"One day, one problem" - applying SOTL on a course about teaching in higher education

At the Centre for Teaching and Learning at Umeå University, we are responsible for the development of university teachers’ pedagogical competence. One of the main purposes of our courses is to help teachers develop an array of teaching methods – including a sound basis for their decisions about which method to use. We work with teaching methods for student active learning that develop sustainable knowledge (Hattie, 2009), for example Problem Based Learning, PBL. Our problem is that this usually takes a lot of time on our short courses.

So we asked ourselves: How can we use SoTL to describe, develop and evaluate a method that gives key transitions in the university teachers’ journey towards pedagogical competence, both theoretically and practically (Dietz-Uhler and Bishop-Clark, 2012)? We wanted a group of teachers on one of our courses to learn more about PBL and to be active while doing this. We also wanted a meta-didactic discussion about it afterwards.

We found a method called “One day, one problem” (O’Grady, 2012) that we wanted to try. We had to redesign the method slightly to fit our context, by writing a relevant scenario in line with our expected learning outcomes. Apart from this we followed the suggested process in the article. We carried out formative and summative evaluations, and we as teachers documented the activity.

Our preliminary analysis shows that this method gave us what we wanted since the learners were positive towards working this way, and the self-evaluated learning process and product was given high grades. Our preliminary results and conclusion is that this method is a useful way to both teach about the PBL process and to work with course content. We also saw that SoTL, systematically searching, finding, developing and evaluating a new teaching method is a good way to develop both our own and our students’ pedagogical competence.


O'Grady, G. (red.) (2012). ”One-day, one-problem: an approach to problem-based learning.”