REVITALIZING HIGHER EDUCATION: HOW TO MAKE EVERY COURSE COUNT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO PRODUCE VALUABLE RESEARCH

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Abstract

Recently, attempts have been made at Danish Universities and University Colleges to combine teaching activities with research activities. The reasons for this trend are twofold. First, it is well-known that research does not have the intended impact, because the produced knowledge is often not applied in education and/or professional practice. In that respect, it can be argued that student involvement in research activities can strengthen the connection between research and education. Second, it seems to be a growing trend within research communities, in general, to include the perspectives of relevant participants and stakeholders (cf. ‘participatory action research’).

At University College Absalon, a number of research projects have been conducted that involve student participation. In the following, three of these cases will be presented. The aim is to demonstrate and explore the potentials and the possible dilemmas that this specific research strategy entails.

In the first case, the learning-potential of E-sport was investigated. E-sport is a relatively new learning area in schools and institutions. Therefore there is limited experience with how these activities can be organized in a pedagogical context. Accordingly, there is a need for new didactic approaches and designs. In the presented case study, students in social work developed different didactic designs. The aim was to enhance the children’s competence in terms of E-sport and digital literacy on a general level.

In the second case, the students investigated the conditions of play in daycares and kindergartens. The point was to explore the potential of using the students’ positions and learning processes as a way to produce knowledge through systematic procedures. Accordingly, the students were active co-creators of important knowledge that will possibly have an impact in the future on the development of the profession.

In the third case, the implications of outdoor exams were investigated. In the summer of 2018, outdoor examinations were conducted in order to investigate the students’ experiences, the interaction between the students and the environment, the aesthetic perspective, etc. Furthermore, the point was to strengthen the focus on the students’ practical skills.

Based on the referenced cases, the involvement of students in research activities seems to be a valuable strategy. However, this method also entails dilemmas and problems in terms of the students’ dual role as both students and researchers. These challenges will be discussed further at the END conference.

Keywords: Student involvement, participatory research, play, science, E-sport