

# Improving theory and practice integration in teacher education: An example from the subject of English

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# Challenges in Teacher Education for English

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1. Teacher training programs need to cater for students' development of both content (subject-matter) knowledge and pedagogical-content knowledge, coupled with classroom application
2. Lack of subject-focused teaching practice during ordinary practice periods at schools.
3. Desire for better integration of theory and practice
4. Challenges in grammar teaching
5. Consensus that effective language teaching requires a solid foundation in both grammatical knowledge and pedagogical skills, coupled with **adequate training in actual classroom contexts** (e.g., Hadjioannou & Hutchinson 2010 and references therein)

# Pilot project: Praksisopplegg (Holmbukt & Son, 2017)

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1. A strategy to bring better integration of theory and practice in teacher education.
2. Provides a student-centered learning environment through collaboration and reflection

## **3. Participants**

- a. 10 student teachers in English in the integrated master program for 1-7 (5th year)
- b. 2 groups of pupils at the 7th grade from one of our university schools
- c. Two teacher trainers

# Praksisopplegg cont.

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1. As part of the course (Engelsk påbygging, 30 stp, 2014), students in 2 groups prepared and carried out a teaching scheme (45 min.) with invited pupils from a nearby university school.
2. Each teaching session was followed by a reflection session with teacher trainers.
- 3. Data Collection**
  1. Responses from the students in course evaluation (Dec. 2014) and a survey in Oct. 2015 (approx. 2 months after their first teaching position at a school)

# Research Questions

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1. How does “praksisopplegg” help student teachers develop necessary language and pedagogical competence in English teaching?
2. How can collaboration between teacher education at the university and university schools lead to better quality of teacher education?

# Findings

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1. The students expand and consolidate their knowledge about teaching approaches by trying them in the classroom.
2. The students consolidate grammar knowledge through praksisopplegg.
3. Praksisopplegg increases confidence and competence (in line with Shulman, 1987; Borg, 2001).
4. «Jeg syntes et spisset fokus og kjapp tilbakemelding var det som bidro mest til at praksisoppleggene var lærerike».
5. Praksisopplegg should be applied in other subjects, too.

# Concluding Remarks

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1. Praksisopplegg is a possible strategy to improve the connection between theoretical knowledge and practical application of such knowledge in our English courses.
2. The collaborative framework including both theoretical and practical training seems very productive with respect to learning.

# Future Plan

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1. Project in autumn 2017 with 2nd year student teachers.
2. Research plan
  - a. Survey on students' attitudes and perceived knowledge about grammar.
  - b. Assessment test in the beginning and at end of semester.
  - c. Praksisopplegg with school children
  - d. Interviews and/or survey.

# References

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- Borg, Simon. 2001. Self-perception and practice in teaching grammar. *ELT Journal* 55 (1), 21-29.
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- Shulman, Lee.S. 1987. Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57 (1), 1-22.