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# From Accountability to Cultural Pedagogy and a Professional Space for Teacher Education – a Symposium Presentation

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*The symposium as an academic conference genre is characterized by a rather spacious thematic umbrella, under which different perspectives of the chosen theme can be explored. The symposium described in this article is a result of the international network cooperation within the frames of NAFOL<sup>1</sup>. The symposium form is supposed to give the participants an opportunity to dwell within a theme for a longer time than the traditional paper. An added value to the symposium is given through the interactivity provided by a discussant, a researcher that in advance has read the presenters' papers and has prepared a response. In this symposium the notions of accountability and cultural pedagogy are connected to the concepts teacher professionalism and professional space. By conceiving of teacher education in a spatial way and understanding its topography, extension and dynamics in these terms, it becomes possible to grasp the genesis of different terms and also how they are given specific and privileged meanings. This spatial approach can also contribute to the understanding of formative mechanisms and how they can be changed, for instance by "re-furnishing" the space. This also applies to the term "accountability", and it is necessary to consider*

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<sup>1</sup> Symposium at EARLI conference in Bergen 15. June 2012

*where this term came from, and where it got and gets its material support. Many such questions can be raised and approached by taking the spatial approach.*

*Key words: Symposium Umbrella, Culture Pedagogy, Formative Mechanisms, Spatial Approach to Professionalism*

## **General description of the symposium**

In this symposium the theme cultural pedagogy will be addressed from three different national perspectives (Norwegian, German and Finnish), but the common focus is culture pedagogy as a means to promote cultural literacy in teacher education and further in education. We will lift to the forefront what kind of perception of the concept accountability might be implied in culture education. We ask what kind of space is given for cultural pedagogy in an era of accountability? We will direct interest to the competencies needed by teachers in order to structure teaching and learning where arts and substance knowledge are combined. Our point of departure is that arts subjects and pedagogy must be given equal importance in the learning processes which are explored by means of arts and by means of pedagogy. We furthermore point to the necessity of developing assessment tools, which take into account the learning potential in arts and through arts. This means that there is a need for reconsidering the concept of knowledge as well as the concept of learning. As we are informed by multimodal meaning theory (Jewitt, 2009; Kress, 2003) the concept meaning expansion will be central in the symposia papers presented. The space offered to culture pedagogy has been hitherto a rather marginalized space, but with a growing interest in different semiotic modes contributing to knowledge development, we suggest that the concept accountability will be renegotiated in order to include the perspectives from culture pedagogy as means to achieve cultural literacy. Cultural literacy will be discussed as a concept of 'Bildung' for today and for the future, because in an increasingly globalized world the skill to read the world will be central in education.

## **Expansion of meaning potential in multimodal exploration of a theme**

In her presentation Anna-Lena Østern took an example from a research and development project "SPACE ME – about man in the universe".

In this project art, natural science and pedagogy were organized like a rhizome in order to support and create learning paths (Selander, 2008) for becoming teachers, as well as for students. In the symposium the design of the empirical study connected to the project was presented. The research problem formulated for the study was: What kind of learning spaces can be identified in a formative intervention combining art, natural science and pedagogy? Multimodal meaning theory (Jewitt, 2009; Kress, 2010) and transformative aesthetic theory (Dewey, 1980) formed the theoretical lenses through which the design and the learning paths were described. Carey Jewitt (2009) writes that a point of departure for multimodal theory is the equal cognitive value of different modalities. Multimodal theory has destabilized existing thought patterns about how humans learn. A modality is a semiotic sign, a carrier of symbolic meaning. Our oral language, the written expression, music, gestures, dance, film, visual expressions, architecture and three dimensional artifacts are examples of different modalities. When an expression is transformed from one modality to another it is called transduction (Kress, 2010). This transduction makes a meaning expansion possible.

The presentation ended up in focusing on the expansion of meaning potential in a dance – the scenography-video-performance SPACE ME, created in three parts connecting to themes elaborated, in arts as well as science, earlier in the project period 2011-2012.

This combination of the openness of artistic exploration, the knowledge base of science, and the educational aims of pedagogy in rhizomatic formations (cf. Deleuze & Guattari, 2004) introduced a wide concept of knowledge. The concept included the semiotic resources of different modalities as amplifiers of meaning potential, which might make the knowledge achieved multilayered and complex. This was considered a cultural pedagogy for both teacher education and education in general, promoting cultural literacy as a way to read and understand the world. Cultural literacy was discussed as a necessary change in the landscape of education and learning. The Swedish researcher in multimodality, Selander (2012), was quoted regarding these changes due to increased migration and increased use of digital technologies:

We seem only to be in the beginning of the transformation towards new institutional patterns and new communicative processes in society. The major shift in relation to learning is that the learner becomes a producer of information, compared to the hitherto dominated pattern of learners as consumers of information. Teacher and students, among others, will also

become designers of their own environments, flowcharts and learning paths. A new epistemology seems to be needed if we want to be able to conceptually grasp how knowledge is formed and transformed in different social domains. (Selander, 2012)

A core concept in the research project connected to SPACE ME was affordance, defined as meaning potential. Through work with creating a meaningful form, like in aesthetic activity, with transformation as a central tool, a meaning expansion was made possible. In the symposium the notion of accountability was brought into dialogue with the expanding concept of knowledge formed through the learning paths in this form of culture pedagogy as part of teacher education.

## Culture pedagogy through the lens of educational research (Bildungsforschung)

In her presentation, Johanna Ray reflected on culture education and the assessment of cultural literacy in the light of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and empirical educational research (Bildungsforschung). During the last decade, the field of Bildungsforschung has received considerable attention in Germany. One of the main reasons for this is the indisputable gap between Germany and top performing countries that comparative surveys like PISA – the “flagship” of empirical educational research – have revealed. The poor achievements by German students and proven disparities, for example in social or ethnic background, sex or region, have stressed the importance of empirical studies on learning quality and quality development. There has been an accentuated need and explicit demand for empirically grounded findings regarding relevant conditions for learning and teaching (see, for example, Prenzel & Alolio-Näcke, 2006).

Bildungsforschung is not primarily to be understood as a discipline as such, but as an interdisciplinary field of research. Empirical educational research, in short, aims at providing knowledge that helps to better understand and to further develop the educational reality (Bildungswirklichkeit). Typically, many relevant questions raised by empirical educational researchers can only be efficiently addressed through contributions from diverse fields. As Manfred Prenzel (2005) stresses, empirical educational researchers by definition deal with a wide range of various aspects concerning learning premises, learning processes and learning outcomes

throughout the lifespan, within as well as outside formal (educational) institutions.

The possible impact on teachers and on the quality of teaching, as stipulated in the description of the conference theme, that the constant pressure to respond to standards and deliver results defined by politicians and international processes might have, appears to be a particularly delicate theme when it comes to arts and cultural education on the one hand and PISA on the other. The presentation included examples of teacher voices on the dangers of the overemphasis on testing and accountability promoted through PISA.

Based on the fact that domains like mathematics and science have such a prominent position in the PISA study, Ray elaborated on the actual space for arts education and the development of culture literacy in an era of accountability. Examples of recent research focusing on the question of how PISA can be extended to include cultural education was given (Wimmer, Nagel & Schad, 2012) as well as a discussion of in what sense PISA actually already contains such elements (cf. Prenzel & Ray, in press). In particular, the specific challenges related to the development of assessment tools that consider the learning potential in arts and through arts were discussed. It was argued that not only scientific, mathematical and reading literacy, but also cultural literacy should be a central educational outcome. The professional space of teachers, as described by Thorolf Krüger in his up-summing discussion, should include such elements.

There are, as Ray stated in her presentation, certain challenges when trying to draw on test methods and methods of collecting data used in PISA within the field of cultural education. This should be taken into account in research aiming at international comparison of cultural literacy. With reference to the typical approach of *Bildungsforschung*, one urgent and challenging research task is the theoretical differentiation of prerequisites, processes, effects and outcomes of cultural education paired with empirically grounded descriptions.

### **Body language, training brains and knowing by heart**

Teacher students' active aesthetic response to visual arts based cultural pedagogy education, in a Finnish teacher education context, were focused on in Hannah Kaihovirta- Rosvik's presentation. In art education none of the methods or techniques in themselves produces sustained art interest, motivation or learning unless the goals are realistic for the learner. Ordi-

narily, people will in learning choose activities of intermediate uncertainty rather than those that are difficult. Having learners assist in defining goals of art based learning increases the probability that they will understand them and want to reach them.

Kaihovirta-Rosvik discussed in which ways becoming teachers were able to identify the pendulum between art as experience and art as knowledge in art based learning and understand its effect on education. She articulated practice based research and interpretations of teacher students' art based assignments in multimodal learning. In this particular assignment teacher students were asked to use a digital slide show as a tool for articulating a response to their experiences from a visit to a contemporary art exhibition. The concept of aesthetic response in this assignment was borrowed from literary theory and transferred to a cultural reader response activity. Concretely, the students were asked to approach aesthetic response as a way to formulate evaluation in education by drawing attention to aesthetic elements in learning situations. One task in the assignment was to reflect upon how learning situations, teaching materials and methods can relate to senses and emotions.

Kaihovirta-Rosvik investigated how aesthetic response created meta-perspectives on learning experiences and how students' sense of aesthetic choices became visible in relation to what they wanted to express. The students' spontaneous reaction when creating the slideshow was that they surprised themselves with their aesthetic knowledge.

Additionally, Kaihovirta-Rosvik investigated how aesthetic response to art based learning occurred at multiple levels: emotional, cognitive and cultural. The students took advantage of collaboration and digital media when they re-created individual and shared experiences. To revisit documentation and past art based learning situations with an aesthetic approach articulated with a handy digital program, created time and space for the students to monitor their own contribution to cultural interpretation. This encouraged them to express multiple meanings and interpretations of how they in future envision cultural pedagogy.

## **The mandate of the teaching profession and the forming of a professional space**

Thorolf Krüger was the discussant for the papers presented. His comments focus on three key aspects of teacher professionalism: the mandate, the knowledge demands and the interrelation between teacher education,

professional practice and research on the teaching profession. Finally, he considered the term “professional space”, expanding upon the meaning of space as used in the title of the symposium. These comments will also, implicitly, address central concepts from the session: accountability, multi-modality, the expansion of meaning, transduction, culture pedagogy, affordance and cultural competence.

Teacher education is basically about developing teacher professionalism. In the wake of the papers and topics presented, an issue Krüger raised was the following one: “How does cultural pedagogy in teacher education relate to the notion of teacher professionalism?”

## **The mandate of the teaching profession**

Professions can be understood as collegial occupational organizations that serve society in distinct ways. Central to the teaching profession, as to other professions, is the mandate in relation to society. The mandate in relation to teachers’ work is concerned with the development of student teachers’ capacity to educate (or culturally form) young people. To carry out this task, teachers have to be able to identify, understand, create and organize conditions that facilitate such Bildung/formation. They also have to be able to handle technological innovations and new patterns of communication and participation, as well as comprehend how such trends and elements create changing conditions for growth. So – what we have heard today concerns not simply one marginal aspect of teaching and learning related to, for instance, science, and art or culture pedagogy; it is part of the core of the teaching profession and of education in general. It should not, of course, be necessary to mention this, but I think it cannot be over-emphasized.

## **The knowledge demands of the profession**

Teacher professionalism implies being able to deal with the specific knowledge associated with one’s profession. This, for teachers, means not only being well-acquainted with knowledge related to teaching, but also being able to understand, demonstrate, articulate and advocate this knowledge. This is of, course, a special challenge when the discipline is not one single one, but a tapestry of multiple disciplines, as we have heard today. It is important to develop, as is done here, relevant concepts that will enable us to grasp the problem, rather than simply adopting those used in other disci-

plines or knowledge traditions. It is also important to develop concepts that are suitable to assess what is going on based on one's own premises. Such concepts not only frame and delimit what can be seen, but also provide opportunities to understand and learn new things. The rhizome as a metaphor for knowledge is mentioned, as well as the new epistemology which suggests that the learner be viewed as the *producer/designer* of knowledge and not simply as the *consumer*.

One important aspect of teacher professionalism is “the noble art” of practicing discretion, didactic discretion. It is possible to regard this discretion as a very specific knowledge aspect of teaching practice. A great portion of teachers' everyday practice is about assessing challenges in often very complex and indeterminate situations, in which there are no established rules to follow in taking action. To make decisions, one has to practice *prudence* – which means taking in a great diversity of semiotic signs in one single “moment”, in order to lay the foundation for responsible educative actions. Such prudence, I think, is based upon normative frameworks generated from cultural competence.

## The professional complex – challenges for research

The texts at the symposium, and the presentations as well, have directed my attention towards another central notion and standard of teacher professionalism: Talcott Parson's notion of “the professional complex”, which concerns vital relations between education for the profession, professional practice and research on the profession.

In facing this “professional complex” many crucial research issues arise, and many of them can be gathered under the heading: research formatting mechanisms. What forces operate to produce certain notions of what is considered scientific? How is one to perform artistic research that counts towards the institution's “publishing credit table?” To what degree are researchers being trained to document this kind of research? What formats are considered legitimate for masters theses or doctoral dissertations? How do infrastructure, equipment and governing systems facilitate and prioritize certain rationalities? And with regard to today's topics: how, for instance, do teachers and other central agents conceive of “multimodality? I remember the journalist who ridiculed the term “multimodal texts” in the Norwegian teachers' magazine “Utdanning”. His article was entitled: “Norwegian language curriculum *in English*”, since he could not find the term in his Dictionary.



I think it is important to struggle with the concepts and categories through which we articulate our research findings and organize our thinking: those that predispose our conceptions and actions, and through which we reflect epistemologically on the premises and limits for the knowledge we develop. “Accountability” is one such concept that is applied in order to “make visible” the way the profession administers its mandate. In fact, I think that the term does not threaten cultural research very much, for instance, as it is defined in Collins Cobuild Dictionary(1990, p. 9):

- a) If you account for something that has happened or for something that you have done, you explain how it happened or why you did it; if you are accountable for something that you do, you are completely responsible for it and must be prepared to justify your actions.
  
- b) An account is a written or spoken report that gives you the details of something that has happened.

However, the way in which “accountability” is employed as a core metaphor in contemporary educational research takes on a different and provocative meaning. So perhaps the term should be de-constructed, or, as Wittgenstein suggests, be taken out of conventional use, washed and then put into use again.

## The professional space

The term “space” is applied explicitly in the general text of the symposium and also in both Anna-Lena Østern’s and Hannah Kaihovirta-Rosvik’s presentations. To follow up this meaning expansion, I think the term space can also be understood in a wider sense, to mean a cultural-ideological space. According to such a meaning, teacher education can be considered both as positioned within a large curricular space (where, for instance, PISA represents one element), and, at the same time, as being constituted by many minor sub-spaces. In the latter spaces, too, power operates to construct what is considered right or wrong, legitimate, reasonable, central, marginal, etc.; and it also operates to fashion what is taking place and to construct subjects and objects in certain ways. By conceiving of teacher education in such a spatial way and understanding its topography, extension and dynamics in these terms, it becomes possible to grasp the genesis of different terms and

also how they are given specific and privileged meanings. It can also help us to understand formative mechanisms and how they can be changed, for instance by “re-furnishing” the space. This also applies to the term “accountability”, and we need to consider where this term came from, and where it got and gets its material support. Many such questions can be raised and approached by taking the spatial approach.

## Conclusion

The papers and their topics concern central aspects of teacher professionalism. There are many other such aspects that might be touched upon such as authority, professional identity, professional relations, etc. It should be stressed that the standards set by theories of what is considered a profession are not written in the stars. They are socially and culturally constructed and should be challenged, and, if necessary, continuously re-constructed.

We need a strong teaching profession, a profession that is able to challenge the basis of its own epistemic existence and profile. And I think the projects we have heard about today, and the concepts and styles of reasoning that they manifest, make a valuable contribution, directly or indirectly, to such a challenge.

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