

# Supporting Educational Change through Change Teams

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## **Introduction:**

We present how a course for change teams has enhanced the scholarly element in their educational leadership in a structured way to support their efforts to effect real educational changes. We describe the staff course *Leading Educational Change – through SoTL* (formed by bioCEED and iEarth) with a focus on actual change teams rather than those in formal leadership positions, and how the course design increases the change teams' understanding of wide change in HE in a scholarly way and thus widens their repertoire of change approaches and strategies.

## **Background:**

Reinholz et al (2021) show that initiatives to accomplish substantial educational change rarely relate to explicit knowledge on how change is to be achieved. Kezar and Holcombe (2019) show that change initiatives often rely on tacit assumptions and ad hoc solutions as they encounter problems in the change process. In this interactive presentation we show how a course for change teams has enhanced the scholarly element in educational leadership. Our participating change teams included administrative, technical as well as academic staff – in other words cross-professional change *teams*. As stated in the literature, change teams often pursue their aspired change in an ad hoc way allowing tacit assumptions to guide decisions and various crises management. An important part of the effort described here is to encourage participants to share examples of difficulties encountered and to collaboratively and critically enquire into these instances. In this is it vital for the change teams to acknowledge all competences of the team and not revert back to traditional hierarchies. Furthermore, it is difficult to reach a state where the change teams appreciate the potential in the literature and thereby gain access to wider bodies of experiences. We argue that a SoTL approach is a favourable way to get change teams to integrate education literature into their tool boxes. In the long run this approach contributes to more systematic knowledge of change and thereby answers the call made by Reinholz et al (2021).

## **Take-home messages (intended learning outcomes) from this interactive presentation:**

- Focus on the change teams and not on the formal leaders.
- You need to use a combination of change theories, not only one.
- The SoTL approach is a great scaffolding tool for the change teams.

## **Key references:**

- Kezar, A., & Holcombe, E. (2019). Leveraging Multiple Theories of Change to Promote Reform: An Examination of the AAU STEM Initiative. *Educational Policy*.
- Reinholz, D., White, I., & Andrews, T. (2021). Change theory in STEM higher education: a systematic review. *International Journal of STEM Education*, 8(37), 1 - 22.