

## **EALTA 2009 Panel discussion**

Tommy Lagergren

### ***Introduction***

- Some points from the conference + Swedish perspective
- Test development as ‘gigantic group work’
- Three levels:
  - Policy level: politicians/agencies/national & local authorities
  - University level: test developers/researchers
  - School level: teachers and students
- Governmental or administrative requirements and (vs.?) pedagogical purposes
  - Accountability
  - Ranking
  - Distribution of resources
  - Equity in grading
  - Promoting learning
- Quantity and quality of assessment: how many tests or exams are accepted by students and teachers? Is the quality of the test good (or at least good enough)? Are the purposes of the test communicated? If so, how?

### ***Tensions***

- Politicians’ demands for results – showing that you make/it makes a difference. Reforms sometimes have to be implemented without enough analysis, within a too short time frame and without all stakeholders being involved.
- Some 25 years ago, it was decided, e.g. for legitimacy reasons, to delegate the operational responsibility of test development to different universities (this is done by the government through the Swedish National Agency for Education). One problem: the Agency is not allowed to fund research; specific research councils for that purpose.
- Swedish teachers work within a very decentralized school system and have a high degree of freedom, are totally trusted with planning lessons, methods, contents,

marking national tests and deciding about final subject grades. Teachers have guidelines, curricula, criteria and an extensive system of national assessment & testing materials to support them. Here we might find a tension between curriculum and reality. Teachers sometimes want quick fixes, avoiding constructed responses and integrated skills, preferring easy-to-correct papers etc.

### *Synergies*

- Group work means possibilities of working in a bottom-up process. A good – and very recent example – are the draft future directions for the Swedish testing and assessment system. The Swedish National Agency for Education was asked to produce a draft to be discussed at the Ministry of education. The Agency took the opportunity to work with many different groups to produce this paper: test writers, researchers, scientists and policy makers. In this process, the universities that are commissioned to develop national testing materials played an important role.
- The assessment and testing system in Sweden consists of compulsory national tests, diagnostic materials and materials that can be downloaded from the Internet for formative assessment; in many of the materials there are models for self- and peer assessment. All materials are developed at universities with high demands on quality. All testing materials go through large pretesting rounds, proper methodology for standard setting etc. Recent studies have shown positive results concerning inter-rater consistency. Fortunately, we have fantastic figures – teachers and students are very positive to the materials. Some teachers complain about the work load but are usually very pleased with the information they get from the tests.
- An obvious manifestation of the way state and universities work together is the joint conference that will be organized by the Swedish National Agency for Education and the University of Gothenburg (Gudrun Erickson) to implement EALTA's Guidelines for Good Practice. This conference will be held in Stockholm in September this year.
- 'Group work' and communication – at all levels – are important when interpreting the high level of acceptance of the national tests, and this is one of the most important synergies we have in Sweden.