Editorial – Conceptualizing Higher Arts Education from Within

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Higher arts education has been a topic of vibrant discussion during the last decade. The discussion weaves around questions such as: What particular knowledges and skills, dispositions and qualities or, indeed, being will be needed for rapidly changing (even supercomplex) environments? And, how will artists, designers, and architects be educated for the future? The questions highlight prevalent themes common to both curricula discussions at universities, for example at Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture, as well as scholarly work (e.g., see Bailey, 2007; Barnett, 2004, 2009; Dillon & Howe, 2007; Edström, 2008; Mäkelä & Löytönen, 2015; O'Neill & Wilson, 2010; Rogoff, 2006; Slager, 2012; Vaughan et al., 2008). These broad questions are always already entangled with the underlying socio-political, economic, ecological, and ethical conditions that shape education as a whole. Currently, the pace of change with respect to the conditions for higher education in Finland is quite rapid, which poses critical questions also regarding the future of higher arts education and its frameworks, aims, and tactics. What will higher arts education be(come) in the future? How will art universities respond to the prevailing conditions? What kinds of responsibilities will art universities take for the future development of the arts, design, and architecture in diverse communities and societies?

This special issue continues the manifold discussions surrounding higher arts education from within, both from the standpoint of inhabiting the university and embodying the local discourses and practices at Aalto University. The aim is not to provide any final answers to the topical and critical questions regarding the future of higher arts education. Instead, the aim is to conceptualize current pedagogical practices and

concerns that university teachers find interesting or important to tackle. With these conceptualizations, we might find some openings with respect to the future possibilities or potentialities for arts, design, and architecture in higher education and beyond.

The articles and essays stem from a program in university pedagogy that took place at Aalto University, School of Arts, Design and Architecture during a three-year period of time between March 2012 and January 2015. Altogether, 18 university teachers, lectures, and professors from the fields of arts, design, and architecture committed themselves to the studies. The responsible teacher was Educational Developer, Artist, and Teacher Educator Kari Nuutinen from the Unit for Strategic Support for Research and Pedagogy at Aalto University. I, the editor of this special issue and one of Kari Nuutinen's colleagues, served as a teacher-facilitator and scholar in higher arts education and represented the Department of Art at Aalto University.

The main idea of the three-year program was to offer the participants diverse approaches for reflecting (on) their pedagogical practices in their specific fields within arts, design, and architecture in higher education. Here, however, it is important to note that "reflection is always done in the midst of a complex network and thus immanent to a wide variety of forces and never the product of an isolated individual that reflects upon something from an external point of view" (Hultman & Lenz-Taguchi, 2010, p. 536, referring to Latour, 1988). Thus, rather than understanding reflection as a practice that "reveals" or mirrors the essence of, for example, pedagogical practices and experiences, we understood it as a diffractive (Barad, 2007) process illuminating the ongoing transformation caused by connections within and between different (material and discursive) agencies. Hence, reflection as a diffraction pattern requires/inspires new/different sense in each connection or "intra-action" with different (material and discursive) agencies where the "distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action" (p. 33).

The approaches to reflect/diffract on pedagogy included, first of all, contemplating (at an individual level) our joint pedagogical process with the focus being on the two-day seminar held every other month. Together, we defined the themes for the reflection. We framed (or delimited) the process via a common theme, which was decided upon at the very end of the second day of the seminar. The theme might have stemmed from one of our many conversations, or from a lecture, or from an article that we had read. Or the theme might have been the result of an (unexpected) insight during the discussion on finding a theme, an unanticipated memory, an accidental encounter, or an unforeseen source of inspiration.[1] The participants then shared their diffractive creations at the beginning of the next joint seminar, allowing us to discuss our pedagogical process and, indeed more broadly, pedagogical issues from diverse perspectives. In addition to the participants' diffractions, Kari Nuutinen shared his ideas about the topical theme by creating watercolor art work. He shared the artistic pieces during the joint presentations, adding

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1 The themes for the reflections during the three-year period of time were the following: Beginning; Movement; Description; (A) spot of (a) comma; One's own voice; Conceptual change; Valuable/worthy things; The notion of knowledge; Me in this group; Failure; The beauty of a mistake/error (Wabi sabi); Look at a human being and expect to succeed blindly within reason; Teacher's power; The peace of making; The air in Paris; Idea/Understanding//Conception; Resistance; Beside the point: Coming to an end with these images and moods.

yet one more layer to be associated with pedagogical issues. Some of the art is included in this special issue.

The second approach was a process of exchanging and creating art work (broadly understood) in pairs. During the process, two participants exchanged their own pieces of art work, reflected upon them and reacted to each other's work by creating a new work of art for the next exchange session. The art exchange process continued altogether for two years, with eight exchange sessions, and it produced both artistic pieces, writings and discussions around one's own artistic practice and its relation to one's teaching practice. One of the essays in this special issue focuses on discerning the art exchange process that occurred between two artist–teachers, Eeva Jokinen, a ceramist, and Antti Huittinen, a photographer.

The third approach was a collaborative inquiry process into higher arts education. Collaborative inquiry can be described as a process by which colleagues gather in peer groups to explore the issues that they identify as interesting or important in relation to their pedagogical practice. Collaborative inquiry is not (only) a mode of research for knowledge creation; it is inherently a form of adult learning through experience, a way of participating in personal and collective inquiry. (Bray et al., 2000; Löytönen, 2016; McIntyre, 2008; Yorks, 2005.) At the end of the second year, the collaborative inquiry process resulted in a public seminar where the peer groups presented their insights into higher arts education. The themes of their presentations included the following: multidisciplinarity as a pedagogical phenomenon, online teaching in architectural history, student feedback, experimental pedagogy, visualizing theory, and dealing with emotions during a film-making process. Several articles and essays in this special issue are a result of the collaborative inquiry process that occurred among the participants.

All of these approaches[2] aimed to encourage the participants to think about, ponder, and make sense of their pedagogical practices and (socio-material) conditions as university teachers as well as our joint three-year pedagogical process. One important element in all of these approaches was to utilize the participants' "disciplinary basis" to inspire them connect with the pedagogy. That is, we encouraged them to think about, ponder, and make sense of their pedagogical practices not only through linguistic modes (mainly writing), but also through, for example, creating images. My colleague and the responsible teacher, Kari Nuutinen, originally started developing artistic modes of sense-making for pedagogy at the Department of Art Education as part of a teacher education program during the years 2005–2009. And so, during the three-year period of time the participants created images and written notes, poems and video clips, photographs and recorded sounds, and much more to make sense of higher arts pedagogies.

Based on the main idea of the program (collective and collaborative sense-making), we did not introduce any specific conceptual or theoretical framework(s) on how to understand pedagogy. However, we offered broad themes for participants to consider during the program. These included such themes as the roles of a teacher; students and groups of students; teaching, learning, and supervising; collaborative knowledge

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2 In addition to the three reflective/diffractive approaches, the participants elaborated on their teaching practices in diverse contexts, presented their insights to the group, and received feedback both from their peers and the responsible teachers, namely Kari Nuutinen and myself.

creation in communities; society, change, and pedagogy; cultural diversity; and the ethics and philosophy of university pedagogy. Together with the participants we further elaborated on the topics once particular topics or certain other themes emerged during the course of our conversations. We did so, for example, by inviting guest speakers or through participant presentations or through readings and articles. Thus, instead of framing pedagogy and pedagogical knowledge through predefined (educational) lenses (e.g., constructive alignment, the epistemological taxonomies of Bloom, and the distinction between surface and deep learning),[3] we proceeded through in-between-ness, through searching for potential theoretical or conceptual or practical frameworks to make sense of higher arts education within the particular context of arts, design, and architecture at Aalto University. I might even suggest that, in line with Irit Rogoff (2006), we swapped the transmission of general pedagogical knowledge for creating alternate or multiple possible terms (senses) through inhabiting a problem/concern/situation that called for exploration.

When now reflecting upon our program and its processes, the concept created by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, namely that of the rhizome, might serve as a helpful image for thinking about the becoming of our teachers' pedagogical program:

> "A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo.* The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb "to be" but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, 'and…and…and…' " (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 25, italics in original)

The rhizome, thus, has "multiple entryways" and "it operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 21). Similarly, our pedagogical program consisted of a series of encounters, knots, or nodes, all of which produced variations, expansions, and offshoots in terms of thinking about and practicing higher arts pedagogies.

This collection of essays and articles is yet another offshoot of higher arts education. The articles and essays offer multiple and different entryways to connect with pedagogical phenomena. They tackle the challenges of interdisciplinary university programs and learning design thinking as well as the relation between professional practice and higher education (section 1). They offer perspectives on draft-based teaching, experimental pedagogies, and (new) metaphors for learning (section 2). They look into specificities in learning to draw and into emotions during a film-making process (section 3). They provide detailed and practical descriptions of online teaching in architectural history and discuss the problematics related to part-time teaching faculty (section 4). The final essay depicts the art exchange process that occurred between two artist–teachers during the pedagogical program and the insights they gained with respect to student guidance and instruction.

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3 For further information, see for example constructive alignment (Biggs & Tang, 2011), the epistemological taxonomies of Bloom (Bloom, 1956; Anderson & Kraftwohl, 2001), and the distinction between surface and deep learning (Marton & Säljö, 2005). See also Wickström, 2014.

With this assemblage of essays and articles, I, as the editor of this special issue, want to challenge/unsettle/disturb the power hierarchies often involved in knowledge generation practices. Instead of privileging knowledge creation only to scholars in higher arts education, I want to advocate practice-based or practitioner-based knowledge production. What counts as important or new knowledge cannot be defined or evaluated solely by scholars within academia; Valid knowledge is defined and evaluated also by practitioners themselves in and through their everyday lives. By paying close attention to university teachers' understandings and conceptualizations in this special issue, higher arts education will potentially open itself up toward multiplicities, subtleties, and localities. Through the curiosity, inspiration, and discovery of the teachers involved, this special issue aims to broaden ideas about higher arts education, hoping to inspire readers to begin their own pedagogical experimentations and investigations.

Acknowledgements

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