SUMMARIES IN ENGLISH

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Activities to Support the Efficiency of Teaching at the Estonian National Defence College

Tanel Otsus, Svetlana Ganina, Maia Boltovsky

Teaching means the formation of skills, attitudes, values through learning process. The aforementioned should also be observed when supporting lecturers.

The seminars "From Lecturer to Lecturer", the Summer Academy, the mentoring system and also classroom observation in essence are united through one single goal – to make the lecturer feel that he or she is not abandoned with the load of lessons to teach, to enable discussions between colleagues and through fostering learning from each other also improve both teaching and learning and make it more fascinating. The most important factor here is the fact that through supporting activities the students of the ENDC receive the training that enables them as future leaders to develop their competences as commanders, administrators, teachers, diplomats and technicians[1] and that promotes the sustainability of the ENDC and employer expectations. Furthermore, all graduates of the ENDC in their first position of service become teachers of conscripts and in the future also prospective lecturers in the ENDC.

It needs to be stressed that all the activities aimed at developing the lecturers discussed in the article are initiated by the lecturers themselves and are sustained through voluntary activities; the administration of the ENDC has adopted a supporting position only.

The activities aimed at developing the lecturers discussed in the article may also be of interest for other institutions of higher education in Estonia.

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[1] Statute of the Curriculum of the ENDC. 2015.
<http://www.ksk.edu.ee/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/%C3%95ppekava-statuut.pdf>, (25.12.2014)

Student Feedback in the Eyes of the University Teacher – Useful or Useless?

Mari Karm, Anu Sarv, Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt

Academic staff in universities must be self-regulatory in many aspects of their work. In research external feedback through peer-reviewed articles, or grant evaluations constantly guide the work, but in teaching there is still a heavy reliance on self-evaluation and increasingly, on student feedback. This article is based on interview data from 39 University of Tartu academic staff members collected in 2012, a year after implementation of new student feedback system. Interviews focused on student feedback, functions of the feedback for the lecturers, coping with the feedback and feedback as the source for change in teaching.

The results of the interviews demonstrated that the importance of the student feedback is dependent upon three key aspects – what teachers think about the feedback system, how teachers perceive the students as feedback givers, and finally, how teachers perceive themselves. All of these factors can both negatively and positively contribute to the acceptance or rejection of student feedback results. Feedback enables professional development when university teachers consider it trustworthy and understandable, and when they understand the feedback system and its overall purpose, and when they are able to cope with the emotional side of the feedback. Unfortunately, many teachers interpret feedback in a way that tends to hinder their professional development, rather than support it.

International studies show that it is possible to build support systems that can assist in turning student feedback into a tool for professional development. These support systems can be comprised of consultations, training, and participation in professional practice communities. It is very important that the student feedback not be the sole method of evaluating the quality of the teaching. Improvements in teaching can come from many different sources and student feedback is just one of them. Therefore it is crucial that the feedback system be balanced and a component of a multifaceted system. Academic staff requires both a variety of feedback sources and the systems to help to make use of that feedback.

This article has outlined some of problems associated with the use of student feedback as the sole source of feedback on teaching quality, and advocates strongly for the use of multiple feedback mechanisms and the establishment of support systems to best benefit the student-feedback data that is being collected.

The Use of Class Feedback Papers as a Part
of Learning-Centred Model of Teaching

Alar Kilp

Feedback papers were used for four courses of the Institute of Government and Politics at the University of Tartu. At the end of each weekly class, the students wrote down their thoughts and questions on feedback papers. The instructor collected the thoughts and questions of the students, and responded to the questions raised in the class conspectus.

Through the feedback papers the instructor became aware of the questions, impressions and thoughts of students regarding the themes discussed in course literature and during in-class debates. The feedback papers enhanced the reciprocal communication between the students and the instructor and between the students themselves as well. Most of the questions asked by students on the feedback papers were reflective in nature. The use of feedback papers demonstrates that students are eager to attend Political Science courses that use individualized reflections that can be shared either between students, or between a student and the instructor.

Feedback papers are one component of a Teaching Model that is built around a continuous collaboration between the students and the instructor wherein there is a regular and reciprocal exchange of ideas and feedback using feedback papers, the class conspectus and class discussions.

The author suggests that feedback papers are most useful when used in parallel with a specific learning approach, and for a teacher's own professional development. Feedback papers are particularly suitable for courses with transferable learning outcomes such as those that teach the ability to understand and analyze social phenomena from a variety of perspectives. In particular the author found that deliberations on Political Science during the class, and the use of feedback papers also enhances the ability of students to make sense of the political world, where different parties have contrasting positions and justifications and are very useful for helping students to rationally arrive at their own position on these issues.

Engaging Students in Syllabus Development:
Reflections on Teaching Experience

Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt

Pedagogical studies show that lecturers learn about teaching from both research and from self-reflection. This article reflects upon the experience of engaging students in syllabus development. Drawing on more than ten years of teaching experience in media studies at the University of Tartu, the author looks at different ways to engage students in the development of a course syllabus.

The four courses that serve as the source of this reflection are at the university level – bachelor to doctoral – and range from the practical to the theoretical. Students were engaged in syllabus development through the following activities: 1) agreeing on a system of course evaluation; 2) agreeing on the evaluation criteria; 3) agreeing on the topics to be covered; 4) composing a reading list. The article gives an overview of how these different aspects of developing a syllabus were discussed with students. The underlying assumption is that such a process of empowerment contributes to the overall democratization of society.

Although there was no systematic analysis of student feedback during this process, the article does reflect briefly upon how such methods of engagement were generally received. Overall, the impression is that, while initially unsettling, the act of engaging students in syllabus development clarifies their expectations of the course and helps them to take more responsibility for their own learning.

The key lessons learned from this project is that, although it can also be somewhat distressing for the university teacher, it is in fact possible to maintain enough control over the collaborative process. This experience shows that students do not actually always attempt to use the system to their advantage, and the collective sense of ethics that arises between them is more than strong enough to ensure that reasonable performance demands find their way into the syllabus. It is the role of the university teacher to manage the process and to even tone down the sometimes harsh criteria students come up with themselves.

The experience of reflecting upon one's teaching methods and processes is quite valuable and also helps to maintain a balance between the different roles a university teacher is required to perform.

How do Modern Students Learn the Best?
A Study on the Example of the ENDC

Svetlana Ganina, Aigi Piirimees

The idea that a new generation of students whose mindset is totally different from that of previous generations has recently entered or is currently entering university has attracted the attention of educators and education commentators. There are different ways to make learning in higher education more efficient. This involves understanding the students' wishes and abilities.

This article gives an overview of a study that aimed at outlining the main features characteristic of the Estonian National Defence College cadets' understanding as to what good learning and teaching are. The article focuses on two main questions: How and to what extent do modern students see themselves as learners? Do modern students need a different approach to teaching and learning?

The study is distinct from others as it examines the characteristics of good learning based on the cadets' own perception of what it is. The study consists of two parts, the first being completed in the autumn and the other in the winter of the 2014/15 academic year.

During the first part of the study, 88 first- and second-year cadets from all three study programs – Army, Navy, and Air Force – were surveyed. In the second part, a questionnaire was administered to 102 first-, second- and third-year cadets from all three study programs.

The results revealed that approximately 70% of the cadets identify themselves as representatives of Generation Y, mainly based on their birth year and the use of technology. However, about a third of the cadets claimed that it is motivation to learn and learning skills which are important rather than the application of technology. The analysis of the results showed that modern cadets are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, expect more involvement in their study process, prefer active teaching/learning methods, and are willing and able to use ICT in their studies.

The results of the study to a great extent coincide with previous research data which show that there is no homogeneous new generation distinct from previous generations and there is no agreement on how to organize an education system so that all members of the generation would benefit most from it. Thus, the authors think that the term 'modern learner' is more appropriate than Generation Y.

The second part of the study indicated that the cadets of the ENDC expect their study process to be led by committed and inspiring teachers who also provide them with profound feedback on their performance. The cadets are in favor of practical tasks which enable them to develop logical thinking and establish links between theory and practice. In addition to printed materials, the cadets could benefit from digital materials since these are easier to organize and bring up to date. Criticism could be seen of e-learning which in the cadets' opinion is inefficient and too formal. Nevertheless, they admitted that they have not had much experience in e-learning. The cadets also criticized some forms of group-work which are organized formally and which enable unequal contribution from group members. As for assessment, continual forms of assessment are preferred to exams and comprehensive tests. In addition, well-established assessment criteria were mentioned as a factor fostering good learning habits.

Based on the results of the study, teachers are encouraged to introduce changes in their teaching practices, which would support active learning and guide students towards becoming self-directed learners. In order to accomplish this, active teaching methods could be used to enhance students' ability to analyze and synthesize, and develop their leadership skills. The authors also recommend further studies to find out which specific teaching/ learning methods are the most effective with regard to modern learners' wishes and resources.

Methods for the Improvement of Students' Motivation to Learn Technical Subjects in Tertiary Schools

Ants Aaver, Anu Roio, Jaak Umborg, Signe Vanker

This article gives an overview of the possible ways to improve the study process of technical subjects and assure quality teaching. It is based on the experience of teaching at the Estonian Aviation Academy (EAVA). The authors introduce ways of enhancing the motivation of the students and specific methods to apply these methods, for both theoretical studies in the lecture rooms, and for practical classes in the laboratories. The EAVA experience shows that sciences and technical subjects are the most difficult to teach, therefore engineering specialties such as Aircraft Engineering (TECH) and Management of Aviation Communication and Navigation Systems (CNS) see the highest number of dropouts. From year to year it is hard to find the

necessary number of student candidates motivated to learn these technical specialties. Each year a portion of the first year engineering students are actually those who had initially wished to pursue other fields (e.g. piloting or air traffic control) but failed due to the higher level of competition. Analysis shows that in the last three years, the number of EAVA specialized engineering (TECH, CNS) dropouts was significantly higher than in other specialties. The main reasons for this include lack of progress in studies, and lack of personal motivation. As various studies have indicated, motivation is decreasing not only in higher education but also at the gymnasium level in Estonia, especially in the fields of natural sciences and technology. To raise motivation in higher education institutions it is essential to provide lectures and practical activities wherein both the content and the form are equally interesting and attractive to the student. One method of ensuring this is through the use of virtual and remote laboratories. This paper describes the EAVA experience in implementing a project based laboratory work that ended up becoming an excellent means of improving learner motivation. This conclusion was reached after an analysis of the students' feedback collected by questionnaires, the study information system, and the Moodle environment.

Differences in Cognitive Styles of Students of Four Creative Fields, Using the Example of the Viljandi Culture Academy of Tartu University

Aurika Komsaare

The current paper discusses the phenomenon of cognitive style. The study describes and compares the cognitive styles of students of the Performing Arts, Music, Applied Arts, Culture Management and Leisure-Time Management (n=254). Previous research shows a distinctness of cognitive styles among the representatives of different professions, something also evidenced by the current study.

To explore the cognitive style of the respondents, The Allinson and Hayes' Cognitive Style Index (CSI), which is a self-evaluation instrument with 38 items to report on, was used. The results of the report divide the respondents into 5 categories according to their cognitive style: intuitive, quasi-intuitive, adaptive, quasi-analytic, and analytic styles.

The results of the current study show differences in the cognitive styles of Performing Arts and Music students, as well as in the cognitive styles of Applied Arts students. The CSI mean of the Culture and Leisure Time Managers did not differ from the other groups and fell in the middle between the Performing Arts students who leaned towards the intuitive side and the Music and Applied Arts students who were slightly more analytical. Category-wise, the quasi-intuitive was a dominant style for all of the student groups, whereas the analytic style, on the other hand, was the least represented of all groups.

There was no difference in cognitive styles based on gender. When making comparisons between age groups, some differences were found between the older group of students (more than 40 years old) and the younger groups of students with the older age group being the most analytical.

The Flipped Classroom – Giving Responsibility to Students

Einike Pilli, Taavi Vaikjärv

The phrase flipped classroom appears more and more often in educational literature and in educational discourse. To our knowledge there is, however, no Estonian definition. We have proceeded to propose a definition and to explain the key components that make a flipped classroom. To our understanding they are:
1. A flipped classroom is not a teaching method, but rather an educational strategy.
2. The independent work of the student has to be well organized and motivating.
3. The main role of the teacher is shifted towards giving feedback.
4. The most effective use of the flipped classroom is for peer-to-peer teaching.

Over the course of two years we have trained a number of teachers and developed our own model for the successful application of the flipped classroom. It consists of three steps:
1. Individual work, which is well organized and easy to do.
2. The student is prepared before coming to class by having completed a suitable assignment.
3. Class time is spent on cognitively difficult tasks, preferably in groups.

The flipped classroom strategy offers many opportunities, but it also entails a few hazards. On the basis of the empirical evidence, gathered from the 13 teacher training events over the last two years, we have mapped out the most common of them. The biggest opportunity provided by the methodology is in placing the responsibility for learning on the student. In addition many generic competences can be developed during the process.

The teachers who have tried the process have mentioned that the biggest obstacles in implementing the strategy are as follows: getting the students to do their homework, correcting their misconceptions, compensating for the students' lack of suitable learning skills, difficulties in getting groups to work effectively, and the actual time it takes to flip their classroom.

Using Humor as a Teacher's Educational Tool in Everyday Work

Margus Abel

Pedagogy as a scientific discipline sees humor as something entertaining and does not connect it to a person's social skills or to their cognitive development. No studies have been made on the importance of the use of humor in the learning process in Estonia.

However, such research has been done in other countries. Unfortunately, these studies are often culture-specific. Cultural factors play a significant role in the use and understanding of humor. Because humor is a manifestation of a culture, each culture interprets humor in a different way. Regardless of culture, however, humor is actually a fundamental and understandable aspect of being human and therefore particularly applicable to a classroom environment.

In pedagogy, there are no scientific methods for the inclusion of humor in the classroom. This is mostly due to the antipathy of many teachers to humor. Some are convinced that the teacher's task is not to entertain students. There is a perception that if education is entertaining it will create a non-demanding learning environment. Others, however, assert that the use of humor in the classroom increases the motivation to learn, and there will be better outcomes in terms of the acquisition of information.

Studies of students' and teachers' experiences and attitudes towards humor have been undertaken and analyzed by University of Kentucky, professor John A. Huss (2008), Moscow State Pedagogical Institute, Professor Svetlana Jakuševa (2009) and the University of Charleston, Professor

Michael E. Skinner (2010). As it turns out, students often respect a teacher more, and admire their interpersonal skills as they are connected to their use of humor, which thus increases the respect of the teacher, and activates the students desire to participate productively in the classroom. Many teachers believe that humor can have a positive impact and create a favorable learning environment and actually prevent discipline problems in the classroom.

It is evident that for students laughter in the classroom helps them perceive what is being taught as being an enjoyable activity. At the same time humor also reduces students' stress, and increases their enthusiasm for learning. Secondly, it has been found that students are more open to receiving information from a teacher who uses humor in the learning process. This stems from the teacher creating a positive learning environment where students feel emotionally valued and protected. It also creates a more relaxed interaction between the teacher and the student.

In 2013, a survey titled "The Consciousness of and Use of Humor as a Pedagogical Tool for Teachers in their Daily Work" was conducted in Estonia. The objective was to investigate Estonian teachers' perception and knowledge of humor and its effects on the learning process and to examine the extent to which teachers actually use humor in their daily work. For this empirical study an interview method developed by the author was used. The sample consisted of nine primary school teachers of four different Estonian educational establishments, aged 24–67 years, with working experience between 1–46 years. Phenomenography was the method used to analyze the collected data.

An analysis of the results shows that, in contrast to the studies carried out in other cultures where humor is perceived as something used to attack or belittle someone, Estonians have a more benign view of humor.

All the interviewees characterized humor as benevolent, tension relieving, and as something that creates a good mood and positive emotions. However, in much of the foreign literature there is a fear that the negative aspects of humor, such as when it is degrading, insulting, deliberately critical and malicious, which are inherent to the concepts of *satire, irony* and *sarcasm,* could be used in the classroom. In the Estonian context however these fears appear to be groundless and the presence of this kind of humor could not be substantiated or confirmed.

The majority (78%) of the respondents did not consider a teachers' sense of humor to be important. Precedence is given to knowledge of subject matter and the application of methodologies to teach the subject. In-service trainings do not deal with techniques or methodologies of joking and humor, so it is

no wonder that the use of humor in the classroom is poorly prioritized by teachers, and traditional methodologies are preferred. This, however, does not exclude the use of humor as a component of other methodologies.

The Concept of Problem in the Military Context and Possiblities for Implementing Problem-based Learning in Military Education

Tõnis Männiste, Margus Pedaste

The concept of problem and the characteristics of problem seem to be well defined in the scientific literature; however, the definitions are all quite general and typically fail to consider the different variations and components of problem in some unique, in this case military, profession. In addition to that, problem-based learning is not often applied in military education. One reason could be that the SAT (System Approach to Training) model, which is widely used in military education, does not fully support it.

This study aims first at specifying and describing the concept of problem and its characteristics in scientific literature. Then it explores how well these concepts suit the military context. In addition to that, this paper aims at providing some procedures and instruments which would support converting real-life problems into problem tasks, which could then be added to military training.

This study is based on a literature review and interviews, which were carried out with experienced military officers.

The results indicate that the general definition of problem is valid in the military context; however, some specific characteristics should be revised and some important characteristics added. Those characteristics are presented and described in this article. Also some procedures were described and instruments revised and presented which suit the SAT model and support converting real-life problems into a learning situation.

The results of the study could contribute to designing problem-based learning in military education.