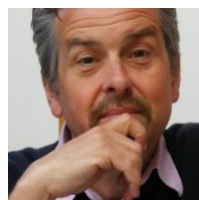


## **A time to pause and ponder - will to meaning in education**

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## Political global trends

Worries on globalisation is causing

- Isolationism
- Protectionism
- Populism
- Post-factualism
- ...
- *Democracy has committed suicide*
  - (Carsten Jensen, danish author, 2016)

## What is the responsible educational response

- Teachers and teacher educators can not take a dystopic position.
- They must attempt to make it possible for pupils and students to be *guided and assisted in the realisation of such meanings that they themselves have detected* (Frankl 2004).
- Europe has experience with atonement:
  - the Berlin wall went down,
  - peace came to Northern Ireland,
  - ...

## In search for meaning in a changing world

### The importance of defining meaning in times of uncertainty

- It is not surprising that we are inclined to reduce uncertainty given its negative impacts. Uncertainty is linked to increased stress, role ambiguity, job turnover, negative health effects and poor decision making.
- Uncertainty can lead to poor performance and people often define their meaning and worth through their performance. As such, we can be left searching for meaning in uncertain times.

<http://www.sidewaysthoughts.com/blog/2013/05/the-importance-of-defining-meaning-in-times-of-uncertainty/>

## The relation between meaning and reflection

Donald Schön lex Andrew Castley, University of Warwick :

- conscious reflection: recall empathy and experience
- critical analysis: objective analysis of cause and action
- new perspective: synthesis and evaluation, adding concepts, applying literature
- implementation and action through a change
  - (i) in technique, or
  - (ii) in attitude or
  - (iii) in value (belief) system

<https://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/ldc/resource/evaluation/tools/self/learnreflection.pdf>

John Dewey according to Carol Rodgers (2002)

- Reflection is meaning-making and deepening understanding
- Reflection is systematic thinking
- Reflections needs interaction with others
- Reflection must value personal and intellectual growth
  - wholehearted
  - open minded
  - direct
  - responsible

[http://www.bsp.msu.edu/uploads/files/Reading\\_Resources/Defining\\_Reflection.pdf](http://www.bsp.msu.edu/uploads/files/Reading_Resources/Defining_Reflection.pdf)

## Chris 1

### Taking an auto-ethnographic approach

- Self-study *is research* (Lewison 2003, Clarke & Erickson 2004).
- Self-study "as professional development - Looking for the **meaning** in one's own activity - methodology characterised by examining role of the **self** in research projects - "*the space between self and the practice engaged in*" (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001)
- Self-study is "*a generally agreed set of insider research practices that promote teachers taking a close, critical look at their teaching and the academic and social development of their students*" (Lewison 2003)
- Self-study "*involves classroom teachers in a **cycle of inquiry, reflection and action**...teachers question common practice, approach problems from new perspectives, consider research and evidence to propose new solutions, implement these solutions and evaluate the results, starting the cycle anew*" (Lewison 2003) (our emphasis).

## Chris 2

### How to be self-reflexive?

#### Focus

- on one's own teaching & one's students' learning while engaging in scholarly practice. (Kitchen 2006)
- the "*analysis of one's own practice with all the attendant challenges and celebrations associated with such scrutiny*" (Clarke & Erickson 2004).

#### Approach

- "*narrative-biographical research*" (Swennen et al 2008)
- journals, diary, notes, emails, video recording, feedback, peer observation...
- Dialogue as a search for **meaning** - learning conversations (Laurillard 2002)

#### Outcomes

- any perceived outcomes seen as *teacher knowing* - one's practice is always evolving, **rather** than *teacher knowledge* - where one's practice is pretty much fixed or static. (Clarke & Erickson 2004).

#### Impact

- we "*need to understand and recognise that ideas and aspirations may not be matched by teaching practices*" (Whitehead 1993)

## Chris 3

### Action research by a teacher educator:

- Classroom activity fails to have full impact on learning
- Narrative in journal entries
- Writing the action research report is empowering (Bullock 2007)
- Dialogue with peers and learners seeking meaning (Whitehead 1993)
- Espoused theory vs. theory in use (Argyris & Schön 1974)
- Reflect on inputs, activity, context, etc.
- Plan and implement effective action.

### To find **meaning** in what we do

- *“confront, re-examine and possibly reinterpret ... past experiences in the light of new experiences” (Lomax, Evans & Parker, 1998),*
- *“closer scrutiny of an individual’s pedagogy in teaching about teaching” (Loughran & Northfield 1998).*

## Peer 1

### Narrative inquiry in Danish teacher education

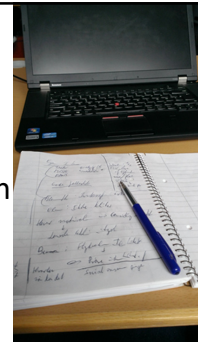
- Inquiry in general is gaining momentum in teacher education:
  - Connect to local community, (Nicholas, Baker-Sennett, McClanahan, & Harwood, 2012)
  - Curricular modelling, (Oliver et al., 2015)
  - Address teacher student concern, (Salerno & Kibler, 2015)
- Narratives bring forward:
  - Experience
  - The individual perspective and **meaning**
  - Setting sensitive
- **Efterskole [Youth folk high school] course**
  - 10 ects
  - 6 weeks fulltime course
  - Including 2 week stay at an ‘efterskole’



## Peer 2

### How narrative inquiry?

- Oral narrative as genre – 15 minutes presentation
- Identity as narrative (Sfard and Prusack, 2005)
  - Who is telling the identity of who to whom
  - Whose meaning is valid
- Address (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007)
  - Narrative documentation
  - Narrative analysis
  - Narrative communication
- Task
  - Description, analysis, reflection, assessment and suggestions for development
  - 5 pages written documentation of method
  - 20 minutes presentation and dialogue



## Peer 3

### A case observed by a teacher student:

- A girl retreats to her room repeatedly.
- The girl wants to more open and learn to make friends.
- The large school community is outside her comfort zone.
- This 'Efterskole' has a network effort where teachers meet with smaller groups of the students.
- In this smaller community the girl finds peers with whom she makes relation into the larger school community.

### Some perspectives

- Teacher student learn to listen and inquire into youth narratives of their experiences and **meanings**.
- *Narrative deal with human action and intentionality*  
(Bruner, 1990, p. 52)

## Meaning and action

- **Meaning** comes from engagement in the world (Frankl, 1956)
- We act within a world we create
- Action (or inaction) provokes a response
- We strive to understand our actions, our own responses and those of others
- We want to know what it **means**
- We want to learn how better to act – with others, for others, for ourselves and for the good of society

## Approaches that creates space for personal meaning to be ascribed value

- Will to meaning can be compensated by will to power and/or will to pleasure
- *true meaning of life is to be discovered in the world* (Frankl, 1959/2014, p. 103)
- Frankl further accentuates that meaning can be found in three different ways:
  - Creating a work or doing a deed
  - Experiencing something or encountering someone
  - Taking an attitude toward unavoidable suffering

## Conclusion

- Will to meaning in education can find completion in educative deeds such as:
  - Teacher students creating relations to vulnerable youths.
    - Applying narrative inquiry
  - Teacher educators performing reflection and revision of teaching in practice.
    - Applying auto-ethnography
- Teachers and teacher educators can in their daily deeds guide and assist e.g. youth and teacher students in the realisation of meaning-making and meaning-use.

## Where now?

Joint initiatives are welcome

- Exchange visits
- Student exchange
- R&D projects
- Joint writings
- ...

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## Questions - discussion

- How can we promote meaning-making in teacher education and teaching?
  - Self-reflection
  - Narrative inquiry
- Which meanings are responsible within teaching and teacher education?
  - Dystopic,
  - Realistic,
  - Hopeful,
  - Optimistic,
  - Naïve,
  - ...

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