

Teaching Portfolio (5 March 2020)

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This is a teaching portfolio in accordance with instructions by the University of Jyväskylä (<https://www.jyu.fi/en/workwithus/academic-career/teaching-portfolio>). Here I present my teaching and pedagogical ideology, as well as my development as a teacher, from the perspective of the position of a Senior Lecturer that I am applying for today. Titles and topics covered are mandated by the template. The instructions allow the inclusion of 3 samples with specified reason of inclusion. I provide the following web links with specifications:

- <http://users.jyu.fi/~nieminen/kj19/kayttojarjestelmat.pdf> – This one is in Finnish, but I hope it can serve as some kind of evidence of the kind of course material I have produced since about the earlier third of my current career. This is part of a larger set of course material containing exercises and tutorials (linked from the preface / “Esipuhe” in Finnish). I license the whole batch for use by any teacher anywhere, if somebody finds it useful. I talk more about open licensing in the next sample.
- https://www.dropbox.com/s/6nyxax2gp0ck1gp/Example_video_2020-03-06.mp4?dl=0 – This one is in English. It is a 15 minute video improvised after office hours on the deadline day of this application. I felt that my communication towards You, my application evaluator, will lack depth unless I provide a direct communication including my voice and face. For more information, please watch the video and take notice that the depth of communication and level of intimacy in communication is a deeply important factor for me when I think about teaching.
- <https://archive.assembly.org/2019/assemblytv/introduction-to-demo-making> – This one is in English, too, but with some unfortunate technical glitches (some missing words) due to unknown issues not under my control. This is a live lecture which illustrates a few of the things listed in my CV: student recruitment, marketing, and pre-curricular guidance. If you already watched my other sample video, you will recognize some intentional mannerisms being used. This also demonstrates my current “worst-case-output”: Due to uncontrollable external variables, I kick off the lecture with no sleep, no food, no break after a day of building a sponsor booth from which I ran to the stage. Graphics resolution was different from information given beforehand which broke our example visually. I was promised 45 minutes by one producer and abruptly called to finish at 40 minutes by another. Nevertheless, the kicked off 3-day workshop was successful with quite positive participant reviews. I let you be the judge of the kick off lecture itself.

1 Pedagogical thinking and training

Theoretically, I navigate my current thinking about learning using the roadmap given by the theories collected and organized into a “triangle map” by Illeris (2009). When I come across new theories or techniques, I tend to map them in my mind in relation to those basic examples. The collection was my roadmap through my own pedagogical studies in adult education (APO-studies, detailed in Finnish by Laine and Malinen 2009).

In my mind, any theory of learning ever devisable is necessarily an incomplete viewpoint or perspective into a complex and ultimately unexplainable phenomenon. When that promise and restriction is understood, each learning theory is a wonderful lense through which I can analyse some specific aspect of my work as a teacher and try to become better in this somewhat arcane art. It is always more useful, but also more difficult, to pick two or more lenses at a time to get a wider or more holistic view.

I find a lot in common between my current attempts to become a better teacher and my earlier attempts to become better in competitive dancing – and I hypothesize this is valid for any kind of expert training including the one that university teachers should help their students with: To really master a skill, I should pick up one small aspect at a time, improve that aspect to its current achievable maximum and return to it later after improving other aspects one at a time. Each show on stage – be it a dance or a lecture or a student guidance session – is an ephemeral moment in time in which the responsible performer can only excel if most of the details that the body and the mind should do have been trained to be instinctive and the performer can stay

in control of the situation and adapt to changing conditions like the mood of the student right this morning. Only in those actual situations is it possible to train the final true skill which is the adaptation to the changing and unexpected environment.

Which dance I prefer to be training at the moment? I currently focus on thinking about values: Which are the values of our institute? How are they written out in our official specifications? Are we committed to the values? Do we agree on their meaning? Do we implement them in our daily work as teachers in our curricular choices and especially in our face-to-face interactions with our students? I do like the value statements in the Finnish University Law, the strategy of our University, and the learning objective definitions of our own curriculum. Yet, I think work remains to be done in the implementation side of the issue.

Ideologically, I am in the trenches of critical pedagogy re-reading Freire (1968) in the modern context. So much of our actual working environment and rules are in contradiction with the values that are supposed to be in effect. We are oppressed, and this must change.

2 Teaching and supervision experience

Technically speaking, over the past 15 years I have taught 18 instances of 6 different courses: Programming 1, Programming 2, Operating Systems, Introduction to Computer Graphics, Physical Models in Computer animations, and an orientation course to Master studies. I have given a countless number of exercise sessions and visiting lectures. I have guided 500+ students from the beginning of their Master studies to the current situation – many of them graduated. Number of individual student contacts must be in the thousands.

3 Contribution to teaching

I think the best way of developing teaching on the university level is the multidisciplinary staff trainings offered as “YPE” and “APO” in our university. I listed as my recommender in this application Anita Malinen who leads the APO studies – she can verify my plans to participate as an instructor in the university pedagogical studies.

As long as I remember, I have worked in the curricular development workgroups of my own department. I wish that through this application to the position of Senior Lecturer I could step up in this work, too, and be better equipped with tools to bring improvements to my community.

4 Teaching competence

(This section is apparently for documenting officially evaluated trial lectures which I have not done.)

5 Production of learning materials

I advocate open information. I want to show by example and by encouraging hands-on experiments. See the samples linked in the beginning of this portfolio for some examples and explanations of what I do and how.

6 Other merits in teaching

I got an honorary mention from our student subject association Linkki Jyväskylä ry in 2017 and honorary membership in 2018. In 2019 I was invited to speak in the annual ceremony of the association. I do my best to act upon the values of academic freedom, well-being of the individual, and professional development of our students. It makes me happy that they notice this, even if my course assignments are tough. Student feedbacks are well above 4/5 on my regular courses. The fact that I am invited to arrange programming workshops in established events year after year is, in my opinion, telling its own and positive tale about my skills.

References

- Freire, Paulo (1968). *Pedagogia do Oprimido*. (later translated to your favorite language).
Illeris, Knud, ed. (2009). *Contemporary Theories of Learning. Learning theorists. . . in their own words*. Routledge.
Laine, Timo and Anita Malinen, eds. (2009). *Elävä peilisali: aikuista pedagogiikkaa oppimassa*. Kansanvalistusseura.