

PUT ON YOUR THINKING CAPS!

Some food for thought about
teaching and learning



A wise man learns from experience and an even wiser man from the experience of others. (Plato)

Take a moment or two to consider the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements from Brown and Atkins (2002) about teaching and learning in higher education. Are they true in your context at the University of Tartu? Why or why not?

Lecturers in universities have three functions: teaching, research, and management.

Effective teaching is complex, intellectually demanding, and socially challenging.

**before you state your opinion, consider what each of these components might mean in practice and whether or not anything is missing.*

Teaching takes place in the context of a department or institution that often has unexamined traditions and conflicting goals and values.

To teach effectively, you need to know your subject in a deep sense, to be able to think and problem solve, to reflect on an appropriate approach, to select key strategies and materials, and to organize and structure ideas, information, and tasks for students.

Bad teaching can be effective because it forces students to study more intensely.

“Effective” teaching can be considered the same thing as successful teaching, meaning that students learn what is intended.

Research can be described as ‘organized curiosity’ and teaching as ‘organized communication.’

Teaching ability (in contrast to research ability which is often assessed for the same purpose) is not often estimated for promotion purposes because there are no objective measures of teaching.

Some further questions for consideration:

- ❖ What is ‘spoonfeeding’? How does it differ from teaching?
- ❖ Which do you prefer, lecturing or small group teaching?
- ❖ Three dimensions of teaching are:

Systematic.....Slipshod

Stimulating.....Boring

Caring.....Uncaring

Which of these dimensions do you consider most important?

Which do you think your students consider most important?

- ❖ What are, for you, characteristics of effective teaching?

Brown, G., & Atkins, M. (2002). *Effective teaching in higher education*. London: Routledge.