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Quality of teaching as “quality of life” Evidencing the passion of professional development through teachers’ research engagement



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Outline of the presentation

(1) Background

What research engagement – why?

University Pedagogy (UP) modules for LC personnel for supporting research based teaching development

(2) A case example: UP5 course module in ALMS-format

(3) Implications: in what way has the module contributed to professional development and the quality of life of teachers?

- What is essential?

Closing: How to support this type of activities in CercleS network?
(Could we do something in global level to enhance local collaborations?)

Research engagement –What? Why?



Engagement..



..*with* research

Reading and using research

- As a source of enhanced understanding of teaching work (not as a direct solution to problems)
- Explorations for pedagogical relevance
- As a way of integrating insights from reading with the teacher's existing pedagogical practices and theories

See e.g.

S. Borg 2010, Language Teacher Research Engagement (state-of-the-art article in *Language Teaching*)

<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayFulltext?type=1&fid=7875438&jid=LTA&volumeId=43&issueId=04&aid=7875436>

S. Borg 2013, *Teacher Research in Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.



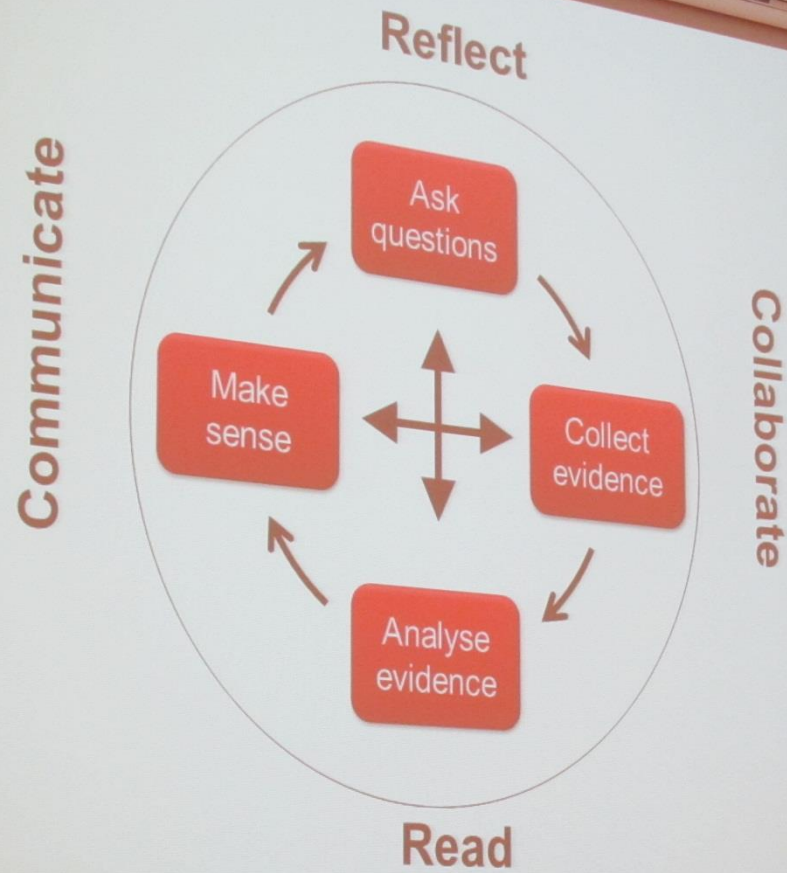
.. *in* research

Doing research

- Variety of conceptions on what counts as research
- Many teachers are unsure whether or not one's development work counts as research

See also: Lehtonen, Vaattovaara & Manner-Kivipuro 2015: Removing the barriers to research engagement - teacher motivation for research-based teaching in language centres. *Casalc Review* 1 (5)

- There are many types of research
- Any teacher can do it!



Professor Simon Borg
keynote in Rovaniemi, Finland
National Language Centre
days (29.5.2013)



WHY RESEARCH ENGAGEMENT?

“For example, it can help teachers [emphasis added]:

- **make deeper sense** of their work (new ways of seeing);
- **identify ideas** to experiment with in their classroom (new ways of doing);
- **extend their discourse** for discussing teaching (new ways of talking);
- **validate with a theoretical rationale what they already do** (new ways of knowing);
- **examine their planning and decision-making processes** (new ways of thinking).”

**In: Borg 2010, p. 414. Language teacher research engagement
-LANGUAGE TEACHING, 43(4), 391-429.**

See also:

Lehtonen, Pitkänen, Vaattovaara 2015: Encouraging teacher research through in-house activities: The approach of a Finnish University Language Centre. In S. Borg, & H.S. Sanchez (Eds.), *International perspectives on teacher research*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lehtonen, Vaattovaara & Manner-Kivipuro 2015: Removing the barriers to research engagement - teacher motivation for research-based teaching in language centres. *Casalc Review* 1(5)

Structures supporting language teachers' research engagement

at the University of Helsinki LC

Teaching development seminars

4-6 / academic year

Development Days

1-2 / academic year

Research seminars

3 / academic year

Mini-conference

1 / academic year

LC publication series

5-credit course modules in University Pedagogy

1-2 courses / academic year

Common room coffee sessions; Reading groups

Occasionally (invited by individual teachers)

Activities mainly organised and coordinated by the

Support for Teaching and Learning Unit

Together with Teaching Development Committee and Research Support group

A case example: UP5 module *Evidence-based development of teaching* (5 ECTS)

YP5 (5 OP) *Opetuksen tutkimuspohjainen kehittäminen*

UP5 (5 ECTS) *Evidence-based development of teaching*

For Language Centre teachers 9.10.2015-13.5.2016

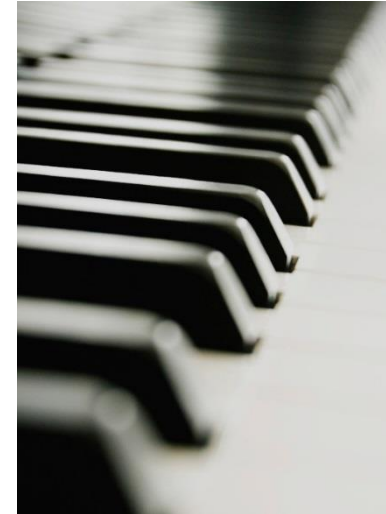
Organised as an ALMS-course
(Autonomous Learning Module)



Picture source: <http://www.helsinki.fi/kksc/alms/whatis.html>

In the heart of the course:

- ✓ Philosophy of Learner Autonomy
- ✓ A reflective practitioner – Working for understanding (e.g. Allwright & Hanks 2009; EP)
- ✓ Research engagement (with or rather: in)



”Ability to learn other than by following a course” (H. Holec 1997:9)

Karlsson & Kjisik & Nordlund 1997 (Eds.): *From Here to Autonomy*. Helsinki University Press

Participants and the learning environment:

- ✓ 13 teachers (6 different languages/professions)
- ✓ All engaged in research
- ✓ The course counsellor positioned herself as one of the learners (13+1)



UP5 MODULE AS A LEARNING COMMUNITY

Tasks for all:

- Pre course assignment on personal development interests + flipped classroom material *Reflective practitioner & Exploratory Practice*
- Only 3 common contact meetings: 9.10.2015 + 23.10.2015 + 13.5.2016

Tools for autonomy during the course:

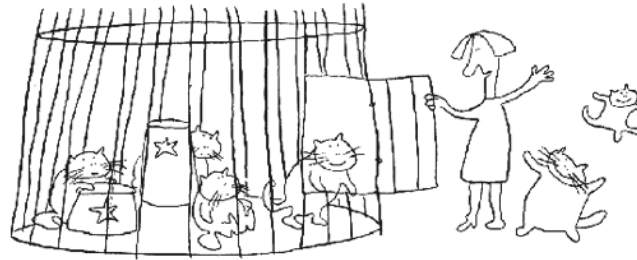
- Individual project plans (discussed with the counsellor)
- Peer group meeting sessions – “formal” & informal communities (small teams)
- Counselling sessions (2-4 meetings/teacher)
- Peer observation of teaching
- Reflective diary keeping
- Research literature
- As a task: preparing for presenting the development projects (13.5.2016, open for all LC staff)

Assessment (criteria based):

workplan – project presentation – learning report – achieving personal goals

50%-50% counsellor's evaluation + self-assessment





Profiles (N=13):

How many completed the course with success?
(carried out a research project)

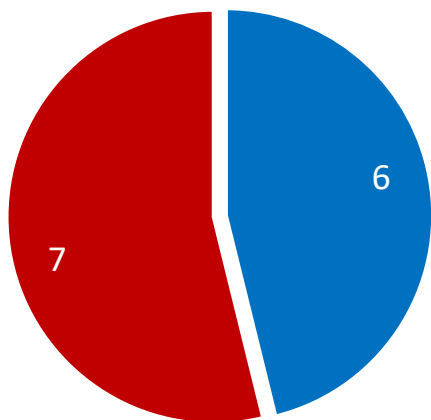
How many quit the course?

How was this course reflected on
by those who completed it?

**What can be achieved
with supporting research engagement?**

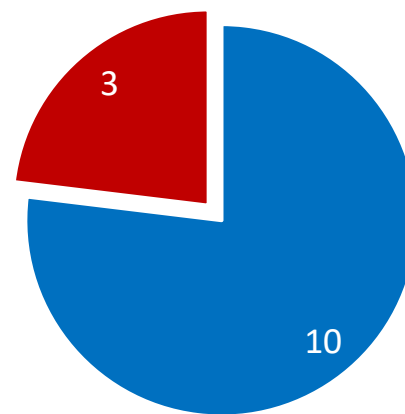
13 participants – profile distribution (1-2)

**How many
had well defined aims /
clear development
target from the start?**



■ Yes ■ No

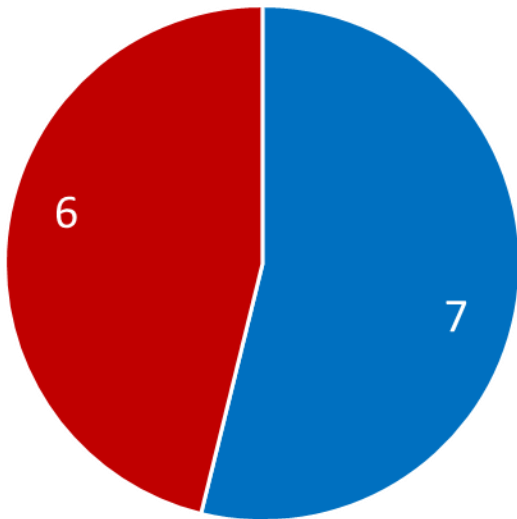
**How many participated
actively in common
meetings & together
designed PG sessions?**



■ Yes ■ No

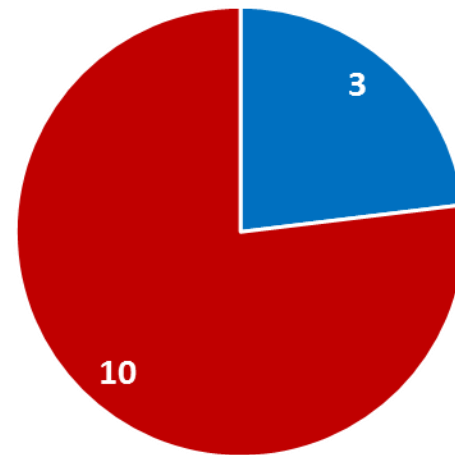
13 participants – profile distribution 3-4

How many were engaged in an informal PG team?



■ Yes ■ No

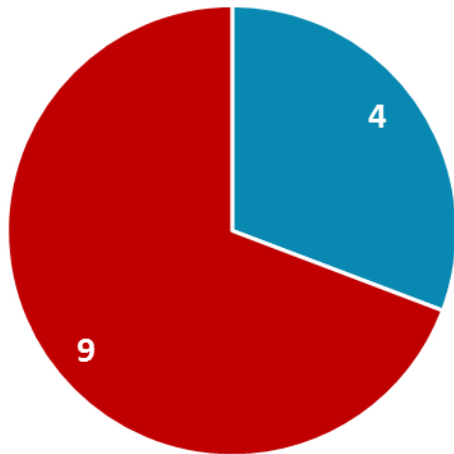
How many met the counsellor more than requested 2 times?



■ Yes ■ No

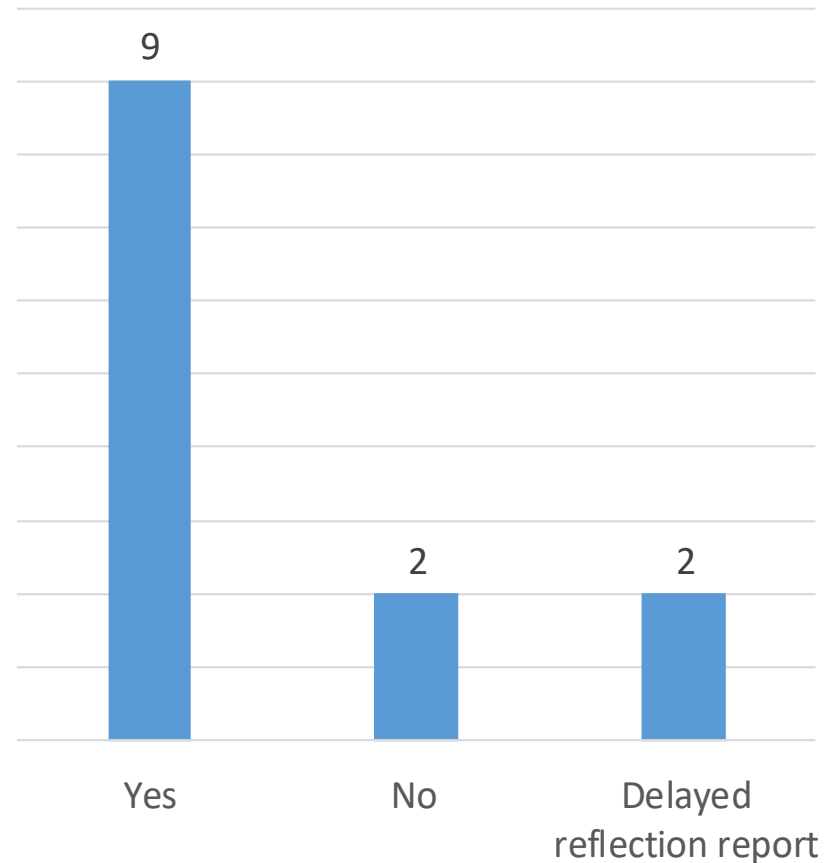
13 participants – profile distribution (5-6)

How many were active in reflection diary writing?



■ Yes ■ No

How many completed the course?



Who quit the course? (N= 2)

Profile *a*

- Well defined / clear goals
- Participated actively to common meetings & PG sessions
- was engaged in a close-knit (informal) PG team?
- met the counsellor more than requested 2 times
- was active in reflection diary writing

Profile *b*

- Well defined / clear goals
- + Participated actively to common meetings & PG sessions
- was engaged in a close-knit (informal) PG team?
- met the counsellor more than requested 2 times
- + was active in reflection diary writing

Of those who completed the course: (N= 9)

Well defined / clear goals



Participated actively to common meetings & PG sessions



Were engaged in a close-knit (informal) PG team?



Met the counsellor more than requested 2 times



Were active in reflection diary writing



Of those 4 that quit the course or have not turned in their final report:
none was engaged in a close-knit informal PG team.

Informal team profiles

(according to reflection reports and details discussed in counselling meetings)

Informal team A

- 4 participants
- Weekly meetings
- Sessions concentrated on sharings about the individual project progress
- Each had their own focus of interest (two rather similar)



Informal team B

- 3 participants
- Only few informal meetings
- Sessions pre-planned (common research literature, 'a reading circle') + catching up
- Collaboration also via email
- Common development interest



Echoes from those engaged in an informal PG team 1(2)

”Betty” from PG team B



In reading group sessions we also discussed our own projects and settled a lunch date for March in order to catch up how is it going with our projects. I also sent to both of my colleagues material concerning [details removed] that they both benefitted in their own projects. The other two members didn't seem to long for any more meetings in the middle of their other duties. Myself, I feel I had enough support from e.g. Johanna, but the more close collaboration with other colleagues would probably have made working on my project more fun and fruitful.

Keskustelimme lukupiiritapaamisissa myös omista projekteistamme ja sovimme maaliskuulle lounastapaamisen, jossa päivitimme sitten sitä, missä kukin on menossa. Lähetin myös molemmille kumppaneille [--] liittyvää aineistoa, jota he sitten hyödynsivätkin omissa projekteissaan. Enempää tapaamisia toiset eivät tuntuneet omien kiireidensä keskellä kaipaavan. Itse koin saavani projektin edetessä riittävästi tukea mm. Johannalta, mutta kiinteämpi yhteistyö muiden kanssa olisi varmasti tehnyt työskentelystä hauskeempaa ja antoisampaa.

Echoes from those engaged in an informal PG team 2(2)

"Annie" from team A



Our peer support group was caring, thoughtful and wise and I looked forward to the weekly meetings that provided both accountability and empathy. In my Pre Assignment for the course I wrote: During busy work periods...I see the piles of books on my desk, the half-there course that I've decided to revamp, and I wonder if I'm just making my life unnecessarily difficult precisely with this enthusiasm for research.. I had suffered from carrying out my work in enthusiastic bursts that burn out, but the steady pace of the course was truly helpful and a habit that I think I will be able to maintain.

(originally in English)

Echoes from those active in diary writing 1(2)

During the winter I have written about 12 pages of learning diary and on top of that, pretty much notes on what I have read. (--) I realize that my way of working [as a teacher] is nowadays more reflective and confident, and I believe that it's pretty much because of this project. ("Betty")



Talven mittaan olen kirjoittanut noin 12 sivua oppimispäiväkirjaa ja lisäksi aika paljon muistiinpanoja lukemastani. (--) huomaan, että työskentelyni on nyt tietoisempaa ja varmempaa, ja uskon, että se on aika paljon tämän projektin ansiota.

Echoes from those active in diary writing 2(2)

For me, the course 'events' – counselling, support groups, peer-feedback, for example – provided motivation to write the diary, and in return the diary provided material for the course events. (--) I read and then wrote about it in my diary, which then led me to read more – which leads me to conclusion that the diary keeping must not be an isolated event, but rather tied into a larger ecology of professional practice and development. ("Alex")

(originally in English)



A participant with 25 ECTS UniPeda studies (including two modules organised as project courses):

My University Pedagogy studies have been a good framework for my professional development and developing of my teaching in a target oriented way together with others. Particularly I have liked the modules in which we have carried out a teaching development project or research project of some kind. I have had a chance to collaborate with several teacher colleagues, and it has been especially fruitful thing in my Unipeda studies, perhaps even the most important of all. ("Betty")



Yliopistopedagogiikan opinnot ovat olleet hyvä kehys kehittää omaa opettajuutta ja opetusta suunnitelmallisesti yhdessä toisten kanssa. Erityisesti olen pitänyt niistä jaksoista, joissa on toteutettu oman opetuksen kehittämishanke tai pienimuotoinen tutkimus. Olen saanut tehdä vertaisyhteistyötä useiden opettajien kanssa, ja se on ollut itselleni opintojen erityinen anti, ehkä jopa kaikkein tärkein.



Implications

Evidencing the passion
of professional development
through teachers' research engagement

Elements of professional development

- what enhances the “**quality of life**”?

- **Research:** deepening understanding, giving new thoughts and aspects for the daily work - engagement *in* research makes it personal and stimulating
- **Contextual Reflection** – at least bits of time for it regularly
- **Sharing** the research literature & personal process with some colleagues
 - **NOT so important:** sharing the same development target or interests with the colleagues

Not research engagement alone, not reflection alone, not sharing alone – but all these put together!



Interested in international collaboration?

How to support research-engaged professional development in Language Centres?

Local + international support for teachers?

(Please contact now or later)

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UniPeda course modules at the University of Helsinki

Open for all members of the LC staff (5 ECTS each course)

University of Helsinki offers 60 ECTS

Tailored courses for the Language Centre personnel **20 ECTS (5 ECTS each):**

- **UP1** *Language learning and teaching in Higher Education*
 - **UP2** *Constructive alignment in course design*
 - **UP4** *Assessment and feedback in language learning* → A concluding Development Day to introduce projects for the whole community
 - **UP5** *Advising and counselling in language learning* OR
Evidence based development of teaching
- UP2 course for LC teachers was organised as a nation-wide course (2 contact meetings; online meetings; local teams in 5 LC's) during the spring 2016.
 - Something similar in international context??