

Revisjonsprosess kickoff matnat October 31 2016

Constructive alignment og nye programbeskrivelser som et verktøy for forbedret studiekvalitet

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NOTE: References to sources are on the slides, not in these notes

We have a big process ahead of us. It is a mix of pedagogical aims and good intentions, and bureaucratic reporting. Both of those elements exist. I am most interested in the pedagogical side, and thinking about how ...

I'm going to do what I always teach people not to do, and that is to move quickly through a lot of concepts and ideas in a short time. But that is because I want to give you some hooks to hang your hats on, and starting points for seeking out resources.

- what is constructive alignment and what does it have to do with the revisjonsprosess?
- what are learning outcomes?
- alignment on the program level: curriculum mapping
- alignment on the course level: backwards design
- motivating colleagues

WHAT IS CONSTRUCTIVE ALIGNMENT?

Learning goals (learning outcomes) – læringsutbytte

Feedback and assessment – vurdering og vurderingsformer

Teaching and learning activities

The idea: students are focused on what they have to do to succeed – ie, eksamen

Take that to our advantage – nudge student's learning activity towards the things you want them to learn, at the level you want them to learn it.

Then, make sure that throughout the course, and the program, students have the opportunity to practice the skills, general competencies and knowledge.

Dee Fink – significant learning (2003)

John Biggs – constructive alignment (1999)

McTighe and Wiggins – backward design (1988) (baklengs design)

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Læringsutbytte - **Specific statements of what a student is able to do in order to demonstrate significant and thorough understanding and knowledge of the course material**

I am assuming that everyone here has seen and worked with learning outcomes before – so I am not going to talk in detail about how to write learning outcomes. Instead I'm going to talk about some of the more complex issues embedded in this process.

When we use learning outcomes (not just when we have them on a website, but when we use them), a number of things happen:

- we have a clearer idea of what we expect from students – it helps focus our teaching.

- students also have a clearer idea of where they are heading and what they should be aiming for – it helps focus their activities
- it can help us design appropriate and meaningful assessments

NEXT SLIDE:

We have outcomes defined on different levels: for a course, for a study program, NKR – which is based on the European Standards and Guidelines

Can think of them a bit like a Matryoshka doll - Russian dolls nested within each other
NKR gives us a framework. The program level outcomes do NOT need to be a mirror reflection of the NKR. And I encourage people not to start at NKR because it will mean your program outcomes are not grounded in the realities of your department and your study program and your colleagues intentions about what a chemist or a physicist or a biologist need to know.

Instead, start from the program level: If students are to be skilled scientists, who can solve real problems in a practical way, whether they become researchers, or entrepreneurs and product developers, or teachers, what do they need to know and what do they need to know how to do?

Then, check that against NKR – is there anything missing in the program outcomes?

One of the big dilemmas of learning outcomes is: what level of achievement does a learning outcome represent? Aiming too low or too high... Does a LO represent a minimum level of achievement, or average, or ideal?

-the answer to that is that in a way, it IS a minimal level. You want all successful graduates to achieve that LO. And NKR defines LOs as a threshold, that is to say, it describes what is needed to pass. But have they done it in an excellent, satisfactory or barely minimal way? There you have grades to differentiate...

The SOLO taxonomy is a tool, developed by John Biggs, that can help here.

- divides "understanding" into levels, and defines each level (describe)
- offers some verbs that describe what "understanding" can mean at each level
- the LOs pitched at the first three levels encourage "surface learning", and LOs pitched at the top two levels encourage "deep learning" (I won't go in depth)
- even at the bachelor level, at the program level, LOs should be at the relational or extended abstract level. (on a course level, there are times that the lower levels are appropriate)
- the grades that students get reflect how well they are able to demonstrate that they have achieved those levels of understanding.

Where NKR can also be useful is checking to make sure the program outcomes are appropriate in terms of level.

In the committee work, this was an area that a lot of different groups had some challenges with.

SHOW SLIDES FOR DIFFERENT LEVELS

A few things about program learning outcomes: you can have as many as you need but typically people recommend between 5-10 learning outcomes at the program level.

Then, you need to make sure that the program learning outcomes are actually reflected in what the students are learning...

ALIGNMENT ON THE PROGRAM LEVEL: CURRICULUM MAPPING

One way to help figure out whether learning outcomes, and also assessments, are aligned on the program level is curriculum mapping.

The program can be mapped to show how different courses build up the program learning outcomes. For any one given PROGRAM learning outcome, there are probably several courses that help students progress, from courses that INTRODUCE, courses that REINFORCE, and courses that help students MASTER skills or knowledge.

The idea of a matrix can also be a useful tool in the revision process. Mapping the current state of a study program can help you identify gaps.

SHOW EXAMPLES

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK AS YOU DO THIS PROCESS:

Coherence Questions

- A. Does each course (and required experience) contribute to the program SLOs?
- B. Do we offer students enough learning opportunities for each outcome?
- C. Does any course try to do too much? Is it possible for a single course to help students make significant improvement on all of the SLOs? What's appropriate?
- D. For programs that allow students to choose courses from a group of program electives: Is it possible for students to choose certain program electives and then not be exposed sufficiently to an outcome? If yes, what suggestions do you have?
- E. For undergraduate programs: Which senior-level courses already use assignments that align with program outcomes? Can we gather evidence of student learning from those courses? [mark these courses on the curriculum map with an "A" or asterisks]
- F. For graduate programs: Where in the curriculum can we evaluate for mastery of the outcomes? What does evidence already exist? [E.g., theses, oral defense.]

You can also add to the map or make a separate map showing the different forms of assessment being used.

Because one of the goals of this process is also to see whether the assessments being used actually are a good fit for the goals we have for student learning.

And also we want to engage students more actively, give them more feedback so they can improve their learning AND develop the ability to assess their own performance and their own level of understanding over time.

Those are called metacognitive skills, and they are very important – it is what it means to become an autonomous learner.

So what forms of assessment are being used, and when? Are all the first year students having only one final skoleeksamen for every course, with no opportunities for feedback along the way, and a lot of heavy cramming at the end of the semester? We know that that is not a very good structure for meaningful learning that lasts. It doesn't mean skoleeksamen is never justified – but all these choices can and should be intentional and reflected. Not done SOLELY because they are traditional, what we have always done. And cheap.

ALIGNMENT ON THE COURSE LEVEL: BACKWARDS DESIGN

On the course level, I think I have already mentioned backwards design, but what it means is that we start Etc.

REFLECTIONS

The schemas we use to write up the course and program descriptions can inadvertently push us to take a quick and shallow approach.

They can also be frustrating, because the format we are asked to use does not always align completely with the pedagogical goals. I say, start with pedagogy FIRST. Then fill in the mal once a meaningful process of review and revision has been done. And if you get frustrated with the discrepancy, it is important to remember: even these mal have been created with pedagogical intentions – AND they are what we use to communicate with students, so we do want to make them pedagogically right. And NKR's reporting requirements are NOT as rigid as what the mal sometimes make things seem.

In terms of motivating colleagues:

Article... make it meaningful. We do care about student learning. Be honest: acknowledge that it can be hard, time-consuming, and that it can feel like a bureaucratic exercise, but let's make sure we make it a pedagogical process, NOT just a compliance activity. Remind them, this is part of our teaching role – to review and enhance teaching – it is not an extra, it is a core responsibility

It is about improving student learning.