Project Lax

The right changes for the wrong reasons, or just plain wrong?

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What we talk about when we talk about Language and communication at KTH

The Unit exists to help students and staff:

- succeed while at KTH
- succeed while on exchange abroad
- succeed after leaving KTH

- staff: roughly 15 FTE
- students: roughly 250 FTE
Courses as we used to know them

- Swedish as a foreign language (A1-C1)
- English (B1-C1)
- German (A1-B2)
- French (A1-B2)
- Spanish (A1-B2)
- Japanese (A1-B1)
- Chinese (A1-B1)
- Brazilian Portuguese (A1-A2)
- Rhetoric

- Designed for KTH students
- Efficient and effective
- Pedagogically sound
- Highly praised by most students
- Taught by highly competent, highly motivated, albeit slightly stressed, professional teachers
Languages taught around (above) us:

University of Cambridge (Engineering Dept.)
Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Spanish, English

Imperial College London
Arabic, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Chinese, Spanish, Russian, English + Language lab for self-study of another 28 languages

University of Oxford
Arabic, Chinese, French, Georgian, German, Italian, Japanese, Modern Greek, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, English and Welsh + Language lab for self-study of another 190 languages

ETH Zürich – Swiss Federal Institute of Technology
French, Spanish, English, Italian, Russian, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Greek, Swedish, Polish, Norwegian

École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne
German, French, Italian, English

Delft University of Technology
Dutch, English, French, Italian, Chinese, Spanish

Technische Universität München
Arabic, Chinese, Danish, German, English, French, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Dutch, Norwegian, Portuguese, Russian, Swedish, Spanish, Turkish

KTH Royal Institute of Technology
Swedish, English, French, Spanish, German, Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese (previously also Russian & Italian)
Challenges? When it rains, it pours ...
Asking for three things at once!

- Economically sustainable
- Pedagogically sustainable
- HR sustainable
Climbing the ladder of change (WIP)

- Create a Sense of Urgency
- Build a Guiding Coalition
- Form a Strategic Vision and Initiatives
- Enlist a Volunteer Army
- Enable Action by Removing Barriers
- Generate Short-Term Wins
- Sustain Acceleration
- Institute Change

John Kotter’s ‘8-Step Process for Leading Change’
Your typical ‘laxed’ course, as compared to courses of yore

- More teamwork behind the design
- New trimmed course plan
- Focuses exclusively on the essentials
- Constructively aligned to a fault
- Uses LMS for many more things
- Reduced number of GLH by 40-70 %
- Nominally taught on 50 % less time (80 hrs)
- Students more responsible for learning
- More active learning in student groups
- More flipped, but not yet filmed
- Simplified P/F credit system
- Standardised to 7.5 credits
- Continuous assessment
- LEQ for evaluation and further course development
- Shorter courses in English & Swedish
- Riddled with uncertainties and concerns
The right changes for the wrong reasons, or just plain wrong?

- Economy?
- Pedagogy?
- HR?

‘The answer, my friend, is blowin’ in the wind’
Language and Communication at KTH
Potential ways to create a sustainable situation

1. Adjust financing to allow for administration
2. For Swedish & English: Programme integration
3. For other languages: ’The European model’:
   • encourage, don’t restrict, students
   • courses with or without credits
   • centrally funded
To be continued ...