



## **Delivery 6.1 REFLECTIVE SESSIONS MINUTES**

**Author: André B. Danielsen, University College South Denmark, Denmark**

### **1. Introduction**

This text presents itself first and foremost as a study to further clarify what *Reflective Sessions* in the context of TODDLER is. This is an identification effort, particularly prompted by TODDLER project's external evaluator, Paul Leseman's remarks in relation to ambiguities in WP6. The question, "What is the purpose of reflective sessions within TODDLER?" will now be taken as a serious reminder of the presence of a communication problem in relation to the general partners and WP'ers. Work to clarify primarily took place in Stavanger in early December and in close collaboration between WP1 and WP6, ie., between Monika Röthle, Elisabeth Ianke Mørkeseth and myself. It is the latter that is responsible for reporting.

Working with the details to identify the rational in WP6 created a collection of experiences based on the partners' practical implementation of the reflective sessions in the spring of 2012. Subsequent reports were submitted to the Danish team. It should be emphasized that all the partners, in their reports, have demonstrated a high degree of loyalty to the job and that precisely because of this willingness to perform reflexive processes are moving important issues forward. These perspectives will hopefully contribute to a further clarification of what reflective practice is, what it can be, how it is performed, and which challenges remain.

To provide an overview, the undersigned in advance completed a layout of the topic. But it remains that which was collected, more or less directly, in the partners' responses to the task of implementing reflective sessions. For the same reason, illustrative examples will be highlighted from the partners' descriptions and analyzes.

## 2. The Wolf and Urgency

The wolf is a character that we know from Grimm's fairy tale "Little Red Riding Hood" and in it serves as a metaphor for a problem, a drama, a conflict or a state of excitement, challenge or even threat. This in daily practice should attract special attention, for example, because it is a challenge, ethical, personal, social, etc.

This is straightforward and of course, does not attract much attention and is not a pedagogical theme. And such is the case hopefully with the vast majority of what we as conscious people are concerned with. In academic terms it corresponds to the status of the tacit knowledge that has come into play. The silence has to do with the fact that it is not intrusive, but can be taken for granted, precisely because it has been previously accepted as knowledge. Thus, it would be meaningless to speak of silent ignorance.

But suddenly it penetrates into a practice, a behavior, a culture itself, so as to get around having to relate analytically or knowledgably, in short, professionally to it. The idea in this way is to start with the acute, the urgent. We include examples of Artevelde's reporting (p.2), in Helmo's report, where the wolf is shown all the way through, highlighting relationship difficulties, such as conflicts in parental cooperation (p.4). The conflicting theme becomes even more acute with our partners in Portugal. Here it is formulated as ethical issues (p.2), but also language challenges and integration problems are emphasized in Schwäbisch Gmünd report (p.2). The wolf is also seen in the reflection process, as discomfort and aggressiveness (Kingston-report) or as resistance and difficulty in listening to each other (Arteveld report).

## 3. The Inductive Approach

With the wolf metaphor, it can be said that WP6 has put emphasis on the inductive approach to the relationship between theory and practice, that is, with the situation as the object causing the reflection. Of course, a dispute based on a concept or theory gives rise to reflection, but the excitement will often occur because concepts or theories, no matter what, necessarily refer to human situations. Or to put it another way: An interpretation and clarification of conceptual meaning has practical implications that may prove to be something of a challenge for the participant.

Here it is worth noting that, partners and other participants, who are explicitly coming from an inductive approach to the reflection process, perceive such a view in a different way than the Danish team. Compare in this regard Helmo's criticism of WP6 in his report p.5 bottom with WP6's guideline from March 2012: "Indeed, *praxis has a high status*, but praxis is not something obvious or something that reveals itself as some sort of epiphany. It requires work, a going through of concepts and theory for us to be made aware of what is going on. So *let's have some praxis-situations* with professional and theoretical angles. Let's be *concrete*: What are the students' professional narratives concerning their professional opinions regarding *praxis*? What do they actually say? What words do they

use?” (WP6 Guideline. Reporting back. 120320). The weight of the inductive approach from WP6's side is, in any case, attempting to be shown with the 3 italics of “praxis” in the passage quoted above: “*praxis has a high status,*” “*let's have som praxissituations*” and, “*professional opinions regarding praxis.*”

The wolf metaphor as an expression that practice, so to speak, comes first and then arises a problem, filled with conflict and drama, is another way for WP6's side to weigh the inductive approach against the reflection process, as opposed to a scholastic enumeration of concepts. For an academic underpinning of the showdown with the scholastic formalism, see the relevant criticism of Pierre Bourdieu's the scholastic sense in “*Pascal Meditationerne*” from 1997.

#### **4. Knowledge as Work**

The inductive approach is important to the reflection processes, which are defined as *knowledge work*. The example of *parental involvement* is again appropriate, for example Portugal report p.2, which has at least 4 areas of investigation prompted by a single theme, *parental involvement situations*: 1. What is the relationship between communication and cooperation with parents? 2. Communication as reciprocal rather than unilateral is another area of knowledge to cultivate. 3. The difference between family education and parental cooperation is a given, but what does it consist of? This is the third field of knowledge that suddenly appears. 4. There will always be ethical issues to deal with, according to Portugal, but what are these issues? This is the fourth field of knowledge to appear. And so this in principle goes on forever.

Seen from WP6's part, this shows reflection processes, in other words, clarifying what is at stake in difficult and confrontational situations. Looking at Portugal's report, the reflections lead to more or less spontaneously occurring themes in which to delve. A single theme, parental involvement, would result, therefore, in some objects of knowledge, being made explicit by the use the language and concepts. This is a working approach and it is worth contrasting it to, for example, the widespread use of tacit knowledge, which is presented as just without problems and taken for granted.

In any case, it was the cooperation between WP1 and WP6 in Stavanger, in December of 2012 that proposed using a musical theory expression of the above considerations regarding the relationship between an overarching concept and spontaneous objects of knowledge: *a theme with variations*. The theme may in this respect be *parental involvement* and variations of the different practice situations and examples (again as an expression of an inductive approach), which students, as well as the session leader can contribute and thereby bring new considerations, probably both surprising and clarifying in places, in short: new knowledge.

## 5. Session Leader's Role

One of the themes that recur in several reports is the session leader's role and their balancing of withdrawal or possibly a proactive approach: Why should we hold theory and examples back? To what degree shall the person responsible for the reflection process be steering and even teaching? What do the students prefer? Should their needs be met? This invites reflection on the session leader's role as is evident in Artevelde's report p.1, middle: "Maybe we should give more examples during this part". But will the facilitator's examples mean steering the students' reflections? Is it a problem that the sessions are led? How withdrawn can the session manager really be?

The session leader's role is, among other things, about when, how and why to breathe life into a concept. As stated, the facilitator can determine whether or not a dead concept should be awakened and set in motion. But the resuscitation, where to get this material from, is not a foregone conclusion. It can include taking place through personifications. Gestalt's, fictional as well as real human characters, can be used to get the concept of what can be understood by such involvement, so that it provides a sense of wellbeing. A good example of the transition from a "dead concept" to a "revived concept" may, as WP1 and WP6 understand it, as seen in Helmo report p.3, where the session leader introduces a figure that influence the students' construction of their professional identity (p.3 below).

## 6. Conclusion and General Invitations

A final and general appeal goes out to get the inductive and phenomenological theory to be more predominant. This is especially true for the sessions, the displays tensions, group dynamics and enhanced experiences from the process of reflection. A good example would be Kingston's quotations of "slightly more aggressive approaches" and "extending their consciousness out" in groups. A curious reader will at all times be interested in hearing what, for example, aggression and further expansion of consciousness will do. Why do they appear? Why does aggression occur?

Again a concluding exhortation: Use these processes of reflection - these "stories", which are largely about how people experience and understand themselves and their surroundings. Use the inductive curiosity.

### **Background Material – Reflection sessions conducted by partners:**

University College Arteveldehogeschool, Belgium

Date: April 27, 2012

Attendance: 15-3<sup>rd</sup> year students

Grouping: Groups of 3-4 participants

Theme: Child Initiative

Duration /Structure: Round 1, Round 2, Pause, Round 4, End

Helmo Sainte-Croix

Date: May 27, 2012

Attendance: 20-3<sup>rd</sup> year students

Grouping: -

Theme: Parents Cooperation - professional identity

Duration /Structure: 3 hours

#### **University of Stavanger**

Date: April 18, 2012

Attendance: 25 students 3<sup>rd</sup> year students

Grouping: 5 groups of 5 students

Theme: Reducing Social Inequality

Duration/Structure: 4 hours; Round 1, Pause, Round 2, Pause, Round 3, Round 4, End

Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany

Date: June 19, 2012 (Emphasis on "Fachakademie-based" session) and July 18, 2012 ("University-based")

Attendance: 11 students, approx. 2 ½ year (the report is a little vague about what the students study year is, see p.1, second paragraph)

Grouping: 3 groups of four participants

Theme: Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in Pre-School Settings

Duration /Structure: 1½ hours; Round A, Round B, Round C, Final consideration of acquired learning by students

Timisoara, Romania

Date: 2012

Attendance: 25 students, Clinical Psychology and Psychological Counselling Master Students

Grouping: -

Theme: Wellbeing and Parental Involvement

Duration /Structure: 3 hours, Conceptual Presentation, exchange of ideas, New round of discussions in groups, New theoretical perspectives and summarizing by the students

ESES - Portugal

Date: 2012

Attendance: 18 students, Master in Education Pre-School/Primary School and Master in 1st / 2nd Basic Education

Grouping: 4 groups of 4-5 participants  
Theme: Parental Involvement  
Duration /Structure: Approx. 3 hours, Continuously implemented session with successful progression through 10 "sections"

Kingston - England  
Date: January 21, 2012  
Attendance: -  
Grouping: approx. 4 groups of 4-5 members  
Theme: Wellbeing  
Duration / Structure: Approx. 3½ hours, Continuously implemented session with successful progression through 11 "sections"

Universitat Ramon Llull, Barcelona  
Date: May 7, 2012  
Attendance: 12 students, 3<sup>rd</sup> year students, Infant Education  
Grouping: -  
Theme: Wellbeing  
Duration /structure: 2 hours. –



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