

## **Abstracts**

### ***Birger Steen Nielsen and Kurt Aagaard Nielsen***

#### **Work and sense of art**

The authors argue that theories of work and learning have lost their critical strength in the last decade. The scientific public within the field stick to ideas which aim towards consensus within organisations: today's new concepts of production already give us the tools to practice qualified work and to develop workers into qualified participants in the future organisational reality. Those ideas are wrong and naive. They hide the fact that the modern trends in organisations reproduce what Braverman called the degradation of work.

An alternative to the present theories of consensus is found in a reconstruction of Marx's analysis of the so-called "narrow minded sense of art in handicraft". In a reconstruction of the concept found in *The German Ideology*, the authors argue that work in modern capitalist reality are liberated compared with the handicraftsmen in the feudal system. Liberated workers, however, never got the chance to realize an element of art in work. On the contrary, the sense of art which potentially connects to work disappears - it is expropriated from the workers - not only in the early manufacturing period, but continually throughout the process towards automation.

In the last part of the article the authors try to design conditions and tools which are useful for a reinstallation of a sense of art in relation to work.

### ***Christian Helms Jørgensen***

#### **Education, training and the transformation of work - practice, reflection and learning**

The article discusses the relation between school based learning of workers and changes in the organization of their work in the workplace. The question is how school based learning can contribute to improvements in the organization of work for the employees in traditional taylorist industries.

The empirical basis for the article is a number of evaluations of training schemes and development programmes carried out in the Danish meat industry with the purpose of changing the taylorist organization of work. The theoretical framework is on the one hand the theory of social practice of Giddens and Bourdieu, and on the other theories of practice related learning of Jean Lave and Donald Schön.

The article first emphasises that the educational institution and the workplace are two separate and different learning environments. It criticises the naive idea - common in the educational system - that changes of social practice in the workplace will occur as a direct result of school based learning. This idea rests on the assumption that human action is a direct result of conscious and rational intentions.

In contrast to this the article considers social practice to be determined by the workplace culture and the habitus of the employees. The culture is both medium for the reproduction of the current social practice, and at the same time it provides the means for the creative resistance and social imagination of the workers. The article points out a number of inherent contradictions in the culture and it sees herein a potential for learning.

The article goes on to consider strengths and weaknesses of Lave and Wenger's theory of learning in social practice. In contrast to this theory, the article stresses that learning requires a break with the constraints and limits of the workplace, and thus to acknowledge the potential of the school to encourage reflection and selfreflection.

The school can constitute a liberated space where the compulsions and action orientation of the workplace is suspended, and the development of social imagination is encouraged. Training and education that aims at a transforming of the organization of work faces a paradox. On the one hand reflection on action and selfreflection requires a distance to the constraints of the workplace. But on the other hand changing the organization of work in the workplace requires that reflection be closely connected to practice in the workplace.

## ***Søren Vøxted***

### **The transformation of Human Resource Management in manufacturing industry**

This article analyses how industrial firms ensure that the personnel's resources tally with the needs of the firm.

It concludes that the demand for employee qualifications increase in firm which implement technological and organisational changes. These firms often need employees with new or improved qualifications.

'Hiring and firing' is one of the most frequent methods used by industrial firms to ensure that the employees have the necessary qualifications. Furthermore, almost all firms have had employees attending service training. The share of employees who are affected, however, varies greatly, even in the most innovative firms.

Finally, it shows that especially firms, which carry out organisational and technological changes, stress different methods of "on the job training" over and above the more formalised forms of service training.

The article is based upon results from the DISCO-project (the Danish Innovation System: Comparative analysis of challenges, strengths and bottlenecks). The project is initiated by the

Industry and Trade Development Council. It aims at providing a detailed picture of the conditions for innovation in Danish firms.

***Karsten Bøjesen Andersen og Claus Agø Hansen***

### **Workbased learning – taylorist practice or holistic development?**

This article focuses on workbased learning, which has recently become an area of increasing interest among researchers, management consultants and labour market parties.

A series of recent, empirical studies are being analysed, from which we have drawn a number of surprising conclusions. In connection with these studies, we call the attention to a range of different problematics, for example on the methodical level, and furthermore we point out a number of unanswered questions, which will require further studies.

In addition, the authors believe that there is a need for a holistic approach to workbased learning, which includes the values of the organisation, the production system and the interest system. Without this approach, the unavoidable result will be a taylorist learning practice, which does not create synergetic linkage to the formal adult and further education. In the long term, it will lead to additional polarisation and segmentation between core and periphery of the workforce of the organisation.

***Bente Elkjær***

### **It's been a long time since somebody talked about the learning organization**

The paper gives an account of a public Danish organization that aimed to become a learning organization. However, despite all the good intentions and support at the time that the new organization was launched in the mid 1990's, the organization is not known as a learning organization today. In the paper I suggest that in order to find the reason for the short life of the learning organization we have to look at the pressure to which the organization was exposed at the time. As a result of a threat to privatize the organization, management thought a great deal in terms of efficiency and legitimating measures. I will also show that the method of implementing the learning organization, which involved letting all the employees participate in a seminar, does not automatically lead to changes in an organization. Organizational changes are not a natural consequence of the personal learning processes that course participation represents. In addition, it is difficult to change employees when they simultaneously are introduced to new control measures and there are no changes in the organization's work practice.

The paper presents different perspectives on organisational learning and the learning organisation, including a view on learning theory that structures the collection and processing of

empirical data in the case. In specific, I differentiate between a cognitive and a social–cultural perspective on learning in the processing of data. These perspectives on learning theory are used to answer the following questions in relation to the professional employees in the organisation: What did they learn at the seminar? Did they have the opportunity to apply their work experiences? How did the organisation and its work practice change? The paper concludes by observing that it is difficult to implement a learning organisation in the ambivalent context of rationalising work processes and developing employees. However, seeds had been sowed in the organisation that from a social–cultural learning perspective could have contributed more than the case was to secure the organisation as learning.