

Danish University Colleges

Participation between pedagogical intentions and control efforts in a secured practice

Hoffmann, Martin

Publication date:
2017

Document Version
Andet version

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for pulished version (APA):

Hoffmann, M. (2017). *Participation between pedagogical intentions and control efforts in a secured practice*. Paper præsenteret ved The 17th Biennial Conference of The ISTP, Tokyo, Japan.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Download policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Participation between pedagogical intentions and control in a secured practice - they also fucked the Turks. They all fucked Hakim. Hakim just nods

Introduction

Within the field of Secured institutions, it's often argued, that school and learning are challenged because of the young people's personal problem; violent behavior, diagnoses, stress, bad school experiences and issues related to their childhood (Bonke & Kofoed, 2001; Danske Regioner, 2011; Jensen, Koudahl, Pio, Petersen, & Boding, 2011). In this presentation I'll argue, that school and learning are not challenged because of personal problems, but rather connected to their handling of contradiction between pedagogical intentions in a controlling practice. In this presentation, I'll therefore investigate development in our common practice.

Because of above reflections, I have two purposes with this presentation. The first purpose is to analyze how two different arrangement, give/ afford different possibilities for being as inmate, researcher and professional inside a high security institution for young people below 18 years. To make an understanding about this, I draw on Bertel Ollman's approach about contradictions (Ollman, 2003) This theory offers an understanding about how practice is developed and governed through blended contradictions and in which possible directions practice might move. In this case, I primarily analyze the contradiction between pedagogical intentions and control. Pedagogical intentions are a collective term that also include ideas about rehabilitation and socialization. In this presentation, I use term pedagogical intentions.

The second purpose is to analyze how our understanding about an inmate and his being in one arrangement, significantly influences our understanding of him and his engagement in another arrangement across contexts. To develop an understanding about participation and how it's coordinated and distributed between arrangements, I draw on theory that are focusing on peoples conduct of everyday life (Dreier, 2008, 2016; Holzkamp, 1998; Højholt, 2016)

Context of a secured institution

We are located in a context of a secured institution for young people under 18 years. These institutions aren't called prisons in official documents. In practice, they look like prisons and they have many of the same architectural characteristics. Like high walls with barbed wire in the top. A big iron gate that can only be unlocked from the inside through radio contact. Up to 75 % percent of the inmates are in custody, the rest of the inmates serve a mixture of sanctions, and some others are undergoing educational observation. Immigrants under the age of 18 without permission to stay in Denmark, are also placed here for a short time. One might say that staff only regulates and controls this kind of practice as they have the power to control the secured practice. Others argue that control and pedagogical intentions are conflictual matters that lock practice. However, as you will see in this presentation, practice is developed and governed by all the participants handling the contradictions embedded in the placement. I do argue that there are both control and pedagogical themes at the same time in different arrangements.

Contractions between rehabilitation and control have been discussed in criminological research for years. In a Danish context, this has been even more current since Denmark's accession to the UN Children's Convention in 1991. Imprisonment of young people below 18 must therefore have a rehabilitative aim. In addition to the above and because of the primary school act, they must be offered education in primary school subjects.

In the chosen empirical material from my ph.d., I'll introduce a shift between two different kinds of social arrangement inside the institution. First I'll describe how a conversation about personal problems on a bench before entering the school setting is possible in certain ways invited by the rehabilitative and controlling practice. Next I'll investigate how schooling in a classroom is developed and governed through contradictions and how the conversation at the bench, can help us to understand possible ways of engaging in the school arrangement.

The involved characters Hakim, Simon and I

In this case, the main character is Hakim who is sixteen years old and placed in custody because of a robbery. He's waiting in the secured institution for a sanction and for which further consequences he will meet because of his criminal act outside the institution. He told me, that he has

acknowledged his guilt and that he has regrets everything, and therefore hopes for a minor penalty. He is very concerned about his future. Simon is a non-educated employed professional social educator who has worked here for many years. Together with Simon and Hakim, I as a researcher stay with them here at the bench.

[It all begins at a bench outside the classroom.](#)

Here in the sun, Hakim, Simon and I, relax with a cigarette and talk about Hakims problems and other everyday life challenges as an inmate. This is a very relaxed situation and we can all feel the rays from the sun. Around the bench, there is grass and some small threes. The arrangement here even though controlling and behind high walls, invites to a conversation about life and the universe because of the relaxed atmosphere. The bench and the time here, makes it possible for a short time, to forget that it's a secured institution. Hakim is curious about Simons and my life. He asks many questions related to our childhood and how life was at that time. Hakim is very concerned about how the prison ruins his further possibilities of taking an education. Simon leaves the context and I am now alone together with Hakim.

I ask Hakim how long he shall be here at the secured institution.

Hakim: I'll probably get my sentence next month. It's Okay.

Hakim: But I will definitely be sent to prison and be behind bars, because I have confessed it all.

I ask Hakim: How long will they give you?

Hakim: I'll probably get about 4 – 5 years for what I did. I comment: It sounds a lot, are you then going to another institution? Yes I think. It depends on whether I behave properly and so. I would rather pay off at a place of a residential institution or similar so I can start an education.

I'll return to this conversation where Hakim reflects about his possibilities later in this paper. As you see, his reflection is primary directed toward how he behaves under isolation rather than getting better in school subjects here at the institution.

The school setting

After our conversation at the bench, we walk into a small classroom where the teacher Valdemar is waiting at the desk. The classroom is small about 15- 20 square meters and invites to ordinary schoolwork. In the classroom, you find a book section, a desk, a world map on the wall and some computers. As a contradiction there is a couch for relaxed conversations. In the middle, there is a working table for the boys to work at. At the same time the classroom must accommodate the control of the secured institution, we are all locked in behind closed doors and the young boys have no possibilities for escape.

Now I'll investigate how as a researcher I am handling the pedagogical intentions together with Simon and how these pedagogical intentions are possible in certain ways because of the controlling practice.

I approach the world map on the wall. The other day we saw a documentary about Islamic State and began to talk about Ukraine. I resume our talk and show Hakim where Ukraine is located on the map and how it is next to Russia. Hakim is curious: where is the fighting located? I tell him that it's happening in eastern Ukraine where the country is adjacent to Russia. Simon (one of the staff members) interrupts me in a hard way (and shows me who's in charge of the situation as a staff) and begins to talk about the history of the Vikings. Simon generally speaks what I would call "street" language. He says; The Vikings were wild and barbaric at that time. They owned the most of Europe. Hakim says he is from Turkey, and Simon says, they also fucked the Turks. They all fucked, Hakim. Hakim just nods. Hakim asks for a similar group from Turkey who had conquered most of Eastern Europe hundreds of years ago. Simon didn't react. It is clear that Hakim is aware of the history of his country of origin and the large conquests they have achieved. We begin to talk about the Soviet Union and German history and what the states are called in Germany. After our conversation finished, Hakim sits on the couch watching TV again as usual with no pedagogical matters.

In this school arrangement, I'll analyze how we (Simon, Hakim and I) enter a situation that's normally locked with no pedagogical matters because of the controlling practice and how I as a participant open a discussion with pedagogical contents through my participatory research. Here we must understand the possibilities for realizing ethos of the practice from the way participants produce, establish and negotiate it on the contradictions in the school setting.

In opposition to the earlier conversation at the bench, between Hakim, Simon and I, this institutional arrangement in school, encourages other possibilities of participation. Drake and Harvey argue how the ethnographic researcher in prison, must handle different identities in mastering the prison environment (Drake & Harvey, 2014, p. 490) In my research I'll show, that this is not different identities but rather different ways of handling the contradictions embedded in the institutional practice. To do so, I as a researcher must do what's possible in the prisons shifting arrangements with different possibilities of participation. Contradictions between rehabilitation and control are constantly there blending up in different ways, at different places. Betel Ollmann says about contradictions:

".. the incompatible development of different elements within the same relation, which is to say between elements that are also dependent on one another [...] differences are based, on certain conditions, and these conditions are constantly changing..." (Ollmann, 2003, p. 17)

As we saw at the bench, pedagogical intentions and control both mixed up at the same time, and gave certain possibilities of participation; here it was talking about personal issues about being locked up in a prison and how it conflicts in certain ways in Hakims life. In this case, about a school arrangement, participation is also established and negotiated in-between these contradictions.

I understand my dialogue with Hakim in the beginning of the empirical case, as a way of participating in-between pedagogical intentions (rehabilitation) and control. As we see, I as a researcher, handle the prison environment by trying to begin a pedagogical discussion about world history. I try to open up the context with pedagogical themes. The pedagogical arrangement with a work desk, world map, books with learning material and so on, afford certain ways of being and participating. In this case, we see how a discussion about Ukraine and societal matters, are governed and developed by one of the elements that is pedagogical intentions where Hakim is supposed to learn in school. Simon and I enter into a dialogue with Hakim where the intention is that he comes to learn. In this example it's clear, that research process and the constitution of practice are in a dialectical process that requires ethical concerns. My attempt to handle the practice shows that I try to handle the pedagogical intentions, but the development in the situation shows simultaneously, that the controlling aspects form practice. Richard Wener says that frequently situations in prison are magnified because of the psychological impact of the physical

environment. For example the lack of possibilities to decide even small things in his or her everyday life in prison as moving from one room to another without permission from the staff (Wener, 2012)

In the empirical case we see, that Simon interrupts me, and begins a harder rhetoric: Simon says; the Vikings were madly wild at that time. They owned the most of Europe. Hakim says he is from Turkey, and Simon says, they also fucked the Turks. They all fucked, Hakim. Hakim just nods.

Simon's dominance shows that he is doing pedagogical matters in a controlling way. In the concrete example Simons dominance as an aspect of the controlling practice, gives Hakim two opportunities. He can try to provoke Simon or subjugate Simon's dominance. Because of what we know about Hakim from the bench, he is trying to "behave properly". We could understand Hakim's act as Erving Goffman's secondary adjustment where Hakim opportunistically is "playing it cool". Playing it cool means that Hakim instead of confronting Simon is trying to get the best out of the controlling situation. He just nods and accept Simons dominance. Even though Erving Goffman's work is intended to show the implications of the total institution, I see Hakims attempts of connecting to the pedagogical intentions, as a way to act in-between contradictions and make practice work in a pedagogical way together with Simon and me.

Because of Simon's dominance, Hakims, and my subjection, we see that even though, that practice was developed in a pedagogical way for a short time, It is falling back without pedagogical contents because of the controlling practice. This happens when the dialogue between Hakim, Simon and I ends. Hakim goes and sits in the couch and watching TV as usually.

Moral in this practice is not something essential in itself, but related to how the participants in the concrete arrangement, are handling contradictions embedded in the placement. Here we see, that Simon's dominance in a controlling way, makes it possible to dominate Hakim instead of recognizing his marginal and exposed position as the learner. It did not have to be in this way. Should education and learning be improved in secured institutions, participants must be aware of the contradictions of importance for their specific arrangements.

