Non scholae, sed vitae: Activity-based, reality-infused academic teaching
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Background
○ During first half of 19th Century Danish scholar-poet N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872) harshly criticized what he termed the Black School for delivering only formal, but no vital (socially, existentially useful) inspiration to pupils – thereby paving the way for the Danish Folk High School movement.
○ During the first half of the last century John Dewey pronounced ‘doing’ as an indispensable pre-requisite for ‘learning’.
○ During the entire last century lack-of-transfer – from classroom settings to life settings – has been studied as a major problem for mainstream educational practice.

Cases
The paper presents case-examples covering a period of 45 years and suggesting how academic institutions may ‘walk the talk’ of voices like Grundtvig’s and Dewey’s and deal constructively with transfer issues – namely by offering students reality-infused, activity-based teaching-learning. All five sub-cases have been embedded in ‘normal’ academic study programs within psychology/social science.

○ Reality-centered introductory teaching program for psychology students (1970-75)
  Discipline-orientation (psychology of learning, cognition, personality … ) was replaced by reality-orientation: “This is Denmark – where and how may psychology help us understand and deal constructively with Danish realities.” A teaching-learning organization was constructed.
○ Counseling and professional team processes (1980-85)
  Student teams (M.A. level) were trained in mutual real-life counseling and at the same studied their own team development …
○ Center for System Development (1985-2005)
  Students (M.A. level) were trained in basic professional competencies by having them (1) offer their unpaid, supervised services to organizations; (2) act as apprentices to their teachers in the context of real-life consultancy projects
○ Master’s programs for experienced organizational practitioners (2008-?)
  Mature students are invited to do action research in their own organizations …
○ Reflexive Learning of Organization Theory in Large Student Cohorts of Higher Education (2015-?)
  255 students in Business Economy are organized in a simulator organization to inquire into the organizational life of interview respondents employed in local private firms/public institutions. Students are invited to view themselves as organizational members who collaboratively produce case materiel for their own oral exam …

Assessment
All sub-cases have been implemented by the authors. The paper will provide material for two sort of informal assessment
(1) Quality of student learning
○ Facilitating transition from studies to practice
- Learning reflexivity concerning own practice

(2) Quality of University life
- Furthering reciprocity between theory and practice
- Integrating teaching, research and practice

References

