Can knowledge and authority really be distributed?
Didactic implications and practice based examples of TBR and directed research communities

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U2016: Teaching and research integration - Barriers and possibilities (2014-2016)

Research based teaching as a matter of concern – under pressure due to rise in ‘teaching-only’ universities (UK, Canada, The United States).

The aim of the project is to explore different modes of integrating teaching and research in university education.

Focusing on University of Copenhagen, the ethnographic material consists of classroom observations, interviews and observations conducted during ‘ethnoraids’ on campus (HUM + SCIENCE) together with in-depth interviews and focus groups with students and staff.
Models for integrating teaching and research

A) Budding genius
B) Graduate seminar
C) Graduate slave
D) Directed community

Hasok Chang: Turning an undergraduate class into a professional research community. (2005, *Teaching in Higher Education*)
Ethnoraid – ‘Place yourself in the action’

An ethnoraid is an ultra short-term qualitative investigation. A larger team of ethnographers conduct ethnographic research (interviews and observations) in situ. Not a ‘voxpop’. Needs a clear and targeted focus and access to the chosen field. One methodological strategy among others.
Students as co-producers

Ethnoraid 2014 at H.C. Ørsted Institute, Faculty of Science, UCPH
Feedback from the students

- Fun and cozy – both a social and a scholarly event
- They felt invited into a ‘real’ project
- Working across year groups benefits study environment
- A feeling of apprenticeship
- Looking into the ‘engine room’ of research
- To get fieldwork experience in a ‘safe environment’
- Contributing to research is motivating
- To be part of the disciplinary collective
- Badges important – materialise T-R integration
Analysing the ethnographic material

MA course on Strategies for Cultural Analysis: 29+22 students have analysed and coded the ethnoraid observations and interviews. Students thus worked as co-producers of analytical insights and possibilities (2014 and 2015).

The exam was structured as a portfolio exam including 4 assignments to be handed in during the course and an overall reflection based on the portfolio.
Insights so far...

Students become co-producers of ethnographic material and analytical insights.

Learning is ‘doing’, originality is relativized, students and researchers enter a shared state of not-yet-knowing (cf. Chang 2005).

The research subject is distributed, authority becomes ambiguous.

-- However, challenges to...!
Challenges…
Students’ feedback on the MA course

Overall a positive response: “To integrate us as students in the research process has been interesting and motivating; this is something which makes me engaged as a student”

However, the MA-students also experienced difficulties in really knowing how their insights could benefit the research project as a whole:

• Uncertainty about the status of the students’ contributions:
  “And it was not clear, or I was not sure, how we exactly contributed to research.”

• Frustrating not to generate ‘own’ material; also a feeling of being the teachers’ ‘slave’ (cf. Chang):
  “I think this course has been truly difficult…(...) Maybe you should pick another theme than the one you are researching at the moment; it seems like we are ‘working’ for you.”

• Alignment between learning objectives and research objectives proved difficult:
  “It has not been clear at all what the relation between the [portfolio] assignments and the exam was”
'Dilemma-workshop': Can knowledge and authority really be distributed? (20-25 min.)

In a directed research community learning is ‘doing’, originality is relativized, students and researchers enter a shared state of not-yet-knowing (cf. Chang 2005). When students are co-producers of research the research subject is distributed and authority becomes ambiguous.

Dilemmas:
A. How can distributed authority and exam go hand in hand?
B. How can research ‘rhythm’ and course structure be aligned?
C. How to make students do research with you and avoid experiences of ‘enslavement’ or disempowerment?

Assignment: 3 groups are assigned 1 ‘dilemma-poster’ each.
1. Use 5-7 min. to discuss the assigned dilemma.
2. Write 3 suggestions for solutions (5-7 min.).
3. Rotate to the next ‘dilemma-poster’ and write feedback on your peer groups poster. Add other/new solutions if necessary (5-7 min.)