

## **Breakout Session I: Education Research and Pedagogy**

### **Title: Assessment practices in higher education**

**Author: Astrid Birgitte Eggen** *is professor of education at University of Agder. She is currently department head at UiA and member of a national research group in student assessment.*

The overall objective for this breakout session is to further explore possibilities of a joint research project in the practices of assessment in various programs in higher education. The knowledge of the practices of university personnel when it comes to the processes of learning and teaching including the application of standards in assessment is limited. University of Agder is implementing European Qualification Framework (EQF). The challenge for universities within a mass university society is to build instructional, assessment and evaluation capacity in order to provide suitable learning and teaching environments for all students. The EQF for Higher Education was introduced in Norway in 2009. EQF is based on the idea of utilizing terminology for the purpose of assuring equal use of objectives for all educational programs. The Norwegian framework is closely related to the European framework adopted in Bologna and Bergen in 2005. This framework is constructed at three educational levels: Bachelor, Master and PhD, and over three dimensions of education consisting of knowledge, skills and competency. Moreover, cumulative progression is an integral part of these levels. 'Learning outcomes' is a description of the education, which students at various levels of completion ought to have acquired over the course of a program or course. Learning and teaching are processes that lie at the forefront towards obtaining learning outcomes at the various levels defined in the EQF. However, it must be stated that it is neither a goal for learning nor teaching (which we often see in educational contexts).

EQF is a part of a national and international system for development and assessment of students' learning outcomes or educational results. Assessment has both a technical-logical aspect concerning how the assessment is conducted and an ideological, value-based aspects concerning why and what we choose to assess and on which criteria. This also characterizes what we emphasize or value in education (Dobsen, Eggen, & Smith, 2009) seen from personal and value based perspectives as well as perspectives related to disciplines and professions. The purpose of this project is get behind the instrumental as element of a qualification framework and empirically show the professional, pedagogical and ideological dilemmas or paradoxes involved with implementing this within a selection of programs, the central questions of which are the following:

#### **Which discourses and practices are seen in higher education over the course of implementing international/national/state standards?**

- How is standard framework interpreted, understood and used with regard to the construction of learning outcomes, and which working forms and assessment forms are selected based on this implementation?
- Which expressions of the educational program's value are contained in the abovementioned practices?
- How is an educational program's need for association with research and development work maintained?
- How is an educational program's need for association with practice in other arenas (school health care, internships, etc.) other than within higher education?

The origin and implementation of EQF is part of a system for the development of academic programs and teaching as well as student assessment/assessment of the entire higher education system. The occurrence of research and thereby knowledge regarding ideological aspects of assessment in higher education in Norway is relatively rare (Barstad, 2013; Dysthe & Engelsen, 2009; Gynnild, 2003). However, internationally speaking, rational, ideological and value-related aspects of assessment are research topics (Brown & Glasner, 1999; Bryan & Clegg, 2006; Knight, 1995). The theoretical starting point of this project is that the assessment systems developed by us are the way they are because of the tension and power/interest disputes existing among various ideologies, and that the implementation of these systems happens for this reason as well (Popkewitz, 1990).

## **Breakout Session I: Education Research and Pedagogy**

### **Title: Increasing Pro-social Behaviors through Strength-based Assessment and Intervention**

**Author: Philip D. Nordness**, Associate Professor, Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders, UNO.

[pnordness@unomaha.edu](mailto:pnordness@unomaha.edu)

Internationally the value of strength-based assessment has received considerable recognition (e.g., Lappalainen et al., 2009; Obel et al., 2004; Rothenberger & Woerner, 2004). The increasing trend towards a more strength-based approach to educational and therapeutic service delivery in Scandinavia and Europe has led to the need for standardized, psychometrically sound assessments that measure individual strengths.

In the United States, one of the most widely used strength-based assessment instruments in educational and mental health service delivery is the Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale-2 (BERS-2; Epstein, 2004), which is a standardized, norm-referenced assessment that measures the strengths of children 5 to 18 years of age. Given the increased call for strength-based assessment in Scandinavia, the BERS-2 was translated into Finnish and its psychometric properties were investigated. The purpose of this workshop is to discuss the utility of translating BERS-2 into Norwegian and investigating its psychometric properties in Norway.