Chapter 2

To learn or to be taught – is that (still) the question?

Siv Merethe Kapstad[1]

Abstract

There is increasing interest in adopting student-centred learning in higher education. It is assumed to strengthen students' learning and have greater relevance to working life. Student-centred learning activities are not necessarily preferred by students and student-centred learning is known to require significant effort, a clear overview and self-regulation. This essay discusses the characteristics of a student-centred learning environment and the basic pedagogical assumptions that must lead to success in such an environment. The discussion is based on pedagogical theory and practice theory and argues that when there is a change in the roles of the actors involved, the framework of the education must also change to enable the incentives for all parties to be linked to the premise of learning as a journey.

Keywords

child welfare, student-centred learning, *Bildung,* learning journey

Introduction

"I have never learned as much as I have in this course, but I have had to learn everything myself!" a student once said to me at the end of a course that I gave. The learning in this course was based on the principles of student-centred activities, with an emphasis on the ability for critical reflection in connection with authentic cases from the child protective services. This happened a few years ago, and I cannot be sure if the student's comment was exactly as quoted above, but I have not forgotten this feedback, and I have many times found myself thinking back to this episode. Therefore,

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[1]   Siv Merethe Kapstad is Department manager in Child Welfare Service, and previously worked as assistant professor at the Department of Health, Social and Welfare Studies, University of South-Eastern Norway. Her research focus is child welfare, education and the development of professional competence.

when I was asked[2] some years later to choose a situation or incident from my own practice as a university teacher and process it through critical and theoretical reflection, this episode was once again brought to mind.

This essay is structured by first presenting the background to this experience and the methodological approach. The original reflection is then presented as a narrative, followed by critical and theoretical reflection. In this section, I examine what was at stake in this situation and enter into a dialogue with pedagogical philosophy, theory and research to discuss it. The discussion is structured around five interrelated aspects of the phenomenon of learning: the environment as an opportunity for learning, student diversity, conditions for autonomous learning, the learning journey and framework, and pedagogical practice. In the concluding remarks, the reflections are summed up and possible implications for education are presented.

Background

Child welfare education is one of three social work programmes in Norway. Graduates are qualified to work with children and young people, and child welfare practitioners have the skills required to identify needs and provide help to vulnerable children, young people and their families (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2019). The guidelines state that graduates of the programme must be capable of providing "the right help at the right time" (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, section 2). The ability to make sound professional judgements is therefore a key skill for child welfare professionals (Devaney & Spratt, 2009; Grimen & Molander, 2008).

There are strict requirements for professionals that their work must be of high quality, within the framework of the law, and it must lead to positive change for clients. Child welfare professionals typically exercise discretion in their assessments (Læret & Skivenes, 2016). The knowledge and skills the child welfare student/professional acquires through education and practice must be transformed from the general to the contextual and individual (Grimen & Molander, 2008, p. 179). Professionals must therefore use their judgement when facing situations that cannot be solved

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2   As part of my competence development, I took the PhD course "Pedagogical Competence Development and Educational Quality" at the University of South-Eastern Norway in 2021. This course, which was led by Guro Hansen Helskog and Glenn-Egil Torgersen, included pedagogical philosophy and ethics. Reflection and philosophical dialogue about one's own practice and competence was a common theme throughout the course, all facilitated by Helskog.

by clear recommendations or rules (Grimen & Molander, 2008, p. 179). In child welfare work, there is considerable leeway for the use of professional discretion. The work of a child welfare worker will interfere with other people's lives, and the question of what characterizes good practice is raised in meetings with vulnerable children, young people and their parents.

The combination of a high degree of discretion, opportunities for very intrusive interventions and the vulnerability of the clients requires considerable professional skill from child welfare workers. Complex professional competence can be explained as a combination of theoretical, profession-specific and personal competence. These forms of competency form part of dynamic relationships in the practice of the profession. Grimen (2008, p. 71) uses the term "practical syntheses" to explain the knowledge bases of professions. Practical synthesis refers to how theory and practice are part of a complicated interplay, where the theoretical multidisciplinarity of the professions is validated through their requirements and tasks. The knowledge base of a profession has a heterotelic purpose (p. 73) because it serves "certain values".

Methodological approach

In this chapter, experience, reflection and theory are combined in order to understand more of what unfolds in practice and extract new knowledge from this experience. This understanding is revealed by using theory to describe and explain (Sæverot & Kvam, 2019). As participants in practice, we are part of what happens through our experiences, actions and our person. Practice takes place continuously and is shaped by more or less conscious actions and traces from the past (Kemmis, 2012). Situations and experiences in practice can bring forth valuable information and knowledge about practice, which can be extracted by taking the experiences seriously and processing them. In practice, one constantly encounters situations and episodes where something unforeseen happens. There may be episodes where what takes place diverges from one's expectations; the external reality does not match one's inner thoughts. Such experiences of discrepancy (Lindseth, 2020, p. 83) make one stop and wonder. Such situations or experiences can, through reflective contemplation, lead to new insights and knowledge that can benefit practice.

> Such an inquiry is then not about *justification*, but about understanding and discovering connections; it takes place within a *context of discovery*. Then we need a *reflexive method* that seeks inner evidence for the insights we work forward. (Lindseth, 2020, p. 96, author's translation)

Danielsen (2013) notes how practical knowledge is not the same as evidence in traditional research but argues that it must nevertheless be justified in practical research that the knowledge obtained is sustainable. In reflexive practice research, the researcher seeks a shift from an action-oriented approach to a more thoughtful and reflexive perspective. Kvarv (2014) suggests the concept of "intersubjective understanding" as a means to validate practice research. The reader must be able to follow the research process through the presentation of the experience via theorizing and reflection, where the researcher's preconceptions and experience are accounted for, contextualized and discussed. In this way, theoretical concepts can be used to grasp the experience and critically reflect on this with the aim of enhancing knowledge and understanding. Reflexive practice research is thus a hermeneutic process because "the practice experience is understood in a theoretical perspective which at the same time is challenged by the experience" (Danielsen, 2013, p. 18, author's translation).

Original reflection

I had been a lecturer in child welfare for just over a year. A colleague and I ran a development project that focused on the use of digital and student-active learning methods (Kapstad & Ovrum, 2019, 2022; Ovrum & Kapstad, 2019, 2021). The purpose was to strengthen the students' basic knowledge and enhance their understanding of the work of the child welfare service, in terms of both investigations and interventions. We restructured a ten-credit course by building a digital learning path, creating e-lectures and constructing a fixed case. We also set aside time for weekly tutorials for students. We exchanged ordinary lectures with dialogue-based class meetings and told the students that we expected them to have worked on assignments (e-lectures and self-study in addition to group work) as preparation for face-to-face classes and group work. In the face-to-face classes, we expected the students to participate in discussions with each other and with the lecturer. There was good attendance in all the classes, excellent student engagement in the tutorials and greater use of theoretical insight when the students analysed and discussed practical dilemmas.

The learning design we developed was based on principles of learning where the learner is an active participant. Through collaboration, case assignments, supervision and reflection, we wanted to help the students develop their theoretical understanding, methodological skills and ability to see the specific aspects of the individual and situation. We wanted to facilitate a learning environment where students were trained to use discretion in making assessments when faced with various authentic issues in child welfare work.

We obtained oral and written evaluations from the students during and near the end of the course. It was in one of the meetings with the student group at the very end of the course that one of the students exclaimed: *"I have never learned as much as I have in this course, but I have had to learn everything myself!"*. She waved her arms in a gesture to her fellow students as if she were asking for their opinion. She received many nods, and several said, *"I agree!"*

I perceived the student as resigned, frustrated, and on the verge of becoming a little angry. The frustration she expressed was directed at a learning process that she was not used to but from which she had found that she learned a great deal. In the same group, I had received feedback that they wanted clearer answers during tutorials: "We're asking for a reason", a student said, trying to explain that she expected answers. In our sessions, we emphasized not providing the students with answers but rather encouraging them to reflect deeply on the issues they had to enable us to arrive jointly at solutions. In tutorials, we asked the students questions such as, "What issues are you facing here?", "Why do you want to choose this solution?" and "Are there alternative ways to understand this?". Little by little, we found that the students became better at using their knowledge to improve their skill in expressing opinions and arguments. The students worked hard at the assignments they were given and became involved in the academic work of identifying various issues and discussing the significance of these for practical child welfare work. *"I have never learned so much"* gave me feedback that we had succeeded in creating good conditions for learning. We had had ten weeks with a steep learning curve, and many students had persevered and done an excellent job. The statement *"I have had to learn everything myself"* made me more thoughtful and worried; I reflected on what the students might have expected when signing up for this course.

Critical and theoretical reflection

The student`s statement above made an impression on me and became an expression of how complex, demanding and yet rewarding learning processes can be. I felt that the student was frustrated and emotional because the examination was approaching, causing some anxiety amongst students. Nevertheless, the episode made me dwell on what the student had said and how I could use this to understand more of the learning processes. Kemmis describes how what unfolds in practice here and now is "shaped by often unseen hands and habits inherited from the past" (Kemmis, 2012, p. 893). With such a perspective on practice, it makes sense to see the statement of the student in relation to intention, action and experience related to the phenomenon of learning.

Strand (2016) refers to Plato`s Meno (Løkke, 2005) to explain this phenomenon. Learning has no uniform definition, and different educational traditions will emphasize different aspects of learning. However, there are three principles that recur: learning as a process, learning as transformation and learning as relational. Strand (2016, p. 85) elaborates:

> This means that the phenomenon of learning must be understood as transformative processes that form part of, and cannot be studied detached from, the dynamic relationships between the learner, what is learned, and the learning methods. (author`s translation)

Through a dialogue, Meno changes his approach to learning. It is as if he is thrown from stronghold to stronghold when confronted with the Socratic dialogue. In his search for answers, he encounters new questions, and gradually, he realizes how a reflective attitude to the questions he seeks answers to leads to new insights. The dialogue shows how learning is a relational phenomenon in the sense that there is a dynamic link in any learning situation between the different aspects of learning (Strand, 2016).

In the episode referred to above, what was at stake in that situation? The student seemed almost surprised, as if she never would have expected to learn as much without getting answers and a blueprint for learning. Her statement was, to some extent, a complaint about having to learn everything herself and shows that her understanding of the competence she was developing was linked to an instrumentalist form of learning. The statement implies an expectation of being taught rather than taking an active stand as a *learner*. It revealed to me that although the curriculum states that learning is transformation, with an emphasis on enhancing reflection and authentic learning, this way of learning was actually quite new to her! I understood that the students sought clear answers and were somewhat disturbed by the questions they were given as answers. In the encounter with a student-centred learning environment that is based on principles of *Bildung* (student formation, holistic self-development), the expectation of being taught will make it difficult for the student to adapt. The statement can therefore be seen as an expression of an understanding of learning itself (Strand, 2016, p. 94). I will therefore use this experience to reflect on how the student role changes in student-centred learning environments and how to create conditions for a learning environment that enhances *Bildung* and professional development.

I will briefly explain below why it is so important that child welfare students gain experience and seek learning as active participants. Graduates of this professional programme are qualified to work in a certain field of expertise. A key aspect of this qualification is to present students with theoretical, factual and practical knowledge (Trevithick, 2008).

Child welfare work is a field characterized by conflict, ambiguity and complexity (Munro, 2019). High demands are placed on the achievements of the child welfare service, which must also be within the framework of the law. Child welfare work often involves wicked problems that are not clearly defined (Rittel & Webber, 1973). The theoretical and practical components of the programme prepare the students for future professional practice. Lindseth (2009) discusses how the requirements that the professional encounters in practice involve something more than applying theory and evidence-based knowledge. Professionals must use their insight and competence in specific contexts and individual situations. Lindseth (2009) describes this as a form of practical knowledge, a responsiveness to challenges.

In developing this responsiveness, students need to be encouraged to take part in their own learning and professional development. It requires an integration of knowledge (Dale, 2011) and the ability to critically reflect on and assess the validity of knowledge when dealing with various practical issues. This is a personal formation process that must take place within a community (Hellesnes, 1992; Varkoy, 2010). The ability of child welfare workers to respond will have major implications for children and their families who are in need of support. Practical knowledge becomes relevant in encounters with challenges and tasks in practical work and is developed by critically reflecting on one's own professional practice.

The environment as an opportunity for learning

In policy management documents and reviews, student-centred activities are emphasized (Damşa et al., 2015; Meld. St. 16 (2016-2017), 2017; Meld. St. 16 (2020-2021), 2020). Such learning activities seem particularly suitable for meeting the demands of the knowledge society and labour market (Meld. St. 16 (2020-2021), 2020).

The reason why student-centred activities are preferred is related to the need for reflective and independent professionals who are able to meet the demands and challenges of the field at all times. In a changing labour market, the importance of lifelong learning is also key, which requires the ability to self-regulate and monitor one's own learning (Damşa & de Lange, 2019b). Student-centred learning has been suggested to meet these demands and to be particularly suitable to enhance student learning processes with its emphasis on participation and joint decision-making and its focus on students' needs and development. Damşa and de Lange (2019b) suggest that it is not the learning that is student-centred but rather the environment in which the learner engages. A student-centred learning environment is a structured setting for students to act upon their learning needs by

engaging in the activities provided and receiving the support and guidance available (Damșa & de Lange, 2019b).

The statement on which this essay is based is derived from a course structured according to principles of student-centred learning. The learning design was carefully tailored to encourage in-depth learning, independence, and the ability to analyse, assess and exercise professional judgement in the face of complex dilemmas in child welfare work. The student activities were prepared by teachers who provided supervision and advice and participated in theoretical and practical discussions on child welfare matters. Practising analytical skills in a professional context involves sharing opinions and building knowledge together.

In collaboration on cases and practical dilemmas from the child welfare field, the students met different perspectives, understandings and arguments. The learning activities and tutorials were designed to encourage them to explore their professional identity.

Although student-centred learning is highlighted and preferred as a way to enhance quality in education, this approach might be challenged by the fact that educational programmes are governed by fixed learning outcomes (Damșa & Lange, 2019a). For students, this can appear as two different worlds that are difficult to reconcile. To put it briefly, on the one hand, they are encouraged to seek knowledge on their own terms, monitor their learning processes and engage in learning activities in collaboration with peers, while on the other hand, they must relate to learning outcomes that seem quite fixed. This discrepancy may make students hesitate to participate in novel learning activities because they are unsure whether the activities will get them where they want in terms of academic results. Society places high demands on academic results, and I wonder if this might influence how students approach learning activities that do not "tick off" one or more learning outcomes but rather emphasize reflection and *Bildung*.

Student diversity

I was surprised that the student stated that she had to learn everything on her own since she had been an active participant throughout the course and therefore contributed to and profited from the joint building of knowledge. The episode illustrates a situation that I imagine many university lecturers might recognize: students are not necessarily ready to be part of a student-centred learning environment, and they may struggle to see the value of learning in this way.

Her statement helped me to direct my focus towards the degree of effort needed and the importance of prerequisites and preferences for learning in a student-centred learning environment.

Motivation can be said to be the driving force in learning processes (Brennen, 2006). It is an orientation towards learning. The way students orient themselves and act in a learning environment will be affected by what they want to achieve and why. Understanding the relationship between motivation and self-regulated learning is crucial (Pintrich, 1999). Students who are driven by intrinsic motivation direct their focus towards their own learning process in order to enhance their competence and ability to think critically (Pew, 2007). If the motivation for learning is primarily externally controlled, it may be more difficult for students to maintain motivation for activities that they do not necessarily consider beneficial (Pew, 2007). Participation in joint knowledge building can be perceived as less meaningful by this student group (Stevenson & Sander, 2002).

There is a wide variety of students in higher education (Meld. St. 16 (2020-2021), 2020). In child welfare education, there is variation in age, experience and knowledge among the students. The interaction in the learning environment will necessarily be affected by these differences. The composition of the student group is an important factor for the teacher to consider. What will be the right level of progression? How to handle possible wide variations in the ability to self-regulate and reflect? How can the learning process be enhanced? These are some of the many questions to be answered in order to create conditions for a learning environment where exploration and independence are central. For some students, it is necessary for the teacher to function as a "temporary motivational bridge" (Pew, 2007, p. 22) and thus demonstrate the advantage of taking an active part in the learning community. Through reflection, dialogue and action, students' experiences can be incorporated into what is learned and create new opportunities for learning and development.

In andragogy, Knowles (1970) reminds us of the importance of incorporating adult students' own experiences and the knowledge they already have. This can strengthen their experience of relevance and involvement and provide greater ownership of the learning process. Such an approach highlights life experience as a source of knowledge and can be fruitful in reflexive practice in the classroom. The notion that personal experience and previous knowledge are valuable sources of understanding and new insight might encourage students to take part in learning activities jointly and individually. A student-centred learning environment must be inclusive. For lecturers, it will be important to explore the learning environment in the group and whether it is perceived as possible for the participants to enter into discussions that affect basic values and academic standpoints. If connections between the past, present and future are clarified in the learning environment, this can help to strengthen students' engagement in

the subject (Havnes, 2015; Knowles, 1970) and their motivation to join a professional community (Hellesnes, 1992).

In my practice as a university teacher, I have found that diversity in a student group can be an advantage and a prerequisite for learning with and from each other. Some of the younger students might have less life and work experience than the older ones. On the other hand, younger students are often more used to problem-solving from high school and show more appreciation for the ideas of others. This might be more challenging for older students. These factors may lead to a greater difference in a group of students between those who manage to assert themselves in line with increased demands for participation and those who do not (Lea et al., 2003; Ovrum & Kapstad, 2019). In student-centred learning, it is considered important for the teacher to take student diversity into account when facilitating learning. Students' learning preferences and their ability and motivation to learn (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Stalheim & Nordkvelle, 2019) should be part of this consideration.

Conditions for autonomous learning

In efforts to renew and develop educational practice, discussions often involve how programmes can better meet the requirements for lifelong learning in the labour market (Damşa & de Lange, 2019b). Nevertheless, programmes still largely consist of teaching and learning activities that bear the mark of "handovers" (e.g. Damşa et al., 2015; Fossland, 2015; Nerland & Prøitz, 2018).

The transition from more traditional teaching methods to student activity involves a change in the actual approach to learning. Kupperman's (1996) article still seems relevant in this context. In his "Autonomy and the Very Limited Role of Advocacy in the Classroom", he warns against a form of teaching that is based on a transfer of knowledge from the expert to the novice. Advocacy refers to the teachers' presentation of views and directly or indirectly requiring support for their position. Instead, teachers should encourage students to think for themselves and express their opinions. Kupperman argues that students must be allowed to develop as autonomous thinkers. This means being able to argue and reflect on political, structural and social issues without being afraid that a lack of complete agreement with the lecturer will have a negative effect on their marks.

This must take place in a learning environment where different voices are allowed to be heard, and arguments are welcomed and debated. Autonomous learners ask questions and actively engage in a dialogue about what is being taught.

The transition from more traditional teaching methods to student-centred activities can be demanding for some students who have to change their approach to their studies and their learning process. It requires an understanding of their role as active members of a learning community. Participating in a student-centred learning environment can therefore represent a challenge, requiring independence, motivation and the ability to self-regulate learning (Pintrich, 1999). Consequently, it is important that students understand the intention behind the learning design and find it meaningful to participate actively in the learning environment.

To achieve this, it is necessary to facilitate a learning environment that encourages students to use and develop their critical and reflective abilities. Achieving student activity understood as autonomy in the learning situation means that students are given space and time to reflect on and express their positions, attitudes and values, which must also be integrated into the theoretical, factual and personal knowledge base (Havnes, 2015; Mezirow, 1997).

Learning Journey

An essential part of my tertiary pedagogical practice involves facilitating learning and seeking to create good conditions for learning. This work includes ongoing assessments and adaptations to optimize the dynamic relationships of the phenomenon of learning. One of many methodological considerations is to maintain a balance between establishing a good structure and creating room for manoeuvre. It is important to create learning environments that encourage the desire to learn more and to become a well-qualified child welfare worker. In my work, I have considered frustration as part of the learning process. Investigating, testing and especially changing one's opinion are demanding and create frustration, which then can lead to the necessary friction and drive needed to develop and push forward. The episode I mentioned made me reflect on how I as a teacher can be sure that this frustration will not be an end in itself. It could make students want to give up. A lecturer might find it more rewarding to practice advocacy in the classroom – take on the role of the expert. As Kupperman points out, this would be an unethical way to practice pedagogy and would hinder the development of the professional competence sorely needed in child welfare.

Skjervheim (1992) presents two presumed contradictions in pedagogical theory and practice: persuasion and conviction. The relationship between persuasion and conviction is fundamental to pedagogical philosophy and is linked to the discussion of *Bildung* in education. Persuasion is linked to a more technical view of teaching, where the aim is to pass

on knowledge to the learner (student), while conviction is more related to free pedagogy, where the learner (student) must develop freely. However, education is more complex, too extensive and too important for such a dichotomy to be sufficient. Skjervheim (1992) argues for a third alternative, namely a dialectical practice. He refers back to antiquity and the Socratic dialogue. Here, the goal is to promote insight through meeting the other where the other is: becoming involved in what is to be learned in the case and engaging in an exchange of opinions related to this. It is by understanding and dealing with the tension involved in providing a framework and space that the teacher's skills come into play (Skjervheim, 1992). The role of the teacher is to facilitate and participate in a dialogue about what is to be learned. It involves acknowledging what unfolds in the social interaction, building on experiences, opening up to the unknown, and engaging in inquiry and reflection. In this way, the learning environment can consist of active participants who help to develop the dynamics of the learning and thus gain new insight.

Learning is about crossing boundaries where one's own horizon of understanding is expanded by opening up to other people's ways of thinking (Hellesnes, 1992). Border areas can be a "chaotic no-man's land" (Brunstad, 2009, p. 56). When two horizons meet and unite, *Bildung* can occur (Varkoy, 2010, p. 94). Understanding and action are mutually dependent, according to Hellesnes (1992, p. 93). Therefore, dialogue leads to changes in both understanding and action. Support in the learning process, understood as dialogue and reflection, increases student understanding to enable the chaotic and frustrating elements of learning to remain manageable and useful, and does not discourage students from wanting to explore more. Varkoy (2010) describes the concept of *Bildung* in a similar way and emphasizes that this involves "venturing away from oneself into the unknown, stretching one`s own limits in order to properly find one`s true self" (p. 88). Studies of student-centred learning environments show that they require a high degree of independence and the ability to self-regulate (Damşa et al., 2015). Taking an active part in one's own learning process and contributing to knowledge construction with others requires discipline and effort. If the teacher no longer presents all the answers, the students themselves must articulate and test their own hypotheses. This requires not only the ability to analyse and balance different points of view but also an ability to reflect and be independent. Such conditions for learning will enhance the development of professional competence and the ability to handle difficult situations in practice. Dialogue is central to this development. The statement *"I have never learned as much as I have in this course, but I have had to learn everything myself!"* indicates how demanding learning

can be in the spectrum between persuasion and conviction, cf. the concept of Skjervheim (1992).

Frameworks and pedagogical practices

Student responses can be understood in light of the demands and contradictions that exist in learning and the environment. Students may encounter fewer learning situations as they follow the path from wonder and investigation towards new insights than they had expected. The education might be more tied up in old teaching patterns than expected. In order to create learning environments that enhance quality and prepare students to become skilled professionals, it is of great importance that students learn how to learn and that the incentives and framework of the education are in line with such an understanding.

The teacher's individual practice is partly shaped by framework factors such as changes in educational policy, and such changes have indirect and direct consequences for the actions and choices made in practice. A change in focus from whole-class lectures to more student-active approaches and the incentives that are communicated through factor calculation and a focus on fixed learning outcomes will affect student-teacher interaction in practice. Kemmis describes learning practices in terms of ecologies of practices (Kemmis, 2012, p. 887), where different practices are influenced by and affect each other. Physical, contextual and social elements affect what unfolds in practice. In order for educational programmes to achieve their goal of a more student-centred learning environment that prepares students for the tasks that await them in practice, and qualifies them for lifelong learning, this must also be reflected in the framework around the programmes.

In this way, a structure of various departments, levels and actors is formed, which together constitute practice. In this perspective, the scope for changes in educational practice is both limited and promoted by the external framework.

Concluding remarks

Reflexive practice research is based on lived experience in practice. Such situations arise in moments of surprise and wonder (Brinkmann, 2014; Fujii, 2015). This essay is based on one such experience. Conducting reflexive practice research is similar to the circular reflection work of a reflective practitioner, as described by Schön (1987, 1995). When one encounters surprising situations, the question of what is at stake in the situation is indicative of one's further reflection. The practitioner is thus part of a reflexive practice by daring to explore the situation and learn

from it. In this way, the reflective dimension can both inform practice and be challenged in practice, while the actions become the starting point for reflection. Reflexive practice research can provide new knowledge about practice, but also strengthen the practitioner's ability for professional artistry (Schön, 1995), or a responsiveness in practice (Lindseth, 2009).

"I have never learned as much as I have in this course, but I have had to learn everything myself!" was a statement, an experience and an opportunity to gain new insight. In this essay, I have reflected on how it can be understood in an educational context where the dynamic relationship in the learning process is key. It reveals the complexity of learning. For me, it was an important reminder that student-centred activities indeed require certain qualities in the learning environment and that operating in the spectrum between persuasion and conviction is not necessarily rewarded with satisfied students – initially. To provide good conditions for learning implies monitoring students` frustration. Education should promote *Bildung* through a learning journey. But, to achieve such a goal, the learning environment must be tailored to include internal and external resources in order to enhance independence and critical thinking. Suitable conditions for exploration and inquiry must be established and developed in the pursuit of practical wisdom. In such a perspective, learning should not be directed towards fixed outcomes but rather lead to an independent, reflexive ability to constantly seek new horizons. The child welfare worker will encounter difficult situations and dilemmas that call for theoretical, practical and personal knowledge. To enhance the quality of child welfare education in order to prepare students for the transition to work requires an understanding of how to facilitate a learning environment that provides *Bildung* and the ability for lifelong learning.

In the discussion on how to raise the quality of professional education, experiences from practice can provide valuable input on the actions of those involved and on how the framework of the education promotes or constrains the desired development. Moreover, understanding the depth of reflexive practice and the development of responsiveness in practice is a matter of enhancing professional competence.

It requires time and space to build learning environments with a focus on co-creation, *Bildung* and autonomous learning. How educational institutions facilitate this through strategic guidelines and frameworks is a very important aspect of what unfolds in practice. Developing professional competence is a transformative way of learning; it takes time and hard work, and frustration and adversity are part of the learning process. In other words, authentic learning equals hard work over time for everyone involved. Evaluations of the educational practice should take this into account. It reveals the need for an overarching approach to discussing the

conditions and development of practice and calls for what Kemmis (2012) refers to as creating "communicative spaces" (Kemmis, 2012, p. 898), in order to discuss the pedagogical practice and its framework. This essay is a contribution to this discussion, emphasizing knowledge acquired in practice as a source of understanding.

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