



Description of the higher education institutions – a survey

The Swedish Higher Education Authority conducted a survey asking higher education institutions to describe how they work with higher education development. Read more about how the survey was conducted in the section below headed “Information about the survey”. This is followed by our analysis based on six thematic areas and a summary of the views of the vice-chancellors on future challenges. At the end you will find a link to the entire survey, which you can download if you would like to read it in its entirety.

Information about the survey

The Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) conducted a survey of higher education institutions to gain a better understanding about their work on higher education development.

We asked the higher education institutions (HEIs) to:

Describe how the higher educational institution works with higher education development and attach the policies and governance documents that support this.

We sent this question to all public sector universities, university colleges and universities of the arts and to a selection of independent education providers. Of 43 HEIs, 40 responded. This represents a response rate of 93 per cent.

We have analysed the answers according to six thematic areas. They appear as headings in the list below. Under each heading there is a brief summary of the analysis and a link to the complete document. At the end, you will find a link to a PDF containing all six analyses along with a description of our approach.

We also asked the vice-chancellors of the HEIs what they regarded as the major future challenges in which higher education development can play a role. A summary of the vice-chancellors’ answers can be found under the heading “Future challenges”.

Systematic approach

A systematic approach is a challenge when educational development is meant to contribute to the HEI’s operations.

In their descriptions, slightly more than half of the 40 HEIs that responded make a connection between higher education development and the internal quality assurance system. However, it is not always clear how higher education development is involved or how the system ensures the in-service training of teachers. About 30 HEIs have governance documents that include higher education development, of which a handful have cited special governance documents on educational development. Almost half of the HEIs indicate they have joint goals for higher education development. A few HEIs describe an entire cycle consisting of goals, follow-up, analysis and new goals based on the analysis. More than a third of the HEIs demonstrate a systematic approach in which higher education development is part of an assignment or responsibility chain.

The most difficult questions in this area of analysis mainly concern how work with educational development can be made more systematic and further contribute to high quality in education.

Organisation

Many HEIs reorganise their higher education development

Relatively many HEIs state that their higher education development is mostly centralised. It is common to have a centrally located unit with one or more employees tasked with offering training in higher education development, consultation, support and conducting development projects. Several HEIs note that in recent years they have

changed the organisation and/or mission of their higher education development. Employees engaged higher education development are often educational developers and teaching staff, and associate professors are relatively common. Several HEIs report that in addition to staff resources, they use educational infrastructure in the form of classrooms and virtual learning environments for development projects. Difficult organisational issues include the contact among management, units working with education development and core activities as well as stability and continuity in the organisation.

Acquisition of teaching qualifications

The HEIs value the acquisition of teaching qualifications differently

Of the 40 responses received, about 20 HEIs answer that they have HEI-wide employment requirements for educational training for higher education teaching (or the equivalent). A majority write that they follow recommendations of the Association of Swedish Higher Education (SUHF) on qualifying training in higher education teaching, which includes at least 10 weeks of full-time study or 15 credits. About half of those with requirements for educational training in higher education allow the person employed to meet the requirement within one or two years. Some of the HEIs describe how they facilitate the in-service training of the person employed without fulfilling the eligibility requirement. About 15 HEIs describe a system for acquiring educational qualifications. Often this serves to reward talented teachers and encourage educational development. It usually involves a two-level model: university teacher with merit-based salary increment and what is known as the “excellent teacher” distinction. At a handful of HEIs, the distinction comes with a financial reward. Some HEIs describe how the teachers with merit-based salary increment are used in, or expected to contribute to, the HEI’s strategic work and activities at the HEI-wide level.

Points of difficulty in acquisition of educational qualifications include the status difference between education and research, time for educational in-service training, and assessment and recognition of educational qualifications.

New roles for students and teachers

Educational development in higher education means new roles for students and teachers

We have examined how the HEIs work with changed roles for students and teachers based on student-centred learning and the scholarship of teaching and learning approach. Our survey shows that most HEIs work with student-centred learning in some part of their educational development, usually in connection with quality assurance of programmes or as a strategic goal for the programme at the HEI. Our survey also shows that one-third of the HEIs actively promote the scholarship of teaching and learning approach and that this is done in three main ways: in overall higher education strategies, by supporting and promoting activities by a educational development unit, or as part of the system for acquiring educational qualifications. A difficult issue regarding new roles for teachers and students is the lack of resources in some quarters that prevents a transition from the theoretical to the practical.

Educational in-service training and collegially based learning

Wide range of educational in-service training and collegially based learning at the HEIs

We have investigated how the HEIs work with educational in-service training, collegially based learning and other activities promoting development. Our survey shows that almost all HEIs offer their teaching staff some form of joint in-service training in educational development, usually through courses, conferences and consultative support from the educational development unit. Relatively few HEIs offer central funding for educational development projects, and fewer still have procedures for disseminating the results of projects to the organisation. Few HEIs mention educational awards as part of educational development efforts. Many HEIs use different forms of collegially based learning and exchange of experience to develop teaching and learning. One problem for this area is the opportunities and incentives for teachers to take advantage of the wide range of activities for in-service training and learning.

Collaboration

Collaboration in many different areas

A total of 25 out of 40 HEIs have noted that they are in some way collaborating with other HEIs on educational development in higher education. Some of the collaborations are regional while others relate to a particular issue, such as digital learning, or are profession-specific. A few have specified how collaboration contributes to their

educational development or have discussed the added value of collaborating with others. The answers show that many of the HEIs are included in different types of networks that they believe work on educational development in higher education.

The most difficult issues are, above all, a great demand for national funding for collaboration within educational development in higher education aimed at finding solutions to societal challenges, develop education and exchange experiences. These examine whether collaboration among HEIs could facilitate development efforts in common areas (such as digitisation), make it more resource-efficient and contribute to a higher quality of education.

Coming challenges

What coming challenges do the HEIs envision?

When the HEIs listed their primary coming challenges, six distinct areas crystallised. The most prominent challenges among a majority of HEIs are digitisation and widening recruitment or widening participation. About half as many brought up lifelong learning. More than 10 HEIs identify sustainable development, the status difference between education and research and internationalisation as important coming challenges in which educational development can play a significant role.

In addition to these six challenges, a couple of prominent themes can be distinguished:

- High quality in education and educational development.
- The need for national initiatives to support educational development in higher education and research in the field.
- Read the complete document on future challenges