

A Swedish perspective on
PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE



Editor Åsa Ryegård
Karin Apelgren and Thomas Olsson

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UPPSALA UNIVERSITY

Division for Development of Teaching and Learning
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PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE – A DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE FROM LUND UNIVERSITY

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Lund University is a large, complex and relatively decentralised organisation with eight faculties. This text describes how Lund University's Faculty of Engineering (LTH) works with assessment and reward of pedagogical competence. LTH is the faculty at Lund University that has worked most purposefully and systematically over time with this, which is why LTH's model can be of specific interest. There is also a short description of what is happening at Lund University regarding the assessment of pedagogical competences and pedagogical competence. The text finishes with a discussion about the critical aspects of the development that has taken place.

Introductory example – an application for promotion...

In 2003 a senior lecturer at Lund University's Faculty of Engineering (LTH) applied for promotion to professor. The application was dealt with by the academic appointments board and after a long process that included assessment by an expert and a certain amount of hesitation regarding the pedagogical competence of the applicant; the board approved the application and recommended promotion. The decision of promotion to professor is taken by the vice-chancellor of Lund University. On its way there the application passed the dean of LTH. In this particular case LTH's dean rejected the assessment of the academic assessment board. It was considered that the requirements for pedagogical competence for promotion to professor had not been met. The case was sent back to the academic appointments board and LTH's dean decided at the same time that an internal assessment of pedagogical competence would be done. This assessment pointed out several short fallings in the senior lecturer's qualifications, among other things the lack of the course in pedagogy for higher education. The result was that the academic appointments board did not support the application after which the dean rejected the application. The senior lecturer then participated in the course and returned in 2007 with a new application. The academic appointments board which at that time consisted of several new members took up the case again. It was decided that a special pedagogical expert from another institution in Sweden would be appointed to do a special assessment of the senior lecturer's pedagogical competence. That official report also pointed out a few inadequacies, but the conclusion was nevertheless a recommendation to accept the pedagogical competences as satisfactory. The academic appointments board decided, after having interviewed the applicant, to recommend the application and finally the vice-chancellor of Lund University took the decision of promotion to professor.

Which happenings and decisions especially influenced the development?

A lot can be learned from this interesting example from LTH which shows what can happen in a period of change. The academic appointments board hesitated and the dean exerted pressure by showing decisiveness and the ability to take action. The case dragged on; it took four years from the time that the application was turned in the first time until the final decision on promotion was made by the vice-chancellor. Individual teachers get caught in the middle between “how it has always been before” and the new praxis that is being established. And they can naturally feel more or less unfairly treated. An important factor that led to the happenings described above is the change in the Higher Education Ordinance in 2003, with the requirement of participation on a course in pedagogy for higher education for employment as a lecturer or senior lecturer. Another strategically critical happening was that in 2005 the university’s vice-chancellor took a decision about sharpened guidelines for assessment of pedagogical competence at Lund University. The consequence of that was that the vice-chancellor, with strong support of the student union, began to return applications to the faculty because of insufficient material for assessment of pedagogical competence, especially when it comes to the course in pedagogy for higher education. The pressure for change from the university leadership sent a clear signal to the faculties: Take pedagogical competence seriously!

The development at Lund University’s Faculty of Engineering – the special importance of LTH’s Pedagogical Academy

Lund University, a large, old, research-intensive university, is divided into eight faculties each with quite a lot of independence in relation to the central university leadership. Nevertheless it is the university’s vice-chancellor who makes decisions about appointments to professor and when new demands are introduced there has to be knowledge and preparedness at the faculties to meet these demands. LTH was relatively well-equipped to meet these demands when the winds of change started blowing around assessment of pedagogical competence. Pedagogical awareness was high and the faculty had several years of experience from pedagogical development of courses for pedagogy for higher education and its own pedagogical development unit.

The most important of all was the introduction in 2001 of a system for rewarding pedagogical competence – LTH’s Pedagogical Academy – with the competence grade of *Excellent Teaching Practitioner (ETP)*. The overall purpose was to stimulate pedagogical development at LTH and to bring forward the organisations’ collected competence and awareness through rewarding pedagogically proficient teachers and their departments. For this reason there was a financial incentive both for the individual teacher and for his/her institution – the teacher received a salary increase of 2 000 SEK per month and the department received increased funding of 50 000 SEK. The compensation was equal to the financial increment received by docents and their departments. Since there is no “new money” in the system it means that departments that do not get involved in pedagogical development are rewarded at the expense of less committed departments. It is a question of relatively small sums – the

total yearly turnover for LTH's undergraduate courses are around 400 million SEK – but the political signal is important and shows that the faculty is serious.

Up to now (2009) seven rounds of application to the Pedagogical Academy have been carried out. After the third round of applications a pause was made to study and evaluate the activities. That work resulted in a considerably more stable and more rigorous application process with a new model for analysis of pedagogical competence. In addition to that better clearer criteria for acceptance were developed through a research project (Antman & Olsson, 2007). Four new application rounds (from and including 2006) have been carried out with the new acceptance procedure. The experiences are very positive. Up to now 76 teachers, from all of LTH's departments, have been accepted to LTH'S Pedagogical Academy. The reward system attracts teachers from all of the teaching categories of which one third are professors. It is also important to note that an overwhelming majority are active researchers. The parallelism to docents is distinct and conscious – both academic and pedagogic competence are rewarded – in line with LTH's policy. The reward system is not intended to be part of an alternative career path; instead all of the teachers are encouraged to strive for excellence in both teaching and research.

To be accepted to LTH's Pedagogical Academy pedagogical competence is assessed and valued based on criteria that focuses on the applicant teacher's pedagogical practice (this is described in more detail later on in this chapter). Teachers who clearly demonstrate that student learning is in focus in their pedagogical practice and who demonstrate that they have developed the ability to reflect upon their practice with the help of knowledge about teaching and learning are rewarded. Besides this the teacher shall be able to demonstrate a striving to develop a more public teaching practice by learning from the experiences of others and sharing their own experiences, for example, in discussions, at conferences and in publications; that is, by doing that which characterises 'scholarship of teaching and learning' (Boyer 1990; Barr & Tagg 1995; Bowden & Marton 1999; Trigwell & Shale 2004). The development of LTH's collective pedagogical competence is central and the applicant has to be able to demonstrate clearly the added value that their pedagogical activities contribute to the organisation's pedagogical development.

Pedagogical competence

In LTH's model pedagogical competence is a broader concept than teaching skills (see figure 1, page 118), which agrees with Magin (1998)

Pedagogical competence presupposes good, broad and deep knowledge of the subject of teaching. A pedagogically proficient teacher shall in different contexts demonstrate a good ability to use their subject knowledge in research-related, practical, pedagogical actions with student learning in focus.

Teaching skills, which is a central part of pedagogical competence, is demonstrated in the ability to teach in a way that actively supports student learning. Subject knowledge and knowledge about learning and teaching the subject or the subject area (subject didactics) is of crucial importance. Changing activities presuppose, however, that the teacher in fact continuously observes and reflects upon their own teaching and its effect on student learning, in order to, based on their knowledge of teaching

and learning, be able to analyse and arrive at conclusions for continued development - the teacher demonstrates pedagogical competence.

Theoretical competence in pedagogy for higher education and didactic subject knowledge are of great importance for the teacher's perspective on teaching and learning. Pedagogical competence is underpinned by knowledge about teaching and learning so that theory and pedagogical practice together develop a pedagogical understanding that creates the prerequisites for continued development.

Figure 1 shows a schematic model of how theoretical knowledge and pedagogical practice are related to teaching skills and pedagogical competence. The model is inspired by Kolb's Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984) and shall actually be seen as spiral-shaped so that pedagogical practice, after going through each cycle, achieves a higher and more developed level.

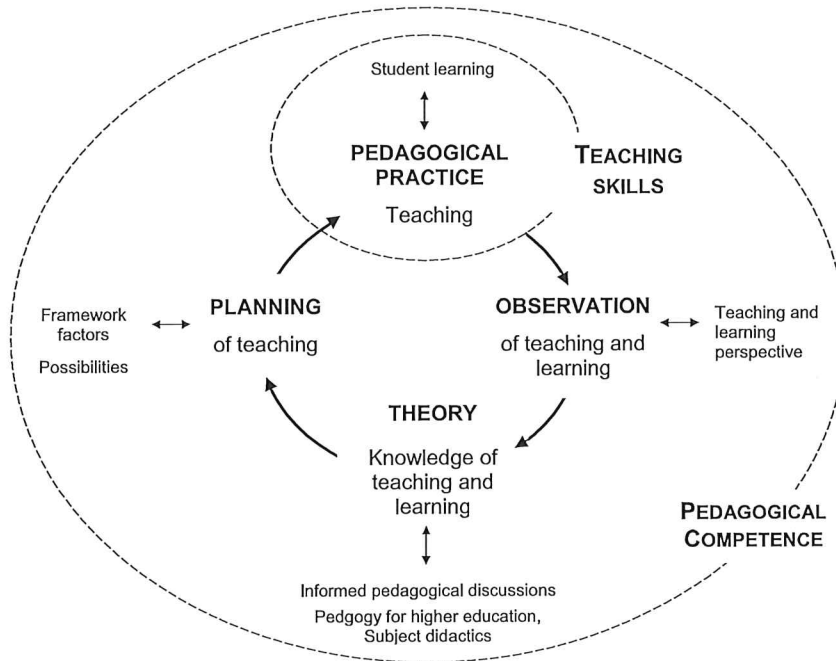


Figure 1: Teaching skills and pedagogical competence

Assessment of pedagogical competence

In order to be able to carry out a systematic and methodical assessment of pedagogical competence requires relevant *criteria* upon which the assessment is based, documentation that demonstrates that the criteria have been fulfilled and clear descriptions of the levels that are to be achieved in order to fulfil the different criteria. (Ramsden & Martin, 1996; Chism, 2006; Elton, 1998; Trigwell, 2001). The following criteria (here somewhat simplified) have been used in assessment of pedagogical competence for acceptance to LTH's Pedagogical Academy:

1. Focus on student learning

- The applicant bases their pedagogical practice on student learning.
- The applicant uses their knowledge about teaching and learning to develop their pedagogical practice.
- The applicant functions well in their pedagogical practice in relations with the students.

2. Clear development over time

- The applicant strives, consciously and systematically, in their pedagogical practice, to support and develop student learning
- The applicant has ideas and plans for continued development of their pedagogical practice.

3. A reflective (scientific) attitude

- The applicant reflects on their pedagogical practice with the help of knowledge of teaching and learning, relevant to their subject.
- The applicant reflects on student learning in their subject.
- The applicant participates in an exchange of experiences from their pedagogical practice and their knowledge of teaching and learning with colleagues through cooperation and interaction with others.

The criteria are fundamental to the qualitative assessment of pedagogical competence. Within the framework for these criteria there is also an overall assessment from different perspectives: from *theory* (knowledge about teaching and learning shown in the complexity of pedagogical reasoning) and from *pedagogical practice* (the ability to reflect on teaching and learning with the help of theoretical knowledge), and how well these perspectives are integrated with each other (Biggs & Collis, 1982; Kreber, 2002).

Figure 2 illustrates a model for an overall assessment that can be used as support in summing up the whole assessment of pedagogical competence (Antman & Olsson, 2007). The model was developed in the research project that studied the three first rounds of the Pedagogical Academy, and ties together pedagogical practice and theoretical knowledge about teaching and learning.

The model has two dimensions that on an overall plane show how pedagogical competence can progress. *Theoretical knowledge* is developed from fragmented knowledge via more and more structured knowledge to an integrated holistic understanding. Pedagogical practice that functions well is a crucial and irreplaceable part of pedagogical competence. The ability to reflect on teaching and learning is central. Pedagogical practice develops from being an unreflective or intuitive practice to being a more and more reflective and scholarly practice with increasing public exchange with others of knowledge and experiences.

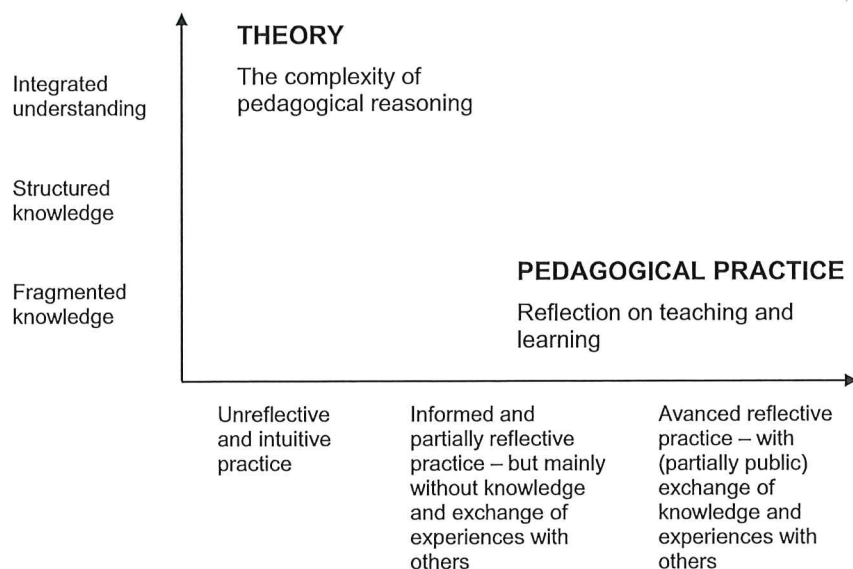


Figure 2: Overall assessment model

The purpose of all teaching ought to be to support student learning. The result of learning depends on the interplay between the teacher, the students and the subject. Teaching can be seen as an offer of pedagogical support to the student (the learner) and there is no simple correlation between pedagogical competence and the result of student learning. A pedagogically competent teacher, however, has to be familiar with the complexity of student learning. A pedagogically competent teacher has to show the ability to reflect upon and draw conclusions from student learning through increasingly reflective observation to systematic investigations and reflective analyses of student learning.

Effects

A crucial question is how a reward system influences pedagogical development at the faculty. Today a good 10% of the senior teachers have the competency level ETP. Most important of all, as pointed out earlier in this chapter, is that ETP attracts teachers from all categories and that a qualified majority of them are accepted to the Pedagogical Academy as active researchers. Teachers with ETP are found today in LTH's leadership, on the academic appointments boards, on the education boards, on the research boards and among the department heads. The development of LTH's Pedagogical Academy has resulted in a considerable amount of knowledge building regarding pedagogical competence and pedagogical competence that benefits the whole organisation.

The work of the academic appointments board has been especially influenced by the assessment of pedagogical competence. The chairperson (who also has an ETP) of one of LTH's two academic appointments boards in 2006 brought up the question of how pedagogical competence is assessed for discussion. She also referred to

experiences from LTH's Pedagogical Academy, especially the research-based model for evaluation of reflective pedagogical practice (figure 2, p.126). This has resulted in the academic appointments board putting focus on the applicant's ability to reflect on their pedagogical practice with the help of knowledge about pedagogy for higher education. Several of the senior lecturers who have applied for promotion to professor have been rejected in the last few years because they lack documentation of their ability to reflect and insufficient training in pedagogy for higher education. This has sent very strong signals throughout the whole faculty. One immediate and tangible result has been the strongly increased interest in participating in the qualifying course in pedagogy for higher education.

Now (autumn 2009) at LTH there is a project going on for the purpose of further documenting the process that has led to the present model for the assessment of pedagogical competence. Up to now representatives for both of the academic appointments boards, faculty leadership, and the pedagogical development unit have been interviewed. Preliminary data clearly shows the importance of the assessment model that has been produced by the Pedagogical Academy, such as the competence that has been developed through the reward system. LTH's leadership has consciously chosen also to appoint people with ETP to boards. Persons with experience from both reporting their own pedagogical competence and assessing pedagogical competence within the Pedagogical Academy use this competence within the framework of their task on the academic appointments boards. In that way the assessment work of the boards has been stimulated to be more secure and with a stronger foundation. A more detailed discussion of the result of this project is going to be published.

The research-based approach and the connection to basic academic values seem to have been of fundamental importance for the described development. Today LTH has a unique system for assessing and rewarding pedagogical competence that has met with great interest both nationally and internationally (Olsson & Roxå, 2008; Roxå, Olsson & Mårtensson, 2008). The strategy includes working actively to influence the local academic culture to having a more reflective and scientific attitude towards learning and teaching. The cultural and organisational consequences of this view of pedagogical competence consist of many questions: Who are considered to be pedagogically proficient? How does this influence their careers? How are active researchers involved? How are the university policy levels affected? Is there a correlation between rewards and allocation of financial resources? Are teachers who are considered to be pedagogically proficient by the university also appreciated for their teaching by students?

What is happening in other parts of Lund University?

As mentioned in the introduction Lund University is divided into eight, relatively autonomous faculties. Each faculty has one or more academic appointments boards with the formal responsibility for assessing applications for employ and promotion and for taking decisions on appointment and promotion. During the last seven years there has been an increasing awareness of the importance of also assessing pedagogical competences, not least of all through the description in the Higher Education Ordinance. The university leadership has clearly indicated to the faculties

that this has to be taken seriously, and the boards have also, to varying degrees, worked with putting together changed guidelines for applicants and experts. LTH's systematic and substantiated work has in recent years been presented and discussed at seminars common to the university, for faculty leadership and academic appointments boards. At present work is also going on – based on LTH's model – to rewrite the university's general common guidelines for assessment of pedagogical competence. Hopefully this can in the long term insure a more homogeneous and common view at Lund University on assessment of pedagogical competence.

In the area of the humanities and theology one has worked systematically and consistently for many years with offering the faculty's doctoral students and teachers pedagogical training. This is made up of modules where one can with a progression successively increase one's own ability to document critical reflection concerning teaching issues and student learning, and relating that to research in pedagogy for higher education and theory. In other words the faculty teachers have been offered support in developing such pedagogical competence that has been described above (see Roxå et al, 2008, for a more detailed description of this course in relation to 'scholarship of teaching and learning').

The faculty's teachers, however, have witnessed an uncertainty in how this view of pedagogical competence in fact permeates expert assessments that have been done in cases of formal employment and promotion. The area for humanities and theology has therefore given this issue priority in their development plan for the period 2009-2012 that "*Assessment of pedagogical qualification and competence when appointing teachers shall be based on a common view of pedagogical competence that is developed in the activities regarding pedagogy for higher education and the academic appointment board's grounds for assessment. This requires that routines and methods for assessment of pedagogical competence and pedagogical competence are developed.*" (Lund University, Humanities and Theology, the Board, 2008, p.3)

Critical aspects in changing how pedagogical competence is seen

Why do things happen? How does change take place in a social environment as complex as a university? One point of departure is that nothing happens without a reason. But happenings that are seen in retrospect do not make a definitive chain of cause and effect that can easily be described. When it is a question of looking at pedagogical competence in a changed way within a large university faculty, one can agree with Foucault that a phenomenon that seems to be new "hasn't just suddenly 'been discovered', one should not consider it [he continues] as a discovery but instead rather the result of a number of small, isolated, processes of different origin, that fall together, are repeated or imitate each other, find support in each other, separate themselves from areas of application, but come together again and gradually a new general method stands out" (Foucault, 1995:140). Change in a complex social environment seems in that way often, messy, difficult to grasp and chaotic.

In this section we shall not uncover the whole process that has led up to a new way to describe and consider pedagogical competence at LTH. Instead we shall talk about some of the isolated but critical aspects that make up the nuances in LTH's

pedagogical development during the last two decades. Central to this description is LTH's Pedagogical Academy. Without knowledge of its history, or of the development that it has followed up to now, it is not even possible to have a sketchy understanding of the chain of events.

At the beginning of the 90s LTH was a technical college unused to pedagogical arguments. Pedagogical training was offered only sporadically. According to the dean at that time, pedagogy was simply foreign to engineers; it "contained too little information per unit of time". But already at that time LTH was influenced by shifts taking place in the rest of the world. "The Linchpin"(SOU 1992:1), one of a series of government commissions on higher education, delivered its report and in its wake money was allocated for pilot projects on pedagogical courses for university teachers. At the same time the government carried out a broad university reform where the responsibility for higher education in many respects was decentralised to the universities. (Bauer et al.,1999). This decentralisation was followed at Lund University with a decentralisation of the responsibility for pedagogical training. Consequently, the funding the government had allocated for the pilot project went to different areas of the university of which LTH was one. The discussion which in the 80s led to and was summarised in the Linchpin, hooks in that way onto a striving towards decentralisation led by the government and the university leadership. The result was that LTH received funding for something no one had asked for, but because pedagogy was a non-subject within the faculty, at that time during the 90s, it was given a chance to grow and develop without being questioned.

During the period that followed a number of pedagogical courses were developed and carried out for teachers at LTH. Participation was voluntary and the influx of teachers with an interest in teaching and student learning was good. All of the courses contained small development projects that were accounted for in written reports. The number of pedagogical descriptions within LTH, written by teachers in the area of technology increased. The number of teachers with pedagogical training increased. The chances that they met each other, talked with each other and inspired each other increased. LTH slowly created its own language to describe teaching and learning. Slowly, the idea of making good teaching into a competitive advantage over other universities that were competing for the same students took shape.

The Pedagogical Academy was formulated in this spirit as a way of creating a reward system for good teachers. At that time, 2000, the sceptics had not yet focussed on the pedagogical discussions. Moreover, the dean, Thomas Johannesson, had gathered the department heads in an organ for leadership and development at LTH. It was also Johannesson who formulated the embryo of the Pedagogical Academy. The idea was refined in LTH's pedagogical council to be a mirror image of position of a docent, with a reward in money to the individual (higher salary) *and* the institution (more funding) as a prototype. But it was in a special project group that the criteria and procedure were formed. The foundation came to be the assessment of teaching portfolios. Within the group portfolios were written and what one should and could assess in them was examined. A draft of criteria was presented to the group of department heads and the dean. The previous ones were also invited in to nominate the pilot group of rewarded teachers. These would go through the process and test it at the same time. In return they were approved already from the start. This first group

of teachers contributed to, among other things, putting the criterion about a learning perspective as the first criterion.

In the years around the turn of the millennium and after, the pedagogical world changed again. Course evaluations became compulsory, the quality evaluations of the Swedish Agency for Higher Education were taken more seriously and in 2003 (after years of being mentioned in public service agreements and so on) a course in pedagogy became compulsory nationally for all newly appointed teachers within the university. Lund University was assigned to do a pilot project in this area (Lindberg-Sand & Sonesson, 2008). In addition, something else that was compulsory was introduced at Lund University: a two-day training course for everyone who supervised doctoral students. In 2005 Lund University's vice-chancellor formulated an appendix to the university's application of the Higher Education Ordinance's appointments procedure. From 15 years earlier at LTH having been a non-question, only for enthusiasts and interested parties, pedagogical competence now affected everyone. All of the teachers at LTH had to be prepared to report their pedagogical competences in order to have a chance to be promoted to professor. The pedagogical competence requirement was now "for real".

Nowadays teachers continue to be rewarded within LTH's Pedagogical Academy. Teaching portfolios are written which are assessed according to the formulated criteria; teachers are accepted to the Pedagogical Academy. In this way competence on how one writes portfolios and on how one assesses them has been built within LTH. In 2003 the possibility of cooperating with *Learning Lund*, a research centre at Lund University loosely connected to the Pedagogical Department, on a research project for the purpose of examining the whole assessment process arose. One analyses the documents and interviews of everyone involved in the assessment process. Besides this, and most likely the most important, generally all of the assessments during 2003 have been video filmed (preparatory discussions in the assessment group, interviews with the applicants and the discussions afterwards). In addition to the rewriting of the document that regulates the Pedagogical Academy and a more stable organisational framework at LTH (the pro-dean leads the board that decides whom shall be rewarded) perhaps the most important result will be an assessment model (figure 2) that supports the assessment of the portfolios' relation between theory (personal pedagogical philosophy) and pedagogical practice (teaching).

Since 2000 the external pressure has consequently been increased as a result of the requirement of accounting for pedagogical competences, but also because of LTH's internal collected competence of how such qualifications can be reported and assessed. Harvey and Stensaker (2008) discuss just such a relation between pressure on the organisation and the belief in one's own ability to deal with and learn from pressure from the outside world. The question to answer is if an organisation is stubborn, recalcitrant, passively yielding, strategically and falsely "obedient", or self-aware and full of initiative. The reasoning of the authors is that only in the latter case does an organisation grow in interaction with the rest of the world, it becomes stronger, which seems to be a relevant description of the Pedagogical Academy's importance and success.

Within LTH external pressure and the belief in the ability of the academic appointments board converged. In 2007 several members had been rewarded and functioned as assessors in the Pedagogical Academy. On the boards there were both personal competence in assessing pedagogical competences and knowledge of the assessment models that had been formed during the work with the Pedagogical Academy. It was probably that combination that led to the decision to take both the Higher Education Ordinance appointments procedure and the vice-chancellor's appendix quite seriously. The boards received then, at the expressed order of the dean, the help of the pedagogical expertise that had been built up around the Pedagogical Academy. Several promotions to professor have been stopped in LTH (which in the introductory example in this text illustrates). The reaction of the organisation was instantaneous. The influx of experienced teachers to the pedagogical courses increased dramatically. Several participants in this new group are negative to the whole development, something which is leading changes in some of the courses; from having been aimed at being an inspiration they now have a more mediating character. Moreover, it is becoming clear that several of these new participants have not been aware of this development. They have put all of their efforts into research qualifications instead of long term pedagogical competence development. They are now forced to rethink quickly.

The above account does not really claim to reveal any clear cause and effect relationships. Instead a few isolated but probably critical aspects have been reported in the development that during two decades have changed the view of pedagogical competence at LTH. The situation today is very different from 20 years ago. The focus is on a combination of external pressure and internal competence development, where undoubtedly the processes concerning the Pedagogical Academy have been crucial, and the fact that a long time has passed. It would be too much to say that these factors alone have caused the change, they have contributed to a great extent, but other factors have most probably played a role. Which factors these are and the role the interaction between them has played however remains to be seen.

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A Swedish perspective on PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE

Pedagogical competence is a key concept both in the Higher Education Act and pedagogy for higher education. In spite of this there is today still no distinct and well-documented nationally shared view of what is meant by pedagogical proficiency. How the concept pedagogical competence is to be interpreted has often remained undefined in theory and unreflected in practice. This has led to a diversity of local interpretations and strategies. At the same time it is possible to identify a common set of values based on the very same research into pedagogy for higher education.

This report is the result of two-year collaboration between ten Swedish institutions of higher education. Its purpose is to problematise the practice that has been established and the set of values upon which that practice rests. We want to encourage a dialogue with the intent of developing a common foundation and platform for substantiating, assessing and rewarding pedagogical competence. Thus opening new possibilities for continued development of a greater shared view of what pedagogical competence is, can be and can become.

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