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Honours communities and school culture

*Do honours communities create a
culture of excellence?*

Outline of presentation

- Introduction (theory)
- Research questions
- Research methods
- Results
- What we can learn from it

What is culture?

- A pattern of beliefs and expectations shared by the organization's members. These beliefs and expectations produce norms that powerfully shape the behavior of individuals and groups. *Charles O'Reilly(1989)*
- Mental programming/mental software.
G. Hofstede e.a. (2011)
- Shared beliefs and values that closely knit a community together. *Deal and Kennedy in: Deal and Peterson (2009)*
- Culture can be very divers: subcultures/fragmented
Martin (2004)

Policy school culture

Practice school culture

Goals

Measures

Management

Teachers

Students

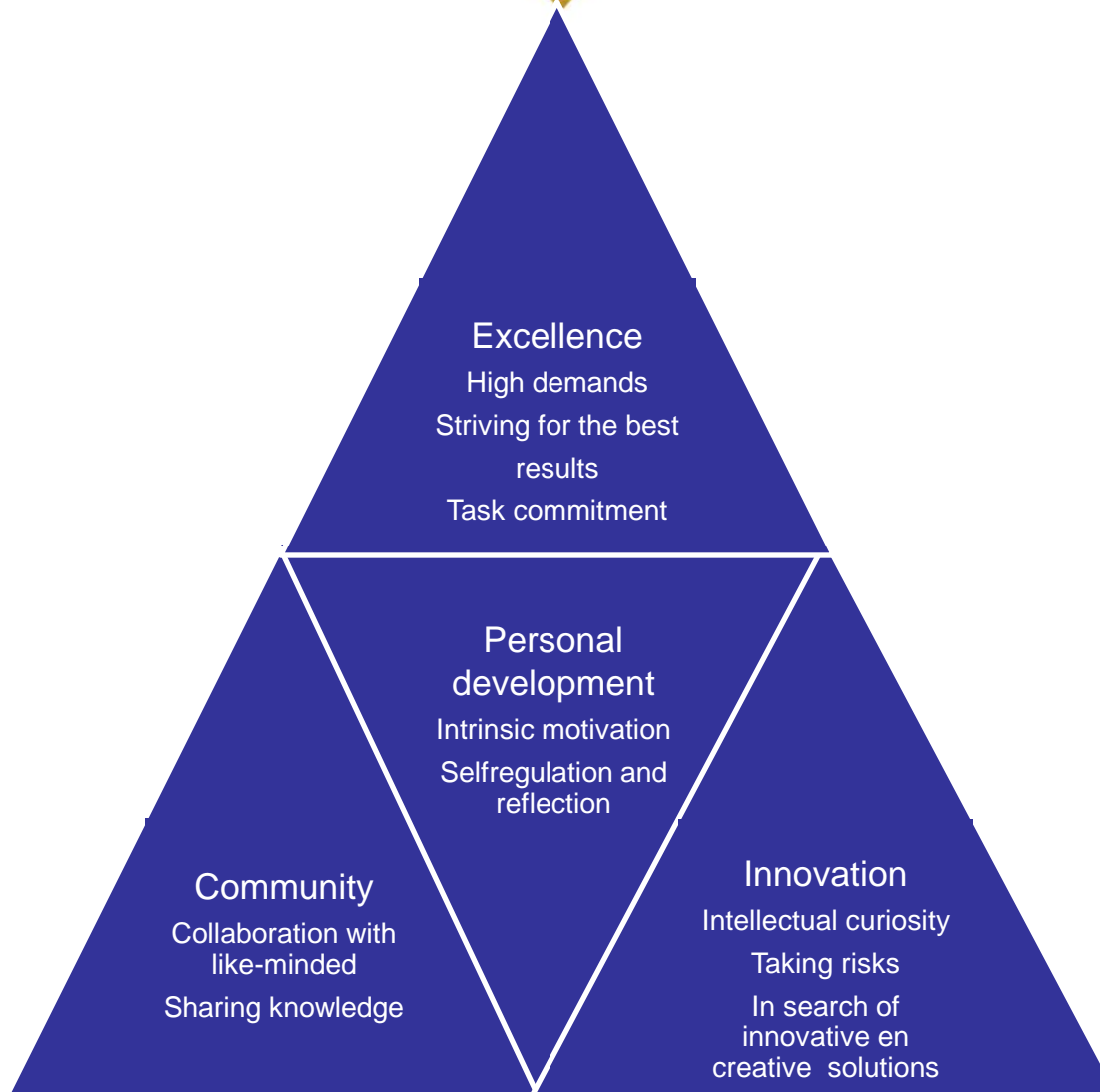
Others

'Regular'
students

Honours
Students

Features of honours communities

- Focus on excellence/ high expectations
- Want to be challenged
- Strong (intrinsic) motivation
- Pleasure in learning, task commitment
- Search for creative procedures and solutions, curious, exploring, asking questions
- Dare to take (intellectual) risks
- Supportive, stimulating community



Research questions

- Do honours students (honours communities) create their own culture?
- If so, what is the nature of that culture?
- Presupposition: a strong (excellence-oriented) subculture is a precondition for radiation effects on 'regular' culture. (Harris, 1998)

Research methods: interviews

- 5 group interviews with honours groups
 - Real Estate Management, Sports Studies, Life Science & Technology, Law Studies, Applied Psychology
 - Total: 18 students (*out of free will*)
- 10 interviews with honours teachers
(various schools) (*selected at random*)

Honours = three year, 30 credits on top of bachelor programme

5 Influence of/upon
the environment outside honours

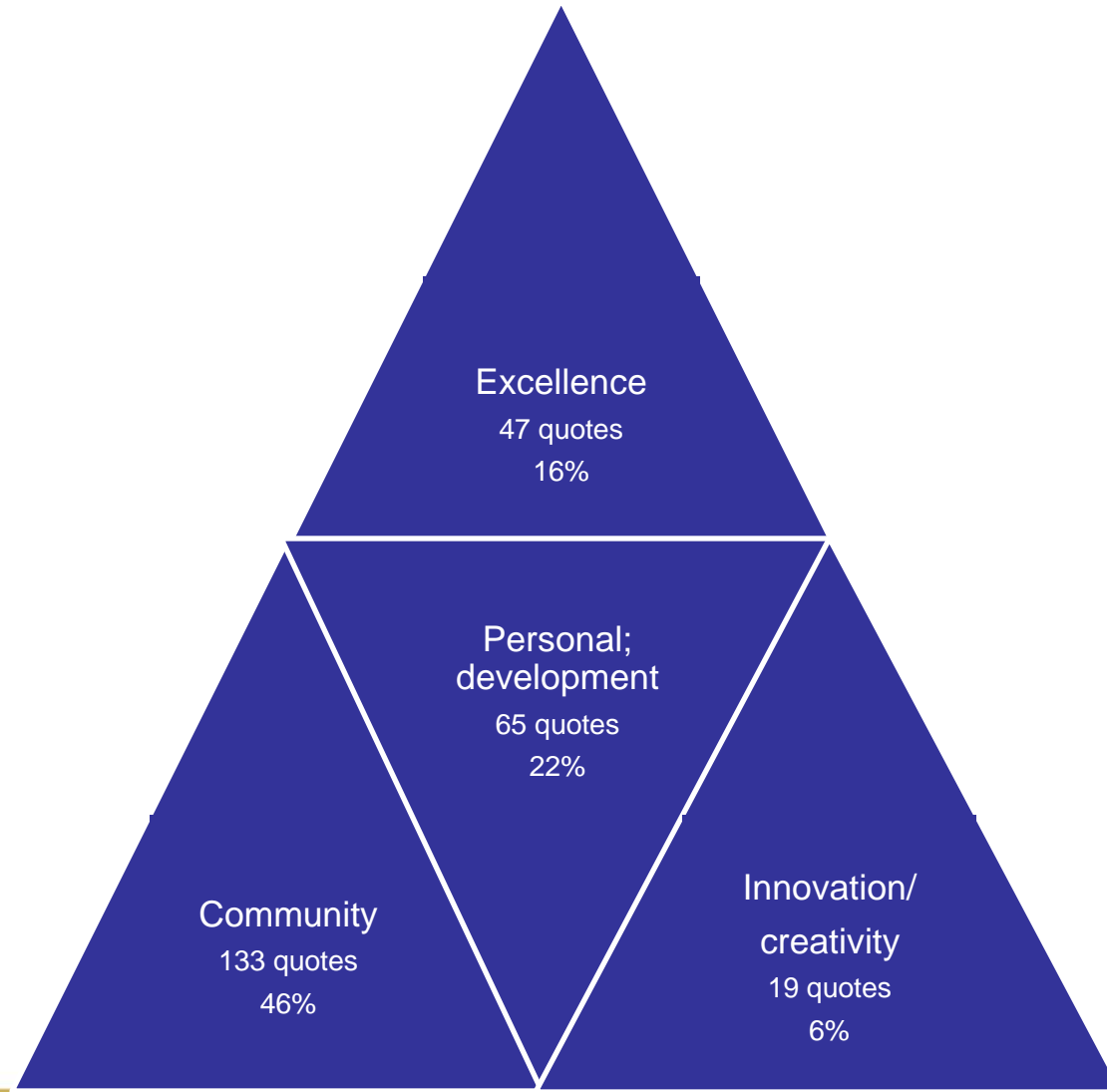
(teachers, peers, professional field, parents etc .)

4 Influence of/upon honours teacher

3 Our way of doing
(behavior, customs, agreements)

2 What we (as a group) think is important...

1 What I think is important ...



Other elements

- 28 quotes (10%)
- They concern:
 - Time management (combining honours & regular programme).
 - Feelings of uncertainty/ insecurity in honoursgroup.
 - Need for clear guidelines.
 - Participation in curriculum development, multidisciplinary collaboration, realistic projects.

Culture of honours students (1)

Important in relation to honours:

- **Honourscommunity**
 - Like minded/shared ambition
 - Support and stimulate each other; inspiring;
 - Important values: respect, engagement, reliability
 - Cooperation, good atmosphere
 - Sharing knowledge/direct contact with professional field
- **Freedom/space for personal and professional development**
 - On the basis of their own motivation/self regulated activities/ reflection/future oriented
 - They “want to” in stead of “must/should do”
 - They highly value possibilities/chances in the honoursprogramme

Culture of honours students (2)

- Excellence
 - Intrinsic: doing things well / high quality standards /professional
 - Extrinsic (be different , be better, make oneself noticed in professional field)
- Innovative/digging deeper
 - Thinking more profound, critical thinking, creativity, thinking out of the box, doing things their own way, explore, find other ways to do it
- Relationship with honours teacher on equal footing
 - Honours teacher less directive/ stimulating / thinking along with student / supporting on basis of student's core values/ intrinsic motivation

Teachers views

In line with student answers

- Development: high motivation, capacity to reflect, self regulation, “eager”;
- Community: students stimulate each other, cooperate, share knowledge, operate as a team, feel responsible, group commitment;
- Excellence: pursue the best results, they want more, chase each other in ambition etc.
- Innovation: creative, critical, curious.

Shady sides

- Environment (*regular students*): *feeling* of being regarded as ‘show offs’ & ‘eager beavers’ (“strebers”).
- Critical feedback/high expectations makes unsecure/uncertain.
- High expectations from environment (*teachers*) puts pressure.
- Honours competes with regular programme.

What do we learn from it?

- Honours community is important in evoking excellence
- Freedom in honours programmes is essential in relation to intrinsic motivation, “drive”, self regulation.
- Create a safe group environment
- Pay attention to “Pressure”: time management and handling high expectations

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eventuele
overige gegevens