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**Author**

LEIBOWITZ, Brenda

**Title**

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**Abstract**

This study features the concept of 'context' and how various macro, meso and micro features of the social system play themselves out in any setting. Using South Africa as an example, it explores the features that may constrain or enable professional development, quality teaching and the work of teaching and learning centres at eight universities in varied socio-cultural settings. The article draws on the work of critical realists and their explication of the concepts of structure, culture and agency. The research design was participatory, where members of teaching and learning centres at the eight institutions defined the aims and key questions for the study. They collected the data on which this article is based, namely a series of descriptive and reflective reports. The findings clustered around six themes: history, geography and resources; leadership and administrative processes; beliefs about quality teaching and staff development; recognition and appraisal; and capacity, image and status of the TLC staff. These features play out in unique and unpredictable constellations in each different context, while at the same time, clusters of features adhere together. Whilst there is no one to one,

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predictive relationship between university type and outcome, there is a sense that socio-economic contextual features are salient and require greater attention than other features.(HRK / Abstract übernommen) Leibowitz, Brenda, E-Mail: brendal@uj.ac.za