What is education based on scholarship?

Conference themes: learning design and/or quality development

Paper presentation

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According to the Swedish higher education act, higher education should provide courses and programmes based on scholarship - but what does this mean in practice? In this project the library and the centre for higher education at Malmö university collaborate in order to explore how teachers, librarians and students interact in an education based on scholarship. The purpose of the project is to investigate how education can be designed in order to be "based on scholarship", and thus to improve quality in education, but also to develop the relations between the Centre for higher education and the library at Malmö university.

In previous studies we have seen that one of the most common questions students ask in the library concern scholarly texts (Lundgren, 2011), and also how the idea of academisation differ between different departments within the university (Ek, Ideland, Jönsson & Malmberg, 2011). From courses in higher education for teachers at Malmö university we see that the idea of "based on scholarship" can be expressed in many different ways, eg by using scholarly literature or through teachers that are also researchers. Thus, students, teachers and librarians are interlinked through this complex question of "based on scholarship".

In the project we ask the following questions:
How is an education "based on scholarship" perceived?
How is an education "based on scholarship" expressed in different educational activities?
How (If) do teachers, librarians and students work together with these questions?
Does an interdisciplinary environment influence the understanding of scholarship and the activities related to this?

We have interviewed teachers (programme responsibles), students and librarians from five different programmes within Malmö university. Respondents were chosen to represent different types of programmes (new professional, semi-professional and traditional social sciences programme).

When we have analyzed our interviews we see the following themes: how to integrate education and research, progression, the relationship between research and students' future careers, interdisciplinarity and the role of the library.

Our results show that an education based on scholarship is managed differently within the librarian practice, the research practice and the education practice. Members of the different practices identify and participate in research in different ways. We also see that education based on scholarship is often described as reading and using research literature. Both students and teachers think that students develop their critical thinking skills. The students' degree projects are described as important when it comes to integrating research and education. How research can be used in students' future careers is quite unclear. From our results it is obvious that the research within the university departments is invisible for the students. Also students do not participate in research.

Some of the most central questions that we see in our study relate to:

•   How the research within the departments can become more visible for students

•   How students, but also teachers and librarians, can be participants in a research community

•	How the research can be fully integrated in education, not only in theory and methodology courses

•	How research can be used and also be visible in students' future careers

•	If the role and competence of the librarian need to change in order to be fully integrated in an education based on scholarship

References:
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