# English summaries

**Magnus Levinsson:** The Institute for Educational Research, Configurative Reviews and the Complexity of Teaching

The call for evidence-based education has led to a range of initiatives aimed at bridging the gap between research, policy and practice. Among these are the establishment of specific organisations—so-called 'brokerage agencies'—whose primary mission is to synthesise the findings of educational research. In Sweden, the Institute for Educational Research (IER) was founded to conduct systematic research reviews. The IER's objective is to enable teachers to plan, carry out and evaluate teaching, on the basis of research-based methods. Critics emphasise, however, that brokerage agencies prioritise aggregative reviews to measure the impact of interventions. One lead argument is that this orientation is suitable for professional fields, such as medicine, but less so for complex fields such as education. However, the use of different methods for systematic review has increased over the past few decades. In education, this trend has included a growing interest in configurative reviews. Configurative approaches have been promoted as suitable for synthesising complex bodies of research and for pursuing questions that go beyond what works. In spite of this, recent studies have revealed that the aggregative approach still dominates in education. In light of the IER's mission and the criticism regarding systematic review's application in education, this article argues that some of the IER's review activity should be based on configurative approaches. Configurative reviews would provide the IER with better opportunities to undertake its mission, especially as configurative approaches can be designed to achieve the following: (1) support judgements about what is educationally desirable, (2) include practice-developing research and (3) convey knowledge that can play a critical role in practice.

*What is educationally desirable?*

Opponents to the systematic review movement stress that brokerage agencies, in their pursuit of what works, tend to take the ends for granted, arguing that brokerage agencies contribute to a separation of education's means and ends. It has been argued that this development constrains teachers' opportunities to participate in educational decision-making. Consequently, scholars have called for a broader approach in which technical questions can be addressed in close proximity with normative and political questions about what is educationally desirable. Based on the IER's mission to improve the conditions for research-based teaching, it seems necessary for this organisation to follow this call. However, a broader approach cannot be achieved through the sole use of aggregative reviews; such methods can only provide evidence for or against a particular teaching strategy. Configurative reviews can, however, be designed to generate new theory and, therefore, also support teachers' judgements about what is educationally desirable. Drawing on examples of configurative reviews that were conducted within the realms of inclusive and civic education, this article demonstrates how the IER could develop syntheses that can encourage teacher deliberation about what is educationally desirable. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasise that configurative reviews neither can nor should determine what is educationally desirable.

*Practice-developing research*

The increased focus on systematic reviews has been purported to prompt the marginalisation of teachers as key actors within educational research. Consequently, opponents have called for a greater emphasis on practice-developing research that involves teachers and addresses questions that are central to teaching. The IER outlines similar arguments, emphasising that the availability of practice-developing research is crucial to the relevance of systematic reviews. As a result, the IER has suggested reforms intended to strengthen practice-developing research. However, one important issue is whether or not the IER's review methods are suitable for this particular line of research. Studies report that brokerage agencies tend to exclude practice-developing research. For example, action research studies have been claimed to be too diverse and not rigorous enough in addressing teaching effectiveness. However, as this article points out, a move towards increased standardisation and proper randomisation may risk the core features of practice-developing research. Based on the lessons learned from a systematic review on action research, this article argues that configurative approaches are more appropriate in the synthetisation of heterogeneous fields within practice-developing research. Accordingly, this article stresses the use of configurative reviews as an important tool in the IER's inclusion of practice-developing research.

*The role of research in practice*
Aggregative reviews are based on the assumption that research can and should play a technical role in practice. Opponents of this view have questioned whether or not this assumption has actually helped improve teaching in schools and have called on proponents to acknowledge the fact that research, besides having a technical role, also can play an enlightening and critical role in practice. The IER emphasises that teachers' use of systematic reviews can vary depending on the nature of the review and stresses the need for teachers to critically appraise these reviews before integrating the results into their practice. However, this article contends that the IER could support such scrutinising activities more directly by applying a specific configurative method. Drawing on one example of critical interpretative synthesis conducted within the caring sector, and two closely related reviews on formative assessment, this article demonstrates how the IER could develop syntheses that include critical research traditions. This article states that critically oriented configurative reviews not only have the potential to support the kind of critical appraisal that the IER emphasises as important, but that these reviews also have the capacity to make a difference for teachers in ways that go far beyond the application of ready-made recipes for action.

*Limitations of configurative reviews*
In the light of the IER's commission, this article outlines three main arguments that all converge in the conclusion that parts of IER's review activity should be based on configurative approaches. It is important to underscore, however, that none of these arguments question the relevance of aggregative reviews. For obvious reasons, aggregative reviews can address questions that fall out of the scope of configurative approaches. The IER's utilisation of configurative reviews would, above all, make the IER more responsive to the complexities of teaching, although it should be acknowledged that configurative reviews alone cannot provide teachers with all the knowledge that they need.

**Mats Lundström, Karin Stolpe, Lars Björklund, Maria Åström:** Systematic reviews as new assessment practice for teacher educators

One of the consequences of the latest Swedish teacher education reform from 2011 is that a student teacher is required to write two student theses during her studies. These student theses should together represent 30 ECTS. One common way to implement this requirement is that the student writes two

theses, where the first one is a systematic review of earlier research and the second one a more traditional empirical thesis. This article investigates if this new type of student thesis – that is, systematic reviews written by students as the first part of the requirements for teacher qualification, also involves a new kind of assessment practice for the examiners at the teacher education programmes. In the student thesis the student is supposed to demonstrate skills concerning several formal learning aims of the teacher education to obtain their qualifications. These include to follow the development of knowledge within a field and solve problems. The student thesis is not only important for the individual student to obtain qualifications, but has also been used to evaluate the teacher education programmes. Despite its significance for students and schools of education, very little research has been conducted on practices in the assessment of systematic reviews. Earlier research related to assessment of student theses demonstrates the difficulties with agreement in assessment practice. The results from earlier studies regarding the importance of the examiners' background present a divided picture. While some research point to the examiners' own subject or experience as important when judging theses, other studies do not.

The purpose with this study was to examine if a systematic review, as a new phenomenon at the teacher education programmes, has entailed a new assessment practice for the examiners at the universities. Supervisors and examiners at six universities with teacher education have been interviewed and have also answered a survey concerning these systematic reviews. The interviews were conducted through a combination of comparative judgement and repertory grid technique. The interviews were conducted after the respondents had read 5-8 student theses. In the interviews, criteria which were pointed out as decisive for the quality of a thesis by the respondents were discussed. The survey was a Q-sort survey where the respondents ranked different assessment criteria. A total of 45 criteria from the interviews were ranked from 0-10 by the respondents with respect to how important they are when judging a student thesis.

The results demonstrate a width in the assessment repertoire among the respondents. Examiners in the study do not see notable differences between a systematic review and a more traditional student thesis. The reasoning concerning criteria was mostly made on a relatively general level, which could be applied both to systematic reviews and empirical theses. Only 27 per cent of the respondents in the survey set a criterion which was more important for a systematic review. Those differences which were mentioned related to the structure of the thesis, the method and how the relation to research is described. Results suggest that examiners' assessment criteria is a potentially important area for educational development within schools of education, and would also deserve attention in wider national and international discussions.

**Lisa Wallander:** Teaching cases – but not as it used to be. The factorial survey approach in higher education

The aim of this article is to introduce and demonstrate an innovative teaching tool based on the use of fictive descriptions (vignettes/cases), which have been constructed according to the principles of the experimental factorial survey approach. This approach was pioneered around 40 years ago by the American sociologist Peter Rossi as a method for studying the individual and social components of social judgements. When used as a teaching tool, the factorial survey approach allows us to examine if, and if so how, and how much, students draw on different pieces of vignette information when making judgements. In contrast to traditional cases, factorial survey vignettes are quantitative, in the meaning that they can be analysed in terms of a number of variables (dimensions) and their values (levels).

In the exercise that is used for illustrating this teaching tool, each student made judgements about the need for organized help for a large number of short vignettes portraying users of alcohol or narcotics (N=96). Each vignette contained information about dimensions related to the substance user's ethnicity, age, sex, social class, partner, children, social network, type of drug, frequency of use, mental health and attitude towards the substance use. By conducting univariate and bivariate statistical analyses on each student's judgements of the vignettes, we constructed individual judgement profiles. These profiles revealed *which* of the above-mentioned dimensions influenced a particular student's judgements about the need for organized help, *how much* each of these dimensions affected the judgements and *in what ways* they shaped the judgements. As this method constitutes an experiment, the identified relationships between the vignette dimensions and a student's judgements are causal, and can be interpreted in terms of cause and effect.

In the context of this teaching tool, these judgement profiles are subsequently employed as the basis for discussions, where the students compare their results to those of their fellow students and where they reflect on and give reasons for their judgements. In addition to the numerous benefits of all forms of case-based teaching, an advantage of this design is that patterns of judgements may be uncovered which the students themselves are unaware of. Such patterns may on the one hand reveal that a student's judgements have been affected by a dimension, to which the student was not consciously paying attention when making the judgements. On the other hand, they may also reveal that a particular dimension has not influenced a student's judgements in the way assumed by the student. Such results generate opportunities for the students to reflect on the potentially unconscious influence of stereotypes on their judgements, and on the contents of their "tacit knowledge" in the area of judgement. Although this tool has been

developed in the context of professional judgements, it may be employed in any higher education course focused on analysing judgements.

**Karin Gunnarsson:** Engagements with manuals: transformative participants in educational health promotion

This article has as its starting point in two connecting movements in education: a decline in young people's mental health and schools' increasing responsibility to promote health. Promotion of mental health and well-being is now seen as a crucial issue for educational policy and practice. In order to promote health among young people, a number of manual-based programs have been implemented in the educational field. These programs often claim to offer evidence-based prescriptions. One such program, quite widespread in Sweden, and explored in this article is DISA (Depression in Swedish Adolescence). DISA is a manual-based program designed for girls in the eighth grade. It aims at preventing stress and symptoms of depression based on cognitive behavioral therapy. The program consists of ten meetings each lasting approximately one hour and each with a predetermined content structured by manuals. In this article, the ambition is to explore the various effects rather than seeking evidence for or critically examine the program effects.

Working with a theoretical approach of actor-network theory the aim of this article is to explore what the manuals, as intra-acting actors in educational health promotion, do and how they are made. The first research question is how the manuals are connected within a network of different actors? The second research question is how the manuals in this network shape regulations and openings?

Actor-network theory provides a performative ontology with the potential to engage in educational practices focusing on practices, relations and networks. These networks do not only include the social but also materiality and affectivity in constructions of reality. Here, both humans and non-humans are actors that together produce our world in entangled relationships. No actor can act alone but can act only within relations and intra-actions. By including the notions of network and space specific knowledge about the enactments of manuals and the health promoting practice are produced. To this theoretical framework I connect affect-theory. This creates an opportunity to include affectivity and feelings as actors in the investigated practice.

The methodology within the theoretical approach of actor-network theory involves a tracing of the manual across and with events in the investigated

health promoting program DISA. The tracing aims to map the different actors involved and how they connect in networks. In the process of constructing empirical material I have participated in DISA meetings in three different schools in the Stockholm area. The material consists of participation in DISA meetings, five interviews with school staff who worked as group leaders and five group interviews with a total of 21 students who participated in DISA.

The analyses shows how the manuals becomes trustworthy actors, actors who together with a network of evidence and research has knowledge of the actors involved and how health is best promoted. To follow the manual makes a way of doing DISA the right way and provides assurance to the practice. Although the group leaders feel safe and place their trust in the manual, there was a tenseness regarding how much it was possible to deviate from the it and yet maintain the effect of doing the right thing. The manuals become forceful actors with a network consisting of the organization of the school day, the many assignments and questions in the manual, the students' discussions and different enactments of time. The many relations going on create tension by adapting to and following the manual or by discussing and paying attention to the many questions, thoughts and feelings that the manuals provoke. The time is meant to be used to fulfilling the assignments. Students' thoughts and feelings are the objective, but there is no space to acknowledge their questions. Simultaneously the manual becomes a creepy, uncomfortable and stressed actor interwoven into the students' realities and bodies. In this way, the manuals become simultaneously both porous constructed and impermeable.

Together with materiality and affectivity, the health promoting practice becomes enacted in many different ways. Mutual arrangements make it difficult, if not impossible, to predict the effects of following the manual. Always remember that there is no universally good program nor any single manual to follow that can determine the response to the complex matter of youth health.

**Sven Bjerstedt:** Musicality as faculty for presence, structure and fluidity: A central concept in actors' learning

This article investigates the meaning and potential of the concept of *musicality* in actors' learning processes. The study may be of interest primarily to teachers and researchers in higher artistic education; however, as an example of profession research and of the potential of linguistic metaphor in processes

of conceptualization and learning, it may be of some interest to other readers as well.

The investigation took its point of departure in the prominent use of the term 'musicality' as a prestige word in theatre discourse where, obviously, not exactly the same reference and meaning is ascribed to the concept as in contexts of music. There seems to be very little previous research in this area, if any. The research question was formulated thus: How is the borrowed concept of musicality used by theatre practicians and educators as a description of qualities and abilities in the field of theatre? What potential may this concept have for actors' learning processes?

Arguably, the intermedially borrowed concept of musicality ought to be viewed as a metaphor of central importance in theatre parlance. In several cultures, the connection between theatre and music is tight; however, in contemporary Western spoken theatre there has been a relatively clear distinction between the two art forms for at least a century. Notwithstanding, there appears to be strong consensus among theatre artists and educators with regard to the importance of musicality to theatre. Sometimes the use of the term is clearly metaphorical or even metaphysical; sometimes the relation between music and theatre is pointed to by theatre theorists as an issue of translation. The theatre researcher David Roesner employs a concept borrowed from Michael Foucault, speaking of musicality as an influential and multi-faceted *dispositif* with significant impact on theatre.

An overview of previous writings on musicality shows that aesthetic fields other than music have rarely been adressed by scholars in the field of musicality research. An historic overview of different ideals of theatre (rhetoric–realism–modernism) shows that musicality emerges as an important concept throughout the history of theatre, and that *rhythm* emerges as a central aspect of the meaning ascribed to this concept in the field of theatre.

During 2010–11 the author interviewed experienced theatre educators (*n*=5) and artists (*n*=13) on the topic of musicality in theatre. The analysis of the results indicates that the concept of musicality as understood and used by the interviewees can be interpreted as a combination of abilities in the actor. It is suggested that these abilities may be divided in three groups, all of which constitute necessary conditions for the actor's musicality, according to the interviewees: to be here and now with all one's senses (*presence*); to apprehend, analyse and build structures (*structure*); and to be free, relaxed, active and open (*fluidity*).

The image of musicality that emerges in the field of theatre is a rich one. To musicologists, it may perhaps seem peculiar with its emphasis on the concepts of *presence*, *structure*, and *fluidity*. The prospect of bringing this image of musicality to the field of music and try it out there emerges as a tempting one. To what extent may these three categories of abilities be used to describe

the concept of musicality in music? Might such a description be perceived as adequate by musicians, musicologists and music educators?