

What I am going to talk about

- Individualism
- Beyond the individual - Mead and American Pragmatism
- Inter-subjectivity and the self
- The story of a student as an example of individual versus social
- Floating - cognitive, emotional and personal change
- Problems caused by becoming a critical reflective learner
- Lesson to be learnt

Individualism

- as a construction of our lives, story telling and narrating
- as a paradox
- a Cartesian split of mind and body, structure and subjectivity, individuality and society.

Beyond the individual

Descartes "dualism" as attributed to Plato and his understanding of knowledge as something seen as independent from experience.

- Pragmatism

Pragmatism & Mead

- ☞ **experience** as starting point for all knowledge. The world as **shared**
- ☞ humanity as part of the natural world including **rational thinking**.
- ☞ human perception is constituted in **action**
- ☞ society as always **in the making**, developing and growing.
- ☞ **inter-subjectivity** precedes **subjectivity** and is constitutive of it

Inter-subjectivity and the self

- socialisation provides us with a foundation to become ourselves and eventually to develop our individuality.
- Mead against a category of possessive individualism - a person 'owns' him/herself and has given rights to come into social community
- a constant interaction between the self and 'a generalised other'

Learning processes

- how to gain knowledge about the learning processes of students?
- Four adult education theories
- transformative theory of learning (Mezirow)
- adult critical reflection (Brookfield)
- Biographicity (Alheit)
- biographical learning and floating (Bron)

Ted's story of an individual versus social learning

- a 33 years old Ted, a single parent taking care of a 9 year-old daughter every second week.
- at the end of three-year BA programme in nursing.
- dislikes compulsory school, not very keen on continuing; becoming an electrician.
- goes back to school to complete upper secondary school but becomes a welding technician.
- settles down with a partner.
- Has a position as a warden at a detention centre.
- in spring 2003 enrolls in higher education.
- splits up with his partner.

Learning individually

- *I don't know actually.....because I do like you know....I like to be independent...I mean I like to work on my own*

Working in a group

- He enjoys seminars because different perspectives are permitted. But to negotiate meanings is challenging.
- Yet, it was in the confrontation with a group that he realised his learning was carried out best.

Having fun

- *There have been some changes and drop outs but still it is this kind of feeling that there have been 50 nice people I have been studying together with.....it has been real fun.....*

Ted's final appreciation

....I told you before that I do not like to work in groups.....but I believe it is the meeting with all people.....it is that.....it is a little bit contradictory but it is the meeting with the people.....new acquaintances and.....yes.....it feels a bit that this is the main thing with studying in reality.....to meet new people and get those new perspectives.....towards studying.....life.....interests..... You get some knowledge too, which is a bonus.....

The paradox: individual or social learning

- *I think it has to do with two different things.....one is the experience of studying.....not the studies themselves.....I think..... precisely this with.....but even.....this about meeting....people in between.....it is something that does not belong to the studies.....if you reflect..... like this obtaining knowledge like this..... but at the same time because it has been stimulating to see and hear other people and what they think and reflectand.....so it has stimulated.....so to say.....obtaining of knowledge..... and exactly this with angles of approaches from other people.....*

A big group work

- *..... in reality.....it has been one big group work without any of us being conscious about that (laugh)*
- *ugh what aha experience*

A perspective change

Ted divided his experiences and attitudes into two different ways:

☞ his experience of being a student; and

☞ education or learning in itself.

☞ To interact with others was not yet a part of the learning process in itself, but more like an **extra bonus** connected indirectly with a learning process. Reflecting during interview Ted's perspective of learning changes

Biographical learning - reflective thinking

- Through life story telling, by reflecting and self-reflecting, we learn from our lives.

- Biographical learning includes experiences, knowledge, reflection and self-reflection and generally all lessons learnt that are included in our life stories

Personal, emotional and cognitive changes

- A narrative interview involves biographical learning which triggers new ways of understanding one's own learning process.

- BL is not only a cognitive development but very often involves emotions. Emotions are in turn combined with cognition.

Floating

cognitive, emotional and personal change

FLOATING

Being

Feeling

Uneasy

Insecure

Accepting
the Crisis

Handling a
Situation

Becoming a critical reflective learner

- *Are there any problems, side effects or risks involved in becoming a critical reflective learner? Steven Brookfield (2000)*
- *process of confrontation between reality and ideals*

Critical reflective learner

- Critical reflection makes us wonder if it is worth continuing studying, to gain new knowledge, to learn for our own well being.
- experiencing change while learning and coping with unexpected events and their consequences, might be felt as problematic.
- The process however cannot be stopped.

Categories describing students' affective dimension of learning

Impostorship

Cultural suicide

Incremental fluctuation

Lost innocence

Community

A sense of impostorship

- *A form of in-authenticity.*
- *The rightness of having critical perspectives on familiar ideas, actions and social forms.*
- *Feeling decreases over time, but not disappears entirely*

Cultural suicide

- Being a stranger, not really belonging to the former community
- too pretentious and *growing 'too big for her boots'*
- to be taken for a troublemaker: asking uncomfortable questions or posing critical opinions

An incremental movement

- Rather than a dramatic paradigm shift
- Described as:
 - *two steps forward, one step back, followed by four steps forward, one step back; followed by one step forward, three steps back*

A lost innocence

- learning to think critically requires abandoning the faith to ever reach a possible truth
- still students *believe that through studying hard they will be given rewards* in form of universal certainty

Community

- Belonging to *an emotionally sustaining peer learning community - a group of colleagues who were also experiencing dissonance, reinterpreting their practice, challenging old assumptions and failing foul of conservative forces*
- *a 'second family',*
- Working in groups

Lesson to be learnt

- Our conscious and a self according to Mead arises from social interaction, and therefore we can say that human identity is inter-subjective constituted.
- Critical reflection and self reflection that we are able to develop while being engaged in higher education are only possible **within a community of learners.**

Thank you

And

Good luck with your

Workshop!