

Field studies in higher education – some implications for teacher training courses.

Some perspectives and experiences from
Norway

Odd Inge Steen, University of Bergen.
Presentation: IGU London Conference
10th-12th April

Distant field studies in Norwegian teacher training courses.

- Very popular in official plans, in Norwegian University Colleges and Universities
- But - increasing pressure to reduce extent and costs.....
- In this case: A narrow definition of field studies - excluding complex research and simple field trips
- Possibilities and limitations in such field studies?

Possibilities and limitations

- Time limit in these studies: 1 – 3 months
- Economic limitations: the students have to cover most of the expenses
- Lack of experience, knowledge and contacts
- Practical problems, research restrictions and rules in "the field"

Participation and observation – some implications

- Complete observation – a good start?
- Participant observation – exploring the environment?
- Observation with some participation – an appropriate method?
- Interlocutor, observer or participant?

Some experiences from India

- Approaching rural India: in close cooperation with a local University College
- A model based on participation and observation in specific defined areas/ local communities
- Result: Students acquire impressive amounts of local situated knowledge but lack overall perspective

An example from Tanzania

- Focus on geographical situational complexity – rather than local participation
- Methodological approach: Interlocutor?
- Wide range of activities including research- and work place components
- Result: students gain less “local” knowledge but gain more “country level” knowledge