

Learning and Experience

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Taking it's point of departure in some critical remarks to some of the most important recent theorizing of learning in the workplace, this chapter presents an alternative framework for theorizing learning as a subjective process in a social and societal context, based in life history research. Key concepts derived from European critical theory, *subjectivity* and *experience*, are briefly introduced with a view to their intellectual background. The chapter elaborates the implication of these concepts in relation to the understanding of emotional aspects of learning in everyday work life and in relation to the understanding of knowledge, based on examples from the author's research into professional learning (general practitioners). The pivotal role of language use and language socialisation is explained in brief, developing a psychodynamic complement to a language game concept of language use.

The study of work related learning needs a theoretical framework which can understand work as a subjective activity with subjective meanings, and see learning not only in relation to the immediate workplace, but also as a fundamental aspect of societal relations (Salling Olesen 1999/2001). Such a framework must integrate approaches from social sciences and human sciences – which might also offer some interesting perspectives for other domains of social sciences. In spite of many efforts and some achievements I think these issues remain highly relevant and deserve further examination. This chapter will offer a contribution to such a framework.

I will briefly outline a theoretical framework for analysing work related learning as individual, subjective experience without losing sight of its societal dimension, aiming eventually at the theorization of subjectivity as being societal. This approach originates in a life history project

(Life History project at Roskilde University¹). Studying individuals who are learning under the conditions and impacts of societal changes and conflicts, this project is intended to understand motivation and participation in education as well as the dynamics of learning processes in their societal context. Very often, but not only, such changes and conflicts are related to work and employment. They include situations of technological shifts, new forms of work organisation and management, or of redundancy (or not obtaining access to the labour market at all). But also the specific types of pressure and workload in everyday life such as the ‘double work’ for women and environmental problems are part of it. We want to be able to understand the subjective meaning of these societal events and conditions for individuals in the context of their life experience and life prospects in order to understand more theoretically how learning is embedded in subjectivity of the learners. Biographical and life history research uses a variety of approaches that are guided and inspired by a conceptual framework of critical social theory, and helps focus on the *particular learning individual*, without abstracting them from the societal context of immediate social events and their wider, deeper societal dimensions. In the general references of the Life History project are noted empirical studies of learning in a wide variety of occupations and workplaces – including redundancy situations.

To avoid the usual dichotomy between the individual and the soci(et)al level of analysis is a key challenge for learning theory. But actually I think it has much broader resonance to social theory, politics and epistemology than can be discussed here (Leledakis 1995; Salling Olesen 2002a, 2002b). I think that the theorizing of learning may be a key to discussions about democracy in a globalizing capitalism and the role of knowledge in a late modern society.

It seems to us in the Life History project that not only is this conceptual framework useful for understanding work related learning, it also informs learning theory. This is because the ways in which ‘work’ is a context for the individual learner is like an exemplar, covering a concrete and specific life world at the same time as it is the central factor in the societal order and dynamic. That is, work related learning in the widest

¹ The life history project at Roskilde University is a theoretical and methodological project. Based on a conglomerate of empirical projects we explore conceptual frameworks of analysis and try out of a variety of empirical methods for production of data and interpretation (Salling Olesen 1996, Weber, 1998). Depending on cases, interpretations are thematically centred on work and gender, assuming that these themes organize (the most) important aspects of learning. The project has received funding from the Danish Research Councils’ Welfare Research programme.

sense also comprises the socialisation, or ‘societalization’, of the individual. I will take my departure in some recent developments that I see as the most relevant fellows in this endeavour – pointing out in unfair briefness some critical limitations in them, which I think can be resolved and complemented by my framework.

4.1 New Learning Theory with an Outlook to Worklife

Theorizing learning has previously been the business of schools and education. Most learning research has accordingly been instrumentalized by the perspectives of this cumulative, transfer-oriented mode of learning – sometimes widening the scope of attention to ‘reality’ and to students’ real experiences, but then most often as a *tool* for more efficient education and training. Development psychology, instructional psychology, and theories of curricular structure have prevailed. The increasing interest of industry in human resources has boosted the interest in broader theories of learning and subjectivity. Much of the learning discourse on work related learning however remains ‘ideological’ in the sense that it deals with a truly important and novel issue in a very abstract way, when talking about individuals learning in contexts of ‘organisations’, ‘tools’, ‘knowledge’ and ‘practices’, not to mention ‘creativity’ and ‘innovation’ without specification.

But the new interest in learning in the work place and for work has also advanced new theoretical approaches. First of all it has exposed the significance of the social context of learning. Inspired by anthropological thinking about cultural transmission, learning is seen as the gradual inclusion in a community of practice, i.e. the group of people whose shared practice also forms a cultural framework and meaning making (Lave and Wenger 1991). The early anthropological or cultural theories of learning have, rightly, I think, been criticized for a conservative bias because they tend to mould the learner in the forms of the already established practice or organisation under consideration, often a work place. However, whereas the subjective meaning of the immediate workplace context is obvious, ‘work’ is a societal life condition; the meanings and conflicts related to that are effectively edited out. The societal outlook is pretty narrow. Wenger (1998) seems to move beyond this problem by generalizing the notion of community of practice so that is not, in his sense, necessarily a concrete social context. In his model learning is connected with the trajectory of the learning individual across and between a number of communities in which (s)he participates and negotiates meaning and identity. But it remains very vague how community of practice relates to all the interesting – and conflicting – social affiliations

of the worker in relation to the work place: formal organisation of a company, informal organisation(s) at the work place, professional affiliations, trade union, and family situation. I think this vagueness may be responsible for the fact that practical analytical application of the concepts tends to identify the subjective meaning making with one specific entity defined by task in the organisation, by work process similarity, or by location. Wenger's point of the trajectory across and the potential conflicts between different communities of practice is lost in application. In a more systems theory oriented approach of cultural learning theory this vagueness is promoted to a virtue of generalised relations, leaving no trace of the dialectic between particular (individual) perspectives and meaning making, and the organisational totality of systems' functionality (or dys-functionality) – which was the important innovation that anthropological or cultural theory brought into learning theory.

The anthropological inspiration does not provide useful answers to the other important questions in relation to a theory of learning: what are the driving forces and dynamics of the way in which the learning individual makes meaning of and 'negotiates' his/her identity in social communities already existing, and when can we say that this ongoing modification of identity and meaning making has the quality of learning and not just of change? In fact, Wenger's conception can be questioned as to whether it provides a theory of learning at all, or even a relevant account of (parts of) the social context in which learning may take place. To create a theory of learning requires theorizing the learner as a subject in its own right, and of the processes that s/he is undergoing.

Until now it seems difficult to connect the attention to social context in work related learning theory with the concepts of the individual learner and learning potential which are available in learning psychology and cognitive science. However, this connection has been attempted and some contributions are more rewarding than others. Billett (2001) in his book on workplace learning refers – critically, though – to the concepts of situated learning to frame the learning within the workplace, and combines them with constructivist learning psychology (Piaget and onwards), seeing learning as the result of practical problem solving in the work process in analysis of concrete cases. This brings out important insights: first the attention to the agency of the learner, and second the socially embedded and material nature of learning.

In this approach the workplace remains abstracted, and learning is seen in particular cases of interplay between the 'materiality' of the work process and the worker. This abstraction may have to do with the strategic, practical development perspective, and limits the theorizing of

the social context. But I also see some limitations in the understanding of the subjective aspects of learning.

The learning processes are understood as the cognitive aspect of problem solving (and knowledge building). This is eye-opening in the context of the theme of promoting learning in the workplace because it emphasizes the fact that workers are always learning all the time, and that there are endless possibilities to create work places which are more supporting and stimulating for workers' learning. The generalising distinction between routine and non-routine work does define work situations in relation to the experience of the learner subject, and hence their subjective status as problems to be solved or not. But this distinction also simplifies the possible meanings embedded in the materiality of the work processes to the dichotomy of routine or challenge. It seems likely that work 'means more' to workers, related to their subjective experience, than this distinction embraces. The possible learning outcome (or no outcome) of the interaction between the work task or problem and workers depends on the complicated relations between workers and perceived challenges.

Eraut (1994) has analysed professional knowledge and competences in terms of the ways of knowing and using knowledge in work situations. He provides interesting and distinctive discussions of theories of knowledge and knowledge use, and relates knowledge to the features of the work situation and the dependence on the type of work tasks being performed. In this way, he provides a useful corrective to generalizing theories of knowledge and professions, and especially emphasizes the procedural and contextual nature of knowledge use.

Indirectly, this is also a way of theorizing learning, in principle within a similar model as in Billett's analyses, namely by theorizing the ways in which knowledge is used and how knowledge resources are modified in problem solving processes of work.

But due to the point of departure this contribution to learning theory is restricted to (or at least strongly prioritizes) the cognitive dimensions. Eraut indicates obvious awareness of other dimensions – the personal experiences of the learner and the specific nature of the work – but these appear as ad hoc analytic observations and distinctions without being theorized. Eraut's mission is another one: to study development of knowledge and competence. I argue that this mission would gain strength by paying systematic attention to the dynamics of learning and to the subjective meaning of work and knowledge for the professional (Salling Olesen 2000).

Though Billett's and Eraut's approaches refer to different types of work, from manual low skilled to professional work, I think they can jointly contribute to a general understanding of work life as social practice, work tasks and knowledge use, and some aspects of learning. But

they share the tendency to operate with abstract learner subjects, individuals without history – both in the sense of an individual life history and in the sense of societal and cultural attributes such as gender. The ambition to theorize subjectivity of work and learning as a subjective process would not deny these insights but would in some respects re-interpret them and in some respects complement them.

The life history approach invokes, in a very elementary sense, the individual's life history as a live factor in the present context. The intention is not to create a causality track of the individual. Nor is it to echo the individual self account of learning biography and identity (Salling Olesen 2004). Instead, it is to understand how specific individuals experience their present in the light of their past and their subjectively projected future. The intention is also to see how the wider societal conditions are experienced in a particular context by this present subject. From this we hope to build a theory of the dynamics of learning.

Referring to the elementary context of learning in the social setting of the work place it is evident that workers learn different new skills and insights, and avoid others. I think that both the differences, contents and directions of learning can be best understood in the context of a concept of subjectivity that is sensitive to individual and social experience, and to unpredictable, but not coincidental, agency.

4.2 Subjectivity

Closely related core concepts in our approach are *subjectivity*, i.e. the way of relating to the world which is characterized by intention, agency and engaging interaction with something outside yourself, and *experience*, i.e. consciousness building through subjective processing of perceptions and impressions from the world. Subjectivity is a relation: individuals (or collectives) constitute themselves by making the world an object of reflection and action, and build *experience* in this interaction. In social philosophy and theory this can be termed a subject-object-dialectic in the Hegelian sense. The theoretical explanation of the concepts within the English language is quite problematic (Hodkinson 2004). So I think it is necessary to give a very basic presentation of these concepts. To think that this life history approach may contribute to a theoretical concept of subjectivity may be seen as a matter of grandiosity, but we see it as a recognition of the difficulties involved, and the need to bring these philosophical concepts into concrete research. Practically we do interpretations of life history narratives or other subjective expressions transcribed into a text by a hermeneutic approach, guiding the interpretations with basic conceptual frameworks and enriching them with knowledge of societal, historical and

psychic contexts. We try to understand the individual subjective expressions, but we also elaborate the conceptual framework to be sensitive to important differentiations and developments in the field (such as gender, ethnicity, and work identities: the identification potential in specific qualities of work processes).

In the following discussion a few aspects and implications of this position can be pointed out, hopefully establishing the relevance of this way of theorizing. Readers who find this presentation either too brief – or inspiring – may find a more elaborated version in Salling Olesen (2002a) and in Weber (2001).

We base our concept of subjectivity in the tradition of critical theory (the Frankfurt school). Critical theory understands human subjectivity as a product of socialisation in which a specific version of cultural and social experience is embodied, becoming a complex of conscious and unconscious preconditions for subjective agency and experience. Opposed to liberal thinking of the independent, free and rational subject, critical theory assumes that subjectivity is a historical and dynamic entity, which is only partly and gradually *constituted* in a learning relation to biological and historical reality. In order to understand this constitution process it synthesizes theoretical elements from Marxism, about societal and historical factors, and psychoanalysis, about the embodied and symbolic forms of psychodynamic processes characterized by contradictions and tensions. This theoretical synthesis helps us to interpret individual subjective reactions and consciousness in the context of culture, and to understand the dynamics of culture in their embodied and subjective significance. The psychoanalytical theoretical ground does not imply, as many people usually assume, an individual psychological explanation of subjectivity, and even less any form of biological or life course determinism. There are many quite different positions in psychoanalytical theory, and even more misunderstandings solidly based on ignorance and maybe a whiff of anxiety. The critical theory position views the psychic processes in which societal relations are mediated as not fully transparent and conscious, but rather unconscious and preconscious. This can be seen as the most fundamental theoretical contribution from psychoanalysis. Culture exists in socially articulated practices, meanings and symbols that are sometimes attached to artefacts or stabilised in social institutions, but they are also embodied in the agents of the culture, and (re)produced in their agency and consciousness. The second key concept, experience, can help us to understand the consequences for learning.

4.3 Experience

I suggest a concept of *experience* developed from this tradition by Theodor W. Adorno and Oskar Negt (Negt 1999)². For the context of learning I have made this notion of experience operational in the following way: “Experience is the process whereby we as human beings, individually and collectively, consciously master reality, and the ever-living understanding of this reality and our relation to it” (Salling Olesen, 1989:6–7). This notion connects the immediate experience with its societal as well as its individual psychic dimensions. In order to understand learning you may specify, for simplicity, three aspects or modalities of experience. These three are relatively independent dynamics, which are mediated through each other in every agency and learning process: everyday life learning, life history experience, and cultural knowledge. Consciousness is being produced as well as presupposed in *social practice in everyday life*, which means it is a situated and embodied experience, but also that it is structurally determined as societal history (in this case by the development of societal labour). We can speak of an industrial experience, or an urban experience, or a female experience of double work. It also includes the objectivation of collective *cultural experience in the form of knowledge, symbols and norms (institutions)*. We can speak of crafts or professions as collective experiences that have been tried out and stabilized, and we can also see literacy and mathematical modelling in this perspective. And, most important in this context, it includes the individual experience building throughout *individual life history*, with the interference between cognitive and emotional aspects, which comes in a specific version in every individual. Every individual has a specific emotional and social experience which has sedimented a general view of the world and ways of seeing him/herself. I will elaborate how this concept of experience can give useful tools for understanding some dynamics of learning in everyday life.

² Let me emphasize, especially in an anglophone educational academic context, that this concept is used here with a substantially different implication from that of Dewey (1916, 1934). Dewey advanced experiential learning as a critical concept of education, and his notion of experience was quite rational(istic), which was an adequate critique in that context. Using Dewey in a context of work related learning research calls for a development of the implications of his ideas which I have not yet seen. Learning ideas derived from critical theory (Oskar Negt’s concept of *exemplarisches Lernen*) share much more with Paolo Freire’s idea of pedagogy of the oppressed.

4.4 Emotional Aspects of Learning in Everyday Life

Learning is embedded in everyday life interaction, but it goes beyond. It is a progressive process, transforming collective cultural experiences (knowledge, skills and normative directions) into individual experience, by using them to enable subjective agency and understanding in the specific context. We want to understand the complexities of this process. We are particularly interested in the interference between cognitive and emotional aspects of the individual experience building in specific social contexts. Clearly the subjective handling of the social in everyday life is not a cognitive phenomenon only. Consciousness in practical interaction incorporates all its meanings for the experiencing subject(s), the emotions connected with this situation, the perception of one self and the situation. Learning is activated by and influenced by the emotional involvement, comprising moments of learning as well as moments of defence. The relation to routines is a good example.

Everyday life in work is characterized by collective and habitual routines. New as well as familiar phenomena are perceived through a basic mechanism of recognition and complexity reduction. However, this cognitive process is also guided by the social and relational emotions attached to these well known categories, to the situation, and to projected expectations within it. The observation and systematization of deviations and novelties – be they new phenomena or new contextual factors – is a process of cognitive as well as of emotional and social change of the learner. This change is challenging, it overloads the learner, and in some cases it is particularly threatening, because it activates life historical experiences or emotional relations in an anxiety-provoking way. In a life situation flooded with impulses and demands, individual and collective mechanisms of consciousness building preserve the individual from anxieties and ambivalences.

The maintenance of a routine is therefore not as passive as the notion seems to suggest. It is most often an active editing of perceptions and knowledge in accordance with possible practices: a defence mechanism. I call this form of consciousness ‘everyday life consciousness’, with a concept (*Altagsbewusstsein*) borrowed from Leithäuser and others (Leithäuser 1976, Leithäuser and Volmerg 1989). Leithäuser’s theoretical framework for understanding the subjective dynamic of this consciousness as a defence mechanism provides a reverse complement to a theory of learning. The selection and interpretation of perceptions is a part of an active, psychic and cultural acquisition which define the situation in a practicable way, i.e. through active, partly collective defence mechanisms.

Defensive action is a mediated form of 'realism' with a limited scope or coercive focus. Routine may often mean more than simplification of practice and attention, for example when the subject attends to certain aspects of the interplay between social reality and inner dynamics and is less sensitive to social reality. But defences also hold the potential for seeing things differently and for alternative social practice. In the conflict preventing mechanisms of consciousness building is also 'awareness' of problems, unexpected impulses, alternative social practices, 'un-lived lives' from one's own life history, or painful experiences from the past. There is strong potential for a learning dynamic in defensive routines when cognition is linked with emotional and practical aspects of the learner's involvement in that situation. We can define an open, embracing attention to inner as well as outer realities as the emotional precondition for and sometimes also the outcome of learning. So reflecting and changing everyday life routines structuring work life may open very dynamic learning processes because they relate not only to the immediate situation but to more comprehensive life experiences.

It may be necessary to restate that we see all these elements in the psychic dynamic as socialized, installing societal constraints and self regulation in the human body. This is not to replace biological determinism with a social determination, but to view embodied life experience as conditioning the way experience is built throughout life and becomes a potential source of knowledge. Generally speaking the defensive and reality oriented aspects are dialectically connected in a way of knowing about the situation and the world, and learning takes place in this dialectic. These emotional dynamics can be conceptualized by the psychoanalytic concepts of conscious, preconscious and unconscious, but I shall leave the discussion of this subjective dynamic of consciousness(es) here, and move on to see some of its consequences in relation to knowing and learning.

4.5 Knowledge and Language(s)

In this section I focus on the relation between symbolic knowledge/experience and sensual/contextual perception, and the role of language in it. Developing a connection between a knowledge sociology perspective and the psychodynamic understanding of cultural symbolisation has implications for the role of cultural resources which are mediated in symbolic forms (languages) in the experience process of everyday work life, and also for the research methodology.

Knowledge is a social construct with a historical genesis and implication, always acquired and reconstructed by somebody in some context, as pointed out by sociologists of knowledge as well as post modern

philosophers from quite different angles. From this it follows that there is no *absolute* difference between ‘scientific knowledge’, ‘formal knowledge’, ‘knowledges of social practice’, ‘everyday life consciousness’, and ‘life experience’. The questions about ‘who’, ‘where’ and ‘when’ of knowing and learning are mostly more productive than the typologies – the typological differences can be defined in relation to their genesis (who generates this type of knowledge), institutional contexts, power relations and hegemonies. The notion of experience aligns with this notion of knowledge and points to the subjective aspect of this knowing, and especially the question of how the media of symbols, meanings and language connects cultural meanings with the individual emotional and relational experience, informed by a socialization process.

For the individual subject, knowledge has the status of cultural resources of understanding, what we may call our life experience. Professions and well defined occupations (crafts) can be used as a simple case with a well defined body of knowledge. In my own empirical research about General Practitioners I study the subjective handling of everyday work situations with the use of a professional bio-medical knowledge base (Salling Olesen 2006). Sometimes this knowledge will allow the GP to understand and take action in a relatively unproblematic way, in other cases it does not provide a very helpful framework. There is an ongoing dynamic tension between collective societal experience (the bio-medical knowledge) and the clinical problem defining and solving experience of the GP. This tension is negotiated by individuals who are strongly subjectively engaged (by the professional obligation to omnipotent agency, by being there in immediate relation to another human being with a problem, by attendant anxieties, and so on). Since it is in the relation of the professional to the patient and to his profession to be able to take action, it sometimes means that the situation must be defined (by bio-medical knowledge) in a way that allows action (e.g. write a prescription), which is a defensive process, where as it may also at the same time lead to learning. The interpretation of the concrete situation is shaped by individuals’ personal life experience and will contribute piece by piece, to their life experience as well as to the clinical collective experience – although this is an extremely slow process. I think professions expose an exemplary case for the interplay between societal knowledge and subjective learning in work situations, because the professional knowledge is societally assigned to the work situation, and the professional worker is subjectively involved in a complex practice in which (s)he is responsible for a knowledge based agency – which is in the end morally and politically related to the quality of the work product or the service provided. I think this point can be extended to the situation of workers in general. Some situations may be less subjectively engaging and the relevant knowledge resources

less well defined. General social knowledge can be very differentiated between individuals and groups, and this is essential for subjectivity (think about gendered skills and knowledges). Particularly in relation to work we draw on more or less specific knowledges related to professions and occupations, acquired by education, training and previous work career. Such differences just mean that the relation becomes empirically more complex.

Now the issue is to get a better understanding of the relation between subjective engagement and the societal meanings involved in this knowing and learning process. Language use in social practice is pivotal. In line with Wittgenstein's concept of language games we can see the meanings of language as defined in a social interaction, and being in continuous re-negotiation, containing the ongoing experience process of the participants in the language game and their communication. The problem solving in a work situation is, from this perspective, a combined application of the language resources to define, react to or deliberate the task, and an impulse that s/he can bring into the language game. We have already seen how this language use will involve not only the cognitive operation of the task and the situation, but also a complex of emotional investments which may heavily influence the cognitive operation.

We can develop this understanding of language by looking at the social 'production' of the language user. Alfred Lorenzer's materialist theory of socialization (Lorenzer 1972) offers essential links between individual subjectivity (the embodying of psyche), culture and language (the codifying of knowledge and collective experience in disciplines or discourses). The biological development and the (necessary) social interaction around the needs of the child gradually adjoin in the production of the individual subjectivity. The Mother-Child-Dyad is the first 'joint subject' for this production of patterns of practice. Later, through the gradual separation of the child from the mother, the interaction produces the *interaction patterns* of the child and its acquisition of language. Through the separation and the interaction with physical and social reality the child gradually builds up its individual subjectivity. The individual experience of being-in-the-world is built around the relation between a sensual bodily and social experience and the representation of it in societal language use. Later learning will elaborate this relation and the subject will engage in new language games on the basis of this experience.

Combining these theoretical elements we can develop a holistic endogenous framework of understanding subjectivity and learning. Learning can be seen as a situated adoption of language games, as signification of experiences of the learner subject. It should be emphasized that language is not just the one discursive language. Any social symbol

system which enables communication and shared meaning can be seen as a language. Different languages may have different features, and especially they may relate differently to the societal institutions of communication and work on the one side, and to the sensual and embodied experience of the language user on the other side. Music or poetic languages have alike been seen as languages with a particular potential for containing experiences that were not included/expressed in the ordinary, discursive language. They can be seen as different language games within or outside the ordinary language.

Learning and knowing is still about a subject relating to an objective reality, and taking place in a subject-object interaction. For critical theory the specific objective reality, such as work situation or specific qualities of work, is the decisive condition of and object for learning. However, the access to reality is not simple and direct. Epistemologically the subject-object-dialectic of learning theory is in a way similar to the reflections of the social sciences, to depart from naturalism without arriving in a relativistic constructivism. In Adorno's (1976) criticism of positivist social science he points out that empirical analysis in the context of critical theory should reconfigure the social 'fact' or action in its historical and subjective context, i.e. understand it in its dynamics rather than as a fixed, reified object. Since the experiencing subjects (the social scientist) are already also part of the social reality, this position reinstalls the historical and subjective nature of critical theory as an act of learning about reality and about the learning subject (the social sciences) at the same time. Although we are not pursuing a knowledge sociology or metascientific question here, this is a basic scheme for understanding learning as an experiencing process.

On the individual level learning is based in the dynamics of knowledge construction, and this is a subjective dynamic. In social practice the cognitive activity is conditioned in subjective dynamics, exemplified by the general practitioner in this consultation. The editing influences of defensive patterns, or the difficulty to express certain aspects of the individual experience in the language games available or allowed in the situation does not mean that they are not there – actually it may often be a result of them. During meaning making in the language games, there are more or less conscious individual experiences that are not at all represented in the language game, but still attached to it by individual participants. Some experiences are represented in the language game in ways which do not express the full referential meaning or emotional quality of these experiences for some participants. For this reason social meanings established in language use are mostly surrounded by a 'halo' of surplus meaning which may be only partly social. This refers to the amount of experience which is very societally structured but not culturally recognized,

and so remains at the boundary of socialisable meanings. It is especially on and beyond this boundary of linguistic meaning making that resources for learning are to be found.

The fact that these experience building processes are partly conscious, and partly un- or pre-conscious can be traced in language use, and this is an essential reason to apply an 'in-depth' or 'reflexive' hermeneutic interpretation. We reconstruct and identify the experiences of social practice that are in the discourses and images of an interview. We can see the life stories and the very telling of them as a piece of identity (re)construction, in which a (new) position is taken in the culturally possible interpretations of and positions in this context. At the same time we are attentive to ambiguities, ruptures and remarkable aspects of what is told, and to some extent to the way of telling. The interpretation includes subjective meanings that are obvious and well defined in language games as well as those which are only vaguely or not at all articulated in the speech of the interview persons. These observations of the text may, informed by theoretical concepts and context knowledge, identify dynamics, uncertainties and ambivalent expressions. The materiality of work which is reflected in the moorlands between the bodily and conscious experiences and their linguistic articulation, between the individual and the cultural meanings, and the multitude and transformations of cultural meanings (e.g. academic knowledge) are the terrains in which subjective meaning making takes place and is articulated.

4.6 References

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