Rapport för projektet “Teachers’ Writing Camp 2018”
Kvalitetsmedel för utbildningsvetenskapen
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Project leader:
Linn Areskoug, Department of Education, Uppsala University.

Project description

Background
Since 2015, The Department of Education (EDU) at Uppsala University and The Graduate School of Education (GSE) at University of California, Berkeley have cooperated in a number of projects. All of these projects have been firmly grounded in the pedagogies of teacher education from different perspectives, such as mentoring methods for pre-service teachers (PST), educating and supporting the mentors of PST, namely the cooperating teachers (CT), and exploring ways of community building for teacher educators at the university as well as in schools that engage in partnership with universities.

The international collaboration with GSE have opened up a rich dialogue between teacher educators at EDU. One of the issues that have been on the table is the identity of teacher educators and the relationship between theory and practice in teacher training. Another issue is how teacher educators might support PSTs’ writing skills in relation to their future profession. Sparked by these concerns, EDU initiated a partnership with the organization The Bay Area Writing Project (BAWP) which is located at GSE, in a project about writing as a method for professional development (PD) for teachers and teacher educators. The collaboration was sponsored by initiation grants from The Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education (STINT). The STINT funding covered costs for the planning of a writing camp for teachers and teacher educators, a study-visit to GSE and schools in Berkeley and Oakland for the Swedish steering group, bringing teacher consultants (TC) from BAWP to Uppsala, and sponsoring the accommodation of a small number of participants in the writing camp.

Benefiting from synergy effects of the STINT project, the project in the present case that received funding from the Faculty of Educational Sciences, was designed to target teacher educators and developing a format for PD of teacher educators. Taking the BAWP model as a point of departure, the basic idea was that by creating opportunities for teacher educators to delve into, reflect on, and explore topics relating to their practices, teacher education will benefit and develop too.

Purpose
The purpose of the project was to explore a model for PD for teacher educators at EDU. The guiding question of the project was: How can we design professional development for our teacher educators that is innovative, sustainable, and built around teachers’ and students’ needs?

Realization of the project
The faculty funding made it possible for ten teacher educators at Uppsala University to work together with TCs from BAWP between June 13th–21st. The writing camp itself were preceded
in a number of meetings with the project’s steering group at Uppsala University, consisting of Linn Areskoug, Per Wingård, and Carina Skeri. The corresponding group at BAWP was made up of the BAWP director Katherine Suyeyasu, and teacher consultants Stan Pesick, Raquel Jones, and Hillary Walker.

The writing camp participants in Uppsala were selected according to their role in teacher training and the EDU alumni organization at Uppsala University. They had different areas of expertise in the programs for elementary education as well as secondary education. Connections to course leadership in various courses, mentoring in field placements in both programs, classroom teaching, alumni development, and research were allocated throughout the group. The group set up was designed to benefit a direct impact on teacher education in the fall 2018, and at the same time as feeding on an interest in writing with the chosen participants.

The participants in the writing camp spent in total six days together at a conference facility outside of Uppsala. The program was intense from morning until late afternoon. All participants also shared meals on site. In the evenings, participants would socialize or spend time by themselves. The activities were mostly workshops (introduction of a topic, short writing, feedback, and discussion), and writing sessions in groups or individually. A reading in which all participants shared texts and more extensive feedback session (“author’s chair”) took place in the end of the writing camp.

There were three recurring themes throughout the six days. These were teachers as writers, civicly engaged writing, and problems of practice. All activities started out from one of these themes, but other topics relating to the themes unfolded along the way.

**Results**

All participants produced at least one piece of writing that was shared with a larger audience during the writing camp. Some of the texts were also shared with additional audiences after the camp. Participating educators’ diverse contexts were reflected in the assortment of topics they wrote about, the variety of audiences for whom they wrote, and the range of purposes for which they wrote. None of the texts were finalized during the writing camp, but several were well on their way. On July 1, one of the texts was published as an op-ed in Dagens Nyheter. During fall 2018, several other texts were used as teaching tools in participants’ specific school or university contexts.

Below is an overview of the main achievements of the writing camp. The products are actual texts or writing assignments for teacher education in fall 2018 and spring 2019.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Implication for teacher education</th>
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<tr>
<td>Writing exercise for pre-service teachers in their final field placement course (VFU 3)</td>
<td>Carina Skeri, together with Stan Pesick, designed a writing exercise for pre-service teachers in their third and final field placement. Approximately 60 students were enrolled in this course in fall 2018. This exercise was heavily focused on mapping evidence of learning with the students in school, and also the writing activity in itself</td>
<td>The texts from this assignment are valuable data for research on pre-service teachers learning and writing during the final years of teacher education. Also, this material is interesting from a research perspective on theory and practice discourses in teacher training. This writing assignment can be used as a prototype for similar assignments in field placement courses in the teacher training programs at UU. The design of the exercise was more specific than earlier semesters. According to Skeri, the writing exercise was motivating to the PST since they would represent and refer to their own collected documentation of student learning and their own teaching.</td>
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for the pre-service teachers to work with the assignment. The PST were pleased with the writing exercise. It had helped them to more clearly analyze and evaluate their own teaching.

| Writing exercise for pre-service teachers in the Classroom Management and Leadership Course (7.5 credits) | Carina Skeri, together with Linn Areskoug, designed a writing exercise for pre-service teachers in the Classroom Management and Leadership Course (7.5 credits). Approximately 173 students were enrolled in this course in spring 2019. Another teacher educator, Helena Påls, was also involved with the grading of this writing exercise. The exercise was focused on teachers’ stance on leadership in school. The rhetorical situation was a journal for practicing teachers. Thus, this writing exercise connected to the issues on civically engaged writing for teachers that Johan Schultz explored during his participation in the writing camp (see below). | The purpose of this assignment is inspired by the belief that teachers should have a clear voice in the public conversation. This needs to be grounded in teachers’ awareness of their stance concerning their professional identity. The writing exercise in the Classroom Management and Leadership Course, invited PSTs to think about their ideas on leadership the classroom, and to put their thought into words. According to Påls, this writing exercise helped the PSTs to carry out the course goal “give an account of, and analyze, how the interaction between students and teachers affect students’ learning and how teachers can create chances of learning”. The PST made connections with their own previous experiences of school and the course contents. Most importantly, the PSTs’ reflections were grounded in their own ideas on leadership, and not only reporting of the course literature, which helped the PSTs to a deeper understanding of leadership in school. |
| Historical Essay | Johannes Lundström produced an essay during the writing camp that is currently used in his History class at CelsiusSkolan, Uppsala. The essay is a model text for the high school students’ writing, and part of the assignment “A Fly on the Wall”, which was introduced at the camp by Pesick. In spring 2019, a colleague of Lundström, who is also a CT will use it in her classroom. | Lundström is a CT. His work in the classroom has an impact on PST mentored by him. In addition to this, the case that his colleague who is also a CT became inspired by Lundström’s work is a good example of the ripple effect of the writing camp as a format for teachers’ and teacher educators’ professional development. Furthermore, the writing instructions, the text, and the students’ texts might be used as empirical data for an article on writing in school, and theory and practice in teacher education, co-written by Areskoug, Pesick, and Lundström during spring and summer in 2019. |
| Op-ed in Dagens Nyheter, June 1 | A first draft of an op-ed was outlined during the writing camp by Johan Schultz, and published on July 1 in Dagens Nyheter. The article addressed the presence of extreme right-wing groups at Almedalsveckan in Visby. | Schultz is a CT, and as such an important part of teacher education. Even though the op-ed did not have a specific content relating to teacher education, he is a key-figure for the exploration and support in the development of a teacher educator identity, and the strengthening of teachers’ voices in the public media. One topic that was raised in workshops during the writing camp, connecting to Schultz’s piece, dealt with professional ethics, personal engagement and political stance when teachers are reflected as writers in the daily press. In addition to this, Schultz has played an essential part in the collaboration with Uppsala stadsteater, and theatre as a forum for civic engagement for teachers and researchers. On November 13th 2018, Areskoug, Schultz, and Uppsala stadsteater, arranged a panel discussion about teachers’ civic engagement, polarization in the public conversation, and writing. The panelists were media strategist Brit Stakston and Schultz, and the conversation was moderated by Areskoug. The event gathered about 30 teachers from schools in Uppsala. Further collaboration between Uppsala University and Uppsala stadsteater, in supporting |
Pen-Pal Project | Informal collaborative opportunities during the writing camp were considerably fruitful. An international collaboration around writing between Lundellska skolan in Uppsala and Life Academy of Health and Bioscience in Oakland, California, was established. During the fall semester 2018, writing camp participant, Carina Tångring, and writing camp instructor, Hillary Walker, were working with a pen pal project between their classes in English. The high school students write and share texts, as well as playlists on Spotify. During the fall, several students in the classes have talked to each other on social media.

Tångring is a CT as well as an adjunct professor in teacher training for secondary education. She is a course leader, and a visiting supervisor in practicum courses. Furthermore, Tångring is a course leader and instructor in English Methods Courses. This collaboration can be used as an example for PST in methods classes on English teaching, or any other kind of language classes. In fact, the pen pal model has also been used by Skeri in junior high school in teaching in the subject Religion. In October-November, Tångring had the opportunity to go on an EDU alumni field-trip to visit teacher education at University of Washington and schools in Seattle as well as teacher education at GSE and schools in Berkeley, CA. On October 29, Tångring met Walker’s class in Oakland. The field-trip concept, which is established in fall 2018 is organized within the EDU alumni organization. This is another format for PD for teachers and teacher educators. In spring 2019, EDU alumn and the Department of Education are collaborating in a field-trip with two alumni to teacher education at Université catholique de l’Ouest, in Angers, France.

Reflection (strengths and weaknesses)

The evaluation of the writing camp gave evidence of a successful format of PD for teachers as well as teacher educators. The main strengths of this format of PD was to spend time together at the conference facility away from campus and the regular workspace, the time to write, and to get and give feedback on each other’s texts. The evaluation testifies to the relaxed atmosphere between participants, and that it was crucial that you felt safe with your peers for this kind of intensive PD. The informal meetings and learning from each other in the breaks and at dinner was referred to as very stimulating in the evaluation.

Another strength was that the language of instruction was English (the writing could be in both Swedish and English). Several of the participants testified to that it was instructive to be a “student”, struggling with unfamiliar concepts in another language which forced them to think anew on their practice. If there would be another writing camp, the participants would wish for more time to share texts, work with feedback, and more time to tie conversations around writing together. Also, a clearer structure of the writing camp was asked for, as well as some specific suggestions for different text genres. Overall, the evaluations reported of very pleased participants.

Taking the evaluation as a point of departure, together with the various results, the writing camp did have an immediate impact on teacher education as from fall 2018 and onward. The writing exercises in VFU 3 and the Classroom Management and Leadership courses are the most evident examples of this. The model text and the pen-pal project touch upon a smaller number of persons than the writing exercises for PST, but nevertheless, they are important for specific methods courses in teacher education. The op-ed has primarily sparked an interest in collaboration with the surrounding society and showed the potential in building bridges between teacher education, PD for teachers, and cultural institutions in Uppsala and environs. In addition to this, the op-ed is an important asset in general discussions about teachers’
professional identity and stance, which apparently was interesting to in-service teachers in Uppsala.

The weakness of the writing camp as a format for PD (as it was organized in 2018), was that the participants had many different roles in teacher education. It would have been more beneficial from an impact perspective if the group set up was only course leaders in field-placement courses, or teacher educators in various methods courses in the different disciplines. On the other hand, if you would want to explore possibilities of building a community of teacher educators, you would need to reach a more diverse group of persons in different roles in teacher education. Impact on teacher education had to rely on ripple effects of individual key persons in the teacher training programs.

Another drawback with the writing camp in 2018, was that the conference format with full accommodation was expensive. Yet, the possibility of being in another place, away from your regular workplace where you could participate with full attention in joint activities, helped in getting the group together and it was crucial for a successful outcome.

It is hard to measure the effect of the writing camp due to the mosaic spread of actual products, but approximately 400 individuals (PSTs, teachers, teacher educators, researchers, and readers in the general public) were in one way or another, influenced by at least one of the different products from the writing camp. Even though the actual products from the writing camp were of different kinds, the work leading up to them were grounded in the participants’ experiences from the classroom and from educating future teachers. The inquiry, bottom-up, grass root level mindset was one of the greatest strengths of the writing camp.

**Discussion about results**

**Short-term implications**

The impact of the short-term results was obvious since students, PSTs, and teachers were actively taking part in writing exercises during fall 2018 and spring 2019 that had been designed during the writing camp. If participants are selected depending on key roles in teacher education, combined with a close proximity to course development as well as teaching and assessment of the course at hand, then it is likely for an immediate effect. Nevertheless, this is also dependent on the personal engagement in writing in teacher education as well as willingness to reform assignments in the program. Not all course leaders in the writing camp 2018 designed writing exercises for teacher education that were tried out the following semester.

In June 2019, Areskoug will organize a second writing camp for another group of teachers and teacher educators together with a couple of participants in the writing camp 2018, who will return as instructors. The program and activities will be similar, except for a sharper focus on writing exercises in various courses in the teacher training program. There will also be a more deliberate attempt to create resources for teacher education, such as interviews with participants and model texts.

In addition to the writing exercises, the other products had an immediate impact on the target groups as well, since they helped the teacher educators to develop their classroom practice in school which is an important point of reference in methods classes at the university. The writing projects that were affected by students in school in fall 2018 referred to the theme
problems of practice, and brought classroom teaching and pedagogies in teacher education up to the fore.

**Long-term implications**

It is hard to predict the long-time results of the writing camp. One factor that speaks for long range effect is that actual tasks for examination in courses were actually implemented, and once this is the case, that task often stays in the course for several semesters ahead since the course leader wants to evaluate, and if necessary adjust it.

Another benefit of the writing camp as a format for PD was the writing experience. *Teachers as writers* was one of the recurring themes. The “walk the talk” (or even “walk the walk”) mindset was essential for all activities. When designing writing instruction for students, it is important that the teacher actually experience the struggles with content as well as composition. The op-ed in Dagens Nyheter, and the ensuing interest from Uppsala stadsteater to collaborate with Areskoug around teachers’ voice in the public conversation ties into *teachers as writers* as well as the theme *civically engaged writing*. A joint project for the university and the theatre, called “Lärare recenserar”, is planned to be launched in fall 2019.

Taking on an identity as a writer, is important from an organizational point of view. Designing the PD as a retreat for a number of days was necessary. A shorter version with fewer days is possible, but it is important to keep the bottom-up, small group, close to practice oriented, and teacher-to-teacher grounded focus as linchpins as opposed to large-scale and top-down initiatives. Teacher educators have much to share and learn from each other, which takes time and trust. From a long-term perspective, writing camps as an alternative and complementary to conference style PDs could be a fruitful venture in building a community of teacher educators.

A lesson learned from the writing camp in 2018 is that a common goal for the PD should be established more clearly, but without neither interfering with participants’ individual needs nor restricting personal interests. A major strength in the BAWP model for PD, is the ripple effect strategy. Participants in a writing camp are invited to be instructors the next time teachers and teacher educators come together for a PD. As instructors they will share what they have worked on in the classroom concerning writing, and bring with them instructions that will be tested, discussed, and developed with the participants. This taking out ideas from the writing camp, realizing them in your teaching, and bringing back your experiences to work on them together with other participants the following year, is repeated continuously. For BAWP, this has proved to be a successful and sustainable model since 1974. Thus, writing camps has an advantage to more general large-scale initiatives, since writing puts an emphasis on individual professional growth due to the process-oriented method. For Uppsala University, this way of working with writing camps has just begun.