Educational Improvement Ideas Collected From All Students
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Abstract
In the development of educational programmes we need to involve the students. The European Standards and Guidelines (ESG 2015) state: “Programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders”. The Swedish Higher Education Act states: “Quality assurance procedures are the shared concern of staff and students at higher education institutions”, and “Higher education institutions shall endeavour to enable students to play an active role in the continued development of courses and study programmes”. We therefore need to know how the students perceive that the programme should be improved. Using just a few student representatives for this has clear limitations, because they might not be representative of all students. Rowley (1995) argues that “gathering relevant, representative and useful student opinion is a necessary part of the quality assurance process”.

In the Computer Science and Engineering programme at KTH, we have a unique opportunity to get input from every active student in the programme, through the Program Integrating Course (Kann and Högfeldt 2016). The reason is that one of the intended learning outcomes is “critically analyze and reflect on the structure and performance of the programme and their own study achievements”.

In a mandatory questionnaire sent to all students in the five years of the programme in May 2016, we asked each student to give at least one proposal for how the programme could be improved. In this way we got almost 800 suggestions for improvements of the education, at least one from every active student.

We have sorted and categorized all the improvement suggestions. We are now able to analyse which type of improvements of the programme that are most asked for, and we also get a number of good improvement proposals that we would never have thought of ourselves.

Method & Results
All student suggestions have now been manually aggregated into categories. A next step will be to prioritize the suggestions in order to identify what should be implemented immediately or when possible, what needs further work to be useful, and what ideas should be saved for future consideration, or simply rejected.

We can already see that many of the suggestions are very realistic and valuable. Still, the brainstorming nature of the material calls for a thorough prioritization process, where it will be important to involve both students, teachers and other members of the staff. Here we can again make use of the Program Integrating Course to involve all students, but also the regular programme board and general assembly are natural fora for such discussions.

To make the most of this prioritization process, we would like to complement the material with ideas collected from the teachers in a similar manner.

Examples from the Raw Data

Classification into Categories

Followup Processing

Immediately Applicable Ideas

Ideas that need more work

Save for future consideration

Conclusions
• Surprisingly many proposals are realistic and well-founded.
• The suggestions can serve as a pool of ideas.
• The suggestions must now be prioritized.
• Any statistical analysis must be done with care, and take into account how the data was collected and classified.
• Feedback to the student group will be an important part of the follow up process.

References
The Swedish Higher Education Act (Högskolelagen 1992, 2013)

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