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**Abstract**

This article addresses academics who innovate in higher education and their characteristics. We undertake a qualitative case study of six individuals who implemented disruptive and transformative pedagogical approaches and curricular practices in their departments and/or at their institutions. Our findings point to six common characteristics – motivation to change institutionalized practices, interest in change, experience in the field, multi-embeddedness, authority to act, and the strategic use of social networks – which seem to play a role at individual levels in driving these disruptive and transformative approaches. While acknowledging studies in higher education that address innovation as a response to exogenous influences, this study highlights the role of individuals with certain characteristics in driving innovation and processes of endogenous change in higher education institutions. These findings are also relevant for higher education practitioners in their desire to foster innovative initiatives in institutional settings. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)