Dissemination of the dialectic between methods for active learning and active learning through research

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Active learning methodology assumes that students will take active engagement in their own learning process. However, as Kane proposed, active learning is not only a matter of applying teaching methodology from the category of 'teaching as learning facilitation' to substitute for 'teaching as transmission'; active learning also dependents *"on the constantly-evolving, dialectical relationship between methodology and learners, mediated by the educator" (Kane, 2004).*This short paper describes an example of mediation the dialectic relation between learning methodology and learners. Students planning and playacting a role play on research methods forms part of a connected course design. The role play gives active learning, but we must also note how the play is embedded in a connected course design primarily aimed at active learning from students doing case study research of controlling in practice. The role play, acts in mediating the dialectic relationship between learners and the methodology for the whole course.

'Controlling and management processes' is a postgraduate course for Masters of Science in business controlling. Active learning in this course is achieved in general by students doing case study research of controlling and management processes in practice (Rasmussen, 2013). Students' pre-understanding of the subject area of controlling and management processes, are however, often grounded in an understanding of accounting as a matter of applying more or less complex accounting techniques while philosophy of science is viewed as a matter of dualistic positions of objectivism and subjectivism basically inappropriate to discuss in relation to the subject area. Case Study Research does however always work with theoretical interpretations and explanations, but never by detaching knowledge from the concrete social practice context (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Therefore, student's pre-understandings create reservations towards applying case study method, which demands teaching to mediate the method. Therefore this dialectic related to case study method is mediated by a learning activity initiated as a role-play of a method, which during the process actually becomes an actively applied method. The mediating is discussed in the following ending in some concluding remarks reviewing the learning from the activity. As the learning activity is concerned with mediation of reluctance towards a research method, generated from dualistic positions in ontology and epistemology the general applicability, is deemed as relatively high and thus not relevant to discuss further.

Setting the stage – active learning of a method
The role play is setup to take advantage of students' own practical experiences and their pre-understandings of the theory. An analytical interview (Kreiner & Mouritsen, 2005) is therefore organized in class to resemble an ethnographic observation problem in research, which students must enact early in the teaching course. At this time in the course, case study methods and science positions in the subject area have shortly been analyzed in theory by the class. During a round of role play, implemented to span two teaching sessions, teams of students prepare to stage analytical in-

terviewing during these two teaching sessions. Figure 1 depicts the sequencing of preparation, planning and implementation.
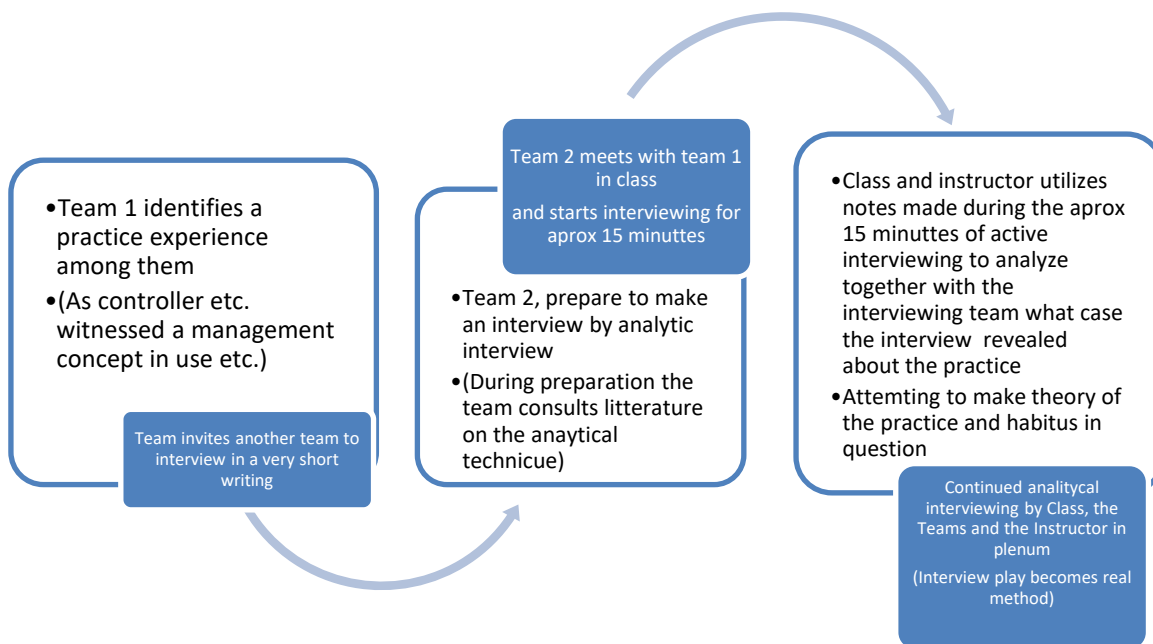

Figure 1 Sequence of preparation and implementation of the role paly

Time span is two weeks in this example. Invitation by team 1 takes place at least one week before team 2 is going to meet team 1 in class. But the time span can easily be shortened. What matters, is sequence, experiences from practices as well as the pre understandings among the students.

The plays start by a team of two or three students interviewing a fellow student from another team in class concerning a practice. The fellow student, who will be interviewed about his special practice experience has, as part of the first step in the sequence (see Figure 1), made a written description termed in a relatively 'officially correct style'. This particular official style of expression is fetched from the practice setting were the experience was made, by the person to be interviewed. This person, possess the experience, enabling her to write the official expression of it. The practice so described might concern how a management concept is applied in an organization as it is experienced by the interviewee or it might concern a general experience from doing a job as a controller. The interviewing teams prepare their interviews based on this description. Likewise, rest of the class prepares to be audience based on the written description before the interview sessions is going to take place. An experience from practice can thus be staged in front of the 'ethnographers' (the students), learning to make an observation and conceive of a theoretical case of the practice.

The play becomes a real method

Together with the class the interviewing team and the interviewee actually ends up enacting a real analytic interview during the teaching session where the interview is enacted. The class is instructed before the interview is played to write and observe during the interview. In an analytical interview

interviewers are supposed to react analytically to the interviewee's response in an attempt to find into the dilemmas associated with the practice of management concepts, the controllers jobs, etc. In other words, it attempts to explore and disclose the dialectic in the practice under study. Response is analyzed while the interview takes place with a view to find new analytical issues of interest until a case of practice and the logic of practice are found. Interviewees and interviewers are thus collaborating to make the case (produce knowledge) resulting from working together to understand the practice in question. The resulting knowledge are new to both the interviewees and the interviewers equivalent to practices being silent about themselves, both to the practitioner and the researcher until exposed in an extraordinary discourse (Bourdieu, 2007).

Staging an analytical interview in this way works along two paths when viewed as a teaching method. This is sometimes made very clear and evident when the interview is continued in plenum after the interview group has been stalled analytically. The teacher is often able to continue the analysis and thus be able to continue the interview in plenum where the roles changes and the interviewing teams are now being interviewed about their approach and results. The students' current qualitative research practice thus becomes apparent to them, which may surprise a lot. Students from an objectivist advance position may be very surprised that the extended analysis can get the first interviewee to suddenly reveal the actual logic of practice that the interviewing students was unable to forward in the first place through their intentionally distanced manner of interviewing. In the now very real analytical interview situation the objectivist stance is seen as an assumed distance to secure the objectivist truth that actually acted to conceal the truth about the practice for the objectivist researcher. From a subjectivist-constructivist advance position student interviewers will on the other hand often be surprised how much deeper structural factors actually determine the structures of opportunities and meanings to act upon. This role play activity for active learning will thus always be evaluated directly and immediately by the active realization ensued. Besides from these immediate recognitions, learning from the activity is also evaluated in the sequence of the teaching course. Here a consensus develops in class that the enacted method of analytic interviewing showed important issues in the study of controlling and management as a practice. Student's case study activities and their research reports also depict a keen interest among many students concerning how to find the logics of practice. This is evident for the instructor both through the process of supervision and exam and from the case study reports handed in by teams of students.

From play to engagement and active involvement in methods and subject matters

The role playing activity leads to enhanced active involvement among students concerning habitus, communicative actions and learning in organizations related to accounting (Jönsson, 1996). Many students refer to their experience with these role plays turning into real applied methods concerning the students own research practice when we meet for supervision regarding their case studies. Some refer to the active learning during the oral exam. Some groups of students are not just interested in

using the method, but also interested in how they can actually negate the dualism between objectivism and subjectivism-constructivism in their case study of controlling practices. After reviewing the activity and learning from several years of application, it can be concluded that the activity leaves, along with the other activities in the subject, a long-lasting impression among students. This is evident when later talking to students of business controlling during meetings for supervision when they want to do research to write a master thesis. During these meetings methods as well as the subject matters from this course are looked upon as important issues to engage deeper into.

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