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On Medicine and Learning
- The Pedagogy of the CBS MPA Programme Revisited

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On Medicine and Learning

The Pedagogy of the CBS MPA Programme Revisited

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Intentions are always perfect - actions are rarely
Poul Henningsen

Introduction: On nearness and distance[1]

The focus of this article is the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program at the Copenhagen Business School (CBS). The aim is to focus critically on the pedagogical practice that has emerged from the program in order to gain insight into this practice and to propose reflections on change. Naturally, this is not an easy task as I have been very actively involved in developing and teaching the program.

In the early 1990s I was among the originators of the program and in 2001 I was still active as program director[2]. There are bound to be aspects of the program of which I am unaware, but I still find the fundamental ideas underlying the program appropriate[3]. (See description of the content below). Thus, neither the purpose of the program nor its structure is up for discussion in this context. Neither is the basic attitude that the program must be both theoretical and close to practice.

In effect it becomes easier to discuss the pedagogical aspects of the program, as they are not jeopardizing the fundamental premises of the program. This discussion is never ending as we shall never know precisely what are the outcomes of our efforts, and improvements are always possible.

It should be mentioned that this is not the first time that the MPA program is subject to analysis. The originators of the program have described and analyzed the start-up of the program and the multiple professional and pedagogical ideas at that time[4].

I have deliberately selected theoretical contributions different from those that we discussed in connection with designing the program, such as 'action learning', interdisciplinarity, the role of teachers, the role of participants and evaluation.

The article takes as its point of departure a number of theories to examine how they might enrich/change the pedagogical practice of the MPA program.[5]

At the analytical level, I start from the motto of the program 'From nearness to distance – and back'[6]. The idea underlying this motto is that in order to become a proficient (MPA) change agent, the student must be able to keep a distance to his or her immediate reality and adopt and apply a helicopter perspective. This perspective emerges through discussions with other students and teachers, but first and foremost by drawing on theories. This is our medicine for the students, which I have chosen to take in this article.

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[1] This (2004) article is an edited and updated version of my contributions to the articles: J.F. Bakka and J.C. Ry Nielsen *En lederuddannelse i et teori-praksisperspektiv – MPA-uddannelsen som case*, IOA-årbog 2001 and J.C. Ry Nielsen and J.F. Bakka *MPA uddannelsens pædagogik i ny teoretisk og praktisk belysning*, MPA Working Paper no. 11, Copenhagen 2002.
[2] I retired as program director in 2001, but I am still teaching at the program.
[3] This is also confirmed by a very positive evaluation of the program conducted by Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut in 2002, see www.eva.dk and J.C. Ry Nielsen (2003) *MPA uddannelsen i går – i dag – i morgen. En statusrapport,* Copenhagen, the MPA program.
[4] Jørgen Frode Bakka, Jens Gunst, Aage Nedergaard and J.C. Ry Nielsen *From visions to reality,* MPA Working paper no. 4, Copenhagen 1996.
[5] The idea for this approach originates from Jørgen Frode Bakka.
[6] The motto originates from J.C. Ry Nielsen and Pål Repstad, *From nearness to distance – and back – on analyzing your own organization*. Papers in Organization, no. 14, CBS, 1993, 19 p.

The approach will be as follows:

- Distance is achieved through discussing selected theories – a short presentation of the major arguments of the selected theories.
- From distance to nearness is analyzed, at first, at a theoretical level, that is summarizing the derived consequences for our practice – what ought/could we do if we took the theory seriously?
- Nearness is introduced through a description of our current practice. How are we acting within the areas that the theory treats.
- Finally I return from distance to nearness at the practical level. That is reflections on changes in our pedagogical practice – what could we do differently? Here I propose a model for development and learning.
- In the process I take a closer look at the changes in practice over the period 2002-2004, and conclude with a closer look at how far we have got with the changes.

The MPA Program at the Copenhagen Business School

The program runs over two years part-time. The first class started in January 1994.
The target group is managers primarily in public and voluntary organizations, but also managers in unions and employers' associations.
The aim to the program is to train change agents. The structure of the program is simple and includes:

- Three core subjects – economy, political science and organization theory
- Three optional courses that in greater detail treat the core subjects.
- The course Strategy and Change that ties the elements together.
- A Master's Thesis.
- The program has two international elements:
    a. In the first year an international summer school with participants from a number of European countries.
    b. In the second year the students go abroad to a country chosen by themselves to conduct comparative analyses in preparation for the Master's thesis.

Each year in January approx. 45 students are admitted and there are considerably more applicants than vacant seats. All applicants are interviewed before admission. (For further information see www.cbs/mpa.dk).

Choice of theories

The target group of the MPA program has been important for the choice of theories. The special characteristics of our students are important for the pedagogical efforts. Of a population of approx. 250 students[7]

- 22% have a background in the natural sciences (doctors, engineers, etc.);
- 8% are economists;
- 25% have a background in the humanities (librarians, Masters of Arts, teachers, architects, etc.)
- 20% are nurses
- Plus a minor group of social workers, lawyer, and people with civil service training, etc.

[7] Data collected by Bakka in 2001, but the composition has not changed significantly since then.

In terms of sector, most of the students represent public organizations, municipalities and hospitals. Unions contribute with both elected representatives and employees. Employers' associations supply employees. Each class furthermore includes some managers of voluntary and private organizations.

The average age has so far been 40+, which gives a total life experience of approx. 1,800 years and business experience of approx. 800 years!

The distribution by sex has been fairly equal throughout the entire period.

As illustrated above the MPA students are extremely experienced people and most of them with a background in advanced studies. They are what you would call professionals and have through education and experience been socialized and indoctrinated to think and act in a certain way.

Some of the participants are 'more' professional than other because they hold a master's which usually implies more indoctrination but also more training in abstract thinking. Finally many of the students carry with them high status in society because they occupy positions as managers in the top of the hierarchy, e.g. in big hospitals or municipalities.

Common to most of the participants is also that as managers they are used to sit at the head of the table and to have others listen to them. Furthermore most of them come from organizations populated with other professionals. This means that both before starting on the program and during the process they are surrounded by 'peers' which are either their superiors or subordinates.

Theoretically we already know much about professionals in organizations. Below is an ultra short review of what the organization literature tells us about professionals in organizations:

- From Mintzberg we know that professionals are powerful and conservative[8]
- Borum argues that organizations populated with professionals are difficult (impossible) to change unless we radically change the pedagogical system[9]
- Goldschmidt tells a fascinating story about prima donnas and other management promoting groups[10]
- Chris Argyris describes how much easier it is for incredibly proficient consultants to teach than to learn. They are experts in defense mechanisms[11].
- Dechow and Majgaard describe how different groups of professionals wage war on each other over power[12]
- Other literature points toward professionals being both creative and enthusiastic provided they receive support and protection[13].

[8] Henry Mintzberg, Structure in Fives, Prentice Hall 1983 and 1993, Chapter 10

[9] Finn Borum, *Transforming hospital mangement- the (im)possibility of Change* Papers in Organization.CBS. Department of Organization and Industrial Sociology, no 23, Copenhagen 1997

[10] Lars Goldschmidt, *Erfaringer med ledelse på trods* in Liza Klöcker-Larsen, Asmund Born, Lars Lindquist og Peter Kjær,(red), *Mosaik om moderne ledelse- IOA-årbog*, Nyt fra Samfundsvidenskaberne, Copenhagen 1997, p.51-67

[11] Chris Argyris, *Teaching smart people how to learn*, Harvard Business Review, May-June 1991 and Chris Argyris, *Overcoming Organizational Defences: Facilitating Organizational Learning*, Allyn & Bacon 1990

[12] Niels Dechow og Klaus Majgaard, Dialog: Støj og konfrontationer, Økonomistyring & Informatik- 12. Årgang 1996/97 nr. 2

[13] See e.g. J.C. Ry Nielsen, *Det private erhvervsliv og Handelshøjskolen i København – og omvendt*, Dansk Pædagogisk Tidsskrift 1992. Også i IP-Information, Autumn 1992 and in J.C. Ry Nielsen, *Anderledes tanker om livet i organisationer*, Nyt fra Samfundsvidenskaberne, Copenhagen 1993

Important for the choice of theories has been to capture theories that take serious the impact of professional background. For this purpose I choose Argyris and Schein because they are both analyzing ways of starting a process of learning/development/change. Simultaneously they are both occupied with the preconditions and methods of change. They are both writing about life in organizations, but their approaches are so general that I find them applicable in this context.

The argument for my next choice of theory is different. Searching for literature in connection with a different article, I stumbled over the Russian Vygotski. His idea about 'the zone of proximal development' is fascinating – also in view of the MPA program. Therefore he is included.

Finally I have also found it worthwhile exploring how far the trendy theory of communities of practitice would take me.

As an unanticipated result of the analyses I succeeded in summarizing the various theoretical analyses in a model that I have named a model for development and learning[14].

This gives the following disposition for the article:

1. Learning- and change theories – the organizational perspective
   a. Chris Argyris (and Donald Schön)
   b. Kurt Lewin and Edgar H. Schein
2. Lev Semenovich Vygotski – the pedagogical perspective
3. Jean Lane and Etienne Wenger – communities of practice
4. A model for development and learning
5. Taking our own medicine - using the model: 2002 – 2004

What has happened since 2002 will be included in the process and in the end.

1. Learning- and change theories - the organizational theoretical perspective

In this section I shall discuss two types of theories. I have chosen Argyris and Schön as their ideas about organizational learning can be used vis-à-vis professionals. Furthermore, Argaris' ideas about defense mechanisms are useful in that they denote something about barriers to learning and ways of overcoming them. Here Schein supplements with fine reflections on process, which he has, in part, borrowed from Kurt Lewin.

A. Chris Argyris (and Donald A. Schön)

There are two aspects of Argyris' research, which I wish to discuss. First, his and Schön's ideas about organizational learning as they in many ways reflect the reasoning underlying the MPA program. (But we did not have Argyris in mind when we started the program). Second, his ideas about the difference between what we say and what we do, and in effect the mechanisms of defence that we employ.

Organizational learning: Single loop or double loop learning

The American researchers Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schön wrote their first book on organizational learning back in 1978[15].

[14] This was a real aha-experience, which happened at 1 p.m. on June 30, 2001.

Here they introduce two concepts that, over the years, have become important for literature on change and management: 'single loop' and 'double loop' learning. 'Single loop' learning or simple learning is about correcting errors. I discover something unexpected, a problems such as that the budget has been exceeded. Mentally I know how to manage that kind of problems. My mental models immediately start working without me thinking much about it. And the better experts we are, the less we thing about it. I have a repertoire of possible ways of acting at my disposal, such as rebuking those responsible, finding slacks in the budget, move resources from one department to another.

I react as a thermostat regulating the heat in a room. If the temperature gets above or below a certain degree, the boiler automatically goes off or on.

'Double-loop' learning or complex learning also means that I discover the error or deficiency, but rather than reacting automatically, I start questioning our mental models. I change the systems.

Are there other explanations for exceeding the budget than those we automatically produce? Is it at all the right products we are producing - are we treating the citizens properly, what is the underlying organizational culture? What are our values and attitudes?

To the extent that I start asking questions I am starting on the process of 'double-loop' learning. In the thermostat example this is similar to asking why the room temperature must be fixed at 21 degrees.

The figure below illustrates single- and double-loop learning[16]

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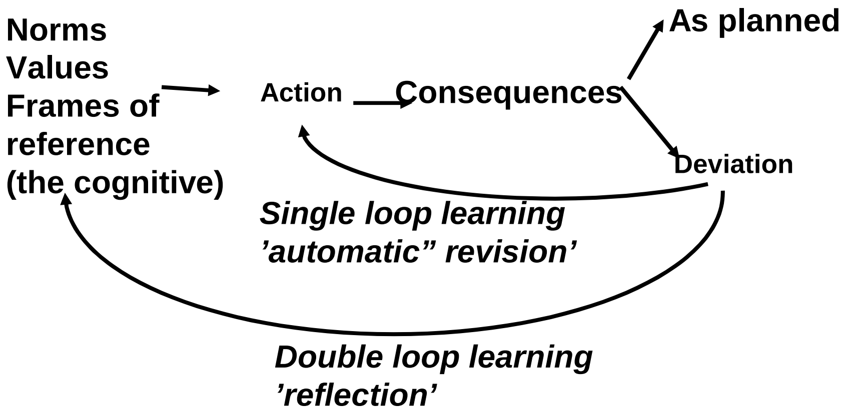
[15] Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schön, *Organizational Leaning*, A Theory of Action Perspective, Addison-Wesley, Reading Massachusetts 1978. Volume 2 was published in 1996, Chris Argyris og Donald A. Schön, *Organizational Learning II*, Addison – Wesley Reading 1996.

[16] This version of the figure is from J.C. Ry Nielsen and Morten Ry (2004) *Tanker om organisationsændringer - brikker til mange ukendte puslespil,* Copenhagen: Nyt fra Samfundsvidenskaberne

ARGYRIS:
SINGLE AND DOUBLE LOOP LEARNING



Derived consequences for practice
The most important message is the necessity of double loop learning, or as I prefer to call it here: reflection: Through the entire course of the program we must ensure that participants are given the option of questioning/reflecting on what they learned. How far have I come? What can I use and how? All types of teaching and writing assignments should involve reflection.

MPA practice
In connection with lessons in the three core subjects (organization, political science and economics) two participants are responsible for writing the minutes of the lesson and giving an oral reflection on the contents. This reflection is not debatable, but is merely 'submitted'. The class of each year appoints an evaluation group that meet with representatives of the study management twice during each term. The group counts approx. 10 students and it is typically used for reflection on contents and pedagogical practice. This also applies to the study committee to which the students elect five representatives.

Reflections on change
We could consider turning the daily reflection into a common matter by discussing it in the classroom. The systematic written evaluations could be targeted to meet this purpose. Furthermore we might offer the individual reflection a helping hand for example by handing out a form listing the daily lessons and leaving space for writing individual reflections. This has been suggested but never implemented.

During the first term the students work in so-called participant-project groups. These are groups composed administratively in order to ensure as wide diversity as possible. In connection with teaching these groups could also be used as reflection groups.

During the second term the students also work in groups, but now on a project chosen by the students themselves. These groups could also be used for the purpose of reflection.

In connection with all written assignments we could consider demanding a section on reflection. Such a requirement must, naturally, be adapted for the individual project.

Changes 2002 - 2004
Many of these reflections on change have been (attempted) implemented:

- We are collectively reflecting on the subjects - occasionally but not systematically.
- Reflection forms have been designed, but we have not been able to convince our busy students of the benefit of giving high priority to this task.
- During 2004 we have systematized our evaluations of teaching. Here reflection is included, but it needs to be improved.
- The requirement of reflection in connection with written assignments has been made clear.

On what we say and what we do – and defense mechanisms
Argyris (and many after him) is distinguishing between 'espoused theories on action' and 'theories-in-use on action'[17]. The formers are used to justify or explain our actions. The latter are tacit and other people must derive their contents from the actions. They are thus subject to a certain amount of uncertainty and we can only, at the most, form hypotheses about them. However, in the view of Argyris and others the two categories of theories often differ significantly, that is what we say differs from what we do.

According to Argyris this discrepancy is related to a constructed 'skilled incompetence'[18]. Argyris names this a defense mechanism, the purpose of which is to protect us. Argyris also labels the phenomena 'model I behavior'[19].

Argyris finds that too often managers can primarily be characterized as

- Occupied by securing their own goals meaning that they cut off the outside world
- Wishing to maximize win-situation and minimize lose-situations. I want to stay in control, and prefer not to help others or accept their help. Altering goals is a weakness. Therefore I end up with single-loop learning.
- They must not demonstrate (negative) emotions. That is a sign of weakness. The result is more private mess rather than open discussion.
- Being rational is important. You must be objective. Discussions must be intellectual and emotions suppressed no matter their import.

Model II builds on the opposite assumption, naturally[20]. Here valid information is presented, participants are open to one another, and choices are made 'free' and collectively. Neither emotions nor proposals are hidden. This implies emotional commitment. Hence the possibilities of double-loop learning are strengthened.

Derived consequences for practice
Argyris and Schön have constructed a program that in relation to teaching can make people aware of model I behavior and simultaneously strengthen model II behavior. The program has a significant strain of sensitivity training, as the participants are required to, among other things, writing down and tell about their feelings and reactions toward others. One way of doing this is to

[17] Argyris and Schön (1996) op. Cit., p. 13.
[18] This understanding is elaborated in detail in Chris Argyris *Bryt forsvarsrutinerne*, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo 1990
[19] Argyris and Schön (1996) op. cit., p. 92
[20] Op. cit., p. 117 cont.

write down the actual course of events in the right column. In the left column you write all the things and feelings that you did not express. Afterwards both columns are discussed[21].

More generally you could say that it is a matter of creating an environment in which discussions are not, in the words of Senge, conducted in order to win, but in order to become wiser[22]. For Senge the learning organization implies demolishing the defense mechanisms through thinking, discussing and acting more openly[23].

MPA practice
We did not think about our participants in terms of model I. On other hand, in writing we do a lot to promote dialogue and group awareness. We have constructed role-plays with matching process analyses based on Leavitt's managerial psychology[24]. We have discussed the participants' roles in their home groups based on Adizes and Belbin[25]. But at the level of the class we only do this at the introduction course.

Reflections on change
Even though it might be exciting to test Argyris and Schön's program, it requires better instructors than we can and will be able to muster in a foreseeable future.

On the other hand an introduction to model I and model II behavior would perhaps be appropriate. Individuals, work groups and the class could use them as a mirror to reflect on their own development and that of others.

Changes 2002 - 2004
We have included Argyris in the curriculum, but he is rather used at the intellectual level than as the mirror recommended above.

B. Kuert Lewin and Edgar H. Schein

Kurt Lewin formulated a pioneer work on changes at individual- and group level many years ago[26]. Lewin saw changes as a three-stage rocket. First you had to unfreeze, then change, and finally refreeze.

Many researchers have applied Lewin's model to analyze organizational changes. In this context I shall fasten upon Edgar H. Schein who used the model for analyzing the brain wash to which American soldiers were subject during the Korean War[27]. Schein later on transferred his reasoning to changes in organizations, which I shall summarize below[28].

Schein's three-stage rocket for change processes seen through the spectacles of the consultant:

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[21] Op.cit, Chapter 6.
[22] Peter M. Senge, The Fifth Discipline, The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization, Century Business, London 1990, in particular Chapter 5 A, Shift of Mind and Chapter 10 Mental Model.
[23] Senge, op.cit., p. 186.
[24] Harold J. Leavitt. Og H. Bahrami, *Managerial Psychology*, 5. ed., University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1988
[25] IchakAdizes, *Ledelsens faldgruber*, Børsens Forlag, Copenhagen 1979 and Meredith R. Belbin, *Management Teams-why they succeed or fail*, Butterworh Heinemann, Oxford 1996 (1981).
[26] Kurt Lewin *Frontiers of group dynamics*, Human Relations, I, 5-41, 1951.
[27] Edgar H. Schein, *Coercive Persuasion*, Norton, New York 1961.
[28] Edgar H. Schein, *Process Consultation, volume II,* Addison – Wesley OD Series, 1988.

Stage 1 **Unfreeze:** Create motivation and preparedness for changes through
a. missing expected results
b. creating guilt and anxiety
c. securing psychological safety

Stage 2 **Changes** through cognitive restructuring: help the client to see things, judge things, feel things, and react to things in a different way – from a new perspective achieved through
a. identifying oneself with a new ideal, such as a mentor
b. searching the environment for new relevant information

Stage 3 **Refreeze:** Help the client integrate the new understandings/perspectives into
a. the personality and self-perception
b. important relations with other people

Derived consequences for practice
In the context of unfreezing it would be 'advantageous' if the applicants had experiences with both successes and failures. This we should probe into during the admission interview and point out the legitimacy of experiencing the roles of manager and change agent as both difficult and troublesome. But simultaneously we should stress that the MPA program offers some of the answers to the difficult questions.

Referring to very high per cent of students that finish the program could also provide psychological safety.

The rites of transition in connection with starting on the program should also stress that the participants are now returning to the student role, they all start on equal terms – irrespective of status in the outside world. They become members of a quite new organization.

In relation to changes, the teachers should be aware that they are also to function as mentors for the participants, meaning that they are expected to tell about traditions, culture, and difficulties. In short lead the participants into the new MPA landscape.

Teachers easily become ideals. Therefore, they must be able to move from nearness to distance. And they are also very visible leaders – especially in the transition phase.

The teachers are responsible for providing new and relevant information in the form of theories and examples, but in such a way that the 'client' is expected to contribute actively, individually and to group work, to large and small projects, and to formal and more informal projects.

This change process should last throughout the entire program in the hope of refreezing in the Lewinian sense. In this context the final Master's Thesis should occupy a key position.

MPA practice
During the admission interview we don't make much of penetrating into difficult fights or defeats. We spend 45 minutes on forming an opinion of the applicant (we are an experience teacher and a MPA graduate).

We emphasize the importance of an introductory course at an external training center running from Thursday to Saturday at lunchtime. This is to give the students a good impression of the contents of the program, of their fellow students, of their home groups, and of the teachers and the official pedagogical practice. We also use an earlier examination paper in the three core subject to demonstrate the requirements they are expected to meet after ten months of studying. Finally an MPA graduate tells about the program as being both gratifying and causing worries.

After the introduction course we fill the heads of the students with theories and all types of assignments, but we are not testing directly any potential paradigmatic shift. The Master’s Thesis is *the* test piece, but there are no requirements for demonstrating efforts of change in the contents.

Reflections on change

During the admission interview there is no reason to cultivate successes and failures, but we could discuss with the individual applicant how he or she manages everyday life as a manger and has managed situations of change. Based on this we could, together with the applicant, work out a competence profile. The new Master of Management Development program could undoubtedly assist us in this task. In this program such a profile plays a significant role in that it strongly emphasizes the participants’ development.

During the introduction course we could, in our review of the examination case, demonstrate better how much the students lack in knowledge and insight when they start.

The psychological safety dimension should be strengthened by the participants working in part in their home groups and in part tested many other group compositions making them experience that they are many in the same boat.

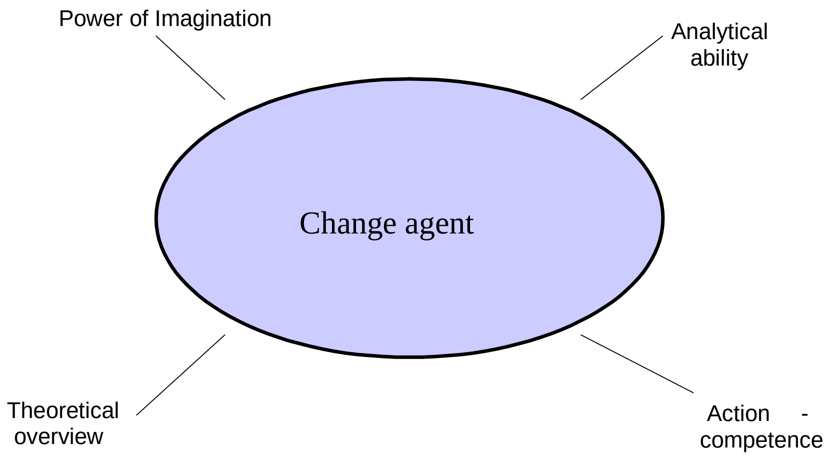
Becoming once again a student is new to everybody. It is also hard, demanding, and difficult to find the time to work with complex subject matters, but it is simultaneously exiting and challenging.

In our roles as ideals and mentors we could, therefore, consider involving our MPA graduates to a greater extent. A MPA graduate could be allocated to each home group in the first term. Undoubtedly we could also utilize better the qualifications of the participants. They are experts within many fields, and we might in our teaching benefit from their knowledge. This requires, however, that we continuously update our knowledge about the participants’ specific qualifications, and that we legitimate their involvement as teachers. We could regularly discuss their competence profile and actually give it a pivotal role. This might also be applicable at the home group level. In continuation of this we would be in a position to know more about which changes that the participants are implementing in their everyday life, and how they do it.

Changes 2002 - 2004

In terms of the application form and the application interview we have become much better at obtaining information about the applicant’s previous practice, and in this context successes and failures are naturally brought up. The competence profile has been discussed in detail. Thus, we have clearly defined what we understand by a change agent (see the figure below)

The Change Agent



The axis power of imagination and action competence is what distinguishes, in particular, the MPA program from other university programs. Action competence illustrates nearness to practice while power of imagination illustrates distance – the ability to juggle with several different perspectives[29].

We have also started to clarify the students' profiles. For the introduction course in January 2004 we had worked out a form for the students to fill in stating the nature of the professional point of departure (humanities, natural sciences or social sciences), and their knowledge of the three core subjects. We also asked about their managerial experience/competence, or particular expertise that could be used in connection with the teaching. The students filled in the forms and discussed them in the home groups, but subsequently we have not, by and large, used the results for anything. Hopefully we will do better in 2005!

For the purpose of getting the students to know each other better and thus create greater psychological safety, we worked out several different group formations. This issue is very important when planning the first term. The plan is that each student will work in different groups over the period, but in practice something unexpected always happens and the teachers are using the original home groups!

Our students are highly motivated for completing the program. This is probably why we are reluctant to demonstrate during the introduction course how far they are in practice from meeting our requirements. We leave it to them to find out!

[29] See J.C. Ry Nielsen (2003) op.cit. for details about the model.

2. Lev Semenovich Vygotski[30] - the pedagogical perspective

Vygotski died young at the age of thirty-seven in 1934 after suffering from tuberculosis for many years. Even though it is now seventy years ago since he died, he still has a strong impact on the pedagogical debate.[31] In this way Vygotski shares the faith of Max Weber. Vygotski did not become know to the wider audience until his major work on thinking and language was translated into English in 1962 and published in a revised and improved version in 1986[32]. Vygotski was Jewish (Russian) and in the Tsarist Russia Jews only had limited access to education in that pedagogical institution were only allowed to accept a certain amount of Jews, and as a Jew you could not become employed as a teacher in a state instituiton[33]. Vygotski, however, graduated simultaneously from to different universities in Moscow. He got a degree in Law from the Moscow University and one in history and philosophy from an alternative university (Shaniavski). He never got a degree in psychology, but was an autodidact, and lived in the provinces.

This period of the Soviet Union was also characterized by experiments never witnessed before or after. Kandinsky, Chagal, Eisenstein, Majakowski, Gorki and Bahtin were all deeply engaged in constructing a new society.

At the age of twenty-eight Vygotsky enters dramatically the field of psychology. At a psychology conference in Leningrad in 1924 this unknown provincial teacher in psychology rebels against Pavlov's theory of conditioned reflex. Man is not only, like animals, reflexes. Man has a conscience that, according to Vygotsky, must be included in the field of psychology. The presentation became the start of Vygotski's academic career in that he subsequently got a position at the Institute for Experimental Psychology in Moscow.

Vygotski has been called the Mozart of psychology because he produced an incredible amount of writing on multiple subjects over a short period (nine years). His doctoral thesis was on the psychology of art, he wrote about the life possibilities of disabled individuals, and finally, but not least, about child development. He was basically interested in constructing a psychology that could contribute to support the new Soviet State.

It should also be mentioned that Vygotski was the founder af the cultural-historical school about which he said:

Man not only draws on physical hereditary experiences, throughout life he draws extensively on the experiences of earlier generations in his work and behavior, experiences which are not transmitted by birth from father to son. We call this historical experience.[34]

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[30] Reading Jan Brødslev Olsen, *Kreativ voksenindlæring*, Aalborg Universitetsforlag, Aalborg 1993 (kap. 10.) inspired me to read Vygotski. I am using a little space in this context to give the reader an impression of Vygotski's background and multifaceted work.
[31] The search machine Opasia immediately came up with references to 354 articles related to Vygotski. He is inspiring contemporary cultural-historical psychology, see Seth Chaiklin, (ed), (2001), *The Theory and Practice of Cultural-Historical Psychology*, Aarhus University Press, Aarhus, Denmark.
Vygotski also appears to have been familiar with Kurt Lewin work and the works of other German psychologists. Vygotski was blacklisted in the USSR 1936-56.
[32] L.S. Vygotski, *Thought and Language*, Cambridge, Mass. 1962, 1986).
[33] Here and in the following I draw on Eric Danielsen, *Vygotski- Psykologiens Mozart*, Dansk Psykologisk Forlag, Copenhagen 1996.
[34] Here cited from Eric´Danielsen, opcit., p. 17

I shall in the following discuss certain of Vygotski's theories about learning and development[35].

Why must children learn grammar, Vygotski asks. In practice they speak the language when they start school. But their knowledge of the language is at the unconscious level. The child does not know that it inflects words. By learning the grammar, the child acquires a conscious relationship to the language and thus learns to use the language arbitrarily, that is not only determined by the situation. The same applies to written language. It can only be used consciously and arbitrarily.

Vygotski also discusses that the child via aha-experiences is able to find out something that it has not yet learned fully.

I shall now turn to Vygotski's best-known theory – 'the zone of proximal development'. The idea is that we should not pay much attention to what the child (or others) can. We shall start from what the child is about to become, start from tomorrow rather than today. Vygotski gives the following example[36]:

'Let us assume that I had already determined the intellectual age of two children to correspond to eight years. If I now proceed and attempt to find out how the two children solve tasks intended for subsequent age levels and which they cannot solve independently – I help with instructions and guiding questions, give them clues, etc., - one of them may prove to solve tasks corresponding to the level of twelve years while the other one does it at the level of nine years. The difference in intellectual age determined on the basis of tasks solved independently and intellectual age determined on the basis of tasks not solve independently indicates the proximate development zone'.

Thus, training what we already can yields no development. We learn from what lies outside in the proximate zone. And we need assistance. Tomorrow we will then be able to manage independently what we need help for today. But the reasoning only applies to the proximate zone. We all know that we do not become chess masters from one day to the next by the help and guidance of a Grand Master.

Naturally, it is important to bear in mind that Vygotski's theories are aiming at children. But are they transferable to adults?

According to Brødslev Olsen Vygotski himself was skeptical of this[37], the argument being that the development process of children and adults differs qualitatively. Brødslev Olsen does not share this view, and finds that the theory could be turned to profitable use for problem-oriented project work at Aalborg University.[38] Brødslev Olsen emphasizes the students' surprise as a useful start for using the zone for proximate learning. According to Brødslev Olsen:

'Surprise represents exactly the tensional field between my current level and the level that I wish to get to'[39].

[35] Vygotski, volume 2, op.cit., 279 cont.
[36] Vygotski, op.cit., p.285.
[37] Brødslev Olsen, op.cit., p. 227.
[38] Brødslev Olsen, op.cit., 228-231.
[39] Brødslev Olsen, op.cit., 229.

A different area to which the theory could be applied is the role of the tutor in that the tutor can occupy the role of the adult (see above).

Consequences for practice

If we follow Vygotski's example with everyday language and grammar we soon end up in the same situation. Theory has invaded everyday language. Many are talking about decision-making theory, strategy, organizational culture, and management in the same unreflected and arbitrary ways as children use everyday language. Therefore, we ought to be more conscious of theories functioning in the same ways as grammar. This would change everyday language into a more theoretically precise language. It is also worthwhile considering Vygotski's ideas about aha-experiences when the student suddenly understands something complex and realizes how to tackle it in a new perspective. We should inquire about such experiences among our students.

According to Vygotski the 'zone of proximal development' requires us to know the 'stages' of the participants, and simultaneously be able to identify their proximate zones in order to supervise them incrementally. In effect tutors and teachers become important at the individual level. Tutors must be good at asking questions, that is, function as process consultants[40]. They must be experienced in order to give examples. Finally, they must be willing to let go the reins as the participants become increasingly proficient. This corresponds by and large to the coach role in McLennan[41].

MPA practice

In the application form we ask applicants about their knowledge of the three core subjects and of English. We are not using this knowledge at the individual level apart from recommending the participants to prepare themselves well prior to the start of the program.

Each year our assumptions about the participants' good knowledge of organizational theory, poor knowledge of economics and no knowledge of political science are confirmed at the collective level. However, knowing this to be the case has little effect except that we each year allocate routinely extra lessons to the subject economics. We are thus confirming the participants' perceptions of economics as a difficult subject! Before we start, we recommend/demand that the participants acquaint themselves with a textbook in each of the core subjects, but we know too little about them to be in a position to guide them more concretely.

At the introduction to the program all participants bring along a problem (a personal project) which they want to discuss or resolve. During the introduction course the projects are discussed without the teachers being present. This happens in groups of four students. Each group is composed administratively to ensure diversity.

After two weeks the personal projects are turned into a so-called participant project, which the group works with during the first term. The participant project is usually one of the personal projects discussed at the introduction.

Teachers of core subjects are encouraged to draw participant projects into group work during the process. This should imply incremental learning. However, we have not yet succeeded much in making the teachers of core subjects do this.

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[40] Schein, Process Consultation, 1988.
[41] Nigel McLennan, *Coaching and Mentoring* , Gowers Publishing House, UK 1995.

Reflections on change
In relation to both participants and teachers we could go through Vygotski's ideas as an incentive to move them towards a collective consciousness.

At the practical level we could start by taking more serious the information in the application form about the students' qualifications in the core subjects and in English, and use this to develop individual development programs. We would thus be in a position to help the students prioritize preparations before program start.

We could also leave more room for the personal project, for example by letting it run for the first month, offering the individual participant greater possibilities for development and learning - to get from nearness to distance. This would also make them better equipped for choosing participant project.

In terms of teaching, teachers of core subjects should be 'forced' to take serious personal projects and participant projects.

Finally tutors should be selected among process conscience and experienced teachers.

Changes 2002 - 2004
Today we introduce the participants to Vygotski's theories during the introduction course. But we are not designing individual development programs, though we have incrementally started to do so. The home groups are using the form listing participants' competencies referred to earlier for enumerating the group's and the individual's strengths and weaknesses. In this context we encourage the groups to let those with least knowledge of a core subject be the first ones to write within this discipline in the first project. Those better qualified in the subject can then function as tutors. The participants in general find this to be a good idea, but as deadline for submission approaches the learning goal 'lose out' to the result goal, and they choose to write about subjects with which they are most familiar. So there is still a long way to go.

The personal project, defined as a project that the student is expected to work with during the entire program, we have dropped. The students could not manage it – that is find the time for working with several projects at the same time. Therefore full attention is allocated to the participant project. To this should be added, however, that some of the participant projects in the first term are continued as projects in the second term. Projects can also become the core of a Master's Thesis.

Regarding aha-experiences we asked a group of graduates about this phenomenon during a discussion in the spring of 2004. There is no doubt that the phenomenon exists. The graduates had already had several such experiences during the program, but especially in connection with the subject strategy (the synthesizing subject in the second term) and when writing their thesis. This knowledge we should use at the introduction course in 2005.

In relation to tutors we can say that since they are the same old crowd, we hope that they will improve. But we are not doing anything special.

3. Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger – communities of practice

Lave and Wenger have invented the concept of ‘communities of practice’. For many years they have collaborated to expand our insight into learning processes. Therefore, I will begin with some examples from the co-authored book ‘Situated learning’[42]. Subsequently I will use Etienne Wenger’s ‘Communities of Practice’[43]. Wenge and Snyder have later published an article on the use of communities of practice[44].

Situated learning

Originally Lave and Wenger were interested in how craft was learned, that is they were interested in the craft's apprenticeship – the relation between apprentice and master[45]. This led to the interest for the newcomer. How was she or he received, absorbed into the company, and how did she or he learn something. This made them even more interested in the context where it all took place, that is, in situated learning.

They found out that learning was an important element of all social action and not a special case of the latter[46]. This implies that everybody learn something in the process. Both master and apprentice profit though very differently.

They also invented an expression for describing the newcomer’s learning process. They talk about legitimate, peripheral participation in communities of practice. Legitimate in the sense opposed to irrelevant and peripheral in opposition to perfect. As newcomers we cannot master everything, but we can begin with relevant activities and in this way improve our skills in the company of old-timers in a community of practice. This is defined as ‘as set of relations among persons, activity, and the world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice’[47]. The definition does not involve consensus or shared culture. Participants can have different interests and contribute with different activities. But there is a shared understanding of what one does and what it means to one self and to the community.

Derived consequences for practice

It is important to accept that all participants are ‘newcomers’. They are starting from scratch, and it should be important to develop a learning curriculum and not a teaching curriculum[48]. The participants should determine the curriculum. Learning must be viewed from the perspective of the learners, and we can learn from all types of activities. At the same time it is important that there are ‘oldtimers’ among the participants.

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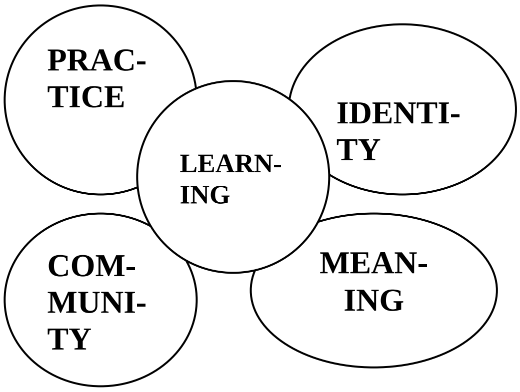
[42] Jean Lave og Etienne Wenger, *Situated learning, Legitimate peripheral participation,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1991.
[43] Etienne Wenger, *Communities of practice. Learning, meaning and identity* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998,
[44] Etienne C. Wenger og William M. Snyder, *Communities of Practice: The Organizational Frontier* Harvard Business Review January-February 2000.
Se også Per Thygesen Poulsen, Vi*den opstår og deles i praksisfællesskaber* Ledelse i dag, nr 44, sommer 2001.11. årgang nr. 3
[45] There are a number of examples in Seth Chaiklin og Jean Lave (red), *Understanding practice. Perspectives on activities and context,* Cambridge University Press, Oxford 1993.
[46] Lave and Wenger, op.cit., p. 35 cont.
[47] Op.cit., p. 98.
[48] Op.cit., p.97

MPA practice
At the MPA program we share the important assumption that due to age and experience the participants are human resources that can learn much from each other. This is the idea of action learning[49]. But they are still newcomers who need somebody to lean against.

As mentioned earlier, we are investing much effort in the introduction to the program. But our line of though is far from that of 'situated learning'

Reflections on change - communities of practice
In the book on communities of practice from 1998 Wenger goes far beyond the general theory of learning in a social context, and in an article from 2000 the ideas are transferred to business life[50].

A simplified version of the model looks like this[51]:



Learning emerges in the interplay between meaning as one way of referring to our changing abilities to experience individually and collectively our lives and the world as meaningful;
Practice is a way of referring to our common historical and social resources, references, and perspectives that can support mutual engagement in action;
Community is a way of referring to the social configurations within which our activities are defined as worth striving for and our participation recognizable as competence;
And finally *identity* is a way of referring to how learning changes who we are and create personal stories of origin in the context of our communities.

Nevertheless any one of the components can be placed in the middle of the figure and it will still make sense.

Throughout most of the book Wenger analyzes the five components, but in the last chapters he is more oriented toward 'design' and one of these chapters, which we are drawing on in this context, discusses education[52]. Here Wenger raises the question of how we can design a learning process to

[49] Jørgen Frode Bakka, *Hvordan lærer ledere at lære,* i J.F. Bakka (red) *Fra ledelseslærens værksted,* Dafolo Forlag, Frederikshavn 1988.
[50]
[51] Wenger op.cit., p. 4 cont.
[52] Wenger op.cit., Chapter 12.

make it identity creating, that is, transformative. For consideration of space I cannot discuss all his arguments here. Instead I shall focus on a few of them.

One of the fundamental arguments is that learning is a continuous and emergent process taking place in many situations and teaching is only one of many ways of learning. Therefore, teaching must be a mixture of the planned and the emerging, and most important is their interaction (p. 27).

Another question concerns the importance and scope of textbooks, curriculum, etc. For Wenger it is important to strike a balance between committed participation and textbooks[53]. When using textbooks it is better to treat a few areas detailed than to go over many areas superficially. The former is more challenging and transformative and thus identity creating (p. 29).

Creating commitment involves meaningful activities that, on the other hand, require mutual engagement among all involved. Activities must entail challenges and responsibilities that draw on the students' knowledge and simultaneously encourage them to search for new avenues (p.272).

Derived consequences for practice

At the general level we could discuss the learning processes that we design based on Wenger's general model.

At the more concrete and pragmatic level we:

- should always make sure that we have examples to illustrate theories or let the participants produce such examples
- should be humble toward our importance as teachers to the participants' learning. They learn in so many other ways
- should be sufficiently prepared to combine in a meaningful way our own planning with the needs emerging in the process
- should seriously consider the dimensions of our curriculum
- should reflect upon our abilities and possibilities for challenging the participants.

MPA practice

In our discussions of the change agent we have dealt with elements of the above mentioned. The students often raise the question of the dimensions of curriculum, but most often we dismiss the question.

Reflections on change

It might prove exciting to see the class and the teachers as a community of practice in which they all learn from one another. Not only professionally but on all dimensions.

Coupling more MPA graduate to the program would also be a good idea. There are too few masters to lean against.

We could also make it legitimate to ask naive and silly questions, to demonstrate uncertainty, cautiousness and openness (compare my remarks above on Argyris).

We could also reconsider the size of curriculum in view of immersion and challenges.

[53] Wenger uses the word reification about textbooks, procedures, documents, etc.

We are, however, up against different pedagogical attitudes, but it is worthwhile challenging these attitudes.

In the spring of 2001 we placed the theme challenges on the pedagogical agenda for the first time. As program direction I presented the issue saying, among other things:

'In terms of (challenging) the students it is a question of education, and we are currently in a weak position. Due the size of the class the possibilities of dialogue are few, not to talk about criticism that focuses on the quality of arguments from both students and teachers. In my view we are neither challenging the students nor letting them challenge us to any appreciable extent. The size of the class may present a barrier to dialogue, and certainly the critical one, but we can do better, such as

- produce sharp and preferably provocative presentations
- let two teachers represent different positions
- give the students time to discuss after each presentation in order to bring out sharp viewpoints
- let the students challenge each other
- make sure that the discussion does not get sidetracked
- make sure that 'the old guard' does not dominate the debate
- be critical of the students' case work rather than merely accept everything
- divide the class into two and allocate a teacher to each team.'

In the study director report from 2001 and in the folder for 2002 we followed up on the latter challenge saying:

'We would also like to be known as the program with small classes and teaching that challenges both students and teachers. This requires that we continuously allocate resources to professional and pedagogical improvements.'

Changes 2002 - 2004

The teachers are continuously debating pedagogical aspects. We are often returning to many of the themes mentioned above. We have in particular focused on our two-teacher arrangement. We are trying to implement some of the components mentioned above. Nevertheless in the concrete situation we often resort to what the students have called 'radiator education': one person teaches, the other one is passive. We have had greater success with dividing the class into two discussion groups with each their teacher. At the elective courses in the second term our success rate is higher, among other things because the classes are smaller. In the second term we are also experimenting to a larger degree with sizes of curricula and with letting the students participate in defining the contents and execution of teaching.

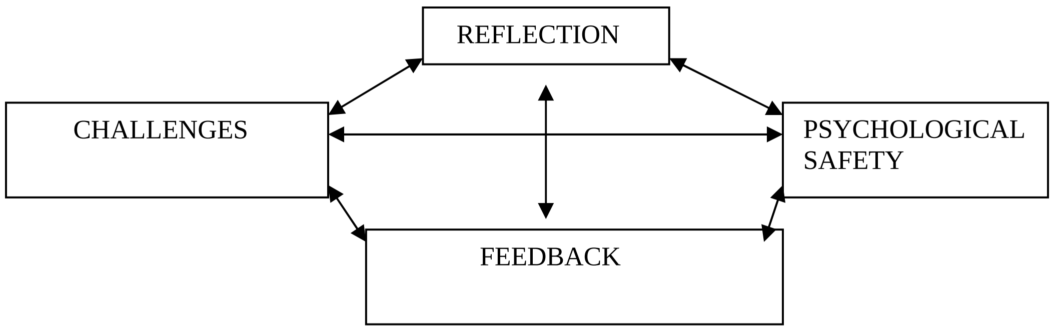
Furthermore, since 2003 we have encouraged the students to find sparring partners either inside or outside own organizations. Most of the students have responded positively to our suggestion and have found sparring partners. The arrangement has been successful – especially at the start of the program. And it has turned out that quite a number of sparring partners are MPA graduates from the CBS. But otherwise we have not done much to involve graduates.

During the introduction course we are increasingly making a point of telling about and discussing the fact that we are now starting a new organization in which everybody are newcomers and by and large uncertain of the new roles. Therefore it is legitimate to be surprised, inquisitive, and uncertain. But we also emphasize that the participants, through their degree of presence, openness, engagement, knowledge, creative skills, etc., are responsible for how the class develops.

4. A model for development and learning and its application

In this section I shall summarize the reflections on change. The previous sections presented many ideas for change. Based on these I have formulated a model for development and learning:

Model for development and learning



Reflection is necessary for being able to shift form nearness to distance, etc. This requires that students are *challenged* on their everyday explanations confronting them with different explanations, and if they don't feel *secure*, they cannot form part of a learning dialogue, but if they are not continuously receiving feedback, their learning is not adequate.

In other words the more secure they feel, they better are the able to reflect and manage challenges. And the more challenges they are faced with, the better they become at reflection and the more secure they feel and are thus in a position to utilize positively feedback. Creating 'good circles' is thus important. The four components are thus interdependent.

The previous sections offered many examples of proposals within the four dimensions, and I have also touched upon the way in which practice has changed during the period 2002 – 2004 and shall not repeat the proposals here.

5. Taking our own medicine - using the model: 2002 – 2004

At the MPA program we are in general good at discussing issues related to subjects and pedagogical methods. But we must also admit the truths of Poul Henningsen's proverb that 'intentions are always perfect - actions are rarely'. Teachers are professionals just like the participants. We might as well talks about 'challenges, reflection, psychological safety, need for support, etc.' in relation to the teachers and thus take our own medicine.

Apart from the recruitment phase and the way in which we use the students' evaluations we are not in a position to exercise any authority on the teachers. The management might find support in Goldschmidt's proposal to 'lead the way, come up with good ideas, demonstrate care, cater for the individual and protect against conflicts'[54]. In practice it is, however, evident that nothing will happen without dialogue. But at the same time the dialogue must take as its point of departure something appetizing to motivate the teachers to participate. They have many competing activities to attend to. Therefore we have staged a continuous dialogue on proposals for changes and on the development model. And as it appears from the above, something has happened, but it is a continuous process. During 2002 the Danish Institute of Evaluation evaluated the program, and this we used as an occasion both to discuss and formulate pedagogical thoughts.

The status report referred to earlier presented the pedagogical ideas to a wider audience. The report is also given to new students. And the model is presented during the introduction course. And we have attempted to incorporate the dimensions in the evaluations in 2004.

At the international level we have presented twice the model and its underlying ideas. First at a seminar at the graduate School of Business, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. Here the psychological safety dimension attracted attention. The same happened at an international pedagogical workshop at the CBS in November 2003. Creating favorable learning conditions for participants who have not been at school for many years, and who are used to take the head of the table, is apparently a general problem.

We learned much from taking our own medicine by creating distance to the MPA program through bringing into play in a new way a number of theories and simultaneously relate them to practice.

Certain of the general theories (Vygotski, Lave and Wenger) have resulted in quite novel perspectives, others (Argyris and Schön) has enabled us to systematize ideas – sometimes numerous. Finally, some of the ideas (Schein) are in keeping with certain of our own ideas, but in a novel perspective. It has been encouraging to realize that many of the proposals presented in 2001 that have been implemented or are in the process of being implemented.

In the autumn of 2004 we are working on reforming the MPA program radically. This is yet another occasion to discuss pedagogical themes.

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