

Cross-Cultural Training and Consultancy in Higher Education

Petra Pistor & Vanessa Müller

This is an adapted version of the article "On Training a Consultancy for Higher Education and Quality Management in the International Higher Education Area" originally published in Application-Oriented Higher Education Research (ISSN 2096-2045) in Chinese language.

Authors

Petra Pistor (1978), research associate at Wandelwerk, the Centre for Quality Development at Münster University of Applied Science. Here, amongst other things, she works as programme manager of the Wandelwerk's international training and consultancy programme. Apart from that, she works as a consultant in the Higher Education Area both nationally and internationally. Contact: petra.pistor@fh-muenster.de

Vanessa Müller (1992), research associate at Wandelwerk. In addition to activities in process and quality management, she coordinates the Wandelwerk's German-language continuing education programme and works as a trainer. Contact: vanessa-mueller@fh-muenster.de

Abstract

Higher Education Institutions are facing more and more external rules and requirements, most of which are concerning structures and processes of Higher Education Management or Quality Management. With this, new demands for professional development and consulting of higher education managers all over the world come into being. The article on hand provides definitions of different formats for professional development and consulting services and deals with the special demands of international cooperation in this field. As an example, the Higher Education Management Programme of Münster University of Applied Sciences (FH Münster) in Germany will be introduced, which respects the specialties of international and intercultural cooperation in the area of professional development and consulting.

1. Introduction: Higher Education Consultancy as a New Field of Activity

Driven by globalisation and increasing student numbers, universities find themselves in a global competition with each other. They are competing for students, ranks in various international university rankings and for additional funds beyond state financing. This puts new demands on governance structures and quality management. Universities worldwide are therefore investing much energy in setting up internal quality management systems, in giving account to society and in increasing their marketing activities (Wang, 2014, p. 254).

The aforementioned developments in the Higher Education Area are reflected in corresponding policy documents, frameworks and laws that include more and more specific requirements. For example, the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) in their new version of 2015 have not changed in principle compared to the version of 2005, but are now more concretely formulated. Another example is that a new requirement states that universities should publish a strategy for quality management in teaching and learning (Standard 1) (ESG, 2015). We can say that the ESG do already have a longer tradition in the Bologna region - along with other Higher Education Areas. In other parts of the world, however, standards and guidelines for quality management have only recently been developed, e.g. ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (AQAN, 2016) or African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (HAQAA Initiative, 2017).

Along with these changing demands for Higher Education Institutions, also the requirements for science managers at all levels of the hierarchy change. They are in charge of implementing the new requirements at their institutions. This is particularly true for employees in the so-called *Third Space*, the area of higher education that lies between academia and administration and within which a high level of responsibility for implementation at the operational level accumulates (Whitchurch, 2015).

In addition to their professional expertise and knowledge of internal and external requirements, these *Third Space*-employees must have skills in the areas of strategy development and project and process management as well as the ability to accompany change processes in organisations. As a result, an international market of support services for Higher Education Institutions has developed. In this market, development institutes (e.g. UNESCO/IIEP), university associations (e.g. EUA Consult, the consulting branch of the European University Association) and private institutes of (former) university staff and managers offer their products. Even the traditional management consultancy has discovered higher education as a field of work (Niedereichholz & Pintschovius, 2007). From the perspective of FH Münster, training and consultancy becomes particularly valuable when the team of trainers can draw not only on their own consulting experience, but also on many years of university practice and can therefore offer tailor-made concepts.

FH Münster, a research-oriented German University of Applied Sciences with more than 15.000 students, started to establish its internal quality management system more than 10 years ago and was the first German University of Applied Sciences to receive the Accreditation Council's quality seal for its internal quality management system. Since 2008, universities in Germany have been free to have their internal quality management system accredited instead of the accreditation of each study programme by an external agency, which was obligatory in the past. A successful, so-called *system accreditation* certifies that the university itself is capable of ensuring the good quality of its study programmes. In 2017, the accreditation decision for FH Münster was confirmed for another eight years (Boentert & von Lojewski, 2018). Since 2010, the Wandelwerk, the Centre for Quality Development at FH Münster, has been sharing its expertise and experience in the areas of higher education and quality management within the framework of continuing education programmes in accordance with the motto "From universities for universities". Based on our experience in the national further education sector and responding to respective requests from abroad, Wandelwerk has been increasingly offering consulting and training for universities and university members internationally since 2016.

In the following, we will outline the theoretical background and the reflections on training and consultancy in an international field of work, that led to the current design of our international offers. We will first present and discuss concepts of and reflections on different formats of training and consultancy in the Third Space (chapter 2). Then we would like to reflect on the special features that constitute training and consultancy in the context of international cooperation (Chapter 3). Finally, the background, topics and formats of the Higher Education Management Programme by Wandelwerk will be presented (chapter 4).

2. Training and Consultancy in the „Third Space“

The *Third Space* in universities is a science-related and at the same time service-oriented area in Higher Education Institutions, which lies between academia and administration (Balden, 2013, p. 27). Employees in the *Third Space* have to balance innovation management and regular operations (Zellweger, Moser & Bachmann 2010, p. 2). They are confronted with individual and specific challenges on the one hand and are in the position to implement everyday work processes on the other hand. For example, they work in quality, innovation, education and research management (Zellweger, Moser & Bachmann 2010, p. 1). We often find career changers (Balden, 2013, p. 34) amongst employees in the *Third Space*, who

according to Whitchurch (2006, pp. 7-8) have an academic qualification and a research background or experience in university teaching. Because of the special field of activity outlined above and the fact that staff in the *Third Space* are often lateral entrants, there is a high need for different formats of further qualification in this area.

In the literature, there is a large number of attempts to define the formats of continuing education, consulting and coaching. We define these formats as follows:

Continuing education: "Continuing education is the continuation or resumption of organised learning after completion of an initial phase of education of varying scope and usually after taking up gainful employment or family activities". (Secretariat of the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, 2001, 4, translation by authors). Dehnbostel (2008, p. 14) supplements this definition by emphasising that outside organised arrangements, further education would take place through informal learning and experiential learning. In this article, we define continuing education as an organised offer concentrated on the transfer of expert knowledge. This includes the exchange of experiences and good practice amongst participants themselves.

Consulting: According to Patzwald and Buchholz (2006, p. 460), consulting is the development and evaluation of options, in which clients are supported by a consultant. In the end, consulting is intended to improve the customers' ability to solve problems. To achieve this, consultants have a special task: they should be able to draw on many years of experience in the respective consulting field, know trends and identify typical errors and obstacles (Weingart & Lentsch, 2008, p. 23). For the purpose of this article, we understand consulting as expert advice and process consulting that takes place at organisations in higher education.

Coaching: Coaching focusses on the individual in a special way. More than consulting, coaching - including professional coaching - focuses on factors that lie in the person of the coachee and that have an influence on their professional activity (e.g. stress, role expectations, communication methods, etc.) (Rauen, 2014). With Rauen, we understand coaching as a special form of consulting that supports an individual in working on a question or a challenge independently, taking into account personal circumstances.

Employees in the *Third Space* have, as explained at the beginning of the chapter, a very heterogeneous level of knowledge. Heterogeneity of the addressees is anything but unusual in further education. However, in the context of tight time resources, high expectations and especially when it comes to cross-cultural training or consultation, heterogeneity is indeed a special framework condition that requires a variety of formats with special concepts.

It can be stated that the boundaries between the different formats of professional development in the *Third Space* are blurring and require a combination of knowledge transfer, exchange and joint development of solutions, i.e. a mixture of further education, coaching and consulting.

3. Special Features of International Training and Consultancy Activities

Training and counselling services for staff of foreign institutions in the tertiary education sector are an extremely interesting but also demanding field of work. It is demanding because - in contrast to formats offered to a German audience - the working environment is characterised by a different educational system and usually a very different culture. Organisations, their staff and internal practices are influenced by structures, cultural values, language and traditions (Barmeyer et al., 2015).

Frank Bannys (2012) condenses the nine so-called cultural dimensions of the GLOBE study into two overarching socio-cultural continua, which have an influence on how organizations operate within the respective society: "goal orientation" and "relationships". The continuum in the area of "goal orientation" ranges from *long-term orientation towards performance and rules*

with orientation towards the general good to short-term optimisation, rule interpretation and orientation towards particular interests. Bannys defines the two extreme poles of the continuum "relationships" as *group orientation, hierarchy and sensitivity* on the one hand and *individuality, equality and directness* on the other hand (p. 129). Within these continuums (country) societies can be located. The GLOBE study and Bannys' condensation provide a helpful overview of the cultural constitution of countries or regions and thus of the organisations located in these countries. This can help to plan training and consultancy services in a culturally sensitive manner on the basis of initial basic assumptions.

In addition to taking into account the characteristics of goal orientation and relationships, the following aspects should be considered in intercultural cooperation, according to further current research in the field:

- **Management Styles:** Is the design of work tasks and work processes more participative or directive? (Barmeyer et al., 2015, p. 75)
- **Communication Styles:** Does communication take place directly and the meaning of a statement can be interpreted from the spoken word alone, or is communication more indirect and for the interpretation of the statement, social status and degree of familiarity of the interlocutors, degree of publicity of the discussion situation, etc. must be taken into account? (Thomas, 2014, p. 179)
- **Negotiation Styles:** Are negotiations more likely to produce "win-win" results, or are they the result of "haggling". (Barmeyer et al., 2015, p. 77)
- **Decision-Making Processes:** Are decisions more likely to be directive or consensual, top-down or bottom-up, more likely to be rationally justifiable or to be the result of consideration and negotiation processes? (ibid.)
- **Conflict Strategies:** Do differences of opinion tend to be dealt with in a more indirect, avoiding way or are they approached in a confrontational way? (Bannys, 2012, p. 278)
- **Work Ethics:** Does working life have a higher, equal or lower priority than other areas of life such as family and leisure? (Bannys, 2012, p. 72)
- **Time Concepts:** Is time regarded as a limited and monetary good or is it perceived as available indefinitely? (Bannys, 2012, p. 88)

Furthermore, our experience in intercultural cooperation, e.g. in a number of cooperation projects in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa and the ASEAN region, suggests that further aspects should be taken into account in the framework of intercultural training and consultation activities, in order to increase the chances of success of these activities:

- **Definition of Success:** Is it rather the success in the matter (e.g. the achievement of a project goal) or the success in building relationships (e.g. the harmonious cooperation in a project team) that counts?
- **Self-Efficacy Expectations:** Do the employees of lower hierarchical levels assume that they themselves can make a difference in their organization, or do they perceive themselves primarily as executors of the orders of others?
- **Language Competence:** Are the interlocutors sufficiently linguistically competent to be able to present even complex issues clearly? Is a translation necessary, or would too much time and information be lost?

These factors have an influence on how training and consultancy should be designed in terms of time and task planning, especially in an international and intercultural work context. Taking these factors into account also gives an indication of the weight that should be given to dealing with communication styles and role expectations within a professional development programme. Finally, the factors listed may indicate which objectives can realistically be pursued within the given framework.

In international consulting and training work, the joint design of the programme - in the scope of action outlined above, from further training to consulting to coaching - together with the clients or a detailed clarification of concerns therefore plays a special role.

4. The Higher Education Management Programme by Wandelwerk

Under the umbrella of the Higher Education Management Programme (HEM Programme) FH Münster bundles its international further education and consulting activities in the areas of higher education transfer and higher education and quality management. In the following, those activities in the area of higher education and quality management (HEM Programme by Wandelwerk) will be presented. The considerations made in the two preceding chapters form the basis for the conception of this programme.

4.1. Our Principles

For many years, the trainers, who have been meeting since 2017 as part of the HEM Programme by Wandelwerk, have been offering training courses and consulting services. We act according to eight guiding principles, which we want to see considered in all our offers.

- **Trust takes time:** Consulting sometimes intervenes deeply in the cultural practices of an organisation. This is only possible if there is a relationship of trust between consultants and clients. Building trust, in turn, requires investment in time and therefore money. Since we are convinced that these investments will pay off in the long run, our consulting formats in particular contain sufficient room for confidence building through personal meetings and joint clarification of concerns.
- **Cross-hierarchical trainer team:** The composition of the HEM programme trainer team, which is characterised by members of different status groups and hierarchical levels of FH Münster, is a central prerequisite for being able to work on the topics relevant to a particular hierarchical level and, in some cases, also supports communication "at eye level".
- **Based on everyday work experience:** All trainers are active in the field in which they themselves offer consulting and training. This is necessary in order to keep up to date in a rapidly changing environment and to be able to make appropriate offers to members of other institutions from the tertiary education sector.
- **Partnership approach:** We believe that dialogue at eye level and an open exchange about our own strengths and weaknesses make counselling and training successful. In this way, both sides - trainers and participants/consultants and clients - can learn from examples of good practice as well as from mistakes.
- **Ethnorelative mindset:** An ethnorelative mindset is a basic requirement for international cooperation. The models and instruments used in the context of organisational consultancy and training are selected in the light of the respective cultural environment. For the trainers team it is important to learn from colleagues who are more experienced in the respective context and to gain further intercultural learning experiences in contact with clients.
- **Strong international networks:** We are convinced that building and maintaining networks of colleagues greatly enriches our own work. We see this as necessary for us as a team of trainers and support the network building of our clients.
- **Flexible and tailor-made formats:** Even if a training course deals with the basics of a particular topic, we believe that there must be room for adaptation to the specific circumstances of a customer group in order to make it successful. When working in intercultural settings, this always includes taking the respective other cultural background into account (see above).
- **Documentation of achievements:** The prospect of a certificate after completion of a training measure can be motivating. We also believe that certificates as a means of documenting achievements can rightly support individuals in their professional advancement and give organisations a first impression of the qualifications of their (future) employees.

4.2. Our Topics and Formats

The offer under HEM Programme by Wandelwerk can be summarised in two format areas: Training, which is primarily dedicated to the qualification of individuals, and consulting formats, which are primarily aimed at organisations. Thematically, the HEM Programme by Wandelwerk can support individuals and organisations in a wide range of topics in higher education and quality management. Deriving from the expertise we find in our institution and trainers team, we support our clients in the following areas:

- quality management including strategic planning, process and document management as well as evaluation,
- curriculum development,
- Higher Education didactics,
- project management.

Topics	Formats			
	Format Cluster Training		Format Cluster Consultancy	
	Professional Certificate Courses (PCC)	Seasonal Schools	Consultancy Services	Institutional Development Programme (IDP)
Quality Management				
Strategic Planning				
Process and Document Management				
Evaluation				
Curriculum Development				
Higher Education Didactics				
Project Management				
	Addressees: Individuals		Addressees: Organisations	

Illustration 1: Topics and Formats of the HEM Programme by Wandelwerk

In order to meet the demands of our clients – Higher Education Institutions, accreditation agencies, *Third Space* staff etc. – and building on our reflections on the special circumstances for training and consultancy in an international Higher Education context, we offer our services in the following formats:

Professional Certificate Courses (PCC)

Professional Certificate Courses provide a qualification in the respective subject area and enable the participants to make informed decisions about changes in their own work context with reference to this subject area and to introduce new processes and tools at their own institutions. The exchange of professional experience among the participants also plays an important role in this process. PCCs can be assigned to us by an institution for its staff or by an association of different institutions. They usually take place at the customer's premises and include one or more workshops lasting up to 5 days. Upon completion, participants receive a certificate of participation documenting the topics covered. PCCs are a flexible format. Topics can be combined and - depending on the participants' initial situation - they are offered as a basic or advanced qualification.

Seasonal Schools

The Seasonal Schools are 1-week events that offer a basic qualification in the field of quality management and place a strong focus on the exchange of examples of good (and bad) practice in expert dialogue and on networking. The Seasonal Schools have a programme defined by us and incorporate current developments and trends.

Institutional Development Programme (IDP)

IDPs are a combination of training elements and consultancy services aimed at universities (or other institutions of tertiary education) and their members from different organisational areas and hierarchical levels. Within the framework of IDPs, the focus is usually on an overarching development project of the client (e.g. to introduce a comprehensive QM system, to establish process management or to prepare for accreditation or certification). For this purpose, sub-projects are defined at the beginning of the programme and implemented over the approx. 1.5-year duration of the project by the designated persons in charge with the help of a personal project action plan (PAP). This approach ensures the transferability of what is dealt with in the workshops.

Consultancy Service

The trainer team of the HEM program by Wandelwerk is itself active in national and international networks and uses the information from these networks for the further development of its own activities. We pass on our experience in the context of method-based consulting, e.g. when it comes to setting up an internal quality management or other change projects. As expert consultants, consulting goes far beyond the mere transfer of knowledge. In order for a consultancy to be successful - especially in an international context - blank spots must first be identified with the customer in order to be able to develop solutions that the customer can ultimately implement.

5. Final Thoughts

Training and consulting for university employees working in the *Third Space* are increasingly demanded nationally and internationally against the background of ever new and complex requirements. However, they are also challenging and can even remain ineffective if, for example, the culturally different framework conditions are not taken into account.

For the future, we anticipate a growing demand for increasingly flexible training and consulting formats worldwide, in which the establishment of collegial networks at local, regional and international level will also play a greater role. Within the framework of the HEM Programme by Wandelwerk, it is conceivable for us to support the development of such networks and to intensify cooperation with local colleagues in order to be able to better take into account the respective intercultural context.

In the context of international cooperation, we consider it particularly enriching to be able to rethink our own convictions and activities in a different context or to repeatedly check their transferability. On the one hand, this provides impulses for the further development of the programs and on the other hand, it gives us new ideas for our own work processes at home.

6. References

ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN) (2016): ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework. SHARE EU ASEAN. <https://www.share-asean.eu/sites/default/files/AQAF.pdf> (22.7.2019)

Bannys, F. (2012): Interkulturelles Management. Konzepte und Werkzeuge für die Praxis. Weinheim: Wiley-VCH, p. 278.

Barmeyer, C./Ghidelli, E./Haupt, U./Piber, H. (2015): Organisationsentwicklung im Interkulturellen Raum. Ein Orientierungsmodell für Organisationsberater. In: OrganisationsEntwicklung, 4, pp. 75-76.

Boentert, A./von Lojewski, U. (2018): Starke Entwicklungsimpulse für die eigene Hochschule. Das "Münsteraner Modell" der Systemreakkreditierung. DUZ Verlags- und Medienhaus GmbH.

<https://kiosk.duz.de/nl/profiles/6ab48de23d75/editions/405030a5316b690fc947/pages/7282672/widgets/90378377> (18.7.2019)

Dehnbostel, P. (2008): Berufliche Weiterbildung. Grundlagen aus arbeitnehmerorientierter Sicht. Berlin: edition sigma.

HAQAA Initiative (2017): African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ASG-QA). HAQAA Initiative. <http://diposit.ub.edu/dspace/handle/2445/126939> (22.7.2019)

Niedereichholz, J./Pintschovius, L. (2007): Hochschulberatung – ein zukunftssträchtiger Beratungsmarkt für Unternehmensberater. In: Zeitschrift für Unternehmensberatung (2), pp. 11-14.

Patzwald, K./Buchholz, K. (2006): Politikberatung in der Forschungs- und Technologiepolitik. In: Falk, S./Rehfeld, D./Römmele, A./Thunert, M. (Hg.) (2006): Handbuch Politikberatung. Wiesbaden, VS Verlag, pp. 460-471.

Rauen, C. (2014): Coaching. Göttingen: Hogrefe.

Sekretariat der Ständigen Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (KMK) (2001): Vierte Empfehlung der Kultusministerkonferenz zur Weiterbildung.

https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2001/2001_02_01-4-Empfehlung-Weiterbildung.pdf (18.7.2019)

Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) (2015): https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf (24. 7.2019)

Thomas, A. (2014): Wie Fremdes vertraut werden kann. Mit internationalen Geschäftspartnern zusammenarbeiten. Wiesbaden: Gabler Verlag.

Wang, Li. (2014): Quality assurance in higher education in China: Control, accountability and freedom. In: Policy and Society, 33 (3), pp. 253-262.

Whitchurch, C. (2006): Who do they think they are? The changing identities of professional administrators and managers in UK higher education. In: Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 28 (2), pp. 159-171.

Whitchurch, C. (2015): The Rise of third Space Professionals: Paradoxes and Dilemmas. In: Teichler, U./Cummings, W. C. (eds.) (2015): Recruiting and Managing the Academic Profession, pp. 79-99. Dordrecht: Springer.

Weingart, P./Lentsch, J. (2008): Wissen – Beraten – Entscheiden. Formen und Funktionen wissenschaftlicher Politikberatung in Deutschland. Weilerswist, Velbrück Wissenschaft Verlag.

Zellweger Moser, F./Bachmann, G. (2010): Zwischen Administration und Akademie – neue Rollen in der Hochschullehre. In: Zeitschrift für Hochschulentwicklung, (4), pp. 1-8.