

## **Developing teachers for the 21<sup>st</sup> century by focusing on professional competences**

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### **Research topic/aim**

The quality of the education system is central for both assuring that individuals can achieve their potential and that we together can build a sustainable society. One key ingredient in the education system is competent teachers and therefore teacher education becomes a central issue. It is given that teachers need to command the subjects that they teach, but equally important is to be able to function in the teaching situation and thus be a professional teacher. One way to approach this is to focus on the development of generic teacher competencies such as autonomy, critical reflection, self-knowledge, cooperation, communication, creativity, digital competence, and ethical attitude. However, to do that successfully, we believe the student is helped by being engaged and approaching the task entrepreneurially, i.e. as an actor that independently and together with others takes initiatives to reach goals. Based on this the aim of this research is to understand and analyze the role student engagement and entrepreneurship play in student teachers' development of generic teaching competencies throughout their education.

### **Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework is based on student engagement literature, with a focus on higher education as well as the literature on entrepreneurial learning especially focusing on non-business contexts.

### **Methodology/research design**

The study is performed at a University in Sweden providing extensive teacher education programs. Participants of the study were 1) teachers involved in the teachers education programs and 2) student teachers in their first year of teacher training. For 1) we used workshops, lesson plans and teacher educator reflections to find ways to work with professional competences and based on this we designed a course for 2) where the voice of students were captured in student diaries, class interaction and reflective assignments.

### **Expected conclusions/findings**

The preliminary findings are that teacher educators' awareness of generic competences seems to be crucial for bringing attention to this matter in teacher education, facilitating teacher professionalism. We also found that involving students in a more extensive way in their education and using an entrepreneurial attitude may contribute positively to their development of generic teacher competencies. Moreover, there are ways to work with generic teacher competencies through deliberate work, for example, through learning goals, as topic in lessons, assignments and examinations. In addition, challenges that relate to problems of balancing subject knowledge and generic competences were found.

The expected result is that we will be able to generate models of how to work with development of the generic teaching competencies.

### **Relevance for Nordic educational research**

As the teacher profession faces new challenges in contemporary and future society, such as teacher attrition, increased diversity and the temporality of knowledge, competences other than subject specific can be crucial. Hopefully, our research can inspire teacher educators in different educational programs in the Nordic countries to also work with generic teaching competencies in conscious and strategic ways.

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