

Report from the workgroup assessing the job satisfaction survey at CBS

In the spring of 2017, the CBS President asked the Academic Council to appoint a committee consisting of faculty members of different rank, nationality, gender and academic specialization. Subsequent to that, the Academic Council appointed Minna Paunova (assistant professor, MSC), Ramona Westermann (assistant professor, FIN), Stine Haakonsson (associate professor, DBP), Wolfgang Sofka (associate professor, SMG), Hans Krause Hansen (professor, MSC) and Keld Laursen (professor, INO) to serve on the committee. At a meeting with CBS Top Management (DIR) on April 26, the workgroup was asked to produce this short report on the reasons for the low score (2.6/5) on the survey regarding CBS faculty members' confidence in DIR ("I have confidence in the way the top management runs CBS"), with a particular focus on the closely related question, "I feel able to speak up and give my view/suggestions on the way things are done at CBS".¹ Both questions pertain to the "Our organization" part of the questionnaire.

This report builds on the existing data from the Rambøll survey material and the report by Peter Lotz (2017). However, a vital source of information has been direct open-ended discussions between workgroup members and their CBS colleagues. Many faculty-members we have talked to base their assessments on the meetings that DIR has had with the departments, including the meetings conducted on an annual basis. 25 semi-structured interviews and a large number of informal meetings, chats and conversations were conducted face-to-face and/or by email with colleagues at both junior and senior levels across CBS departments.

Reasons for the low score attached to the confidence in DIR

Some reasons have already been indicated in the written comments submitted with the Rambøll survey responses produced by CBS faculty members. These reasons have been confirmed via the workgroup's own investigation based on the conversations and interviews conducted. Asked why there is a lack confidence in the way top management runs CBS, our colleagues pointed to four main issues:

1. *An opaque strategy and vision for CBS including a lack of focus on research excellence*, as well as concerns expressed by colleagues from several departments about whether CBS

¹ The Danish version of the question was posed as follows: "Jeg føler mig fri til at sige min mening og give mine synsvinkler/forslag til måden ting gøres på CBS". Unfortunately the Danish word "fri" was translated into "able" in the English-language version.

would become a “*regular business school*” with a narrow focus on the more traditional business school disciplines.

2. An increased use of *CBS-wide key performance indicators* that some faculty members perceive as challenges to academic autonomy and diversity while other faculty members perceive these as being futile unless measurable CBS-wide minimum requirements and ambitions for research as well as teaching are defined.
3. *A failing recognition and appreciation of faculty work and deficient incentive systems.*
4. *A general lack of transparency in decision-making and an unreceptive tone from top management.*

Our colleagues provide a range of examples underlying these themes. Among the most widespread ones are (there is inevitably a bit of repetition from the list above):

- Inadequate conditions for producing excellent research and teaching.
- 88 hour rule as a symptom of perceived lack of DIR appreciation for supervision, teaching coordination, etc.
- Dissatisfaction with the functioning of the central (study) administration.
- Increasing bureaucratization of academic life at CBS and the proliferation of “boxy thinking”.
- DIR’s dominant focus on obtaining research funding as an end in itself.
- Frequently changing focus (for instance, STÅ production versus 88 hours, teaching over research focus, etc.).
- Authoritarian and non-involving decision-making.

Even if it is unsurprising, it should be noted that the reasons for the low score vary across CBS in the sense that different weights are attached to the different problems across academic departments at CBS. While the lack of confidence in DIR is widespread across departments at CBS, it is particularly pronounced at SMG and MSC (see the table below). Indeed, despite some variation (IBC, ICM, SMG and to an extent MARKTG have very low scores), in absolute terms, all departments’ faculty members attach quite a low score to the confidence in DIR question — with the exception of ITM. To our understanding, at SMG faculty members give a lack of clarity in top level strategy including a commitment to research excellence by DIR as a central reason,

while at MSC, much of the “excess” dissatisfaction can be traced back to the way in which DIR handles the decision-making process (e.g., pertaining to the IBC-ICM merger and closing of the languages). Still, many of the problems highlighted also by interviewees at those departments, such as poor involvement of staff and unclear goals, clearly transcend the more specific issues and processes just indicated.

Why do faculty members not want to speak up about the way things are done at CBS?

It would be a major issue at a university if faculty members did not want to speak up because they feared possible consequences related to their work situations. However, in spite of the relatively low average score (3.3/5) with respect to the “I feel able to speak up and give my view/suggestions on the way things are done at CBS” question, we have not found much evidence supporting such a hypothesis. If faculty members chose not to speak up because of fears for losing their jobs, one would expect that assistant professors (especially those not on tenure track), should be more hesitant to speak up and share their views. However, if one looks across the 15 CBS departments (see the table below) it does not appear that there is strong systematic evidence in this direction. The score is lower for assistant professors, but only very marginally so for the “able to speak up and give view” question. Regarding the confidence in DIR question, there is also no strong systematic pattern in this dimension. For instance, at IOA, the confidence in DIR is higher among assistant professors than it is for all faculty members at the department. The same is true for ACC and ITM, while numbers are identical or very similar for MPP and ICM. The confidence in DIR is markedly lower only among assistant professors at DBP, FIN and INT.

For the “able to speak up and give view” question, we find also no obvious patterns when comparing general scores across departments. The scores are at least reasonable for 8 (ACC, ECON, FIN, INO, IOA, ITM, LAW, MPP) of the 15 departments, given that the score is ≥ 3.5 (i.e., people tend to agree or strongly agree with the notion that they feel able to speak up and give views/suggestions on the way things are done at CBS). This leaves DBP, IBC, ICM, INT, MARKTG, OM and SMG with scores that are more either “Neither agree nor disagree” or some form of direct disagreement with the statement about being able to speak up. However, the data presented in the table — combined with our qualitative investigation — seem to tell another story than one about faculty members feeling unable to speak because of fears regarding their

job-situation. If one considers some simple correlations across the 15 departments, there is a very high correlation between the confidence in DIR question and the general job-satisfaction score (0.71) and there is an equally high correlation between “able to speak up and give view” and the confidence in DIR questions (0.73). The latter suggests that when faculty members are dissatisfied (for whatever reason) they tend also to feel less able (or rather willing) to express their views on CBS.

On a final note, we would like to underscore that while part of the reason for the low score on the confidence question can be said to represent a “communication problem”, not all of it can be reduced to communication failure. Indeed, our conversations with colleagues suggest that this is not only due to missing effective or consequential communication channels, but also due to the perception that speaking up will not make any difference to the situation anyhow. Furthermore, faculty generally thinks that information is being distributed and that discussions are held very late in the process, or even after new initiatives have been decided upon. Closely related, disagreements on decisions and how these disagreements are handled by DIR play an important part in this context. For instance, there are probably real disagreements about the importance of high quality research versus the importance of raising external research income per se. There are presumably real disagreements involved also when it comes to issues such as increasing the amount of teaching in class at the cost of supervision, and about the benefits from centralizing the (teaching) administration.

Within a university such as CBS it is nevertheless not surprising that there are many examples of larger or smaller disagreements between central management and members of faculty. However, and more importantly to this report, the issue of disagreements — and how these disagreements are handled by DIR — speaks directly to the issue of faculty’s unwillingness to speak up. The perception is that while DIR does in fact communicate the rationale for a given decision to faculty members in a reasonably clear fashion (and certainly upon request), there is little or no actual opportunity for affecting the decision even in a relatively minor fashion. Again, the perception is that of a leadership style which is characterized by a lack of responsiveness in the context of disagreements. In turn, this perception discourages faculty members from speaking up.

Table: Answers to central questions on the job-satisfaction survey at CBS

| | All VIP 2014 | All VIP 2016 | All VIP | All VIP | Assistant prof | Assistant prof |
|--------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---|
| | Job-satisfaction* | Job-satisfaction* | Confidence in TMT [#] | Able to speak up and give view [¤] | Confidence in TMT [#] | Able to speak up and give view [¤] |
| ACC | 4.0 | 4.0 | 2.8 | 3.6 | 3.3 | 4.2 |
| DBP | 3.6 | 4.0 | 2.5 | 3.1 | 2.0 | 2.7 |
| ECON | 4.0 | 4.1 | 2.9 | 3.5 | n.a. | n.a. |
| FIN | 4.1 | 4.2 | 3.2 | 3.9 | 2.0 | 3.8 |
| IBC | 3.5 | 3.5 | 1.9 | 2.7 | n.a. | n.a. |
| ICM | 3.8 | 4.1 | 1.9 | 2.9 | 1.9 | 2.9 |
| INO | 4.1 | 4.3 | 2.6 | 3.8 | n.a. | n.a. |
| INT | 4.0 | 3.9 | 2.7 | 3.3 | 2.4 | 2.6 |
| IOA | 4.0 | 3.9 | 2.8 | 3.5 | 3.2 | 3.4 |
| ITM | 3.8 | 4.3 | 3.6 | 3.5 | 3.8 | 3.7 |
| LAW | 4.2 | 4.2 | 3.2 | 3.5 | n.a. | n.a. |
| MARKTG | 3.8 | 3.4 | 2.3 | 3.0 | n.a. | n.a. |
| MPP | 3.6 | 3.9 | 2.9 | 3.5 | 2.8 | 3.2 |
| OM | 3.7 | 3.9 | 2.8 | 3.1 | 2.6 | 2.9 |
| SMG | 3.8 | 3.1 | 1.8 | 3.1 | n.a. | n.a. |

Note: *“In general, I am satisfied with my job”; [#] “I have confidence in the way the top management runs CBS”; [¤] “I feel able to speak up and give my view/ suggestions on the way things are done at CBS”