

Implementing Supervised Placement – Reflections on the Unity of a Concept¹

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ABSTRACT

Different forms of work-based learning have for a long time been considered important in academic programs. Some argue that it is the most important part in any vocational training, even in academic programs educating for professions and other occupations. The aim of this paper is to start a discussion about the variation in how work-based training is described and performed in different academic programs. Every year, for three years, heads of academic programs have been interviewed about their implementation of work-based training. The interviews have been conducted at a university that have placement in all programs. Curriculums, course plans and syllabus have been collected and analyzed. Our findings suggest that there are major differences in how to think "where professional education is good". Some programs have course plans where student placement is embedded in progression through the program. Some programs "just place" students at the workplace or involve them in projects together with the organization where they are placed while other programs try to have "theory driven" placement. Some programs have a placement organization that train staff to receive students while other programs leave it up to students to find a placement for work-based learning. We discuss the variation from three viewpoints. What differences can be found between disciplines that dominate different programs? What diversity can be found in what various types of professionals to be do during their supervised placement? What are the circumstances under which the program implement placement? How do these forms of placement relate to different ideas about education of professions and more general ideas about where it is best to learn?

WHERE EDUCATION IS GOOD TO THINK

Any university, that strives to improve and profile their programs challenges staff thinking about the best places to learn. One challenge concerns how to think about placement. This paper reports on efforts to implement supervised placement in all programs at Kristianstad University, in Sweden. Different forms of work-based learning have for a long time been considered important when learning a trade. Learning at work is one way of representing "where education is good to think". Learning at university, in a discipline, is another way, common when learning a profession. Research however, demonstrate the notion of a boundary between learning "at work" and learning "at university" in professional education presents a simplified picture (Bücker & Woodruff, 2008; Calway, 2008; Callanan & Benzing, 2004; Connor & McFarlane, 2007; Freidson, 2003; Groenewald, 2004; Halén, 2008; Rystedt & Gustavsson, 2007; Sattler, 2011; Sultana, 2005).

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There is a relative agreement about how to define professions. For example, professions emerge and are sustained by the idea that they master certain knowledge and certain competencies. These have to be learned under specific circumstances. There is a relative agreement about the level of mastery that must be reached for a person to be allowed to join the profession and carry our work. Entry to the profession often require license or certificate issued by the professions organizations or by authorities. These agreements provide the foundation for example for division of labor through standardized job slots and are according to Mardsen (as cited in Freidson, 2003, p. 234) maintained by such technologies as job descriptions across organizations and countries. Boundaries between professions are also maintained by some level of standardization. Coordination of type and length of placement for example have resulted from the Bologna declaration. Demands for student and work force mobility call on local education providers to follow transnational and national guidelines. Programs educate for diverse segments of working life and diverse job slots hence there is a need for them to handle many ways to think where education is good. Others educate for well-defined job slots and organizations. All have to find ways to fit into national higher education. Demands for coordination create difficulties on a national as well as institutional level (Bücker & Woodruff, 2008).

At Kristianstad University all programs have been called on to implement at least five weeks of supervised placement. Some programs have a long tradition, hence standards for "where supervised placement is good to think" while others have to find ways to reform. In this paper we will explore some aspects of the reform "Supervised placement in all programs" in order to generate knowledge - how programs turn strategy into action and make meaning of supervised placement.

Aim

The aim of this paper is to discuss the variation in how work based training is described and performed in different academic programs. We will discuss the variation from three viewpoints; discipline, activities and context.

1. We will exemplify how programs dominated by different disciplines or base of knowledge reason about placement.
2. We will analyze how meaning is made of differences in what students should do during their supervised placement.
3. We will illustrate how different circumstances are reasoned about when programs go about implementing placement and discuss how forms of placement relate to different ideas about education of professions and more general ideas about where it is best to learn.

SUPERVISED PLACEMENT IN ALL PROGRAMS – A LOCAL INITIATIVE

2009 the board of Kristianstad university decided on a strategy that requires all educational programs to have at least five weeks of "verksamhetsförlagd utbildning" [supervised placement, our translation] (Högskolan Kristianstad, strategi 2009-2014) under the vision "to educate Sweden's most employable students". For some programs the reform required only minor changes to their organization. Other programs would have to find a place for supervised placement. This would seem to imply making changes to curriculum, course-plans, how courses are organized and planned. Subsequently staff would have to engage in 'strategizing' (here to be understood as making meaning of strategy) to engage in development work. The Kristianstad model as it was called in the strategy was formulated as follows:

/.../ while the concept of practicum narrows down to a meeting between working life and education supervised placement refers to a meeting between research, education and working life. Supervised placement is therefore research based and scientized practice. (p. 8)

What it means to "scientize" placement is left unanswered, saved it is not merely a "triple helix" in the form of a meeting between research, education and working life. It remains unclear if it means that practice should be based on science; if practice should be the subject of scientific study; or if scientific

theories and methods should be used for reflection on students' placement. Kristianstad university's placement reform can for example in the terms of Sultana (2005:229) be viewed as an attempt at 'universitization' of practice, teaching students to treat practice not first of all as learning at work but learning through theorizing work. Control of student experience of practice resonates well with the professional project, but may as well be viewed as a gradual attempt to adapt to transnational demands for student and work force mobility (see, e.g., Aili & Nilsson 2010a, 2010b). From the international initiatives inspiring local reform follows that many more vocational programs should include courses or modules that take place in the students' assumed future work place. That different competencies are trained in close proximity of the working environment have for decades, sometimes even from the beginning of a professions education been the case in medical education, nursing education, law education and teacher education.

What appears as a change is that there are transnational attempts at governing (European Union, OECD, professional organizations). Through these organizations, standards and benchmarks are put in place that introduce recommendations for how much of an education that needs to be supervised placement, what parts of an education that needs to have placement and what the relationship between placement and academic knowledge should be. The EU-standard that require at least half of nursing education to be clinical provides an example. (Europaparlamentet, EUT 2005L0036-SV, article 30). The Swedish Higher Education Ordinance (SFS, 1993:100) also provides examples where the presence of placement and its length is regulated. It may as for teacher education as a given number of weeks or as a given number of academic points It may as in the case of specialized nurses be expressed as an extent fitting the needs of the speciality. Sometimes programs are not required to have placement but still have implemented such a form. Most social work programs have placement without mandatory formulations in the ordinance (Halén, 2008).

ORGANIZATION OF EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

What characterizes education for professions according to Freidson (2003), is that most training takes place at the educational institution not in working life. Teachers are usually former practitioners but now full-time educators. They are actively devoted to the professional project to develop a professional knowledge base through theory construction and research (p. 92). The ideology that legitimizes how education is organized often stresses the importance of abstract concepts does this with reference to their importance for the professional's ability to carry out discretionary work, sometimes at the expense of the ability to choose correctly from a narrow set of methods, routines or mechanical technologies. Training of competencies and skills can therefore be placed at the end of or after the educational program. At the same time Freidson concedes that how education is arranged varies over time and between different occupations and educational locations.

The location of education, from the perspective of Freidson, is to a high degree dictated by how the choice influences the possibilities for the education provider to ensure content and quality. The selection of environments where students can be educated may therefore also be entangled in concerns about the content they need to master. Ideas about content may in turn be more or less dependent on the interests of disciplines that dominate programs. Alternatively content can be made up from subsets of different fields of knowledge depending on how they manage influence curriculum. Training can be organized in many different ways. Usually, however, students are educated in cohorts rather than as individual by individual professionals that go about their work at the same time as they try to teach. The reason, according to Freidson, is that in individualized approaches it is difficult to standardize, control and provide guarantees that a particular content is covered.

The organization of education can be understood in relation to how the dominating discipline shape how meaning is made about the program it dominates and what it means to learn to become a professional. For this reason presentation of abstract knowledge in formal education is intimately associated with education of professionals (Abbott 1988). However, the history of university education also shows that training have been used to develop the skills needed to carry out the daily work. Training is carried out both at the university and elsewhere. Training of medicine students for example has been

carried out in places such as hospital wards, mortuaries, accident scenes and laboratories as well as at campus. Sometimes these places have been replicated at campus.

Larson (1977) argues that abstract knowledge has a symbolic value and that a claim to ownership of a scientific knowledge-base has been used strategically by aspiring occupational groups for their professionalization project. University education give credibility to such claims and Fransson, (2009, p 22, our translation) stresses that "professional autonomy in its traditional form requires a university with a position as exclusive and distanced in relation to other dominant social and cultural spheres". Science main importance, according to Collins (1979) is symbolic and the value of holding scientific knowledge obscures the fact that professional knowledge to a high degree has been acquired through processes of socialization in work places rather than through formal education. Svensson (1989) concurs but suggests that professionals' most important cultural capital consist of the ability to master the social practice of professional work where theories from the professions center of knowledge transmission are being intertwined with experience into an inseparable whole. Schön (1992) follows the same line of reasoning but asserts that the technical professional rationality conveyed in academic education is of little use in work life because work life has another ecological rationality. What becomes professional competence in real work situations is formed by complex relationships in work life and hence intimately dependent on the context. Expert knowledge needs to take the client into account but also conditions in a wider sense as defined for example by organizational, economic, political and bureaucratic conditions. For that reason expert knowledge can also be seen as developing through training in the context of every day work. There the critical abilities to manage the fact that professionals cannot handle every single case with quality because lack of recourses (Lipsky 1980) but at the same time deal with the fact that they can be expected to be held accountable for how they handle the single case can be fostered (Aili & Nilsson submitted).

ENVIRONMENTS FOR WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING

Research provides us with a number of ways to represent how to think about the location of professional education. Sometimes the term work-integrated learning is used as a collective representation (Rystedt & Gustavsson, 2007; Sattler, 2011). What many of these arrangements share is the ambition to stage activities that are equal or similar to those students will carry out in their future lines of work. At the same time a certain overview and control has to be maintained. Cooper et al. (2010) presents a framework for work-integrated learning based on how they compare from seven key-dimensions; purpose, context, nature of integration, curriculum, learning, partnerships and support. Using this framework they differentiate between the professional model, services learning and co-operative learning. Guile and Griffiths (2001) uses six factors to differentiate between models for learning from work; purpose, assumptions about learning and development, management, practice, outcomes and the role of the institution. Based on these the authors suggest that it makes sense to distinguish between the traditional, experiential, generic, work process, and connective model. In the traditional model for example learning is expected to occur as a consequence of practice while in the connective model connections are formed between formal and informal learning.

In a review Sattler (2011) present several representations for work integrated learning, among these internship, work experience, field experience or business clinics and a plethora of other names.² He argues that these can be grouped together based on three underlying philosophies. In systematic training the workplace is the central place of learning, in work experience familiarization with the work of work is the aim, in employer/community/institution partnerships joint interest is the basic idea (s 38-39). The terms used to categorize how studies are carried out allow for displacements in where stud-

² Internship, Remedial training, Work experience, Pre-course experience, Practicum Work-based projects, Vocational education, Technical preparation, Apprenticeship Experiential education, Contextual learning, Praxis, Service learning, Business laboratories, Clinical laboratories, Externships, Field studies, Internships, Cognitive apprenticeships, Professional practice, Preceptorship, Work based learning, Cooperative education, Organisational learning, Industry-based learning, Sandwich courses, Project based learning, Cooperative partnerships, Volunteerism, Community service, Traineeship

ies are localized, but also in the relative importance afforded to theoretical knowledge and skills, student dependence and independence, flexibility and control, reflection and experiential learning giving a few examples. Sattlers review demonstrates how different factors such as pedagogical thought, possibilities to pay student/tutor, demands on students advance knowledge, possibilities to recruit supervisors at different levels of competence and other aspects needs to be managed in the work integrated learning designs of different programs, and that it is important that besides the strategic professional issues pointed out by researcher these are factors that need to be taken into consideration.

THEORY

The idea that special knowledge and competencies distinguish professional occupation from, for example craft occupations, have been crucial to all groups that aspire to be associated with quality performance and to gain legitimacy both from clients and the state (Aili, 2002; Terum & Grimen, 2009). As such these ideas are important tools in any groups' professionalization project. Theory of profession takes an interest in occupational strategies for developing trust and legitimacy in the labor market. Since the local placement reform has been presented as a strategy to educate for employability, this theory seems to present a viable point of departure for our study. Our interest here however is not professionalization projects per se but in how meaning is created from Kristianstad University's vision to educate Sweden's most employable students and the decision to use supervised placement in all programs as a method to accomplish this aim. It is the discursive aspects of visions and envisioning, strategy and strategizing, guidelines and guiding that is our study object. Strategies help constitute discourse on strategy, but we view strategies much the same way as Garfinkel (Garfinkel & Rawls, 2002) view instructions. It is not what they contain that is our primary interest. We take an interest in what they become. Vaara (2010) argues that one way to open up strategies is through discursive analysis. A realization of the potential of discursive analysis will make us able to "broaden and deepen our understanding of strategy as an important social and societal phenomenon as well as the organizational activities and practices that are associated with it" (p. 30).

We have asserted that employability is constructed as a problem. In relation to what is it a problem? Aims are set for and importance presently afforded employability in transnational, national and local strategies. What are the aims and how are they formulated? Higher education has been pointed out as an authority on how to deal with employability using technologies such as common standards for a European Higher Education Area. How do authorities gain legitimacy? What is the nature of employability? Is it the right of every human being or professional or is it a means for serving the needs of the market or for securing affluence? How do we come to know employability? Should it be studied by surveys, tests or observation? From the perspective guiding this study professional education is always historically situated and dependent on the social and cultural context. When we approach vocational and professional education from a socio/cultural/historical perspective, we need a framework that allows us to study governance of professional education in greater detail. This framework needs to take into account how employability becomes a problem to be handled and how supervised placement is reason about as a means to deal with the problem.

THE CONTEXT

In transnational, national and local regulations standards are produced for where good education can take place. The Degree ordinance in the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance (SFS, 1993:100, 1st supplement) specifies that placement is a requirement for some degrees for example nursing degrees, teacher degrees, engineering degrees and master of science in pharmacy. Placement may be called "praktik" [practice, our translation] and specified as a requirement that the student must have practiced at a pharmacy for a period of six months. Placement may also be called "verksamhetsförlagd utbildning" [supervised placement, our translation]. Literally this means education that is placed at the work site. In policy documents the introduction of this concept is usually presented as a shift from mere practice to practice guided by theory and based on evidence (Högskoleverket, 2010; SOU, 2008). The standards for campus based and work based education should be the same.

The material used for this paper derives from a study of “*verksamhetsförlagd utbildning*” at a Swedish university where the board has decided that all programs must have at least 5 weeks placement, where as it were, placement has been considered “good to think with”. This implies that the university accedes to an international trend that results in more occupational programs with educational modules that are carried out in the future work environment and a national trend that learning during placement should be guided by theory and based on evidence. In the strategy placement is presented as a model that will support the universities vision to support education of Sweden’s most employable students. One motive behind the effort is the trend that requires universities to excel through more specialized efforts. The rhetorical production of this educational space is tied to the development of the universities brand. The university aims to become known for its placement model. The primary component of the model is placement. It is made clear that placement in this context is something different from practice. Placement cuts through a triple helix containing working life, research and education supported by theory, practice and collaboration around research and development.

The universities programs were differently situated as the reform was to be implemented and the study was conducted. Some programs had recently been subjected to national audits. Some of the programs had been approved while others’ had been criticized. As a result some of the programs had identified reoccurring standpoints from the reviewers on placement through their own efforts to appreciate the audit reports. To these programs the local reform “supervised placement” presented opportunities for change that could be acted upon.

Some programs were not required to have supervised placement so placement could only be a part of audits if they existed. Even if placement was not required other stakeholders could express opinion about placement outside of or in connection to audits. Student evaluation of the economy program for example included requests for placement. To these programs supervised placement could present opportunities for change but also demands on the programs that could be hard to meet. Hence supervised placement in all programs posed different challenges for different programs. How programs reason about the reform in this context is what is studied.

METHOD OF THE STUDY

Visions, strategies and guidelines are in some quarters regarded as effective tools or technologies for conveying a message from the top down (Mintzberg, 2005). Once formulated with precision and clarity and properly motivating they are considered to have the power to steer organizations. Combined with ideas about the one best practice and benchmarking tools concerns are voiced that they may be too inclusive and powerful and effectively contribute to exclude valuable alternatives. The discourse on effective universities in Sweden where it is suggested that we must aim for fewer universities and more specialized research environments may serve as an example” (Alvesson & Rothstein, 2011).

There often more than one strategy discourse and Seidl (2007) argues that transfer between strategy discourses are impossible. Our interest concerns the up-take of strategy (Hardy, Palmer & Phillips, 2000) and the rhetoric used by programs to discursively motivate how strategic aims are being implemented (see e.g., Johnson, Melin & Whittington, 2003; Samra-Fredericks, 2003 Vaara, Kleymann & Seristö, 2004). We recognize as do Hardy, Palmer and Phillips (2000) that individuals can generate new meanings from strategy that can help or hinder enactment; they cannot simply produce new meaning. They must locate meaning in a meaningful context. Within this meaningful context strategies may be both stabilized and amended as they are dealt with (Jarzabowski & Seidl, 2008). Along with Whittington (2003) we assume that strategizing means seeing with the help of different resources or tools. Goodwin (1994) coins the concept professional seeing as a metaphor for the kind of practice professionals carry out. Mintzberg (2005) for example argues that strategizing implies seeing before, ahead, above, below, beside, and beyond.

We also need to take into account where strategizing is taking place (Jarzabowski & Seidl, 2008). Analysis of strategizing can be carried out at different levels and Vaara (2010) suggest three levels of analysis. The first (meta) takes an interest in “the complexity of strategy as a body of knowledge”. The second (meso) takes an interest in the narratives about strategy. An analysis at this level would con-

cern the different narratives about strategies for example alternative versions of how the placement strategy at Kristianstad University was conceived, its' aims and tools, authorities behind the reform. The third (micro) level concerns that rhetorical management of strategy. At this level different ways to promote and resist particular views on strategy can be studied.

Hardy (1983) suggests that universities are organization that often lack strategies and cites as reasons that they are decentralized organizations and that decisions are often what Lipsky (1980) refer to as discretionary and formed at a grass-root level. The study presented here however is carried out at a university that has a central strategy for employability and presents a model that involves science based and supervised placement as a method to reach its aim. What this means has to be dealt with at a grass-root level.

Every year, for three years, heads of academic programs have been interviewed about their implementation of work-based training as part of a process to ensure quality. The interviews have been carried out as a part of the programs dialog-meetings with the university leadership. Present at the meetings have among others been the head of the programs and/ or the person responsible for "supervised placement" in cases when such a person had been appointed. During the first two years questions have been sent to the heads of the programs in advance and they have answered by mail. The answers have been used to support dialogue between university leadership and program leadership. Notes were taken at these meetings by a secretary from the university administration. The third year regular interviews have been carried out by the research team, digitally recorded and transcribed. In addition curriculums, course plans and syllabus have been collected³. Material for this paper derives from the answers to the mailed questions, the notes from the dialogues and the recorded interviews.

RESULT

Our findings suggest that there are major differences in where heads of academic programs state that education is good to think. Some programs have course plan where student placement is imbedded in progression through the program. These programs have varied placements covering different aspects of students' future jobs. They may start with students observing moving on to them taking almost full responsibility. Some programs try to overcome the duality between theory and practice. They have "theory driven" placement. Students arrive at their placement with theories that they are required to use as they observe aspects of their work place. Some programs "just place" students at the work-place or involve them in projects together with the organization where they are placed. Some programs have assignments that they are assessed on. Other programs leave it to the supervisor at the work place to assess students. The differences in organization are vast. Some programs have a placement organization that train staff to receive students while other programs leave it up to students to find a placement for work based learning.

Dominating disciplines and the organizing of supervised placement

Differences between disciplines and programs can be discerned in talk about supervised placement. The strategic up-take is different. In the program dialog two disciplines, sociology and psychology define themselves as disciplines first of all and regarding placement they state:

"I don't know if this is what you mean to say but in any case I believe we think about it the same way. We don't have any. We run courses. We don't have formalized supervised placement.

Courses in the sense referred to by the representatives of sociology and psychology are courses outside degree programs.

³ Five papers have been produced from the collected material. The first paper (Aili & Nilsson, 2010a) concerns transnational and national attempts steering and local realization, the second paper and third paper concerns the organization of supervised placement (Aili, 2010; Aili & Nilsson, 2010b), the fourth paper concerns the rhetorical presentation of electronic support for supervised placement (Nilsson, 2010), and the fifth paper concerns strategizing and the presentation of supervised placement on the Internet (Nilsson, 2011).

"We don't have any programs.

No you don't have any programs. You are disciplines?

We are single courses"

University organization is used as a technology for self-regulation. The way program is reasoned about here is twofold. Program may be a degree program in a narrow sense. Such a program educates for a future profession. Sociology and psychology share with degree programs a particular feature of the university organization. They are treated as programs in the sense that they are included in dialogs and somebody represents them, but in essence they are disciplines. They can do not have to adhere to the strategic goal because it concerns program and they only have an indirect relationships to supervised placement - when they take part in courses. Their own courses are campus based and deal with disciplinary content.

Still university strategy appears to be used as an authority that supports self-regulation by the disciplines. When an application to start a program is discussed it is stressed that a connection between psychology as a discipline and work life is not missing To the contrary a lot of students that attend psychology courses work as psychologists in some capacity, and this is referred to as some kind of placement. The application for a program has not been granted however but the resulting two courses will include placement of some sort. That the university strategy is taken into account can be further corroborated by the programs reasoning about how to set up courses at advanced level. How staff makes meaning of placement seem to shift when they talk about disciplines compared with their talk about program, as exemplified when a representative from biology states that:

"our program at bachelor level was not particularly well suited for as an education with supervised placement because our program was designed with self-contained courses in biology, chemistry and earth sciences"

Self-contained courses do not make room for placement. At master level however supervised placement may very well be an option. Once again organizational features such as courses and levels are used as technologies to make meaning of the relationship to placement. Economy represents another relationship. Economies different programs have managed to arrange for five weeks placement at the end of the program. Supervised placement appears to be subordinate to disciplinary knowledge.

"We had some problems handling it at the beginning. We did, as it were, manage to schedule some business simulation games now during the first semester. Then during the second semester they take national economy and this discipline does not combine well with supervised placement"

Economy staff presents themselves as a program so they have placement but the kind of ideas Sultana (2005) called universitization support their self-regulation. Campus based education controlled by university staff is treated as hegemonic. The epistemological stand-point is that work-life should be sub-ordinate to disciplinary content, theory and methods. Consequently any intervention based on the local strategy should originate from or take place at campus. The economic disciplines try to arrange placement in such a way that theory guides work experience. Business simulation games place control over content in the hands of the educational provider and its staff. Supervised placement is an arrangement where it would be good if "students during their second years last semester go out and observe what an economist actually, what an accountant does, some kind of observation what not". Students observe but do not take part in actual work. Supervised placement is embedded in disciplinary structures and carried out to provide examples that can be used for reflection on how theory can be applied. At advanced level students carry out what is called an advanced investigation. It is made clear that this investigation should be designed as an investigation into a disciplinary problem and that

"it should rest on a scientific ground, so they have to hand in a methodology-report to me, how they have gone about the investigation, on what grounds they have chosen their theories, and so on"

This line of reasoning is followed in programs that have more than one major discipline such as for example personal administration, health sciences, bio medical analysis and teacher education albeit with varying strength in how they align themselves to particular disciplines. What these programs share is the idea that there is foundation for their education that is made up by accepted theories, methods and subject content drawn from relevant disciplines but work place logic needs to be taken into account. Their epistemological standpoint is that while some things are best learnt at work. What is learnt must be reflected on through the lens of a discipline. So students will:

“learn how to write a report and train to use excel since this is, that is what they frequently have in work places. So they will learn the design of a report because later when they do their degree project or examination project during supervised placement it will not take the form of an essay instead they should learn how to write reports because that is what they do very much in their future profession. But it is still research and theory based and the scientific foundation must have been made clearly visible.”

Report work carried out during placement may take on a form that it is envisioned that future employers will want it to have, and yet not exactly that form since there has to be a clearly visible scientific foundation. The biomedical analysis program makes clear that in theory alignment to science comes first and:

“the large universities have supervisors in the field that supervise degree projects, that is degree projects in bio medical science [unhearable] and they have to have done a doctorate in the bio-medical science”

Supervisors with a degree are talked about as authorities on projects. Smaller universities such as Kristianstad may not have personal enough to guarantee such supervision. Projects carried out in the field are glossed as degree projects clearly labeled with disciplinary jargon. Placement may look like work but the technologies used to determine what professional practice is, are disciplinary. Teacher education has for some time treated degree projects as something separate from placement. The degree projects are done within science of education and must be cover a described educational problem. The connection between discipline and placement can be better discerned through examinations carried out during the placement course. Students are supposed to relate their experiences during practice to theories of learning. How they manage this is assessed in various ways: “so you always try to collect, they should out from what has happened during supervised placement produce oral and written reports. These are the once we assess”.

Engineering sciences present another relationship to disciplines. Staff sees their students as engaged in problem solving of a more practical nature. Students have to master what is referred to as academic knowledge such as math, physics or computer science but:

“as I see it you can focus on working life all of the time and that students should get some training in how to observe how things work at a production site but it would also be reasonable that you argue in terms of the more conceptual development students need to undergo and the kind of more generic academic competencies that the program also aims to cover. Problem solving, to deal with complex problems in engineering...”

Conceptual knowledge can be understood as disciplinary knowledge but rather than stressing disciplinary knowledge engineering points to problem solving and the importance of mastering generic competencies, here presented as academic generic competencies. These are presented as valuable resources in a core area for engineering, problem solving.

Student Activity during the Supervised Placement

The second analysis aims to discuss how different programs reason about the concept of supervised placement in relation to what students should do during supervised placement. Student educated for different occupation are obviously expected to do different things. In staff's talk and writing about placement however the “doing” that is expected is reasoned about and handled in many sometimes even mutually exclusive ways. While, for example the nursing program, has checklists that displays

“all” work task that should be trained during every specific placement have scheduled positions for reflection on supervised placement, teacher education have few rubrics for actual work and assessment is dominated by meta reflection or reflection on action. Control of teacher skills is less developed and teacher students for example may very well go through supervised placement without being checked on their ability to work with digital media or use particular instructive material.

Overall, when programs describes what should be learnt during supervised placement hands on competencies are rarely used as examples. Hands on activities such as doing audits, dressing a wound, or counseling a client, instead appear as activities done on campus, as simulated activities or as activities to be observed in practice. What is covered in campus courses surfaces as content that lends legitimacy to supervised placement. In bio-medical analysis reasons for supervised placement is formulated as:

“What supervised placement aims at [unhearable] but it is actually that they should be learning in site, and it’s about learning methods, main subject, in green science and, methods that is in this discipline”

The biology program clearly sees supervised placement as a site for learning the discipline. It may provide grounds for reflection on work but work within this program is using methods and knowledge from the discipline. It is not ruled out that students do work but reasons are provided for why they may not be directly involved at the work place. Sometimes such as in bio-medical analysis and nursing security issues prevent student involvement. In economy supervision of their work can be considered too costly. In nursing there are ethical considerations. In engineering the field is described as too wide.

In economy it is claimed that students know too little and that it is difficult for them to take part in actual work. In the biology and landscape science programs this is elaborated on and it is claimed that students do not have the tools needed to be sent to a work place. It is argued that students need both disciplinary knowledge and competence to make use of typical tools:

“They need to have, they are placed now in green biology at the regional council and work doing inventories and tasks so they need basic course in GIS [Geographic Information Systems] how they can handle maps with computers. They need to know how to make an inventory, they need environmental law”

Students cannot become a burden to the workplace. They need to come prepared. To come prepared needs to master basics such as for example the basics of how to use a particular disciplinary tool that is also a tool used in work life. Sometimes students can train competencies at the boundary between campus and work place. The personal administration program states that their students arrange for their own placement. Employment issues are a core concern for students at the program and it is argued that contacting companies and arranging your own supervised placement can be seen as an application of a wanted professional competence.

Place rather than competence is used as a resource in some programs when staff reasons about placement. It is not what you do but where you are. In some cases as in teacher training it appears to be obvious that students do placement at school and carry out the kind of work done at a school. Some programs describe placement as a series of typical workplaces that students need to have visited during their studies. A place can be a physical space such as a laboratory or an unemployment agency, but can also be understood as an organizational function such as management or accounting. Another way to reason about placement is as a place where a particular type of work is carried out. The canonical case can be found in nursing education.

“Two weeks in school health care and it’s a placement that has no examination it’s more like a study visit or what you would say. Then they have the other two periods one specialization is primary care units at the regional council or in the private sector. The other part is geriatric care or individual care”

Staff describes placement through the parties involved. Staff describes their placement as organized around specializations in health care.

That programs can have different needs and that these needs influence the organization of placement is commented on in many interviews. A representative from the bio medical analysis program states:

“it is comparable I should say to nursing education rather teacher education, the thing is they need to go to particular positions, that is to particular laboratories”

For some programs division of labor becomes a problem that doesn't appear to be manageable through placement in typical specializations. Many programs such as personal administration, engineering, bio-medical analysis and water management all state that there are far too many specialized work places for the program to be able to construct a generic place for learning at work. All programs stress that students are not ready for their job when they leave education, but some programs more directly use division of labor as a resource to make sense of why placement cannot be used to teach students their future work:

“so this is something we will never be able to do. The company, it's not, that kind of knowledge the company does not educate. Later when the student comes to, later when they, when they come to, and they learn, when they come to a particular branch or company, then we, more what company does and what machines they use, and what technical systems they work with on a daily basis, and software and so on.”

For many reasons, not least the way technology is evolving, placement can be difficult to make meaning of as something that has to do with a physical work place. The economy programs use business simulations to simulate work practices and support students' reflection on practice. The personal administration program use applications for a placement as a method to mimic application for a job. Two ways of making sense of placement can serve as illustrations for the problem. The dental hygiene program has had problems securing places for their students. As a result the program has set up its own clinic at the university. The work place in a more formal way has become a part of the university organization but it has its' own clients that pay for their visits. Supervisors however are university staff.

Many of the engineering programs do not have placement in the sense that students visit a work place. Particularly when it comes to programs that deal with software design there is not a work place in the way referred to by programs such as nursing and teacher education. The projects students work with are talked about as authentic projects.

“they have a seven dot five point course where they should improvement project, development project or construction project during the education and then we have degree projects and we regard these to as placement”.

The programs use resources such as place and supervision to make sense of their model but it is obvious that they are not well-suited for their needs:

“and then there are some musicians. I don't think they have a larger number on it at all. They kind of work and do some free lancing or have their own private company. The other is a small company among ten small companies. He has some kind of small apartment or somewhere. And should you sit at these companies you would be sitting at home. Those that have removed removed from these companies; we have taken upon ourselves to do that. They don't have the resources so it is a solution.”

Staff argues that if they are going to find placements at all they need to be run as authentic projects. The companies in question work with a low budget. In most cases they sit at home and carry out their work. These small companies are far too important to the program to be removed from the data base containing available placements. However, it means making meaning of place and supervision differently than in other programs. Students carry out their projects from the university or from home and contact is maintained over the Internet. Supervision may be carried out by university staff. Companies as small as those mentioned above do not have the manpower to supervise students. In many cases it is unclear whether supervision comes from the university or the work place.

The reform context for different programs

The third question concerns the reform context for different programs. The question aims to shed light on contextual aspects of supervised placement that the program heads and responsible for managing placement make relevant at the dialog meeting. The circumstances for implementing placement vary. Some programs have hundred year traditions for arranging various forms of training at work. For some programs transnational policies give recommendations about the percentage of education that ought to be placement. National policies stipulate minimum requirements. One difference between programs concern whether they are required by law or not to include placement. Programs such as teacher education and nursing are required to while social work and engineering are not. Many programs have an organization in place. They have entered into agreements with receiving employers. They have a pool of supervisors and established routines for examination. Other programs have placement though they are not required to by law. These programs generally do not have government founding that allows them to pay for local supervisors and agreements depend on the willingness of the receiving organization to take on the extra work. Despite these facts some of these programs have arranged placement and since long established contacts with employers and supervisors at different work places. Other programs may have arrangements that resemble placement but do not have a formal organization.

How do programs make context relevant when reasoning about the implantation of the reform? Policies can be treated more or less as recommendations, but they can also be unknown. Earlier the program head of nursing has referred to an EU-agreement that states that all nursing programs should have at least 50 percent supervised placement and deplored that these are requirements that are not met. The new head does first not recognize the requirement. "what, an EU-standard at fifty points?"

Other countries and universities are used as resources in order to make meaning of such requirements.

"But if EU has that standard, I mean, then it is, I mean Denmark that has extremely little practice in their". And: "But "2 "But if I understood it correctly, Luleå, so they have, they were out for three to five week periods and they were not supervised"

Programs such as biomedical analysis, water management, the gastronomic program and engineering all make meaning of supervised placement with reference to the local policy. The programs have to have at least five week placement and they grapple with problems concerning how to implement five weeks. There seem to be some symbolic value in exceeding the stipulated weeks and the gastronomy program says: "we have five weeks the second term and five weeks the third year and then our student have to do thesis work".

Another difference that is made relevant concern how placement can be financed. Programs vary when it comes to subsidiaries for placement. Nursing and teacher education have state subsidiaries, some engineering programs has a tradition of getting paid for projects, and economy and personal administration does not have any subsidiaries that can be used for reimbursement. Subsidiaries are treated as consequential for what kind of placement the programs can set up. The supervisor organization is affected. The economy program, nursing program and dental hygiene claim that it is difficult to get supervisors when you cannot give compensation. Even if there are subsidiaries there may be rules for who can be reimbursed. Nursing says that school health cannot be compensated:

"we have had problems getting supervisors. They are municipal employees, school nurses and we don't have any subsidiaries for school and they have said that they don't want any students"

Personal administration argues that it affects their ability to provide for training of supervisors:

"And then naturally it all fails because we don't have any compensation to give and yes they don't get any reimbursement for them not even for travel costs, but it happens that that they come here and five or six supervisors we use to have at a supervisor meeting"

Subsidiaries also affects where students can get placement and the gastronomy program states:

“There were some staff members that don’t work in our program and it wasn’t very popular. The compensation is zero, even for students, when they travel to their placement and some of them have problems with that, but it is like it is we don’t have any funds, only if they go abroad then they can apply for travel grants”

Finally, lack of subsidiaries means extra costs for the program and this in turn can influence expectations of organization that accepts a placement. The bio-medical analysis program phrases this as a question of customer expectations:

“instead it costs us a lot just to get them referred and then we think we are entitled to have some expectations about a return because there we pay substantial sums for this and what is a problem is that it seems like these sums just disappear into the regional bankruptcy account.”

Yet another difference reasoned about concerns the type of organizations programs have to cooperate with to arrange their placements. University strategy stresses the importance of joint projects with the surrounding society. This means programs cannot just deal with a few large organizations. The programs deal with workplaces of very different sizes. Teacher education work with the large municipalities and only in the rare case students are placed at small private school-organizations. Nursing works with the large regional council and rarely with small private clinics. These are organizations with thousands of employees. Personal administration, engineering, gastronomy, water management may very well deal with large organization but talk about smaller units and very diverse work places. In the case of gastronomy students may be placed in organizations as large as IKEA or Scan AB but also at the local apple farmers place in small companies with only one or two staff.

The context for placement may be very different when the program predominately deals with large public or private organization as compared to when they deal with small entities. Working with large companies and public organizations implies having a professional partner to deal with. Teacher education program states that:

“Predominately we work with Kristianstad municipality eh but in some other municipalities we have contacts with school, eh municipal school districts. We have agreements and these are, that have been checked by the university lawyer. We have a placement our own organization with administrators that work with placements and they they the municipality has a corresponding organization. So actually they place our students based on the requests in the “VFU och Valwebben”⁴. We have tried to attract private schools but and we send them, when they see our agreements they usually opt out. It’s just too much for them.”

Large organization implies a possibility to share expertise and personal. In nursing supervisors works both sides of the fence:

“but then I think like this because we are out there that much, as teachers I mean we are there and meet the student three times for each placement then I think, and then we have clinical lecturers [kliniska adjunkter] that are also out there”

In these programs students become embedded in an organization that supplements their placement in ways that cannot be met by other programs and that some other programs do not wish to copy. Personal and economy programs describe some of the organizations where they place their students as places with little time to take care of the student, with high risk and high demands on expert knowledge. There is the danger that students placed in these companies will only be allowed to observe or to take part in routine work:

“but in staffing companies there is the real danger that all you will be allowed to do is to go through cv’s or ring in consultants and that’s not what you are supposed to do during your education”

Programs that don’t have a fixed organization and a corresponding organization in a company or public organization the students such as economy and personal administration often rely on contacts of a

⁴ VFU-valwebben refers to the software used in administration of placement.

personal kind and involve students in the hunt for placements. One reason is that it is hard to find places personal administration for example has many students. Another reason is that the action of contacting organizations, finding your placement is ascribed some pedagogical value but as a job experience and as preparation for future job hunts.

“have not had extra resources as program head and what happens here is that the students themselves go find their placements and given what they are going to work with it stands to reason that they do. Because many work places if we recruit and it happen that they call us and ask and they just want to meet the students. And if you are going to work with management issues you need to be able to take contact.”

Networks appear to be crucial for programs that do not have fixed organizations to enter into agreements with. This appear to be particularly so when it comes to the engineering and the gastronomy programs.

“To me it appears to be more practical to build a real net with contacts”

Local knowledge is treated as important. Teachers report that they know when a company has needs, for example when they work on a technical design that make them suitable partner for placements. There are possible disadvantages as reported by the heads. Dispositions are used as explanatory resources. One disadvantage cited is that some students are not ‘placeable’, and there is a feeling that since this is an education all students have a right to a place. This demand however must be balanced to the needs of employers:

“yes we, well sometimes because they have not always been so many students, so it becomes kind of a case of hand-picking students. And there are companies, that have good contact with somebody and they can ask if you have some students. But it’s also the company needs to get something back.”

As a result staff has to take on extra responsibility and engineering programs report that they need to monitor projects and sometimes have problems with how much to supervise. There is the need to present a successful project to satisfy the company but also the need to be able to accurately assess students’ abilities. Security understood as secrecy is an acute problem within health, care and education. Students there have to present excerpts from criminal records and also health certificates. Security in industry presents other hazards. Projects need to be separated in such a way that they can be assessed and at the same time remain secret. The kind of companies the programs work with influences the kind of intervention that can companies can be expected to expect but also public organizations like labs:

“then I say, we can’t place a test that a student conducts in an array of tests set up for analysis because it jeopardizes the whole set so it’s both the discipline and the supervisor at the placement”

The context appears to be an important resource as programs reason about the local placement reform. The different requirements placed on programs by transnational, national and local policies and laws, the presence of subsidiaries, differences in the organizations that can be used for placement all surface in accounts used to describe how programs manages the local reform. As such they can rightly be called the context of the reform.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

The catch-phrase “where to think good education” has been used by us as a heuristic tool. In many studies when authors discuss placement (see e.g., Bücken & Woodruff, 2008; Callanan & Benzing, 2004; Calway, 2008; Connor & McFarlane, 2007; Groenewald, 2004; Halén, 2008; Rystedt & Gustavsson, 2007, Sultana, 2005; Sattler 2011) space can be considered an important device. Terms such as internships and externships or co-ops opens up different social spaces for educating professionals. While our material show that spatialization is an important device when staff tries to make sense of placement, it also demonstrates that space is more than a location.

The idea from the Bologna initiative that universities should educate for employability, pushed by the local university reform provide input to strategic thinking in the programs. Differences can be found in how “pure disciplines” and programs reason about how to learn, where to learn and how to be a good professional in the field. Many studies demonstrate the problems with charting knowledge systems in terms of disciplines. Hyland (2000) show the difference between disciplinary discourse on academic writing and writing as practiced by member of the discipline. Abbott (1999) illustrates in his history of “the Chicago school” the importance of faculty interests, local politics and rivalry for the emergence of a school of thought. In the terms of Becher and Trowler (2001) disciplines and programs could be considered to form different tribes with different ways of conceptualizing the good place for being educated. In our results different disciplines but also different programs have different ways of thinking good education, different ideas about the education of professions and more general different ideas about where it is best to learn and educate.

We argue that disciplinary thinking is revealed in how education is conceptualized. Representatives of “pure disciplines” in our interviews do not talk about the future employer or employability. They talk about particular disciplinary content, disciplinary methods and a division into courses. The universally academic is more important in their rhetoric than transnational guidelines on employability or work force mobility. Placement however is taken into consideration. Education is for the sake of the discipline and it can be carried out at campus in campus courses. Pure disciplines remain relatively free from ideas such as that a particular part of education should be carried out outside campus. They do however not take a critical stance. Instead they acknowledge that they may need to concede to such arrangements if they run a program. Representatives of programs talk about the employer and what is expected of the students at a future employment market. They also note that there are transnational guidelines and goals for mobility, employability and placement that they need to take into account. Disciplinary content tend to be treated from the perspective of what is expected of students as future employed. They need to master particular lab-routines and they need to be able to use geographic information systems (GIS). This knowledge and these competencies however are also disciplinary and there appear to be a substantial overlap between disciplinary interests and program interests not so surprisingly since disciplines dominate programs to varying degrees.

The university strategy states explicitly that placement should be guided by theory. Programs seek legitimacy for the way they organize their placement using theory as a warrant for following strategy. Theoretical guidance is used for justification in many cases when legitimacy is sought for other arrangements that the program argues can be conceptualized as supervised placement. These arrangements may very well appear to be outside of how placement is defined in the local reform but in most cases resemble solutions that already exist and are conceptualized as placement internationally (see for example Sattler (2011)). Staff grapples with the problem where they should intervene when they follow strategy. The absence of theoretical guidance is used to question some arrangements. Can degree work that is not supervised from a workplace count as supervised placement? Can placements that do not involve examination and reflection count? The absence of practical work can be used to question other arrangements. Should short visits that are more like field trips count as supervised placement? Should really field observations count. Is it okay to do nothing at all? “Pure disciplines” as presented above do nothing but appear to feel pressured to at least account for future plans. Programs that have placement at campus such as dental hygiene face the problem if a clinic placed at campus may be called placement. The economy program uses placements as sites for guided observation. Observations are then used for reflection at campus. Water management, teacher education and health education place their students at work places where they carry out work under supervision. Sometimes the inherent tension in theoretically guided supervised placement makes it difficult for representatives to justify their solutions. Water management talks about the problem with supervisors. Academically trained supervisors are scarce at the workplaces where their students are sent. If students follow the supervisor they can get theoretical insight but not work training. Is it okay for water management to focus on practical skills? Strategizing may begin with local strategy but the uptake is better explained by university logic, program traditions, the interest of a university profession

and individual staffs' ways of making sense of the profession they educate for, the work place, the need to control what students do during placement and to assess student work.

One main theme appears to be that placement must provide for science based reflection on practice. While the work place can provide a space for training, university can provide a place for doing things correctly, according to science or according to a professional ethos. Teacher education and health education have during some periods had moral standards as a central theme, and also placed moral demands on those that applied for admission to the program. Obedience, orderliness, and responsibility were core values in health education in Sweden and other Nordic countries during the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth (Irgens 2006) symbols for what opened and closed that space for professional education. Conceptions about professionals moral qualities has during the twentieth century been transformed to concern professional identity, but empathy, ethicality and moral action are still important criteria that have a central place in degree ordinances. They are no longer keys to entry but keys to successful departure. In many of today's programs students self-awareness, for example awareness of their need of competence development is considered important requirement to pass with a degree. When the notion was that moral aptitude was something that the students should already have acquired elsewhere and carry with them into the program such aptitude could as Foucault (1986) argues open and close the lived space of professional education to some groups. When programs have the idea that placement does not socialize students into the professional ethos a space opens for reflection on practice at the campus. Science based and supervised placements as defined by some university professions get defined as something owned by the university professions. The work practices of the placement, the work carried out by supervisors and even the environment can be reduced to something to reflect on.

Our results show the merits of treating strategy as emergent through activity in the same manner as Garfinkel (Garfinkel & Rawls, 2002) treats instruction. Strategy becomes through meaning making rather than is by virtue of a leadership decision and its existence on a paper. In this study our interest concerned the up-take of strategy (Hardy, Palmer & Phillips, 2000) and the rhetoric used by programs to discursively motivate how strategic aims are being implemented (see e.g., Johnson, Melin & Whittington, 2003; Samra-Fredericks, 2003, Vaara, Kleymann & Seristö, 2004). The results show that Kristianstad University's strategy does not remain a text on paper. Instead the interviews used for this study show that staff engage in meaning making around supervised placement, the most important tool for reaching the goal "Swedens most employable students", and that in that process supervised placement takes on different meanings.

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