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TEACHING PHILOSOPHY GAME – A WAY TO CLARIFY VALUES, ATTITUDES, AND PREFERENCES RELATED TO TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

The authors propose a game that can be used to clarify faculty members' values, attitudes, and preferences related to teaching and learning. The game is intended to establish a guided, yet unformal and amusing, framework for considering and discussing what staff members find important in their task and role as university teachers. During the gaming process, the participants get a chance to externalize their tacit knowledge through individual reflections and team-based discussions. This can be useful not only for individual clarification, but also for teams of teachers to develop common ground principles of teaching and learning. Although no award will be given and no winners will be appointed, all participants will potentially gain insight into their own and colleagues' values, attitudes, and preferences related to teaching and learning. During this workshop, you will try out the game and engage in discussions of possible use scenarios and further development.

KEYWORDS

Teaching Philosophy, Faculty Development, Standard 10

BACKGROUND

Professional practice in general is to a large extent based on tacit knowledge (Schön, D. A., 1983). For university teachers, tacit knowledge includes knowledge about what works – and what does not work – when teaching a specific group of students a specific subject matter in a specific context.

Making tacit knowledge explicit is important for at least two reasons: Firstly, for the individual it may facilitate a more conscious linking of lose impressions and observations from own teaching practice to general principles of teaching and learning, thus enabling a more systematic interpretation and development of own teaching (Smith, K. & Tillema, H., 2006). Secondly, it is useful – if not necessary – for communication with others about teaching and learning, e.g. when guiding less experienced colleagues, or sharing experience and collaborating on teaching development with colleagues. Teaching Portfolios are a well-known means for the individual teacher to develop a reflective approach to own teaching practice and the underlying values and presumptions, including a process of making tacit knowledge explicit (Mcalpine, L. & Weston, C., 2002). However, we see a need for methods for sharing, discussing and developing teaching philosophies in a collective process. The perspectives of introducing such methods are to support a team-oriented approach to teaching and to strengthen communities of practice / communities of learning among teachers.

THE TEACHING PHILOSOPHY GAME

At the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) we are developing a game to be used for clarification of values, attitudes, and preferences related to teaching – involving both an individual and collective process. The core element of the game is a number of cards each with a statement about teaching, e.g. “Students must learn to dare to fail and learn from their mistakes”, “What I teach is what students learn”, and “Blackboard and chalk is an overlooked method of teaching”.

The first step in the game is an individual reflection leading to the selection of a few cards (the ones you agree with the most), and a priority order of the cards.

The second step is to present the selected cards to the rest of your team, explain your selection and prioritization, and in the team discuss the rationales and implications of the selected statements.

The follow-up steps can be designed to the context and use scenario. We have identified several use scenarios:

- Participants in a teachers’ training course. Purpose: to clarify and articulate own teaching philosophy.
- A team of teachers teaching the same course. Purpose: to reach consensus on ground principles.
- Teachers and students in a course or education program. Purpose: to clarify mutual expectations and roles.

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

The overall objective is to gain insight in your own thoughts, attitudes, and values related to teaching and learning. The workshop will lead you through a process that helps you articulate your own thoughts and preferences, and will invite you to clarify those further through discussions with colleagues.

WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

In the workshop, we will introduce the intentions and ideas behind the game, and invite the participants to play the game.

The participants will be guided through the first, individual step of selecting the cards they agree with the most, and place them in order of priority. In groups of 3-4 persons, the participants will present the outcome of their individual selections and together organize the selected statements in themes reflecting various aspects of teaching and learning. Then they will cooperate on selecting the cards they find most important. The groups will also be asked to reflect on the process and its outcome.

At the end of the workshop, we will allocate time for discussions and hope to get feedback for the further development of the game.

PREPARATION FOR THE WORKSHOP

As the participants will use their own teaching practice as reference during the game, the workshop is primarily directed at active teachers in engineering education. Educational developers may also participate.

There is no preparation to be done for the participants.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Birgitte Lund Christiansen is head of LearningLab DTU which is the pedagogical unit at Technical University of Denmark. She is engaged in faculty development and educational development in engineering education and has been actively involved in the implementation of CDIO across a range of education programs at DTU.

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