

Teaching Statement of Werner Liebrechts

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Both my research interests and my experiences with teaching at different levels have informed and shaped my teaching skills and philosophy. Next to these hands-on experiences, I have attended various meetings aimed at strengthening the attendees' teaching practices (e.g. with the newest IT tools) as well as a full course on teaching in higher education. Amongst others, group sessions of the course dealt with attractive and effective openers, designing engaging lectures, leading discussions, supervising students' research, providing feedback, and assessment and evaluation. Peer visits to classes taught by colleagues (and vice versa) inspired me to further improve my teaching.

I mostly taught and will be teaching courses in the fields of (corporate) entrepreneurship and innovation. Such a course perfectly lends itself for case-based teaching and learning. Although some are adopted from the Harvard Business Review (HBR) or the book that we use, the majority of cases has been developed by ourselves. Students are challenged to study companies or business cases in-depth, to critically reflect on the available documentation, and to apply theory when answering the discussion questions. Most students highly appreciate this teaching method, because of the application of theory to practical, real-life cases. Likewise, guest lectures by people from the field, more specifically board members of innovative companies, are always evaluated as a very positive element. Guest lecturers share their firsthand knowledge, for example about how they manage organizational ambidexterity, which makes it easier for students to bridge the gap between theory and practice. For this reason, I always include at least one guest lecturer to the course program.

Following the renowned self-determination theory, which in essence states that individuals' intrinsic motivation can be fostered by autonomy, competence and relatedness support, I aim to combine challenging assignments with freedom of choice and involvement. My courses are designed in such a way that the assignments become increasingly challenging and thought-provoking. For the final assignment I expect students to apply the knowledge that they gained throughout the entire course. Furthermore, I always try to maximize student autonomy within the boundaries set in advance. For example, one assignment asks students to come up with three relevant discussion questions themselves after having read an extensive introduction to a certain case. Last time, this led to very diverse standpoints on the matter, so that an intense discussion easily took off. In providing feedback I constantly realize that students are in the middle of a learning process, and that I am there to help them. I also consider giving feedback as a means to increase students' feelings of competence. I first highlight things that went well, before I move on to specific steps that should be undertaken to make further progress.

In April 2016, I let my students fill out a so-called Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction (QTI). For comparison purposes, I also completed the questionnaire myself. The outcomes are presented in a two-dimensional figure that reflects how I interact with my students. The two dimensions represent

proximity (ranging from *opposition* to *cooperation*) and *influence* (ranging from *submission* to *dominance*). The report shows that my self-image almost fully coincides with how my students perceived me; the typology of interpersonal styles that fits me best is *authoritative*, i.e. a typology more towards the *cooperation* and *dominance* sides of the spectra. Moreover, my profile comes close to what a representative group of Dutch students once indicated to be the “best teacher”. The classroom environment of someone authoritative is characterized as well-structured, pleasant and task-oriented. Authoritative teachers are described as enthusiastic and open to students’ needs. I very much feel that these qualifications indeed apply to who I am and to who I want to be as a teacher. I always make sure that I am well-prepared, and I also expect this from my students. I like students that comply with the rules and procedures, but tend to ignore minor disruptions. I rather spend my time on motivated students to help them reach the learning goals. I enjoy bringing across my enthusiasm for the course topics, and hope to exceed students’ expectations that they had beforehand.

Teaching is not about one-sided knowledge transfers from teachers to students. Instead, it is a process of mutual exchange; teachers share their expertise in a specific area and students contribute with their own insights, preferably in the reversed order. Classes should be designed in such a way that students feel safe and even encouraged to speak up. I pose questions extensively to stimulate discussion and critical inquiry. Depending on the topic, it might be good to let students think for a moment and/or discuss in smaller groups first. As a teacher, I am there to guide the discussion that will follow, and to wrap-up at the end. I hereby establish links to the theory and to topical, practical examples that appeal to the students’ perceptions of the real world.

I also advocate research-based teaching, meaning that the most current knowledge in the field should be part of the course materials. As such, students at the undergraduate level get familiarized with academic research and standards, and students at the graduate level continue focusing their critical lens towards scientific research. It is also a means to share my knowledge, excitement and intrigue about my fields of interest, as I can integrate my own latest research insights into the program.

I strongly believe that university education nowadays should be focused on developing and improving modern skills like creativity and innovation rather than preparing students for lifelong jobs. As such, they will be better able to move easily between different roles on today’s dynamic labor market. This necessitates a different approach while teaching, one that lays more emphasis on modern skills like academic thinking and reasoning. I am planning to spend more time on plenary discussions about the most important – and usually the most challenging – topics during my lectures and tutorials. To make this happen, it is important to get rid of content that students can easily prepare in advance, for example because it is well-explained in any of the available course materials. If not, various interactive tools may be a solution. I have already been experimenting with recording knowledge clips and video lectures, and they proved to be useful. I will increasingly incorporate more of these tools in my teaching. Students can watch video lectures containing the basic knowledge beforehand, at their own pace and as many times as they want, leaving more room for discussion in class. This makes students feel it is worth it to attend classes. Yet another step towards making my lectures feel like a learning experience.