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The awkward adult education: learning between the logic of education and the logic of work

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Abstract

There is a growing focus on life long learning. Employees must engage in development of competence to secure employability in a dynamic labour market. As a consequence, the workplace applicability of educationally formed knowledge is now in the focus of the planning of adult education. Especially in the general adult education the idea of including a vocational orientation is new, but not unproblematic. Several problems arise from the effort of mixing the two logics of learning embedded in respectively education and work. The paper will describe the two logics of learning and examine the dilemmas in the vocationally oriented general adult education as they appear in the phases of education courses: 1) defining the purpose, 2) planning, 3) accomplishing, 4) evaluating and 5) implementation of the learned in the workplace. The paper includes empirical examples developed in a Danish project with focus on competence development in thinly populated areas (www.kom-ud.dk).

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to examine if possibilities of teaching activities in connection to a certain project can contribute to competence development in private as well as public companies. The mentioned project is COMpetence development in OUTskirts ('KOM UD') financed by the European Social Fund. The purpose of the development part in the project is to create more and better continuing vocational training in the Danish outskirts. 'KOM UD' consists of a series of general adult courses, which in various ways are compatible with different trades. The educational procedures are established as cooperation between Adult Education Centres (VUC) and both private and public companies in the outskirts of Denmark. Participants of the education courses are employees at the companies – and primarily with short-cycled education. This article will examine two logics of learning; a scholastic, being the foundation of VUC's educational strategy, and a situated, which is the foundation for practical action. During the analysis, there will be focus on how the various educational processes in different ways aim at integrating the two forms of knowledge, and at the same time support the participants' transformation of knowledge acquisition at the educational framework to competence development at the work site. Empirical evidence is based on evaluations of the educational process by project managers and teachers. The evidence does however not present a fulfilling picture of the procedures due to the reason, that the material is far from exhaustive. Moreover, the evidence is presented in varying quality and appears uneven. Thus, the solid foundation of the empirical evidence is doubtful and the analysis is therefore seen as a way of generating hypotheses. These will be the starting point of a systematic survey of the competence based effects of the 'KOM UD' project.

Vocational training, learning about knowledge acquisition or competence development?

The (Danish) society is presently involved in a process of change. Industrial work based on short-cycled education is outsourced in numbers to areas of low production costs and the remaining production companies demand new and other capabilities of employees. The public sector experiences continuous changes as well. Flexibility is in high demand. Employees who can fill in different functions – and who is willing to it – are sought for and furthermore, they must be willing to work extra shifts when needed and counterbalance overtime when the company wants them to. Yet an important part, concerning the demanded skills, is the employees' ability to develop capacity to appraise large amounts of the operational courses, coordinate actions with other teams and in general cooperate. Finally, they must be updated professionally. The government established Three Part Committee (Feb. 2006) has had as assignment to analyse and evaluate the present continuing vocational educational effort in relation to future challenges.

Technological development and globalisation are pointed at as challenges which can be reasons for a reduced demand in labour with low levels of competencies, and the committee points to,

“... that the most important issues are to help those with low abilities in reading, writing and/or calculating to commence education and that it is less important whether it is general or vocational due to the reason that the participants will be more apt to participating in other relevant continuing vocational activities. Furthermore, people with insufficient fundamental abilities participating in courses and educations have (as a minimum) the same yield as other participants.” (p.130)

The National Competence Accounts (NKR) (Dec. 2005) is an attempt to clarify a number of key competencies and deals with the distribution of key competencies among people with short-cycled education. The Minister of Education stated in his preface, “...*that education pays off in more than one way... and it is the factor with ...the largest significance for development and making use of a line of key competencies*”. The Minister continues, “...*that education...opens doors to employment and ways of life where competencies can come to display and be developed.*” (p.3)

The conclusion states, “...*that the literacy competence divides labour in a determining manner (...) important to underline that literacy not only deals with basic abilities in reading, writing and calculating, but just as much with work challenging and developing literacy and makes basic abilities go hand in hand with vocational established practice (...) the results of the theme analysis does not indicate that continuing training can be replaced by education at work.*” (p.256)

There is political interest in general upgrading of skills concerning people with short-cycled education and that everybody acquires a basic of general knowledge and abilities, as well as making use of the abilities, challenging and developing such in relation with vocational practice. But to which degree have the companies in question interest in competence development of their employees?

A study in 2002 of industrial companies and their point of view concerning needs for continuing education focuses on these tendencies (by Institut for Konjunktur-analyse /Institute for Analysis of Company Conditions). Top five of prioritised needed education was,

Quality (55%)

Safety/working environment (53%)

computing (44%)

Production/new technology (41%)

Cooperation (39%)

It is mainly wishes from employees, new technology and statutory requirements which are the causes of vocational training. Furthermore, readjustments of the company and new strategy and company plans are the causes. On the contrary, reading and spelling issues are only to a small degree reasons (ibid). Subjects of courses and needs of educations point to abilities of a technical nature and not towards general abilities at all, cf. the low prioritising of reading and spelling courses. Apart from technical abilities, the companies seem to prioritise development of personal qualifications, e.g. cooperation.

In relation to the mentioned prioritising, it can appear problematic for VUC to participate in the competence development of industrial employees, as the demanded technical competencies are not the aim of VUC's core services. VUC's services are focused on increasing general knowledge of universal validity e.g. language or mathematics. However, VUC offers subjects as 'cooperation and communication' and 'presentation and communication' which are within the field defined by the industry as being relevant for development of personal qualifications. In relation to the intentions of both the Three Part Committee and NKR, VUC's over all profile of services is a good match.

Competences

The question of whether participants develop their competencies in formal education programmes is posed due to the reason that competencies are not solemnly developed through acquisition of knowledge. The use of the concept 'competence' gives way to a number of discussions and perspectives on the relation between employee and practice. For decades, the concept has been used with a broader and larger impact, numerous and diverging definitions and perceptions prevail but still there are common features. Two characteristics are pointed to as distinguishing it from e.g. the concept of qualifications. The first characteristic is that of it having a dimension of applicability – to have a competence is not limited to know something but includes the ability of transforming knowledge into action. The second characteristic is that of competencies being embodied in the individual personal characteristics. To be competent within an area is not just an evidence of

professional mastery but encompasses social and personal dimensions and often the latter is in focus, while the professional dimensions merely are presumed.

Hermann & Kristensen are engaged in the common features of competence definitions and add in relation to the two mentioned characteristics: Firstly, the concept of competence does not privilege cognitive and imperishable knowledge on the contrary, it is open to silent dimensions and secondly, competence is contextual and competent actions depends on altering conditions concerning right and wrong. (2004:497)

The first dimension is increasingly in focus through attempts of adding words and concepts to what could be described as silent dimensions, which is the case concerning real competencies. In the mentioned case, it is attempted to clarify the actual abilities and following course of action by employees in relation to formal professional qualifications. The second dimension (concerning situated defined competence) is important as focus is pointed towards the use of competence as a way of creating and negotiating meaning and thereby giving it local contextual meaning. The result is a change of definitions, as what was competent action yesterday, is not so today due to a substitution of definitions. This means, that the concept of competence implies negotiations of definitions of well done work thus, power to dictate and legitimise such definitions.

Competence is therefore all about situating the competent professional individual in a clever manner at work, where a successful criterion is contextual defined in the power structure of the situation. The issue is the interaction between qualifications of the employee and demands by the actual work situation. The issue is therefore not what an employee *is able to* isolated or what he/she *is supposed to be able to*, but what he/she *actually does*. This implies an element of learning as employees thereby will learn from setting qualifications into action in a work situation (e.g. Lave & Wenger, 1991). Such competencies are possibly further developed and deepened during informal learning through practise (Keller, 2003). Employees' abilities are broadened to include personal abilities and qualities through the use of the competence concept. Personal qualities are conceptualised, appreciated and demanded as professionalism and the personality cannot be separated, meaning that our personality is put into action in a work situation, whereas personal development is turned into a possibility or a demand.

Based on the above, it is evident that competence development is not equal to general professional knowledge. A minimum is putting knowledge into action within a certain contextual frame, and in this case a work context. Knowledge must be viewed as substantial for managing issues solving in practise, in order for it to be transformed into practise. Usability is a keyword for employees' practise knowledge. Participants of a working group have cooperated in order to solve challenges in practise and thereby created routines, practises, terms, and norms for the functional and good practise. Such a group has over time built up a

common set of competence management (Wenger, 1998). New challenges demand new answers, which potentially demand the acquiring of new knowledge to be turned into practise. E.g. registration of daily hours and tasks through the means of a mobile telephone has lead employees – who previously have not written or read at work – to use and develop their abilities in written communication to an increasing degree.

Situated learning theory

Situated learning theory is a showdown with large amounts of Western culture's thinking concerning the issue of learning. Lave (1988) describes the theory as a showdown with the communicative culture of educational institutions which have created the image that learning is about students acquiring the knowledge of the relevant culture and that this learning is most fulfilled without direct contact to relevant fields of application (ibid:152). Nielsen & Kvale (1999) point to a fundamental showdown with educational institutions' monopoly of learning. Situated learning theory is a contrast to learning theories founded on an understanding that relevant learning is (only) orally constructed knowledge and that this kind of knowledge has as (primary) learning acquisition to be obtained in the context of teaching. Situated learning theory, on the other hand, indicates that learning is all about acquiring other elements than purely oral knowledge, e.g. professional identity, abilities and knowledge about social norms. The organised entity of learning is the focus of the individual concerning a certain practise as of mathematical practicality in schools or cooking within the frames of family unit, or professional practical contexts. Learning is therefore a present element in any possible situation, including of course teaching situations. The result of learning is the ability to perform certain practise and the individual obtains this by participating in a practical working group already mastering this ability. The individual learns through participation in a way which is named legitimate periphery participation.

The learning logic of educational institutions

The use of concepts such as learning, knowledge, learning processes etc implies strong understandings due to the reason that they traditionally have been connected to educational institutions. It is therefore of interest to examine which more or less explicit presumptions concerning knowledge, learning, the student and the teacher adhere to such educations.

Learning within such educational contexts is organised in certain ways with common denominators, which have a variable within individual educations and individual subjects, but basically are founded on certain implicit presumptions about learning. Stephen Fox (1997) determines nine characteristics in what he names traditional cognitive learning theory, which exist as implicit presumptions due to the organisation of learning within educational institutions. Recapitulated he argues, that traditional cognitive theory has a mentalist based picture of learning, as in the process of learning is conceived with emphasis on cognitive processes

(e.g. with interest in concepts as internationalising, perception, assimilation, accommodation and memory). The development process is conceived as students internalize knowledge and the acquired knowledge is characterised as savings; the student gains knowledge, stores it in his/her memory, and is able to withdraw the capital, as in using the knowledge in practise. Learning takes place through a teacher passing knowledge on to a student, who, after having digested it, will remember it for later use. Pedagogy is all about organising teaching in such manners that it will be remembered. The teacher has responsibility for setting the basis in the students own knowledge and motivation, helping him/her to overcome difficulties, encourage to seek new knowledge, reward etc. The basis is to a large extent the student's psychology, psychiatric structure and motivation in order to optimise the learning process. A preoccupation is optimising the distribution of knowledge but focus is not on how knowledge is produced. It is presumed that knowledge is produced in professional connections, where as knowledge produced outside professional circles - 'lay knowledge' - is limited and is perceived as limited, undisciplined, based on limited experiences, anecdotic, ad hoc, specialised (as contrary to generalised) and contextual (Fox,1997: 729-731). In this way, cognitive learning theory is based on a positivistic perception of knowledge and science, and implicit perceptions on differentiation between research as context of *knowledge production*, teaching as context of *knowledge distribution* and practise as context of *knowledge usability*.

From teaching to practise

Succeeding a course, theory must be transformed into practise and knowledge must be competence in a transformation process where original knowledge is formed and interpreted in relation to practise. This transformation is to a large degree for the individual employee to handle. Some times it is easy to transform theoretical knowledge to practise, but at times it is difficult and the employee finds it difficult to make the connection between the attended course and everyday practise.

Distance is found between education and work but numerous teachers are working on minimising the distance in order to obtain maximum knowledge transformed into practise. One way of relating education to practise is to use project work as method, in which employees deal with work related issues as part of the education. Another method is to teach based on concrete examples of the relevant company. The idea is based on the integration of theory and practise. However, it is possible to make more of this connection by involving workplace learning and informal learning processes in the planning and conduction of the educational course. It is evident to consider learning courses involving both formal and informal learning processes, in stead of focusing on formal educational courses for the purpose of learning. This kind of attention demands a extension of the horizon of thinking learning and involvement of e.g. more informal forms of learning as training sessions, on-the-job-training, induction training, coaching, mentor arrangements, network, project work and job swaps in collaboration with formal educational elements. The

starting point must be what the employees are supposed to learning and in this manner build the course with the use of various forms of formal and informal learning elements. Do elements of VUC's cooperation with a relevant company, concerning coordination of the teaching offer, bridge VUC's offer on upgrading general knowledge and the employees' possibilities (necessities) of using this knowledge in practise? Is increased general continuing education able to further the asked competence development of the employees with short-cycled education?

Analysis of the KOM UD project

KOM-UD is a number of courses conducted in the regi of VUC. During two years, courses have been arranged for publicly and privately employed people primary with short-cycled education. The attendees have been taught in computing, Danish language and mathematics at a preparatory level. Furthermore, subjects as 'cooperation and communication', 'presentation and communication' and 'English and German language' and 'psychology' have been on the schedule.

Through the KOM-UD project, VUC aims at exploring the possibilities of developing competence development in outskirts. A key complaint is, if the attendees will not come to VUC – VUC must come to the potential attendees. This have resulted in a number of courses planed as a cooperative effort with companies (company adjusted courses) which have taken place during work hours or in connection to these (flexible scheduled courses) and which have taken place at the work place or close to the work place (company placed courses). The results of these courses are that attendees, who would never participate in a ordinary VUC course, have had the possibility of attending and have thereby acquired general knowledge. It is however more of a question whether they through these courses have developed practise competencies. In the following, it is our aim to discuss – based on the mentioned evaluations from the project managers – if and to which degree the educational courses exceed the scholastic understanding of learning and attach the general knowledge to the practise of the employees and in this way contribute to competence development.

The analysis examines five phases of the education (purpose definition, educational planning, educational course, exam and implementation) and will focus on how and to which extent the borders between the educational institution and the relevant companies are crossed.

Phase 1: purpose definition

The purpose of the education is the starting point of the education course. The evaluations indicate several kinds of purposes with the individual courses. A difference between the courses deals with to which extent the purpose is based on an analysis of the need of competence development for the company. Often there has not been a clarification of the need for competences and only rarely are arguments found for a need of

general competence development. The need is merely natural and evident present as shown in the following statement; “*The course has its reason in a wish from the employees who increasingly need upgrading of skills within language, computing, Danish language etc.*” But why the employees think they need this and what the work related purpose is, is not made evident.

It is characteristic for the preparatory courses in Danish, mathematics and computing that there is not made an account of the usefulness of the courses in relation the everyday work. Even more, it appears as if the employers think of the courses as staff benefits and an activity the workplace offers to employees as a personal benefit. Perhaps later, the company can benefit from the increased improved general qualities of the employee. This is reflected in that the educational courses are offered as ‘a packet deal’, meaning that offers are made in a number of subjects which the employees can volunteer to. If a company finds profit in it, there is (hopefully) made ground for focused competence development, “*the expectations from the company have been to create a basis for the further processes of changes which the company faces*” (spelling for production employees).

The courses which to a larger degree are integrated with the strategy of the company are partly courses which have as purpose to develop personal qualifications in the long run, such as ability to cooperate, increased flexibility and communication skills.

The professional upgrading courses aim at giving employees specific skills which they need practically, which is evident in the following purpose sentence “*the need of administrative personals’ increased language skills are due to increased activities in English speaking countries*” (English for administrative personal).

In the subjects ‘cooperation and communication’ and ‘communication and presentation’ there are possibilities of developing employees’ personal abilities. In these *personal upgrading* courses, the course is often made on the basis of a concrete analysis of needs of the company, as stated in the following sentence, “*a partly reconstruction of the organisational culture in the company has made ground for a number of employees (O-group) – chosen by the group of employees which they represent – will be responsible for the communication of information and insure an appropriate communication between groups of employees and management. This is a new function and a new field of responsibility to develop and qualify. The organisation is large and the working pace high. Therefore it is considered important,t to maintain an efficient and appropriate communication between groups of employees*” (communication and presentation for a certain group of production employees).

A picture is painted of some courses being set up with the purpose of being a general vocational offer, which employees primarily can view as of personal interest and secondary the workplace can benefit from. These courses are often not based on a company analysis of needs concerning employee competence development and the purpose seems to be staff benefits. Other courses are to a higher degree based on an analysis of needs for general vocational upgrading in the company or development of personal qualifications with employees. It is presumed that if a company views the education as a necessary part of the company's development and the management is involved in the course plans, the more likely it is that the employees have the opportunity to translate the acquired knowledge to practise.

Phase 2: Educational planning

The target group of by far most educational courses are publicly and privately employees with short-cycled educational background. A significant theme is therefore the preparation of the teachers in relation to the company customisation to the course. Most teachers prepare the education by more or less radically obtaining knowledge about the specific company, which the attendees come from. Some teachers follow the routines of the employees in order to get a sniff of the workplace for a day or two. Other teachers conduct group interviews with employees and management concerning special needs. *"[there was made a] introductory interview round with both management and employees. The result of these interviews gives the teacher insight into the culture of the company and problems and challenges which makes a good background for the planning of the educational course."* (Cooperation and communication in a production company). Others settle with a tour of the company. Others get teaching material from the specific company and in several cases, a substantial effort is made to develop materials specifically suited to the attending employees, but examples of courses with little or no use made of special material or examples are presented too. It is distinctive that the attendees have a positive perception of the teacher's knowledge of the workplace and a disadvantage if they do not get this knowledge. *"it would have been an advantage if the teacher had had practical experience from the company and by her/himself experienced the culture, the environment and the communication at the company"* (attendees in communication and presentation for production employees).

Several teachers experience dilemmas attached to the issue of modifying education to the company. E.g. when the issue is upgrading education, it is a dilemma between the company's specific interest in competence development and the interest of the educational institution to contribute to a broad knowledge acquirement. *"a demand to the teachers have been to balance general communicative English with a certain degree of attention to the company's and the attendees' need for work related English. A balance between general educational and company relevant materials, organised at upper grade level and high school level"* (English for administrative employees).

The dilemmas related to the fact that the two different logics of learning are found in many levels, e.g. in a teacher's description of the organisation of the teaching, in which it is debated whether considerations for the acquiring of knowledge is more heavy than that of competence development. *“Finally, it must be pointed out that it is a dilemma that the attendees acquire better learning processes by participating in teams of an equal level of education, but at the same time it is exactly important to learn to cooperate crosswise of professional groups and educational background”* (team of cooperation and communication in eldercare).

Another dilemma concerning the planning of teaching is the flexible planned teaching. Flexibility in the planning of courses is essential in the cooperation with the companies. Flexibility is primarily about when and where. The following example illustrates it, *“employees at [company] have very flexible hours which is problematic concerning arranging educational courses which provide for everybody. Therefore, VUC's offer of flexible and differentiated teaching is a good offer. The teaching was planned with 12 lessons, two days a week between 3 PM and 8 PM. Furthermore, a possibility of frequenting ordinary courses with the same content and teacher was present. The employees could spread six lessons out within these frames, with the reservation of max twenty four attendees at once. The end result was a spread out at eleven teams”* (VUC teaching for production workers). The flexibility means that the employees have an opportunity to participate in the education but evidently this is not enough to create competence development.

A third dilemma are the company place courses. In the KOM-UD project there is emphasis on teaching which takes place at the relevant company, meaning that the attendee do not have to go to VUC, but that the teacher can conduct the education at the company or another relevant place. There is in this connection a hypothesis of making the education more work relevant if education takes place closer to practise. Apparently there is no empirical or theoretical evidence of this, unless the education is actually integrated into practise. This is however not the case here. The issue is about education taking place in the company cantina or in meeting facilities turned into an educational space. It can be very practical that employees have easy access to the education as well as very impractical, as in the lack of teaching means and that the attendees are disrupted due to urgent needs of the company. As a condition to increase the level of acquired learning of knowledge and turning it into competence, it is without relevance for the employees.

Phase 3: Educational course

The fourth theme is conducting the education – the course – in relation to the idea of flexible scheduled courses. This theme is about the interchange of education based on the teacher's guidance and independent study or group work. It is common to have courses of 'studies without a teacher' in order to have financial coherence. Independent studies or group works are therefore not part of a pedagogic planning but a necessary

evil and some of the teachers find it problematic for one reason or the other. *“Both attendees and teacher have experienced the importance of a present teacher during such educational courses. The legacy of an educational space was present, doors could be shot and work external to the education could be left behind. The teacher had a unifying position and without the presence of the teacher, the attendees found it hard to leave other work out and were disrupted and allowed the disruption from colleagues, telephones etc.”* (communication and presentation for team leaders in a local government)

The challenges of independent study and group work despite, it is not hard to imagine the usefulness and necessity of these elements in regards to the common understanding of knowledge and competence. On the one hand, a situated perspective at the field of learning will focus on the exchange and discussion of opinions between the members of a group or class as an important part of the development of competencies. The VUC teacher will on the other hand more often have the teacher as centre of attention concerning passing knowledge on to the attendees, which is more in compliance with traditional cognitive learning theory. Unpublished material has examples of classes, without the presence of a teacher, have been used to discuss opinions between the attendees.

During courses, it is more or less strived for education based on the work and lives of the attendees. One end of the spectre indicates courses with basis in prerequisite conditions of a group of attendees, as is common practise in VUC courses (with regards to Sønderjylland). The other end of the spectre finds courses where the education is based on the examples from the specific company, *“the company’s own material was used along with texts from the attendees’ daily lives, as a way of becoming aware of different forms of reading techniques, pre-comprehension and layout. As part of the course was completions of forms, which belonged to the company”* (spelling course for production employees).

The basis of personal upgrading courses is found in examples from the company concerning cooperation, management, communication and presentation, *“Often were courses based on praxis from the specific company and thereby on the work and experiences of the attendees. It was their experiences which were analysed. The outcome was satisfactory for the employees, according to the evaluation, as the course had relevance for their work and their personal development”* (communication and presentation course for work instructors in a production company).

In this connection the problematic issue is on the teacher’s side as the role as teacher is challenged. In these courses, the teacher goes beyond the traditional teacher role in order to adapt the course to the needs of the company. As a consequence of this, both the company and the employees have expectations to the relevance of the course content and the teacher must explicitly legitimise the course content and form. *“it is my*

experience with adapted teaching that this kind of attendees have expectations to a fixed 'box' of information suited their needs...but to learn a language is a process and the various professional elements are engaged in each other...I have made a big effort to help them through this process..." (teacher in English in a course for administrative personal)

During this personal upgrading courses, a large effort is often made to attach relevant issues of the company in the course. The ideal is that the course enables the employees to understand, analyse and evaluate examples from work (and the private sphere), "*it means that the course has had its basis in the employees own experiences from both work and the private sphere. The assignment of the teacher has been to put these experiences into a theoretical frame and in this way present a connection between theory and practise. The theoretical material is primarily presented as cases and models in order to limit the amount of reading material*", (cooperation and communication course at a production company).

Fulfilling this ideal is a challenge and the difficulties with balancing the subject and the practical issues for the teacher are understandable. The balance can easily be lost to either side: it can be to the advantage of the theoretical subject and the traditional teacher role, as it is well known praxis, but it is also easy to imagine that the balance is to the advantage of the practical issues and the teacher ends up as consultant, with a degrading of the subject and the teaching unfolds as a frame of reflections of the challenges of working life.

Phase 4: The exam

Most courses include an offer of a test in the end. Some attendees chose the exam, but most do not. The personal upgrading subjects, such as cooperation and communication and presentation, have alternatively organised exams. A characteristic of exams is the dialog it is used as between the management and the teacher about the course and the attendees. It is collective held and with no grades. The evaluation has a clear formative character as the following example illustrates, "*the presentation consisted of 3 parts, which was presented the management:*

- 1. Each group presented the result of the study with a common case*
- 2. Then the group presented a list with the qualifications and competencies, they wanted to contribute with in relation to the development of the company.*
- 3. Finally the purposes were presented with emphasis on implementing the benefit of the course in the future.*

This form of presentation is an invitation to an equal dialog between management and employees and it is considered important for the following process", (cooperation and presentation and communication for production employees)

The formative evaluation form attaches the content of the course to company praxis to a large extent, as an addition to the case presentation, with focus on the professional aspects of the subject, is presented how the employees view their competencies in relation to the company development. Furthermore there is specific focus on the implementation of the benefits of the course.

It is evident that the traditional exam with the lack of context, the summation and individual grade does not facilitate competence development. However, the attendees do get a personal evaluation of their professional level. This possibility is not present during alternative exam forms and it has been a desire to integrate the two forms of evaluation.

Phase 5:

Implementation at the workplace

If the education is considered a staff benefit by the company, it is thereby been distanced and the expectations to its usability is therefore also reduced. A characteristic is that possible implementation is left to the employee, as in if it is possible to transform learning to competencies it is fine, but there are no demands of such and no new demands to the content of the work are made by the company. Thus, it is considered private matters if the employee wants to use the new learning, *“computing qualifications are not necessary qualifications in relation to the present work at [company] but as said by several employees, it is the way of development”*, (computing course for production employees). If competence development takes place in such cases, it must be despite – despite new competencies are not demanded and despite the work is not changed according to the new competencies, a development of competencies takes place some times.

The cases of companies, who do not solemnly considered education as staff benefits but also as a necessity due to changes of processes, only show one example of focus on implementation, *“we have been aware of that implementation of results after education is the hardest part of the entire educational course. It has given rise to higher demands to the management concerning following through as it is our experience that the following work with implementation has low priority attached to it in relation to production. Our experience is that the follow ups have with too large intervals, which makes it hard to maintain involvement and spirit”*, (Teachers in cooperation and communication at production company)

In this case, the teacher has been involved in the following implementation and has, based on the experience, gained knowledge of the difficulties, but it is an exception. In most cases there is only a vague hope of changes in the employee's way of carrying the work out – based on the employee's own action – and that the course in this way has been beneficial for this process. The implicit understanding of learning is therefore

close to that of the 'banking metaphor' which means that employees stock knowledge during the course to be withdrawn later in relation to another context, a work related context.

There is only little focus on formal measures in relation to the implementation of competencies and how to convert knowledge to competencies is considered to be carried out based on the individual's personal abilities and motivation. It is possible to state that if the companies made demands concerning usability of the competencies of employees, it would be motivating for the development of competencies. This would hardly be the case if the education is a staff benefit. On the contrary, it is possible to be the case if the course is considered necessary knowledge in the company. General knowledge is in this case equal to necessary professional upgrading. An example is a number of employees with contacts to German customers, who participate in a course in German language. In regards to personally qualifying courses, the companies have a direct need of competence development but the need is not transformed into opportunities to cooperate and communicate in new ways, in all cases. It would be obvious to connect the courses with specific work development, such as new assignments or a reorganisation which would demand increased cooperation and communication skills, and as mentioned, it does take place in some cases.

Conclusion

Based on the evaluations of both teachers and attendees, it is possible to state that the 'KOM UD' courses have increased awareness of how to exceed the distance between education and work/employment in the specific parts concerning preparation and conducting the relevant education. This is carried out more or less drastic, in that the least radical form is company placed courses, where (an intact) education space is brought to the employees (possibly at the workplace itself). A more radical variance is education based on company applied courses by gaining insight in the employees' work and using examples from the company directly in the education. The third form is company adjusted courses, where the teaching is based on some analysis of the company needs, e.g. through interviews and aims at connecting the subject with relevant issues from both work and private sphere.

It is evident that focus is not always on the reason for the purpose, concerning the success of the course. If the education is not connected to a specific need of competence development at the company, competence development will only occur as a coincidence in practise based on the subjective possibilities of each employee. The courses described as general subjects and personal upgrading courses have focus on the introductory clarification of the needs of competence development, whereas this does not seem to be the case in the courses perceived as staff benefits. Those cases seem to be a postulated need. A general challenge for VUC is to improve the ability to expose the needs for general qualification in relation to the practise of the attendees.

Another clear weakness, when the focus is on competence development, is the very few cases of focused implementation. In the empirical material, it was only possible to find one example of special attention towards implementation. It is clear that if competence development is the aim, it is necessary to focus on implementation of knowledge in practise.

The various courses are to be found in different places at the line between the traditional scholastic understanding of the learning process of the attendees and the situated understanding of learning. At the one end of the line are courses, which do not directly have the company's aim of being upgrading courses, but are considered a kind of staff benefits. They resemble traditional VUC courses. They are based on traditional cognitive learning theory and produce knowledge which is coherent and reasonable with the eyes of professional logic, provided by the teacher and are individually prepared, understood – or the opposite – and memorised. A primary difference from traditional VUC courses is in the moving of the scholastic space to the place of the employees. In this way, two new groups of society have easier access to general knowledge and ability development. A problem in supporting competence development is the fact that in such a case there is no integration of the scholastic and the practical work context, which means that it is left to the individual to transform knowledge acquisition in practise. With education based on company placed courses, it is possible to reach new groups but there is no action taken to insure employees' transformation of knowledge to practise. At the other end of the line, courses based on analysis in which competence development is needed, are found and where coherence are made between purpose, teaching and exam. We have named these courses upgrading courses and they have focus on either a personal or a general professional aspect. The point is that in these courses it is important to connect knowledge and competence development.

Based on the hypothesis that successful competence development is based on active and focused attempts at suiting the knowledge acquisition of the education to the practical knowledge the employees' needs, we have a presumption of large differences of the effect of the different courses concerning competence development. These presumptions need further analysis which will take place in a scientific evaluation of the entire project.