

2019/2020 Network report for Danish Network for Educational Development in Higher Education, DUN

Annual conference

The 2020 conference of DUN was held online on May 14-15. It had 229 participants with 12 webinars and 18 presentations of research and development activities. The conference theme was “Teachers in focus”. It was inspired by on the one hand the observation that focus on, for instance, educational technologies and student-centred learning the university teacher has received less attention. On the other hand, quality assurance systems and political initiatives is concerned with the quality of teaching and the teachers’ competences.

Due to the Covid-19 situation, the conference was changed to an online event offering webinars and access to 8-10 minutes video recordings of paper presentation. Except for a welcome address by DUN’s chairman, plenary sessions were cancelled. Eventually the number of participants attending the webinars exceeded previous years’ number of attendants.

The general assembly of DUN was held online on the second day of the conference.

SIGs

The special-interest groups (SIGs) form the spine of DUN’s activities during the year. There are at present 13 active SIGs that meet typically 2-4 times a year to discuss and exchange experiences and knowledge related to the theme of the SIG. The members come from the various member organizations. There are SIGs focusing on, inter alia, doctoral supervision, use of digital learning technologies, exams and assessment. In the recent year, new SIGs have been established addressing themes like higher education policy and practice, laboratory and field work. This indicates the increasing level of activity among members of DUN.

The board decided to increase the budgets of the SIGs and allow them to pay invited speakers with the funding. This was done to support and increase SIG activities.

Meetings for the heads of the units and departments of educational development

DUN facilitates meetings between the heads of the units and departments engaged with educational development. The group met twice and will continue to meet every six months. The meeting planned for the spring 2020 was cancelled due to the Covid-19 lockdown.

The journal and the newsletter

DUN publishes a journal, Dansk Universitetspædagogisk Tidsskrift, DUT (The Danish Journal of Higher Education). This journal publishes two issues each year containing peer-reviewed research papers as well as non-peer reviewed papers, mainly in Danish.

The quality of the papers is high and there is a reasonable number of submissions.

Furthermore, a newsletter is sent via email to all members, every month. In addition to information concerning conferences, seminars, vacant positions, etc., each letter includes a short comment from a member of the board, addressing a topic that the board member finds relevant to reflect on.

Particular activities from June 2019 to June 2020

The results from a national survey of teaching quality and student engagement (Læringsbarometeret) was published in December 2019. The board of DUN are involved in the planning of a national conference discussing the strategic use of such surveys from the point of view of educational leaders at the HE

institutions. DUN will also be involved in local dissemination activities together with The Danish Evaluation Institute (EVA) and the Ministry of Higher Education and Science.

Subjects of discussion in the DUN board:

- National Teaching Award
- The national survey of teaching quality and student engagement (Læringsbarometeret)
- The revision of the job structure for academic staff at universities

The political landscape

- University pedagogy has a place in education policy
- Increased focus on teachers' teaching skills - not least job structure
- Focus on digitally supported learning environments, including with funding for development projects
- Focus on students' well-being and reduction of stress related to attending higher education in relation to the study environments

Hot topics

The focus on the introduction of digital learning resources in various forms and with various labels. How can this be achieved in a way that maintains the digital resources as means to an end rather than being the goals in themselves? The ministry funded a number of development projects across higher-education institutions aiming at improving HE teachers' digital teaching competences.

Another focus has been on well-being and stress levels of students at higher education. The ministry allocated 25 mio DKK for the institutions to launch initiatives to reduce students' study-related stress by looking into the study environment.

A revised job structure for academic staff at universities was introduced at the beginning of 2020. One of the changes was that all academic staff at universities involved in teaching activities have the right and the obligation to engage in continuous development of the teaching competences throughout their entire career.

Lars Ulriksen

Chairman of DUN, July 2, 2020