Gaming with Teaching Philosophies

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ABSTRACT
Professional practice in general is to a large extent based on tacit knowledge (Schön 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: For the individual it may facilitate a more conscious linking of loose 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 (Mcalpine and Weston 2002). It is also useful – if not necessary - for communication with others about teaching and learning, e.g. when peer coaching 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 (Smith and Tillema 2006). 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 (Wenger 2008)/ communities of learning among teachers.

So how can we do this? The authors have conceived and designed a game to identify and clarify teachers' values, attitudes and preferences related to their teaching. The core element of the game is a deck of cards each with a statement about teaching and/or learning, e.g. "Students must learn to dare to fail and learn from their mistakes", "What I teach is what students learn", and "Blackboards are an overlooked method of teaching". While the statements do not give the "solution" to what good teaching practice is, their purpose is to start a personal reflection.

During the game, the players go through an individual reflection process leading to the selection of a number of cards with statements each player find relevant and important in relation to the question "What is good teaching?" These are then ranked and discussed in a group of players who are asked see if some consensus can be reached and explore if they can identify common approaches to teaching and learning. This consensus may different from the individual player's choices.

We have tested the game in different scenarios: as part of a training course for experienced teachers, in a study group for faculty members on university pedagogy, among teachers and students at a specific

education programme, among directors of Bachelor of Engineering programmes, and at an international conference. Based on our experiences, we have identified a number of possible scenarios where the game can be used:

- 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.
- Across an educational institution: Purpose: to create and support an increased awareness and discussion of approaches to good teaching practice.

In cases where the game is played among colleagues who collaborate e.g. on teaching a course or coordinating an education programme, the process may also contribute to developing and strengthening the community of practice they are engaged in.

In the hands-on session, which is a revised version of a previous workshop, we will introduce the ideas and intentions of the game and guide the participants in playing the game. Ample time will be given for individual reflection and collective discussion of identified values and approaches to teaching and the general outcome of playing the game. At the end of the session, we will invite to a discussion of possible applications and use scenarios, and to suggestions of improvement of the game.

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