations between leadership and teaching excellence [Ramsden et al. 2007]. In this review, academic leadership is analyzed in the context of integrating educational changes to enhance teaching quality, leaders being viewed as stewards of teaching excellence [Gigliotti 2017; Phillips et al. 2018]. Some researchers argue that teachers are more likely to adopt a student-centered approach and work on their teaching practice if "leadership in teaching is perceived as transformative and teachers are involved in the context of co-management with a clear and consistent reward system" [Ramsden et al. 2007:143]. Elton suggests the following criteria for academic leadership at the individual level of teaching excellence:

- Management of others in course teams, etc.
- Development, management and review of courses
- Development of staff
- Departmental leadership in the teaching area
- Acting as manager and editor for writing teams of learning materials
- Promoting, leading and supporting change" [Elton 1998:10].

Academic leadership is sometimes understood as the art of cultivating relationships, as a direct response to "wicked problems," and as a mosaic of administrative competencies [Gigliotti 2017], but most often as effective communication in the context of educational change. Academic leadership requires a great amount of resource and effort, change often being difficult to implement and sustain in the rather rigid system of higher education [Phillips et al. 2018].

All the aspects of teaching excellence and academic leadership described above are reflected in the methods of design, implementation and assessment of the initiatives analyzed, which will be shown below.

3. Characteristics of Teaching Excellence Programs for Academic Leaders
3.1. Why? Key areas of interest

The quality of education became the subject of growing concerns for a number of universities across the globe in the 1990s, which led to the emergence of targeted professional development and academic leadership programs for teachers in higher education. Reasons for introducing such programs can be grouped into three categories, reflecting the major interest groups. The first category includes mac-

ro-reasons associated with country-specific education policies. For instance, Denmark launched a campaign to demarcate the functions of universities and polytechnic institutes in the 1990s. The key differences between the two types of educational institutions were widely discussed at the national level, and it was a historic turn for Danish universities establishing the priority of research over teaching and at the same time analyzing the causes of high student attrition rates. Additional pressure was created by student union campaigns [Keesen et al. 1996]. On that account, a number of centers were established to promote academic excellence, which still exist as public institutions supporting national universities [Robins, Ambrozy, Pinsky 2006]. As an alternative to creating such isolated centers, governments may offer competitive research funding for universities administering teaching excellence programs, as described by David Gosling and Rebecca Turner using the example of Great Britain [Gosling, Turner 2015].

Internal needs of educational institutions represent another category of reasons for launching targeted teaching excellence and academic leadership programs. Given all the potential diversity of situations, requirements, and problems to be solved, it becomes obvious that initiatives and methods of their implementation vary greatly across universities. Some of such programs, for instance, are compulsory for novice teachers [Grunefeld et al. 2015; Stes, Coertjens, Petegem 2013], while others are not [Gosling, Turner 2015]; some are integrated and directed by departments and make allowance for the discipline-specific characteristics of learning and teaching [Eley 2006; Keesen et al. 1996], while others are administered centrally and serve the institution as a whole [Stes, Coertjens, Petegem 2013]. Education reforms in universities are often implemented by centers for teaching and learning that are responsible for "providing expertise, enhancing teaching potential, ensuring education quality, holding competitions and rewarding the winners, and issuing dedicated grants" [Bain, Zundans-Fraser 2017:11].

Finally, at the micro-level, there is personal motivation of teachers to participate in teaching excellence programs. First of all, instructors are interested in getting promoted and tenured [Gibbs, Coffey 2004; Keesen et al. 1996]. In some cases, they are also awarded certificates of completion that are equivalent to the level of Master's degree [Stes, Coertjens, Petegem 2013]. In the end, motivation for professional growth and personal fulfillment cannot be ignored either [Biggs, Tang 2011].

3.2. How? Major instructional approaches

In most cases, teaching excellence programs suggest implicitly or require explicitly that teachers should learn and try out the approaches that the institution seeks to encourage and sustain in students. This orientation serves the basis for designing the program content.

As with students, learning for instructors in teaching excellence programs should be organized with due allowance made for the principles of teaching adult learners, which constitute the subject of andragogy. Education of adults rests on the assumptions that (i) they need to know "why they should learn something before start being taught" [Knowles 1984:55], (ii) they have a quite mature self-concept and "a deep psychological need to be perceived by others as being self-directing" [Ibid.:56], (iii) they prefer individualized learning based on their previous life experiences, (iv) they are "ready to learn what they need to know to solve current life problems, (v) <…> they are problem-centered in their orientation to learning" [Ibid.:59], (vi) and they are motivated for growth and development by inner drives rather than by external influences. These orientations can be traced across a number of teaching excellence and academic leadership initiatives implemented by high-ranking universities.

Teaching excellence and academic leadership programs widely use the practitioner-centered model of professional development, in which "mature teachers, just like any other type of practitioners, are active thinkers, or practice theorists, who are constantly trying to make sense of their work" [Foley 1999:8]. Learners of this type tend to be more successful in teaching excellence programs in case the latter are organized within the reflection-in-action framework [Lawrence-Wilkes, Ashmore 2014]. "Reflective practice is <…> a form of practice where situations in professional life are problematized to become potential learning situations. By analyzing those situations, professional practitioners learn, grow, and develop in their practice" [Jarvis 1992] (quoted after [Lawrence-Wilk es, Ashmore 2014]).

A few more approaches to learning in teaching excellence programs, in addition to those mentioned above, turned out to be very important and broadly debated. Transformative learning, for example, "appears to be a powerful resource for solving the issue of changing the existing teaching approaches. This is a complex introspective approach to teaching and learning that leads to changes in professional identity" [Newman 2012:38]. In self-directed learning, teachers are positioned as key decision makers about what matters for their own professional learning and as "active learners experiencing a process of personal learning rather than simply attending a mandated program" [Smith, Loughran 2017:5]. The inquiry-oriented approach to teaching and learning stresses the existing capabilities of teachers; for instance, project-based learning requires a deeper knowledge of subject matter and changes in assessment and classroom management strategies [Fishman et al. 2003].

Many authors make a strong case for a shift in students' views about the role of the instructor—moving from an authority which dispenses truths on the topic, to an authority as a resource with specific expertise to share. Likewise, students move to view their own role as a passive receptor of facts to being actively engaged in de-

fining arguments and creating new knowledge [Kanuka 2010; Stes, Coertjens, Petegem 2010]. This viewpoint draws from the model of Marcia B. Baxter Magolda's model for epistemological reflection that has four stages: absolute knowing, transitional knowing, independent knowing and contextual knowing [Kanuka 2010]. Learning methods are determined by the instructional approach. With teacher-centered approaches, learning is restricted to memorizing facts, whereas student-centered approaches orient students towards deeper learning and yield better student performance. Teaching excellence programs designed within the framework of reflection-in-action [Lawrence-Wilkes, Ashmore 2014] provide teachers with tools that actually allow them to improve students' learning outcomes. Monologic teaching sparks little enthusiasm in teachers as well as students [Willcoxson 1998]. Therefore, modern teaching practices are expected to shift the focus from teacher to student [Trigwell, Prosser, Waterhouse 1999].

To summarize, major approaches to promoting teaching excellence and academic leadership include the concept of reflective practice, andragogical theory, transformative learning approach, self-directed learning, inquiry-based learning, and refocusing from teacher to student. All of them are designed to develop appropriate conceptions of teaching and learning in instructors [Trigwell, Prosser, Waterhouse 1999], develop their ability to reflect and be self-improving, increase their self-confidence [Gibbs, Coffey 2004], and, most importantly, bring about qualitative change in education.

3.3. How exactly? Specific features of program design
3.3.1. Selection criteria, frequency, and duration of programs

If a teaching excellence and academic leadership program is not mandatory for attendance by specific groups of faculty members, a participant selection procedure must be developed. As a rule, instructors are recommended for participation by their immediate supervisors [Grunefeld et al. 2015]; in other cases, applicants may be asked to submit their CVs [Grunefeld et al. 2015; Robins, Ambrozy, Pinsky 2006], participate in an interview [Grunefeld et al. 2015], provide written responses to a set of questions about their previous and current teaching experience and academic goals [Robins, Ambrozy, Pinsky 2006], present their statement of teaching philosophy [Schönwetter et al. 2002], or submit a proposal for a scholarly project [Robins, Ambrozy, Pinsky 2006]. Programs may be administered on a regular basis [Keesen et al. 1996] or be targeted to specific groups [Eley 2006]. In order to achieve long-term effects, actually change teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning and approaches to teaching, and "create a sustainable, efficient innovative learning environment", programs must last for quite an extended period of time [Willcoxson 1998:67]. A lot of researchers suggest engaging faculty members in teaching excellence programs, while others consider it a more efficient strategy to focus on leadership immersion, so that leaders would then steward quality improvement in their teams [Phillips et al. 2018].

3.3.2. The fundamental principles of implementation

Analysis of the teaching excellence and academic programs administered by universities in different countries (USA, Germany, Great Britain, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Australia), as reflected in the literature analyzed, allows identifying the following design and implementation requirements contributing to the successful achievement of teaching excellence and the development of leadership skills:

(1) Participant recruitment must be based on reliable information about teachers' views and goals [Frost, Teodorescu 2001];
(2) Participants have an opportunity to influence the program content [Grunefeld et al. 2015] and plan [Robins, Ambrozy, Pinsky 2006] in accordance with their own interests and professional duties;
(3) Programs must combine theory of teaching with direct practice [Grunefeld et al. 2015; Stes, Coertjens, Petegem 2010];
(4) Programs must ensure an environment conducive to intensive interaction among participants, experts, and mentors [Grunefeld et al. 2015; Stes, Coertjens, Petegem 2010; 2013], collegiality and faculty collaboration being seen as powerful tools in crafting instructional improvement [Frost, Teodorescu 2001];
(5) Programs must allow the participation of faculty, leaders, and faculty developers in building a collaborative vision of the intentional academic culture and create a shared responsibility for the outcomes [Phillips et al. 2018];
(6) Programs must be long enough to initiate perceptible change in education [Grunefeld et al. 2015], while maintaining a good balance between program duration and rational spending.

3.3.3. Possible formats of implementation

The following formats are used most often by universities across the countries to administer teaching excellence and academic leadership programs:

- Intensive themed sessions conducted, whenever possible, off campus [Grunefeld et al. 2015], e.g. faculty development workshops series [Robins, Ambrozy, Pinsky 2006];
- Invited speakers and expert lectures [Grunefeld et al. 2015; Robins, Ambrozy, Pinsky 2006];
- Role-playing scenarios in which participants develop expertise in guiding faculty as leaders [Phillips et al. 2018];
- Small-group tasks and discussion [Grunefeld et al. 2015; Stes, Coertjens, Petegem 2013] using video or micro-teaching fragments, case studies [Stes, Coertjens, Petegem 2013], practice and critical incident analysis and searching for solutions [Grunefeld et al. 2015];
- Reciprocal attendance of lectures, peer observation and feedback [Henard, Leprince-Ringuet 2008; Robins, Ambrozy, Pinsky 2006; Stes, Coertjens, Petegem 2010; 2013];

• Reflection on one's professional goals and aspirations [Robins, Ambrozy, Pinsky 2006], implementation of theory-to-practice projects [Grunefeld et al. 2015], e.g. development of a new educational program, exploration of writings pertinent to education, or experimenting with new teaching methods [Robins, Ambrozy, Pinsky 2006];

• Construction of a teaching portfolio [Robins, Ambrozy, Pinsky 2006; Schönwetter et al. 2002], in which the instructor reflects on their teaching philosophy and how it will transform after completing the program [Grunefeld et al. 2015]. Teaching philosophy consists of the following components: (i) definition of teaching; (ii) definition of learning; (iii) view of the learner; (iv) goals and expectations of the student–teacher relationship; (v) discussion of teaching methods; and (vi) discussion of evaluation [Schönwetter et al. 2002]. A teaching philosophy statement is a critical rationale based around a distinctive set of aims, values, beliefs and convictions that provide an organizing vision of the teacher's thoughts on teaching and learning [Ibid.];

• International scholarships [Grunefeld et al. 2015], intensive exchange of experience with colleagues [Robins, Ambrozy, Pinsky 2006];

• Leadership immersion [Phillips et al. 2018].

3.3.4. Performance assessment

In order to receive a certificate or otherwise verify the successful completion of a teaching excellence and academic leadership program, those taking part are required to meet certain criteria: participation and active engagement in the program sessions; a qualitative elaboration of the assignments at the end of each module [Stes, Coertjens, Petegem 2010; 2013]; development of a teaching portfolio [Keesen et al. 1996]; and final test scores [Stes, Coertjens, Petegem 2013]. Performance of program participants can be assessed by experts, peers [Robins, Ambrozy, Pinsky 2006], and tutors [Keesen et al. 1996; Stes et al. 2013]. Besides, self-report data is also used [Robins, Ambrozy, Pinsky 2006]. Participants can be asked to develop and present an instructional project [Grunefeld et al. 2015], create or improve an existing course or educational program [Stes, Coertjens, Petegem 2010; 2013], etc. In case expertise is limited and casts doubt on the reliability of teaching quality assessments, it is recommended to develop a group of academic staff who are trained in the areas of teaching and the evaluation of teaching. "Together with similarly trained external peers, as well as both external and internal peers who are subject specialists, these can then form the teams who will judge the quality of teaching" [Elton 1998:9].

3.3.5. Program evaluation

Evaluation of effectiveness is intrinsic to any training program, but many authors claim that evaluations of instructional development initiatives have been generally limited to measures of participants' satis-

faction while little is known about the impact on daily teaching practice [Stes, Coertjens, Petegem 2010; 2013]. Nevertheless, a few objective assessment methods can be singled out based on literature analysis. Evaluation may be targeted at the program itself or the participants; it may be carried out by experts, peers, or students [Willcoxson 1998]. The criteria include the quantity and quality of projects implemented by the participants after the completion of the program [Grunefeld et al. 2015]; personal achievements, such as a developed vision of oneself as a teacher and one's professional transformation [Grunefeld et al. 2015]; career advancement, including promotions [Robins, Ambrozy, Pinsky 2006], and awards for quality teaching [Ibid.]; network effects, such as collaboration among graduates beyond graduation [Ibid.]; and other possible effects of programs, including negative ones [Grunefeld et al. 2015].

When evaluating program effectiveness, it is necessary to bear in mind that participants' stated intentions to engage in educational initiatives do not often actually translate into implementable teaching strategies [Trigwell, Prosser 1996]. Personal teaching philosophies stated by lecturers often have little in common with their educational practice [Murray, MacDonald 1997]. A number of researchers believe the grades of students taught by graduates of teaching excellence and academic leadership programs to be a good measure of actual program effectiveness, lamenting the fact that this measurement tool has been widely neglected [Gosling, Turner 2015; Grunefeld et al. 2015; Robins, Ambrozy, Pinsky 2006]. Opinions of students may differ a lot from those of teachers [Ramsden 1991]. Students' perceptions of changes in teaching after the completion of a teaching excellence program by their lecturer are affected by a number of factors, including how much time has passed since the program was completed [Ibid.]. "Choosing reliable and quantifiable indicators to assess the quality of one's teaching and the efficiency of teaching initiatives remains challenging" [Henard, Leprince-Ringuet 2008:2], and a lot of studies discuss appropriate approaches to such evaluation [Diaz-Mendez, Gummesson 2012].

3.4. Potential obstacles

Initiatives to improve teaching and learning, be it specialized centers or dedicated programs, are always contested—their implementation is inevitably fraught with contradictions, tensions and conflicts [Gosling, Turner 2015]. Contestation may come from academic leaders (deans, department heads) opposing to new approaches in education; senior university managers unwilling to lose control over the instructional processes; program directors irritated about the need to coordinate every single step and the lack of freedom in project implementation; senior academic staff having little sympathy with the innovations because they are not part of the traditional culture of the institution; or stem from the lack of institutional support for the initiatives [Ibid.]. Conflicting conceptions of the nature and role of disciplines,

curriculum requirements, processes of knowledge creation and updating, and teaching quality criteria may coexist in an institution's academic culture [Ibid.]. Perception of teaching excellence initiatives can also be affected by internal issues, such as allocation of time, money, and other resources [Brockerhoff, Stensaker, Huisman 2014], or difficulty supporting a viable network of graduates without sufficient funding [Grunefeld et al. 2015]. It is not always easy to get people to understand the aims and agenda of the program and to make them collaborate [Gosling, Turner 2015]. A number of authors question the long-term impact of teaching excellence and academic leadership programs on teachers' conceptions of learning and teaching, wondering whether such programs actually result in educational change [Stes, Coertjens, Petegem 2010].

3.5. Role of institutional environment

Not only pedagogical but also institutional and administrative investments are required to provide for a qualitative change in teaching and learning [Oliveira, Vasconcellos 2011]. The role of institutional environment, which may promote or inhibit effectiveness of teaching excellence programs, sustain their outcomes or prevent their use, is discussed in many of the publications analyzed. Universities undertake various actions to provide institutional support for the effects of teaching excellence and academic leadership programs. For instance, conferences were organized and a magazine for staff and students about university teaching was started by Utrecht University as part of its teaching improvement initiatives. Development of teaching competence can be integrated into the system of promotion criteria and the career structure of staff positions [Keesen et al. 1996]. Overall, such programs should influence the university's human resource policy [Ibid.]. Researchers note that to be effective, teaching centers must be able to operationalize policy, recognize the different stakeholders, understand the need to work with the "all-powerful middle level" (department heads/chairs and deans), create a presence and links within the schools/faculties, ensure there is high-level support and involvement, understand adequately the limits of their power, understand the impact and work within the inter-relatedness of other university policy areas, and work toward making institutional changes, if necessary [Kanuka 2010]. Therefore, concerted micro-politics should be complemented with institutional change [Gosling, Turner 2015].

4. Conclusion

The review of literature performed in this study allows making the following inference: to be successful, a teaching excellence and academic leadership program in higher education should meet the stakeholders' aims and expectations at the three levels of individual, institution, and government, the balance of those levels being subject to case-specific variations. Instructional approaches used in programs must reflect the educational change expected to be achieved after

the program completion. As a rule, a shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered learning and a more elaborate choice of instructional approaches are generally expected. The most popular approaches, according to the review findings, include andragogical theory, action-reflection learning, problem-based learning, practice-oriented approach, transformative learning approach, self-directed learning, and inquiry-based learning. Those are the ideas that most often underlie the teaching excellence and academic leadership programs, providing access to expert knowledge and building the foundation for expansion of professional communication, critical analysis of personal experience, real-life problem solving, and support for educational change initiatives. In order to result in actual educational change, a teaching excellence program must be long enough: in a number of cases, programs last for an academic year or longer. Institutional environment has proved to be a significant factor of program effectiveness. Areas of potential contestation must be explored in the first place. In particular, the dominant academic culture, popular conceptions of teaching and learning, the established power structure, and financial health of the institution should be analyzed as factors that may promote or inhibit program effectiveness. Sustainability of program effects depends on how well the program has been integrated into the systems of career promotion, quality provision in education, teaching effectiveness assessment, and human resource policy.

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