

Authentic Assessments of Teaching Skills

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INTRODUCTION

In this *Research Discussion Session* we would like to debate an ongoing collaborative research project that is carried out at the Faculty of Engineering and the Faculty of Social Sciences at Lund University. The ambition is to develop supplementary research based methods that can be used to evaluate and assess teachers' teaching skills. We are well aware that such methods can only demonstrate selected aspects of the complexity of teaching skills, but could form an important attempt to capture more authentic images of parts of what represents good teaching.

We will use our 5-minute-introduction to present some themes to the audience with the purpose of facilitating a fruitful discussion based on our views and ideas about authentic assessment.

Since this paper presents research work in progress presented at a research discussion session it cannot be regarded as a full paper. Below we will describe research aims, thoughts and ideas and the current stage of our project.

1 PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE AND TEACHING SKILLS

Pedagogical competence is a key concept in higher education [1] that includes many aspects beyond just teaching skills – the teacher's ability to teach in the classroom. Pedagogical competence includes the relationship between pedagogical practice – the ability to teach in a way that actively supports student learning (teaching skills) – and theoretical knowledge about teaching and student learning at university level. Competent teachers show excellent abilities to use disciplinary knowledge in a teaching practice based on theoretical understanding of teaching and learning in higher education and a continuous development of teaching skills focusing on student learning. This means that teachers should be able to observe the effects of their teaching on student learning and use these observations to analyse, draw conclusions and plan for the continuous development of the teaching practice.

2 ASSESSMENT OF PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE

Knowledge about assessment of pedagogical competence has progressed significantly over the past decade [1; 2; 3; 4]. Pedagogical competence is multifaceted and complex and as a consequence an appropriate assessment must be designed and performed in a serious and professional manner that takes this complexity into account.

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Currently, a commonly used document in this assessment is the teaching portfolio. In the portfolio the teacher reflects about teaching and learning and integrates theoretical knowledge and pedagogical analyses and reflections with their pedagogical practice. The portfolio is supported by relevant documents and in most cases also by an interview. Thus, it is the teacher's presentation of his or her pedagogical practice that is central in the assessment process. This is of course supported by extensive documentation and represents what in research is assessed in a traditional academic peer-review procedure.

3 ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING SKILLS

To further assess teaching skills – the most important aspect of pedagogical competence – applicants for academic positions, promotion or teaching awards are often required to show their teaching abilities during special tests or trial lectures. The idea is that such performances should give a more authentic representation of how a teacher acts in the actual teaching situation.

Such lectures may very well be used as a supplement during the assessment process. However, it is important to recognise that they can only provide samples of some aspects of the teaching skill which in turn is only a part of the pedagogical competence. In addition, trial lectures are very much constructed situations that are greatly influenced by the intrusion and influence that the audience and the assessors create. During the present project we are developing other types of tests that can give a more authentic picture of a teacher's teaching skills but without the trial lecture's artificial format.

4 KNOWLEDGE-BASE OF THE PRESENT PROJECT

The Faculty of Engineering at Lund University has long been very successful, within the university, as well as nationally and internationally, in terms of important research and development on assessment of pedagogical competence [5; 6]. This development has been supported by the development of pedagogical reward systems, teaching academies, both within and outside the Lund University [7; 8]. The Faculty of Social Sciences at Lund University has also greatly contributed to this development. The participation of the Faculty of Engineering in the development of the reward systems at several Swedish and international universities has also provided valuable experience and contacts.

5 AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING SKILLS

We are in the process of developing concrete proposals for new pedagogical tests or work-samples that can be used as part of the assessment of pedagogical competence. Authenticity is the common denominator and all proposals must be underpinned and based on relevant research. The first part of the project has included a literature survey and a compilation of concrete types of tests in use nationally and internationally.

An important part of our project is to build assessments centered on teaching cases. We are for example working with different types of problematic teaching situations and various aspects of student assessment. Other parts of the project include analyses of authentic teaching situations (described or filmed). Further proposals that we are investigating are planning of actual teaching situations (at programme level, course level, and class level); discussions and analyses of learning hurdles [9] and educational content (what, how, why); and evaluations and investigations of student learning. We are also considering the possibility of combining a specific task with a short presentation (in an authentic lesson/lecture form). Finally, and most importantly, we build authentic assessment of teaching skills on reflection in action [10] and on a performance that questions current assumptions and conditions on how to conduct the teaching practice [11].

The final results of this project will be presented within Lund University and in national and international publications and by dissemination in networks.

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