Sustainability Transitions and Competence Awareness

Introductory remarks for the workshop ‘*Social change through Learning’, Nordic Development research Conference 2021*

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Students in Higher Education need to acquire skills and competences that underpin not only critical thinking, creativity and innovative skills, but also the ability to convert skills and competences acquired during their university years into practice. Yet, limited research exists about competence awareness and less about how to facilitate process in which the students can become razor sharp on their competences and skills to enhance the students’ employability, when they graduate. Our research builds on a wide range of experience from different geographical contexts ranging from Mexico, Cuba, Kenya, and Tanzania and how we as teachers/researchers can facilitate students’ competences awareness.

We claim to be doing ‘teaching-based-research’, where the elements of a learning process is used for doing research based on experiences from activities in our teaching programmes.

Our main argument in this presentation is that students need to experience – and not only be taught about –how and why they need to interact with external stakeholders (and future employers) in order to be aware of their own competences and how to put these competences into practice, by working with external partners. The specific case we use today to illustrate this broader message builds on experience from a teaching programme involving students from Aalborg University and small companies, NGOs and municipality in a smaller town in Southern Mexico.