

Teaching Portfolio

Alf Mikael Rehn
Professor, Head of unit
Department of Technology and Innovation
SDU Innovation and Design Engineering
Email: aamr@iti.sdu.dk
Mobile: 93507224
Phone: 65501593



Pedagogical view: Educational practice

Teaching management, innovation, and organization is, in many respects, an embarrassment of riches. Not only is there no lack of interested students, as all the better schools have realized, but the field is such that teaching the subject can be both challenging, socially relevant and highly rewarding. We live, after all, in a world of management, innovation, and organization, where the students have been embedded in the subject on a very embodied level from their very birth. We also live in a time where new movements in the field emerge at such a rate that one never needs to lack good cases, interesting new developments or challenging new problems to address. This is of course also the great challenge inherent in teaching the subject area. In order to be a good teacher, one needs to constantly stay abreast of the developments in the field and the manner in which corporate life is evolving.

Here, I feel that my continued work with e.g. top management teams and policymaking agencies have enabled me to become a better teacher, and also to key my students into the necessity of understanding the field as constantly developing. This has also been my key underlying philosophy for teaching – by moving between the world of practice and the world of theory, and explaining the interactions between these, I can keep intellectually awake and transmit not merely regurgitated textbook fodder, but a way of looking at the field of innovation and management, one that is both practically and theoretically informed.

So, for the last fifteen-plus years I have been actively engaged in teaching on all levels of the university system. I have taught, in several countries and in a wide range of subjects, everything from introductory modules to series of doctoral courses.

Taken as a whole, I have lectured – in a lecture hall, in front of students – for approximately 2200 hours in total, not counting seminars and workshops. During this, my teaching evaluations have consistently been far above the average of the institutions I've worked at, and sometimes even effusively positive. I can, if needed, provide both evaluations as well as unsolicited letters of reference from students. A number of former students have, without my asking them, suggested themselves as references as to my educational expertise. Such references can also be accessed on my LinkedIn-page (<http://www.linkedin.com/in/alfrehn>). I was also awarded the Teacher of the Year at the School of Business, Åbo Akademi University, in 2010. It should however be noted that Åbo Akademi University, where I currently work, has lacked a systematic process for the collection of teaching evaluations. I thus lack course evaluations for the great part of the courses I've taught – partly as I've preferred to work directly with students and the student union through e.g. seminars and interviews to collect such information.

My teaching philosophy has always been the same: by taking the subject seriously as an intellectual endeavor and the students seriously as engaged adults, teaching is less the transmission of knowledge and more an integral part of research. I've consistently approached teaching as a mode of thinking and as an active exercise in the development of thought. Rather than teach a set unit, I've used my courses to explore different strands of a greater intellectual project, and emphasized to my students the necessity to engage with the subject, rather than with rote memorization.

My teaching has however greatly focused on lecturing, as I believe that there is a knowledge aspect to academic education that cannot be fruitfully achieved solely

through seminars and the like. All too often teachers choose the easy way out and focus on the modules that are easiest to teach, which for instance is why I insisted on teaching the introductory course when I took my chair in Finland. I believe students need to see their professors, basics should be taught by senior academics, and that lecturing is still the main way in which teaching should be conducted. I know this might seem a slightly idiosyncratic standpoint, but it is one that has served me well.

This does not mean, however, that I haven't worked on exploring alternative forms of teaching as well. I've continuously attempted to vary the didactics I've adopted in courses, and have utilized both case study methods, intensive seminars, ethnographic works, creative writing, online teaching and various other methodologies in my teaching. I do, however, see these as complements to lecturing, not necessarily substitutes for the same.

Teaching experience

Development

Turning to development work, I've developed not only individual courses but also programs and program modules. I've developed, from the ground up, approximately 30 different modules, on all levels. In this area of my work I've focused specifically on linking courses with what's happening in the world of research, as well as bridging the perceived chasm between theory and practice. Having worked internationally as a consultant, and thus having extensive knowledge of the working practices of corporations, I've tried to merge this into my teaching both through case studies and by engaging companies directly in my teaching. My course development has normally been one of developing entirely new courses – 50% of the courses I introduced at Åbo Akademi University were brand new, and about 80% of the courses I introduced at the Royal Institute of Technology have either been brand new or complete overhauls, keeping nothing but the name and the general topic. Such work has consisted of developing new lectures, bringing in new literature and new theoretical frameworks, as well as introducing new ways of working (e-learning, portfolio methods, and so on). Many of the new courses I've introduced have been extremely well received, by the universities and the students alike.

I've also developed entire programs and program modules. When I took on my chair at Åbo Akademi University, I planned and oversaw a complete restructuring of the entire program, from basic to master's level, including introducing a series of courses (12 in all), designing the program, and implementing the practical change. This undertaking, which took two years, taught me a lot both about the administrative intricacies of educational reform (this program was also a reaction and adaptation to the Bologna-process, which complicated matters greatly) and the difficulties of enacting a large-scale educational change. In 2012, I again revamped the entire program of Organization and Management at Åbo Akademi University, this time emphasizing practical management skills on a bachelor's level, and enhancing theoretical focus on master's level. In this revamp, I further increased overall flexibility and branding, so as to attract a greater number of students and adapt to our students changing work- and study-habits. I have, in doing so, managed to raise the number of applicants to our master's program by over 300%, ensuring that we are currently the biggest master's program at the university – going from being one of the smallest.

At the Royal Institute of Technology I took an active part in developing a master's program in industrial management, as well as being the sole developer of the entrepreneurship and innovation module therein. I have also developed a one-year master's program in entrepreneurship and innovation management which started in autumn 2008, and which in the first round of applications had 800 students vying for 15 open slots. To this comes the development of modules. I have taken part in designing, overhauling and teaching modules in entrepreneurship and innovation in both Finland and Sweden. These have normally gotten very high marks in student evaluations.

At the University of Southern Denmark I've been hard at work to redesign a program entitled Product Development and Innovation, which is an engineering program with a large part of management and entrepreneurship. This ongoing redesign has forced me to deal with issues such as what is needed from a contemporary student, particularly one who is expected to have extensive knowledge of technology. It has also forced me to work with issues such as digitalization and emerging technologies, and how such might be taught in the most efficient manner.

Teaching

I would further like to point out that due to fortuitous circumstances, I've had the opportunity to teach over many a disciplinary boundary. Åbo Akademi University emphasizes these kinds of crossings, with the result that I have taught people from very varied backgrounds in my courses there. My advanced seminars have included people with backgrounds in physics, engineering, psychology, gender studies, sociology, economics, biology, theology, law, linguistics, cultural studies not to mention the obvious management students. When revamping the Master's program, I paid particular attention to designing it to be suitable for various backgrounds, regardless of whether students had previous experience in management studies. At the Royal Institute of Technology, the work I did with the Stockholm School of Entrepreneurship meant that I in addition to teaching engineering students taught both at and to students from the Stockholm School of Economics, the University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, and Karolinska Institutet (one of the world's foremost medical universities). In other words, I could in a class have both MBA students, design students, medical students, and the odd

doctoral student in e.g. biotechnologies, with the attendant challenges for pedagogy. I've however always enjoyed this challenge, and felt it improved the teaching of particularly innovation, as the varied backgrounds could then be used to challenge students and inform the discussions.

Obviously, as a professor I also supervise master's theses. Over the last ten years, I've supervised more than 150 such, usually as the sole supervisor. In this area, I believe the most important part of supervision is to enable the student to find his or her own voice and support the project in a manner that makes the experience meaningful for all involved parties. In order to achieve this, I've experimented with a number of methods, including allowing more idiosyncratic methods of reporting studies. Three of the master's theses I've supervised have later found publishers (one has actually sold quite well as a book in project management), and I am currently working with two former students to develop their theses into publishable form.

When it comes to individual courses, I've taught so many that I've opted for presenting a selection of courses, mainly in order to give a feel for the kind of courses I've engaged in. On an undergraduate level I've taught:

- Introduction to Industrial Management (introductory level)
- Introduction to Management (introductory level)
- Innovation Management (basic level)
- The Philosophy of Innovation (advanced level)
- Value Theory (advanced level)
- Advanced Strategic Theory and Knowledge Management (advanced level)
- The Production of Knowledge in the Social Sciences (advanced level)
- Management Consulting (advanced level)
- Ideation – Developing a Business Idea (basic level)
- Planning – Developing a Venture (basic level)
- Human Resource Management (basic level)
- Leadership (basic level)
- Theory, Culture and Organization (advanced level)
- Critical Organization Theory (advanced level)
- Business Cultures (advanced level)
- Organization Theory (advanced level)
- Work and Labor (basic level)
- Strategic Management (introductory level)
- Strategic Management (advanced level)
- Strategic Praxis (basic level)
- Management – Traditions, theory and trends (advanced level)
- Technology Entrepreneurship and Business Development (advanced level)
- Theories and Methods of Technological Change (advanced level) and several others.

These courses have had from 10 students to more than 200, and I can state I'm comfortable in both extreme cases. I've tried to develop and engage in courses with a lot of students, as I believe it is important for the universities to strive for educational efficiencies. For instance, I redesigned an entrepreneurship course in a manner so as to take it from 50 to 150 students, receiving improved student evaluations with a developed syllabus, thus showing that courses can be economically effective without sacrificing quality.

On the level of doctoral courses, I've participated in and led about 20 of these, often together with an international faculty. I have taught both advanced organization theory, on journal publishing strategies (a course/seminar I've promised to run again at Copenhagen Business School), creativity as well as power and ideology, usually taking the same kind of approach I utilize in master's level-teaching.

Formal pedagogical training

Other activities related to teaching and teaching development

I also want to note that I have some experience in developing teaching materials. Together with professor Dan Kärreman I edited *Organisation – teorier om ordning och oordning*, which has been used for teaching advanced organization theory in both Sweden and Finland. My book *The Scholar's Progress* has been used as teaching material for postgraduate students in at least Finland, Sweden, the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and Israel.

The book on power I co-wrote with professor Mats Börjesson (sociology, child and youth studies), *Makt*, is used as a textbook in several Swedish universities. I've recently written the innovation and entrepreneurship-section of a major new textbook in industrial management (together with professor Marcus Lindahl), and recently published a short textbook entitled (surprise!) *Innovation*.

As an additional remark: I sit on the advisory board of the *garagErasmus* Foundation, which counts among its aims to make entrepreneurship something more naturally and normally integrated into university teaching in Europe. As an initiative supported at the very top levels of the EU and the EC, I see this as a good way to continue the engagement with entrepreneurship that has long colored my teaching and mentoring of students.