

Q: Caroline, you've been head of department at the Department of Business and Politics (DBP) for two months, if you were to characterize those months in one word, what would it be?

A: Inspiring!

Q: And what is your impression of the department so far?

A: The Department of Business and Politics is an unusually vibrant department, with excellent scholars that contribute to world-class research at the intersection of business and politics. DBP's research expertise is multi-faceted, but the common core is to comprehend and to explain institutional dynamics behind business and politics at the national level, comparatively and at the international level, combining insights from various disciplines, such as political science and sociology.

I have become familiar with the high level of engagement, curiosity and activity of the talented DBP scientific staff in the individual annual performance reviews I held with DBP researchers shortly after starting. DBP researchers strive to be at the forefront of academic research, which they do in many different ways. Their strengths are firstly to blur boundaries between disciplines such as sociology and political science, enabling a better understanding of macro-level societal developments, and secondly, to be innovative in terms of methodological tools, using a wide range of sophisticated qualitative and quantitative tools. These include social network analysis, which uncovers centers of power in business and society, and experiments, which provide insight into behavioral aspects of various phenomena.

The world-class level of theoretical and methodological curiosity and innovation among the scholars – that all have excellent international networks - explains the unusually high success rate of project grants from national, EU and other funding sources. However, this would not be possible without the support of the administrative staff at DBP, which is unusually engaged and highly professional. They are crucial before and also during the course of the projects, when challenges related to their implementation may arise. All research output is communicated in relevant international scholarly fora.

Some of the research output is communicated and developed across CBS, supported through the successful cross-departmental platforms, where DBP has been particularly active in the sustainability (<http://www.cbs.dk/en/knowledge-society/business-in-society/sustainability>) and public-private partnership (<http://www.cbs.dk/en/knowledge-society/business-in-society/public-private>) platforms, that are soon due to terminate. The platforms have built up expertise and produced world-class research and they have institutionalized collaboration with other universities and stakeholders in Denmark. In order to maintain this, hopefully there will be some form of co-funding or institutional support from CBS to continue the work of these excellent platforms in another form.

Furthermore, the DBP staff is engaged in high quality international teaching at CBS, spurring the engagement of students. The DBP staff is particularly active in *International Business and Politics* (<http://www.cbs.dk/uddannelse/bacheloruddannelser/bsc-in-international-business-and-politics>) as well as the *Business Administration and Sociology* (<http://www.cbs.dk/uddannelse/bacheloruddannelser/bsc-in-business-administration-and-sociology>) programmes, which recruit and train among the best students in Denmark and internationally. DBP staff also makes a crucial contribution to the Executive Programme *Master of Public Governance* (<http://www.cbs.dk/efteruddannelse/mastermba-uddannelser/master-of-public-governance>), which trains professionals in topics such as public management in a changing context. This is important in terms of the skills and competences our staff can provide various groups of

professionals, and in doing so, it also contributes to CBS' Business in Society strategy (<http://www.cbs.dk/viden-samfundet/business-in-society>).

Q. Of the many experiences you've had in the first months, does anything strike you as particularly important and/or as something that will shape the coming months and years?

The first priority for DBP in the coming years is to ensure a continued balance between high-quality research and high-quality teaching. This is a challenge, since the norms for various teaching-related activities have been and will continue to be reduced, due to the government imposed cost-saving requirements for institutions of higher education. There is therefore a real risk that teaching norms are reduced beyond the bare bone, which could in turn have negative consequences for the quality of teaching and/or scientific output. It is thus of utmost importance that conditions are maintained to be able to continue the path of excellence in research and in teaching already achieved.

The second priority is to ensure that our research is disseminated and debated publicly in Denmark and abroad. DBP is extremely visible and vibrant in academic networks as well as in various European-level institutions and fora. DBP has traditionally been active in Danish public debate regarding, for example, the welfare society and competition. Now, DBP expertise is relevant concerning issues of tax evasion and financialisation, which are the core competency of some of our international staff. DBP thus continues to be active in public debate, on the basis of its inter-disciplinary scientific excellence at the boundaries of business and politics.

Q: In your opinion, what is the head of department's role and main responsibilities?

A: The head of department's role in day-to-day management *and* strategic leadership in research, teaching and public dissemination issues are equally important. In this task, I am supported by an outstanding Vice-Head of Department, Mogens Kamp Justesen, and an unusually skilled head of secretariat, Bo Bøgeskov.

The day-to-day management is important to ensure that there is a high level of productivity in research and teaching, particularly in this time of 'university austerity', which may affect scientific staff by a creeping teaching workload, as a result of potentially harmful reduction of teaching norms. Thus, ensuring that there is still time for research, while maintain high quality teaching, is an essential task as head of department.

Related to this, strategic leadership is important in order to, firstly, ensure that DBP scientific staff should strive for excellence in publications, teaching and public debate, and secondly, to contribute to shaping and achieving CBS' strategic aims.

In terms of scientific output, it is important that all scientific staff be motivated, and thus to have a high-level, but broad repertoire of benchmarks to assess the scientific success of DBP, which is important for CBS as a business university. We know from behavioral economics that high but attainable incentive structures and aims are motivating, while incentives that are unattainable may have the opposite effect. Thus, DBP will develop its own ambitious but attainable publication strategy, thereby contributing to CBS publication strategy.

Concerning educational output, it is important that quality in teaching is taken as a benchmark of success and not only the quantity of students produced. Naturally, there still may be some areas where

savings may be possible to implement. However, there have already been many savings in the teaching programmes at CBS, and it is important that the government recognizes these steps already taken and be ready to reduce the severity of the austerity plan developed for universities.

Q: What are your plans and visions for DBP? Where will the department be four years from now?

A: My main ambition for DBP is that it will continue to be world-class in research on institutional changes in business and politics. DBP staff will thus continue to successfully obtain research funding, a means to produce excellent research that has an impact in academic, political and public agendas. This should be propelled by researchers' own ambitions and curiosity, as well as by an ambitious but realistic DBP publication and public visibility strategy. At the same time, the staff will continue to have excellent teaching results, and to move towards *blended learning*.

Q. Do you see any particular challenges in reaching these aims and what possible solutions do you envisage in this regard?

A. The unusually high level of dynamism and productivity of DBP staff could be undermined due to the impact of government saving plan for higher education institutions. CBS Management and the other departments at CBS are also concerned and are trying to minimize the effects of these savings-plans on teaching and research output. However, given the extensive saving required, and the unfairly low basic funding for CBS, it may be 'mission impossible' to avoid decreases of quality in research and education. This could have detrimental effects for the whole university sector, with possible repercussions in DBPs and CBSs reputation of excellence abroad in research and education.

A possible solution would be for the government to recognize CBS as a business university, on par with other universities in Denmark, thus raising its core funding to the same level as other universities. This would recognize the high level of scientific excellent, carried by DBP and other departments at CBS.