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Author

LOUVEL, Séverine

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Understanding change in higher education as bricolage : how academics engage in curriculum change

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Abstract

The engagement of academics in organizational change in higher education institutions is generally understood as involving a wide range of behaviors, and previous studies have situated academics' actions at various points along a continuum between passivity and pro-activity. This article complements this approach by asking how?rather than in which contexts?academics act as central agents for change in higher education. Rather than trying to assess their global level of proactivity in a given change situation, we aim at identifying the actions which show them behaving more or less strategically. We argue that the notion of 'bricolage'?widely used in organization theory?can be useful in this respect. Based on a qualitative study of the creation of 20 post-graduate nanotechnology programs on French university campuses, the article shows that academics participating in curriculum change engage in three distinct forms of bricolage. We suggest that the bricolage lens can identify two types of actions via which academics implement more or less pro-active strategies?identifying a repertoire of resources, and assembling those resources?and so allows us to reflect more deeply on

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how these actions may demonstrate several forms of agency, as well as several different relationships with norms, in each organizational change situation. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Louvel, Séverine,

E-Mail: severine.louvel@iep-grenoble.fr