



How can
Systemic Constructionist Theory and Practice
Inform and Develop
Learning Practices in Schools?

M.Sc. in Systemic Leadership and Organisation Studies
The University of Bedfordshire, KCCF & MacMann Berg
Denmark, May 2008

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To take people’s actions as invitations, makes us connect in a totally different way
Peter Lang

Words can create revolutions and “invitation” could be one of them!
Jesper Juul

A vision of good communication

“-when you and others are able to coordinate your actions so sufficiently well that your conversations comprise social worlds in which you and they can live well – that is with dignity, honour, joy and love”.

Barnett Pearce

Abstract

As an assistant professor in a Danish university college, creating further education for pedagogues and teachers, I wanted to explore the possibilities and future potentials of systemic constructionist work in the creation of teaching- and learning processes at different levels in schools. I have referred to a broad group of theories and practitioner's experiences to support the development of systemic constructionist ideas within school contexts (Bateson, 1973, Wittgenstein, 1953, Pearce, 2007, Lang & McAdam, 2008¹, Maturana, Cooperrider & Srivastva, Shotter, Harré & van Langenhove, 2003, among others).

The systemic ideas² have been introduced to some extent at the University College Lillebælt through several workshops with Peter Lang and through his article written together with Elspeth McAdam, (in Kristensen, 2006) As a parallel to this research, my teaching has really changed towards a much more co-creating and curiosity based creation of learning environments!

I set up the ethical premises for and developed an action research programme as part of my training to be a researcher within this area, which can be seen as a meta - process to the subjects I work with. I have conducted semi-structured interviews (Kruse, 2006, Kvale 1997) with systemic trained teachers from a Danish Boarding school in order to explore how systemic constructionist ideas have influenced their work. I turned my findings into a narrative, a story of how the school would present their systemic constructionist picture of themselves on a website. In a focus group interview I shared my findings with the interviewees and their pedagogical leader and received a very positive feedback. I conducted this as a first circularity within a larger circular process, where I have fed back into the system of the interviewees in a respectful way.

As a second circular process, tightly connected to the themes from the interviews and my previous experience, I have been looking for new ideas to develop and inspire my understanding of teaching and learning processes in school development projects as well as in learning processes at my work place University College Lillebælt.

Based on my research and practice I have suggested:

- 1. An Extended CMM school model – a suggestion of a structure*
- 2. A place marker for a team log book - monitoring pedagogic practice learning processes*

¹ The book is supposed to be published in 2008 and I am going to make a Danish translation.

² In this dissertation “systemic ideas” are similar to “systemic constructionist ideas”. As the space is limited I have chosen to use the short version most of the time.

3. *A circularity model, sharing and maintaining knowledge over time*
4. *Mini action research projects for teams or small clusters in schools*
5. *Mentoring and re-positioning through transformative meta- language*

The main points of the research is planned to be published in an anthology concerning ways to create the best learning environments at schools and University Colleges³.

Prologue

A Narrative Beginning

Once I was dining with Peter Lang in Odense after another successful and creative day with this inspiring supervisor facilitating processes at University College Lillebælt⁴, a lady came to our table and asked: “You are Peter Lang, aren’t you?” Peter nodded and she continued: “I joined your presentation for half a day in Copenhagen two years ago and it simply changed my approach to my students, my colleagues and even to my own kids. I just want to thank you for that!” With this strong statement she excused herself and retired to her table.

This wonderful story made a strong impression on me as it confirmed for me the feeling I had, when I met Peter Lang together with Elspeth McAdam the first time in Denmark. This was an impression of a person living the values he talks about, creating a strong environment for curiosity and development. Peter Lang presents and represents a language that supports and gives me lots of words and actions to increase new and appreciating language games (Wittgenstein, 1954) in my ways of connecting to other people.

Meeting the appreciative approach personified by Peter Lang started a long and exciting journey for me, which is contextually embedded in this dissertation. My research project is intended to bring these exciting **systemic constructionist ideas**, as Peter Lang / KCCF names it, (in Kristensen & Fredslund, 2005) further into my teaching and learning processes.

³ I am producing the anthology for Dansk Psykologisk forlag as an external editor. It will be a basic book for University Colleges among others to understand the creation of social worlds and language games in teaching & learning processes.

⁴ Often referred to as UCL in this paper.

A Theoretical Beginning

The observer must be included within the focus of observation, and what can be studied is always a relationship or an infinite regress of relationships. Never “a thing”⁵

Gregory Bateson

I am going to “include myself into the research” with a short presentation of the relevant parts of my context. I am working as an assistant professor at a University College in Denmark, called University College Lillebaelt (UCL). I am conducting this research as a part of my Master of Science in Systemic Leadership and Organization Studies at Bedfordshire University in cooperation with KCC Foundation in London and MacMann Berg in Aarhus. As a lecturer and educational consultant I want to explore further the possibilities in systemic constructionist work in order to develop my work in schools (Kristensen, 2007B) and at the University College in teaching and training courses for experienced teachers and pedagogues.

I have been an educational advisor/consultant within special education for the County of Vejle. We made a row of conferences, among others with Peter Lang together with the Finnish psychiatrist Ben Furman (Furman, 2005) and after that I have arranged and participated in quite a few workshops with Peter Lang in the context of the University College.

During these conferences and exciting meetings before and after the workshops, I have had the privilege to learn a lot in personal conversations and interviews with Peter Lang. This makes me think of Humberto Maturana who says “Teachers do not simply transmit some content; they acquaint their pupils with a way of living. Pupils learn teachers” (Maturana & Poerksen, 2004, pp 128). I have experienced this in my meetings with Peter and other amazing people at our conferences through these years.

The presenters from the conferences agreed to write articles for an anthology based on relational thinking (Kristensen, 2006). I learned a lot from this creation and translation process as well.

⁵ Bateson, 1972, p 246

⁷ Jesper Juul is a very influential Danish advisor and consultant working all over Europe. He is the former leader of The Kempler Institute of Scandinavia for 25 years.

Interviewing Daniel Stern (Kristensen, 2006), Peter Lang (Kristensen & Fredslund, 2005) and Barnett Pearce (Kristensen, 2007A), also created possibilities for me to generate more personal knowledge at Master class level and facilitate some of the exciting systemic constructionist ideas through articles and teaching. Recently I have conducted and published a DVD where I am interviewing Peter Lang in dialogue with Jesper Juul⁷ (Kristensen, 2007C) in order to explore some of their ideas in new contexts and at the same time create interesting dialogues between two capacities in the same field.

In April 2008 I have edited and facilitated a professionally recorded two hour presentation on DVD with Professor Daniel N. Stern at a conference at the UCL⁸ (Stern, 2008). Daniel Stern describes human communication as messy and not perfect at all, and he explains that this is what separates us from being robots.

Skilled mothers are not at all perfect in communicating; they are just very attentive to co-create the best understanding with their children (Stern, 2008). This supports my approach of creating ways to negotiate how to go on in teaching and learning under “a systemic constructionist umbrella⁹”.

This “messy personal/ theoretic approach” and my education for two years at DISPUK and later at the M.Sc. study at MacMann Berg, is an important context for my dissertation and research.

The Dream and Purpose of my Research

I have a dream, that when I have finished this research process, an increased number of research based actions and ideas about teaching and learning in a respectful and transparent way, in schools and at the University College, will have emerged.

I have worked with classroom leadership and the positions of the teacher as one of the important punctuations to understand the actions and the language- games¹⁰ of the teacher in schools today. The Danish Ministry of Education has recently focused more on the integration of students with difficulties in the classrooms in public schools, but in practice more students are segregated than ever! Special education, including students with behaviour problems, is intended to move them into the classroom, but real life shows us, that it is really difficult for the teachers and pedagogues to manage this move.

⁸ Dynamics of Lived Experience and Participant Learning. www.kommunikation-relationer.dk

⁹ Barnett Pearce’s metaphor, trying to contain the differences among “the systemic constructionist society”.

¹⁰ Wittgenstein’s expression.

I have a dream that facilitating an appreciative; constructionist approach will:

- **Change the frames and possibilities for more students to stay in the classroom instead of being segregated in separate classes for special education.**
- **Provide teachers and pedagogues with respectful dialogic tools that create more satisfying environments in the classrooms and in the school as a whole.**

By interviewing systemic¹¹ trained teachers in special education I want to examine “systemic constructionist influenced practice” as a foundation for examining new possibilities, ways of teaching and ways of co-creating systemic constructionist learning scenes¹² and models in an action research based context.

I need to be future-oriented in my approach, always thinking “what else is possible”, in order to **increase complexity**¹³ and continuously present new possibilities at my courses.

This need of variety in ideas and methods is also stressed by Peter Lang and Jesper Juul in an interview, where I asked for some ideas to imagine an upcoming “Centre for Appreciative School Development” (Kristensen, 2007D).

They suggest some important headlines to guide my work:

1. To gather relevant research of what works
2. To build the centre on a broad variety of theories
3. To be irreverent to methods, avoiding to get stuck
4. To describe a variety of relevant forms of teaching & learning
5. To create research through teachers interviewing about performance at each others work places
6. To initiate and describe new research of what works in practice

(Kristensen, 2007C/2007D)

¹¹ “Systemic” is understood as “systemic constructionist” in this paper.

¹² Barnett Pearce refers to a metaphor: a stage where we are born into an ongoing play and have to find some others who will reply meaningful to our communication. (In Kristensen, 2007, p 25)

¹³ - based on Barnett Pearce’s thoughts of complexity as the key to new, helpful stories. (- Personal dialogue, September 2007, Aarhus.)

My Research Project

I have started introducing systemic constructionist ideas in special education and in institutional development projects in schools. I see this research as a very exciting way to develop research based possibilities in my work in general.

I am basically not looking for or handling “truth”, but increased possibilities and ways to go on, that might be seen as “a locally founded truth” as Bakhtin’s:

“Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people, collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction” (Bakhtin 1984, p.110).

I will introduce some of my main values as they will show in this research inspired by Peter Lang & Elspeth McAdam, Gregory Bateson, Ludwig Wittgenstein, David Cooperrider, Barnett Pearce, John Shotter, Kevin Barge and Daniel N. Stern among others.

Reflexive, Appreciative Agency

My research philosophy and action guide for this study and research will be unfolded within a frame of “**Reflexive, appreciative agency**”. I want to create:

- **Reflexive, appreciative** approaches at different levels, looking for **skills, abilities and possibilities**.
- **Respectful and safe relations** in my research actions as well as in teaching and learning
- An **invitational approach** to all actions and stories
- **Inclusive curiosity** towards the stories and contributions of all participants
- A way to **live out in practice and research**, the same “**basic equality morality**¹⁴” that I try to expose in my teaching and ways- of- being-together¹⁵ with my students.
- **Transparency in language and actions** and an open mind to **diversity**.
- **Pedagogical remarks**¹⁶ and **transformative words**¹⁷ that makes a difference for my future teaching and learning.

¹⁴ Peter Lang describes, that in every action we embed our morality.

¹⁵ Daniel Stern’s expression of a dynamic interaction. (personal conversation, 2003)

¹⁶ Inspired by Wittgenstein’s idea, that he was only able to make remarks instead of describing “The whole” in philosophy.

¹⁷ Peter Lang’s expression of words that works and creates differences in practice (discussed in private conversation, 2007).

These values are embedded in the following considerations about the design, the processes and in the results of my research.

The Research Question

How can Systemic Constructionist Theory and Practice Inform and Develop Learning Practices in Schools?

My research question is intended to frame at least three perspectives to fulfil my visions.

- In a **1st circular process** I want to explore through interviews, how systemic constructionist ideas influence learning processes in a Danish school. A circular process examining and co-creating systemic constructionist learning and teaching processes with the teachers through interviews and reflections. I will secure a closure of this first circular process by delivering a web story that can bring back inspiration, considerations and maybe visions and ideas to the interviewees, to make it possible to go on through their own school development. It is my sincere concern to be a respectful and transparent researcher in this project.
- In a **2nd circular process** I want to connect my research through chiasmic intertwined¹⁸ development processes related to my own teaching and learning development in the University College context. The themes and values from the interviews will be named and connected to my own learning and elaborated through the development of new models, structures and ideas. This co-creating of ideas in the reflexive domain (Lang, Little & Cronen, 1991) is intertwined with my research into relevant literature, very important reflections with my extremely skilled study group members, my own reflections in my diary, reflections with the teachers I have interviewed and their leader, and my students at the University College, all of whom I consider to be important “intertwiners”.
- Above, below, within and as a parallel to the two “circularities” the “Meta circular processes”, training myself to be a scientific researcher in an emergent mix of values, research methods and development of consistent language games is floating like a river steam in different tempo,

¹⁸ Bateson’s expression, referred from John Shotter, master class 2006.

direction and places. The two circular processes above are “River rafting¹⁹” embedded in my research values, considerations and actions. I see a systemic constructionist research language embedding my values as an important tool to support my vision of a centre.

The co-creation of the research part of this project is mainly framed and supported by my educational advisor and supervisor Kevin Barge and once again, my very inspiring and impressive networking group.

Audiences

The primary audience for this dissertation is the board at KCCF and Bedfordshire University, who is assessing this paper.

The research is intended to be an inspiration and reflection paper for me in my own professional development as a researcher and a lecturer and for the interviewees and their leader in their context as well.

I expect the research to increase my reflection skills and to support new constructionist ideas. A personal reflection log book²⁰, where I reflect on topics, concerns and ideas or make field notes of “turning points,”²¹ in the process, is intended to guide me through “the whirls and circularity of the research river”.

An article based on the research in this dissertation is planned to be published in spring 2009 in a Danish anthology²² for lecturers and university college students among others.

Barnett Pearce is, as part of his retirement, preparing a homepage about CMM, where he has encouraged me to publish my papers and the dissertation, too. I hope my research will come up with useful contribution in this perspective as well.

Furthermore I see this study as my contribution to create a virtual foundation of a “Centre for Appreciative School Development” at the UCL.

¹⁹ to use Peter Lang’s metaphor in a different context....

²⁰ A log book shows the important changes of course for a ship and for me through my ”River rafting research”.

²¹ Barnett Pearce: “Forgreningspunkter”

²² - Made for “Danish Psychologist Publishers” and with me as the editor.

My Position as a Researcher

To reflect on my research position as a systemic constructionist inspired lecturer creating learning processes, I will focus on the notion of “invitation”(Lang in Kristensen, DVD, 2007) and “transformative words²³” and try to conduct the interviews in this spirit.

An invitational approach **positions me respectfully curious to diversity** in order to create safe communication and avoid a power position in the dialogue based on my formal position as an assistant professor.

I express the invitational approach in different ways:

- Participation is voluntarily and the interviewee may stop at any time
- I invite the participants to help me to avoid an “expert position”
- The interview questions invite to conversations about what is important for the interviewee in his own language and context
- Finally I respectfully invite the interviewees and their pedagogical leader to adjust my story through a focus group interview based on the web story and through reading the draft for this project.
- Harré and Langenhove (1997) have described some basic positions I have taken into considerations in the process in order to be invitational. The deliberate invitational self positioning as a humble and really curious and appreciating interviewer is only one part of it, if the participants try to position me differently, it could be as “the expert”:
 1. deliberate self positioning
 2. forced self positioning
 3. deliberate positioning of others
 4. forced positioning of others

²³ Peter Lang, private conversations, 2007.

These different positions often occur simultaneously in real life, according to Harré and Langenhove. Positions as lecturer and student, basically determines different rights and positions. These changes the same utterance said from the different positions, (Harré & Langenhove, p 17). I see myself as invitational and respectful in my way of connecting and I have the great advantage that my interviewees as well as my students are experienced people, who are there mainly because they want to. I am convinced that the “mirror neurons²⁴” will make the interviewee and students feel my acknowledging positioning as “an unconscious bodily response”, as John Shotter describes it. (2005).

Literature Review

In this review I will try to grasp the important notions of what I will try to unfold below as a **flow-generating witness thinking** in teaching and learning.

Gregory Bateson's Epistemology

Gregory Bateson presented his ground breaking idea of a mental ecology in his attempts to create an epistemology based on monism instead of the dualism introduced by Descartes. His ideas are very influential and basic to the systemic constructionist approach and to my research as well.

Bateson introduced the idea of a **circular, mental process, a mind including items in the environment, explained with a metaphor:**

A blind man uses his stick to follow the pavement. Bateson understood the stick and the pavement as parts of the mental system seeking and adjusting information and creating feedback. Information he saw as bits of information that adjusts behavior if the difference is appropriate to create a difference within the system. (Bateson, 1974)

Bateson defines “mind” as a system for thinking and feed back processes trying to obtain homeostatic balance by trial and error. Interactions are created by differences within “mind” and mental processes require circular chains of determination. In “Mind” there are only mental “**ideas of pigs and coconuts**” or **transformed differences**, (STEPS, p 317).

²⁴ Mirror neurons seem to be the neurological basis of unconscious learning. (Bråten, 2006)

Bateson mentions another metaphor: A man cutting down a tree. The eye, the hand and the axe is part of the total system of “mind” and the transformed differences in the coordinated actions are **ideas**.

A difference becomes an idea or information if it makes a difference in the system of mind.

As a consequence, any message has to be understood in a mind (and context) to be meaningful.

Some of the important markers of context according to Bateson are **time, space and relationships**, and therefore he *understands the concept of “self” as our actions, perception and premises.*”(Mind and nature, p 92)

These basic ideas from Bateson inspired among others the people behind the Milan School to co-create communication and therapeutic processes as embedded in systems.

Bateson has influenced the language games of communication immensely ever since and his ideas seems to be deeply embedded in the systemic constructionist language game and it certainly is in my language game as well. Peter Lang mentions the Milan group’s work as very important inspiration for him (In DVD interview, Kristensen, 2007D).

My research is based on Bateson’s thoughts directly and through the systemic constructionist ideas. I therefore see myself as an inseparable part within the circular systems involved in this project.

Robyn Penman reframes it: “In undertaking research into communication we are at the same time participating in the very same process we are researching” (1994, p 3).

This study is another and very important beginning in a complex, continuous process; as I am already deeply involved in the possibilities in a systemic constructionist development. I see this research as an opportunity to go with the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein: “To look at the places I don’t normally look”²⁵ to co-develop more complex possibilities of appreciative actions and processes in teaching and learning.

Connections to Wise People and the Literature

The most important “literature” has been watching and co-creating with, and learning from especially Peter Lang on a lot of different occasions, where I have facilitated Peter’s work or I have been assisting. I really appreciate and emphasise the “learning by doing” (Dewey, 1977) and acknowledge the work of the “mirror neurons” in these processes. According to the Norwegian professor Stein Bråten, brain scans indicates, that our brain has so-called mirror neurons, that fire just as if we as

²⁵ Cooperrider & Srivastva, Lang & McAdam

observers are acting ourselves, they just fire less than the neurons of the person actually acting (Bråten 2006, 2007). This phenomenon is suggested to be the neurological basis for human beings, being able to imagine parts of the world “standing in another person’s shoes”, which again indicates, that we learn a lot by doing, without being conscious in the learning processes. Mirror neurons support multiple layers of intersubjectivity and empathy (Bråten, 2007/2008²⁶, Stern, 2004, 2008). I see this as an important idea supporting especially the use of an AI approach.

Peter Lang and KCCF has developed their own ways to go, inspired by Cooperrider & Srivastva’s notion of “Appreciative Inquiry” among others. Peter Lang is especially inspired by John Bowlby (Kristensen, 2007C), the “Milan School” and John Dewey²⁷ and he says: “We (at KCCF) mix it all up, systemic thinking, social constructionism, storytelling and appreciative inquiry and we call it a systemic constructionist approach” (In Kristensen & Fredslund, 2005 p 67).

I edited a Danish anthology “Fantastiske Forbindelser²⁸” (Kristensen, 2006A) with contributions from Peter Lang & Elspeth McAdam, Daniel Stern, Stein Bråten, Allan Holmgren and Håkon Hårtveit among others, on the topics “relations and connections in teaching and learning”. I had the privilege to choose people, who have inspired me in my personal, professional development as well, so the anthology is an important part of my literature context.

I have interviewed Peter Lang twice to learn from his experience, the second time he was in dialogue with another influential (Danish) supervisor called Jesper Juul (Kristensen, 2007C). I interviewed into the ideas and topics they as experienced practitioners and writers would consider the most important to work with in my context in the future²⁹.

An important statement from Jesper Juul³⁰ was: “The power discussion is dead, so we have to **create a third way of handling situations instead of talking power language**”. Juul refers to Barnett Pearce’s idea of creating another language at a meta-level to develop better relations in the classroom³¹ (Pearce, in Kristensen, 2007A).

²⁶ - A conference in Odense, April 2008 with Daniel Stern at University College Lillebælt.

²⁷ Personal dialogue, October 2007

²⁸ Directly translated: “Amazing connections”, referring to connections in the brain, connections between people in teaching and learning and finally my precious connections to learning from wise people.

²⁹ I refer to this quite new interview as a parallel to the literature. I see it as a new way of conducting the development of new ideas. (One DVD was published 2007C and one was made to support this research (2007D))

³⁰ Jesper Juul was inspired by Walter Kempler many years ago, but he soon developed his own ideas (Kristensen, 2007D).

³¹ I sent my article where I was interviewing Pearce to Jesper Juul and I see this as a good example of creating circular processes.

Peter Lang has suggested looking for “**transformative words**”³² as a way to describe the potential for changes in the language game, instead of focusing at the context levels. I agree in the importance of that, but I and several others need more structure embedded in models to secure the process of looking for transformation.

“**Invitations**” as a key to change perspectives in the dialogue, is an important idea for Peter Lang in the interview. He suggests seeing anger or any other action from students as an invitation to learn the morality of the students. “The invitational approach makes us connect in a totally different way”, he continues. Jesper Juul adds to it, that some words can create revolutions and he considers “invitation” to be one of them! (Kristensen, 2007C).

I will try to be “**invitational**” in my approach and the “**transformative words**” I will look for must **embed a basic equality language** avoiding a power position.

I have argued (Kristensen, 2006B), that classroom leadership is a relational phenomenon, which makes me focus on possible positions in teaching and learning processes (Harré & Langenhove, 1999, Pearce, 2007).

Peter Lang’s invitational approach is an important positioning of the teacher, especially in the work with fragile and exposed students.

In order to assess my own progress and direction as well as my students’ skills **towards an invitational, transformative language**, I want to introduce one way to mirror development of systemic constructionist skills in a self reflexive context.

How can we Identify Skilled Constructionist Processes?

Peter Lang suggests the metaphor “Wild River Rafting” for the teachers’ work in schools (In Kristensen, 2007D). This metaphor creates the need of being able to **constantly change position and act spontaneously**, because everything changes very fast. To understand how we can obtain these skills and how they will show, I have reflected on how the ultimately “best systemic constructionist practitioner”- would show? I think it can be helpful to bring some ideas of best practice and skills into the reflective domain in school projects and teaching and learning processes at the UCL.

³² Private dialogue, October 2007

How to be Excellent - the very Best Practice

John Shotter³³ refers to Dreyfuss and Dreyfuss' five levels of skills and abilities and I intend to use these descriptions to reflect on my own development and give my student a way to mirror their own skills as well.

The model is intended to show human learning processes in general (in Flyvbjerg, 2001). The different steps are described as “recognizable, qualitatively different ways of acting and performing”.

The five levels are:³⁴

1. **Novice**

Focus on getting it right

2. **Advanced beginner**

Trying to get it right and starting to relate to other skills and/or situations

3. **Competent performer**

The person is able to carry out the skill correctly and relating it to the wider picture

4. **Proficient performer**

The skills are an integral part of the repertoire. Still refers to guidelines for where to go from here

5. **Expert**

Rapidly & accurately sums up the situation and seamless move to how to deal with it.

If I should describe Peter Lang's way of performing in these terms, it would be closely connected to the level five, the expert position. The interesting phenomenon is the spontaneous and rapid reaction and ability to cope even in unexpected situations.

I am still searching for new knowledge and I still need models, structures and similar tools to conduct episodes and situations whereas Peter Lang from his expert position once suggested, “Why not just ask questions?”³⁵

³³ In a Master class presentation in Århus, 2006

³⁴ From Shotter's Master class presentation at MMB 2006

I guess this “simple approach” contains all the qualities of level five, when it is conducted by someone who has embedded all the needed skills as unconscious knowledge and possible actions.

For me a meaningful metaphor for my systemic constructionist journey through the last twelve years has been the change from “having the interaction words outside, sticking to my skin” to a growing feeling of the meaningful and essential words and actions, being an integrated and spontaneous part of me and my language.

Witness Thinking

Peter Lang’s “skilled performance” at the expert level gives me close associations to John Shotter’s “witness thinking” to identify a highly skilled performance as a lecturer or consultant. Shotter describes “witness-thinking” (2005,) as a genuine way of approaching a relation.

I understand his notion of “aboutness- thinking” as embedded in what Pearce & Cronen called a “singular social world- thinking” with the teacher or researcher in a position of “knowing the right things”. And Shotter describes the pure form as: “another person remains an object of consciousness and not another consciousness...”(2005 p 55) whereas **“witness thinking” is “conducted in fleeting moments... when we respond to unique and crucial events occurring around one NOW, at this moment, in this time”**³⁶.

“Witness (dialogic) thinking is a form of reflective interaction that involves **coming into living contact with an other’s living being, with their utterances, their bodily expressions, their words, their “works”**... it is sensed invisibly...and our responses occur spontaneously.... we are **spontaneously “moved” toward specific possibilities for action in such thinking**” (Shotter 2005, pp 54). Witness-thinking embeds the constructionist idea of including the researcher as well as all other participants in the process of a genuine, chiasmic interwoven practicing (Shotter, 2007³⁷).

Because of the limited space, I will not go deeper into the use of these levels of skills, but I will keep it going in my log book and my teaching considerations at the UCL.

³⁵ Private conversation, 2007

³⁶ Shotter (2005, p 2)

³⁷ Presentation at Summer school, 2007 at Bedfordshire University

Flow-generating Withness Thinking

How can I “convince” people to join me in a systemic constructionist withness approach? I do not think we need to!

The notion of “Flow”, described by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi³⁸, focuses on the quality of our being in the NOW. “The quality of our lives is not depending on what we do, but how we do it”.

(Csikszentmihalyi 1997 / 2005).

Flow is a very motivating condition of learning, where all mental resources are concentrated in one activity, leaving time and everything else out of mind (My “interpreted definition” from Kristensen & Andersen, 2004).

Flow is an interesting notion to understand how some processes makes us forget everything else in teaching and learning moments.

Daniel Stern (2004) describes in opposition to that, a “now moment” as a very conscious moment where one experiences “flow-moments as different moments where you forget time and space” one experiences now moments as “if you stop the taximeter” (In Kristensen, 2006 p 7).

I understand John Shotter’s notion of a person being spontaneously moved, as related to the notion of flow more than the very conscious parts of a now moment, mentioned by Daniel Stern. The findings of mirror neurons described among others by Bråten (2007, 2006) **supports Shotter’s notion of largely sensed, spontaneous fleeting moments**. Mirror neurons seems to be brain structures where we unconsciously “copy the actions of others as neurological patterns” adapting and coordinating our language and actions in a non-conscious way.

So I would suggest “Flow” and “withness thinking” to play together as notions to explore our systemic constructionist work.

Peter Lang’s appreciative way of practicing “withness thinking” with a personal as well as professional dimension at the same time, gives me “the mirror neurological” learning, and it influences my personal reflections **in my emerging vision of “flow-generating withness thinking” in teaching and learning** as another narrative of “the expert level”.

³⁸ Flow is a very motivating condition of learning, where all mental resources are concentrated in one activity, leaving time and everything else out of mind. (My “interpreted definition” from Kristensen & Andersen, 2004)

Coordinating Place Marker of Stories

In order to structure and embed progression in my way of conducting “**flow-generating witness thinking for beginners**” in teaching and learning, I find it helpful to work with “place markers” such as CMM models.

Pearce & Cronen (Griffin, 1997) describe how they try to change the understanding of communication processes from the traditional information transmission model to a social constructionist approach.

They have found “three stark differences” to “the dominant information- transmission model” (pp 69).

1. Quest for Certainty Versus Exercise of Curiosity
2. Spectator Knowledge Versus Participant Knowledge
3. Social World as Singular Versus Social World as Plural

These three differences in understanding give a meaningful foundation for my understanding of CMM models as helpful place markers to structure and facilitate “how-processes”.

The constructionists “are curious about the way individuals act under ever-changing conditions”, Pearce & Cronen sum up saying constructionists “seek active involvement in their study”, so knowing *how* is more important than “knowing about” to “gain practical wisdom of how to act”. This notion connects closely to the “how we do things” in Csikszentmihalyi’s idea of flow generating processes. “Social constructionists are convinced that the events and the objects of the social world are *made* rather than *found*” and “Since diverse people are involved in creating the social universe, it is clearly pluralistic”.

In his book *Interpersonal Communication: Making Social Worlds*, Peace sketches a vision of good communication: “-when you and others are able to coordinate your actions so sufficiently well that your conversations comprise social worlds in which you and they can live well – that is with dignity, honour, joy and love”.

In another context Barnett Pearce notes: “The centre of the LUUUTT model³⁹ is the place marker (and not much more than a place marker) for this work: “storytelling.”⁴⁰ Based on this description I see CMM models as helpful to conduct understanding of conversations between teachers and pedagogues.

³⁹ One of a row of CMM models focusing on how to understand stories.

⁴⁰ Email conversation, 2007

In a former article I have combined the CMM Daisy model, with the thinking of Multiple Intelligence (Gardner, 1983) – another remarkable approach to skills and abilities, that I find consistent with the increased diversity of actions and styles imbedded in an appreciative constructionist approach (Armstrong & Kristensen, 2006A, p 159).

I have co-created a basic “CMM school model” based on the CMM hierarchy model with generous help from Barnett Pearce, in order to get a model for conducting diversity in school development projects (Kristensen, 2007B). In this research I will try to develop these “context levels” through my interview analysis and see, if the levels are actually showing themselves in practice, or some levels should be added or removed in order to optimize an extended model.

I understand this “CMM school model” as a place marker for a “flow generating witness thinking” in the schools as organizations.

I am very aware of the tendency of “talking about things that has already happened” in a model like this, so I intend to add a future perspective to make the school model create dream talk and visionary school development processes.

Related studies

I have been searching for related research and I have found some rather different and very valuable studies.

England

I see the work of Peter Lang and Elspeth McAdam as a kind of action research ending up in strong narratives described in their writings; stories that has influenced my work and research and development as well. (in Kristensen, 2006, Dalsgaard, Meisner & Voetmann, 2002, Lang & McAdam, unpublished⁴¹, 2008B, 2008A).

⁴¹ I have the draft as I am going to translate it.

Norway

In Norway Professor Thomas Nordahl has made a large research project based on, what he has named “the LP- model” focusing on “L: Learning environment and P: Pedagogic analyses. “The model is based on systemic thinking, seeing the class and the school as a social system” (Nordahl, 2007, LP-modellen.dk, my translation).

A large research shows that “Especially the contextual condition in the classroom and the social environments appeared to be important to explain what worked at different schools with especially good results” (Nordahl in Hansen, 2007, p 36, my translation).

Professor Nordahl refers to his systemic inspired⁴² research (14 schools in Norway) listing the following important conditions for the learning environment: (My underlining)

1. Relations between student and teacher
2. Relations between students at the same age
3. Rules and standards at the school
4. School management and leadership
5. Classroom leadership
6. Culture and “climate” between the teachers
7. Engagement, motivation and contribution
8. Collaboration between school and parents (Nordahl in Hansen, pp 38, my translation)

The model is mentioning “teaching the employees at the schools” and “development of cultures” as two main lines to follow and “guidance/supervision” as an important tool.

Nordahl concludes: “There is a high degree of support to other theory and projects underlining a close interaction between the students’ actions and contextual conditions” and “actions and strategies based on analyzing these conditions seems to provide positive learning and a better environment at the schools”.(Nordahl, pp 644, my translation).

This research in a Nordic context is a valuable support to my research working with the schools at different context levels embedding a systemic constructionist approach. Nordahl focuses on guidance and teaching in his model, which I interpret as a parallel to “mentoring” and “teaching the whole staff at the school” which are main point in my interviews as well, as described later.

⁴² Nordahl 2005B, p 631: “System theory as a superior frame of understanding”, my translation.

Sweden

Anna Boije, M.Sc. (2007) has made another very interesting study, concerning the work position as a consultant in schools in Sweden. It is important that this research, just as Nordahl's, in a Nordic content, is rather close to a Danish context and language game. Anna Boije has co-created interesting knowledge into the school as an Organization, confirming that systemic ideas creates development, which works out fine in schools. (Boije, 2008) I see her findings as supportive to Nordahl's research from Norway. Her research uncovers how to work with action research methods directly in schools. The main findings from her research are meaningful and inspiring for my creation of "flow-generating witness thinking":

- *it is important to invite **multiple voices** into co-creating a shared vision of what a safe and joyful learning environment is.*
- *the process invite parents, pupils and teacher to engage in a more **open conversation** and therefore they get more involved in interaction*
- *the language change from a problem focused language to an **appreciative and future oriented language**.*
- *pupils, parents and teachers agree that they experience **a different learning environment**.
The misunderstandings and conflicts decrease, the climate in the classrooms are much calmer and focused on learning.*
- *as teachers/leaders we notice how important it is to reflect over feedback and **be flexible and adapt to every group's needs**.*

Anna Boije actually hears the language changing to be more appreciative and her research supports Nordahl's two main points about developing relations between teacher and the student as well as between the students. I see possibilities of cooperation in a Nordic context and I have invited Anne Boije to write an article (Boije, 2008) to the Danish Magazine "Kognition and Pædagogik".

My Research in an Organizational Development Perspective

Holographic, Brain-based Cluster Designs in Schools

Morgan's metaphor of the school as a holographic design (Morgan, 2006, pp 97) made me reflect on how the Danish school system seems to be moving in these years from an understanding of the school as a whole organization metaphorically understood as a brain, "a learning organization learning to learn" (Ibid. p 81), deeper into a Holographic, brain-based cluster design (Ibid. pp 100), emphasizing teams as more autonomous and independent small clusters in the organizations.

Some of the principles mentioned by Morgan (Ibid. p 100) would indicate a differentiated development being in progress, as I see mirrored in the different levels at the boarding school in Ringe:

- **The whole built into the parts** (At RK the values are supposed to be embedded in the teams)
- **Match the environment in complexity** (Increased complexity in the teams is supposed to create independent new actions)
- **Define no more than absolutely necessary** (The teams at RK are developing in different ways and tempo, which indicates a flat structure of leadership under "the systemic Umbrella")
- **Learn to learn** (An increasing expectation of reflexive learning processes are clearly embedded in the language games in the interviews at RK.

This cluster metaphor, stress the need of different levels of approach to increase the diversity of the development of the school as an organization at all levels.

In a way my description of a "web story," (later in the paper), can be seen as "reading the culture" to refer to another metaphor of Morgan's, and connect to the energy where it is embedded in the systems at this certain moment.

My interviews confirm the tendency at RK, where they are creating a leader's team right now. On the other hand the teachers at RK "go from a family institution to a professional organization" where each member of the cluster/ team is responsible to the values of the team and the whole organization. Both interviewees are joining the new leaders' team and they see as their task "to delegate balanced

responsibility” An important confirming statement emerged from one of the interviewees in the focus group interview: “We will be here **as leaders on behalf of the values and the organization**”.

CMM School models in a Brain-based Cluster Perspective

My primary CMM school model has been developed quite a lot based on the interviews, which makes the “brain based cluster” metaphor meaningful to support and frame further development of an extended CMM school model focusing on an understanding of increased complexity in clusters/teams at different contextual levels of the stories lived and stories told (Pearce). It would be an interesting perspective in the future working with Morgan’s metaphors especially with the leaders’ level to inspire new metaphors to show and grow.

Literature Review on Research Methodology

My research project is designed to be future oriented and based on co-creation of a transparent and reflexive practice.

The Australian Robyn Penman has brought me into some considerations about “primary research.”

Prospective Anticipation

Penman (1994 p 5) says about primary research: “It is only when researchers enter the process and brings about understandings of the acts of communication, that primary research is taken”.

She argues for three principles:

1. Respect for all participants – without respect, nothing can progress (inspired by Klaus Krippendorff and Romano Harré)
2. Inspiration of the continuance and direction of the conversation... towards “good change”
3. Mutuality. All participants should be able to contribute to the mutual development of the methods in primary research (p7)

Penman refers to Rogers 94, when she describes primary research as implicating **the study of possibilities**:

- Anticipation is more primary than recollection
- Projection is more primary than summoning the past
- Prospective is more primary than the retrospective

“In practice, the possibilities are always there before us, imminent, but never in actuality”, Penman says (p 8) and this makes me put my research into perspective as a **primary study of possibilities in teaching and learning**.

My study is intended to create new knowledge of how to go on, as Wittgenstein expresses it, and my findings can at the best be expressed as “pedagogical remarks.”⁴³

This position and understanding of the research has demanded a transparent and on-going reflexivity on how I was involved in and influencing the study and how my role could be changing, depending on the outcome of the interviews –remembering Maturana’s sentence that: “everything said, is said by an observer” (Maturana, 1980 / 1987). My design, my research question as well as my models have been changed through the process as a sign of my continuous reflexive participation.

Reflexive, Appreciative Agency

Professor Kevin Barge has generated the following criteria for assessing systemic constructionist research:

1. *“Reflexive practice should be viewed as a relational activity that highlights issues of situated judgment, timing, and rhythm within conversation.*
2. *Reflexive practice emphasizes inclusive, respectful, and safe communication.*
3. *Reflexive practice is connected to empowerment. (Barge, 2006)*

I see these key-values, generated at KCC Foundation as coherent with the values I want to emphasize as a frame for the research and my actions within it.

⁴³- Similar to Wittgenstein’s expression, that when he wanted to “create a whole” in philosophy, he realized that he would never succeed. Instead he created “philosophical remarks” or a number of “sketches of landscapes”. (Referred from John Shotter master class, 2006)

My research philosophy and action guide will emphasise “**reflexive, appreciative agency**” to create **flow-generating withness thinking** and I guess my wish of future orientation connects to empowerment through reflexive practice. Withness thinking demand reflexive participation and my appreciative position makes it meaningful to facilitate learning for both parts in the dialogue. An action research process seemed appropriate to facilitate this.

Action Research Considerations

Charlotte Burck (2005, p 237) mentions four overarching research areas that are pertinent for the systemic family therapy field. I think they could frame my research as well:

1. Does it work? (outcome studies)
2. How does it work? (process studies)
3. Subjective experiences and aspects of family living
4. Further development of research methodologies for systemic research

I find these categories useful to reflect on the frames for this study even though the context of therapy is rather different from the educational field. I see my research as mainly a process study, but building some methodologies of teaching and learning as a reflexive continuous process connected to the interviews I am conducting.

I developed my research mainly within the frames of an action learning approach (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006) examining the outcome of systemic constructionist inspiration at RK through qualitative interviews with two teachers from the school. This part of the study brought me into a primary research position in a primary, circular process, examining what kind of systemic constructionist ideas have been useful and influencing their daily language and educational practice.

Whitehead and McNiff describe the action researcher in a similar position being inside the research, trying to understand what we are creating in the process.

They suggest three elements monitoring ones own learning “in a never ending line of new episodes of learning and practice” (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p 66):

- Action
- Reflection
- Possible significance of the learning (p 65)

This simple model of I - position learning is what I am trying out in what I see as a primary circular process. I will feed back a story, based on analyzing and generating themes, into the system through a focus interview with the interviewees and a leader, formulated as a narrative, an imaginary web-site showing my idea of the Systemic constructionist influence at RK, and inviting their co-constructing reflections and curiosity towards it, into action. The participants hopefully get some inspiration from this process to their own future progress, experiencing how I interpret their actions from my perspective and maybe they could reflect on how an appreciative interview can influence learning in their practice.

The appreciative approach (Lang, 2006, Cooperrider & Srivastva) has been a basic condition in my way of conducting the interviews on systemic constructionist teaching and learning and it was embedded in the way I planned the action research process.

The action research is described below as a more detailed cyclic process in order to conduct my research in the action research frame:

1. **Plan**

I have planned a realistic research within the time frame and coordinated time schedules, research proposals, ethics forms, question guides, interviews, transcriptions and so on.

2. **Act**

I have worked through the processes as planned; reflecting constantly with others and my self and adjusted transparently to improve the process.

3. **Observe**

Through my interviews and analyzing processes I have observed the practice of the interviewees and I have got feedback from them and their leader. Another important source is my network from my M.Sc. group, creating a very valuable feedback to my observations.

4. **Reflect**

Reflexivity is a key point in my values

- Self-evaluation is embedded all through the research in my research log
- Reflecting the themes through the story as a co-creating participant
- Reflecting findings into my literature perspective

- Reflecting themes through changing my teaching at the University College all through the study, getting very positive feedback and validating my research in “real life actions”.

The next cycle of action research I want to describe as a 2nd circular process trying to generate some models, structures and frames based on the themes in the interviews and playing with my generated knowledge about what is valuable, told by the students at the UCL.

(Inspired by Sankaran, Dick, Passfield & Swepson, 2001)

A Concern about Action Research

Whitehead and McNiff describes “intellectual freedom” as a basic value rooted in an understanding that all (researchers as well as participants) are capable of thinking their own original thoughts and exercising their critical engagement. (2006, p. 78). It seems to me that this idea in action research could be based on assumptions similar to Wittgenstein: “Stop, look, listen, it is already there, you just have to look other places that you normally do.”⁴⁴

I agree to a certain extent but Wittgenstein’s idea that “the limits of our language is the limits of our world”, at the same time makes me think that action research in my position as a lecturer can not stand alone as a way of developing schools. It has to be supplied with presentation of ideas of how we can teach and learn; an introduction of ideas, methodologies and models created in different contexts as a variety of ways to be introduced to new language games and extending our limits of actions - or with the Wittgenstenian expression, find “ways to go on”. I refer to the notion of Jesper Juul and Peter Lang on creating a variety of methods and ideas and examine what works (2007D).

Participants and Ethic Considerations

My interview guide has been tried out and revised through a pilot interview in order to increase the validity of the questions.

My research includes two experienced teachers, systemically trained to some extend, from Ringe Kostskole, a Danish Boarding school. They were chosen by their leaders without my involvement. They are my main focus participants and co-creators of my story and the themes. My findings were

⁴⁴ Quoted from John Shotter, 2006, master class in Aarhus.

presented for the teachers and their leader in a focus group interview to respectfully confirm my interpretation of their stories and to create circular reflections back into their practice. All results will be shared with the participants including the final dissertation.

My research findings have been introduced for my students (experienced teachers from different schools) at the UCL through a transparent change of practice during the whole process. I have chosen to leave out this part of the process because of the lack of space.

I see no ethical problem in using the emerging ideas to create new learning processes, as long as the themes are anonymized if it is needed and it is only used in an appreciative, transparent process.

Categorical Thematic Analysis of the two Interviews

In my analysis of the interviews I was inspired to conduct a holistic thematic analysis embedded in the action research in order to get hold of the data. In this part of the research I combined a traditional content analytical approach with a web site narrative. (Lieblich, Tuval, and Zilber, 1998, pp. 113-115)

The thematic analysis generated and refined the themes in the interviews highlighting what I asked for in my research question. My thematic analysis used the following steps:

1. Selection of the subtext:

- a. I have colour marked words and comments from both interviews showing a “systemic constructionist content”, assembled and commented on it in a new file. I went through more processes generating themes in the transcribed interviews as shown below.
- b. I decided to examine the presence of metaphors, because they seemed strong in the language at RK (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2005)
- c. I examined expressions and words connected to the possible “CMM layers of context” in my primary CMM school model in order to enrich my extended model in the 2nd circular process.

- d. Finally I decided to examine my own interviewing style, coding and examining the language game comparing it with the values I have introduced in the beginning of this study to support my own learning and my reflexive diary.

2. **Definition of the content categories:**

The relevant themes that showed up and were named in the highlighting and analyzing of the interviews were:

- Leadership
- Values
- Development
- Teaching skilled people
- Positioning
- Mentoring
- Appreciative Language
- Models and frames

3. **Drawing conclusions from the results:** The themes from the analysis of the two very different interviews were brought into a new story in the form of an imaginary website telling about the systemic constructionist influence and visions at RK.

I am trying to create a possibility to be inspired, thinking of their story in a new perspective.

To me the first circle creates valuable possibilities to go on with ideas in a research based context.

Communicative Research Validity

Validity in a traditional research paradigm answers the question “Do I measure what I intend to measure”? Emil Kruse defines validity as “examining whether we are actually asking the right questions to examine what we want to examine”.

In the social constructionist paradigm validity is a matter of coherence – **Is the process and the outcome useful and relevant to the participants and the audience?**

“What is valid observation is decided through the argumentation of the participants in a discourse” (Kvale 1997 p.244).

Steinar Kvale calls this “communicative validity” and this understanding fits into my systemic constructionist research approach, where Barge’s terms of **reflexive transparency** (2006B) has been essential to create an ethically valid research for me. This demanded open dialogue about everything that concerns others through the research, because Cecchin’s notion of neutrality (1987, p 408) that every human system has its own operating logic that is “neither good nor bad, right nor wrong. It is simply operative” is a meaningful foundation for **reflexive transparency**.

Another important aspect of constructionist research transparency increasing validity is:

- To make all details available for other researchers in order to share the premises and the context and make it possible for others to make their own “validity check” before using my findings.

The same way of showing the links to the premises for my choices is useful in the work with pedagogical models and tests with teachers and students as described in my London presentation (Kristensen, 2007E). My research papers are all accessible through the links at the end of the paper.

Whenever I have experienced some kind of hidden agenda or a problem in my own actions, I have brought it into the conversation. An example was, when I realised that the web story I sent to the interviewees to comment on (see below) should have been translated. I took responsibility, started translating and secured a respectful approach. From a (social) constructionist perspective the question about validity is namely about trustworthiness all through the process (Kvale, 1997). I think this is obtained by total transparency and “being in your actions, what you claim to be in your speech” and avoiding any kind of “double bind” in communication (Bateson, 1972/2000, pp 201).

The usefulness that validates my research was negotiated in the focus group interview, where the interviewees approved my writings in “the web story” in all details. The next level of validation is the experience of usefulness in my teaching practice and writings after the research.

The Research Process

I have found it helpful to divide my research into two tightly connected circular processes as described in my unfolding of the research question.

The 1st Circular Process

I created a semi- structured question guide to start up the action research approach. (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006) I made a pilot interview with an associate of mine to try out the reliability, the amount and quality of the questions and to estimate the time frame of the interview. This caused a lot of changes in the questions, so it was a really useful process.

Some of the revised questions:

- **I would like you to tell me a successful story from your practice as a systemic trained teacher**
 - What made the story a success?
 - Who was involved and what did they do?
 - What else would be possible?
 - How do you experience that your systemic training influenced your successful story?
 - How do you imagine your work at RK in five years?

With a formal permission from the school board and leaders, the questions were sent to the leaders and the interviewees, together with a description of the context of the interviews, in order to be transparent and avoid misunderstandings. The whole set-up including the video recording of the interview were described and I added an invitation for all participants to make contact if needed to feel safe.

The interviewing started up with an introduction to create a contract, a frame of how I imagined we could work together, in order to make the interviewee feel ok. In the middle of the interview I changed context and asked, whether the interviewee were actually feeling ok and then we were ready to continue.

I summed up the previous part to coordinate⁴⁵ our understanding and then we went on with the rest of the interview.

Transcription of the two video recorded main interviews took several hours.

I generated and colour coded words that were remarkable from different perspectives in the interviews. I did not choose significant words ahead of the analysis in order to look for them. I choose an open ended approach looking for words, phrases and actions that in any way could be seen as meaningfully connected to or coursed by the systemic constructionist influence at RK.

Or in other words, what could be helpful to create a complex and detailed answer to my research question? I ended up with several pages of enriching keywords and key sentences.

The green coded text contains words and ideas from the interviews that seemed systemic constructionist inspired were copied into a table (see below) and my extracted ideas of systemic constructionist influence and inspiration were added together with my research comments in two columns.

Colour coding index

(Primary analysis)

- Interviewee: systemic constructionist keywords
- Researcher, keywords, comments
- Researcher comments, reflections, associations and own learning
- Metaphors
- Ideas of models and structures, in the interviews, that could inspire and give reasons for ways of working successfully with schools

1. ⁴⁵ Barnett Pearce's metaphor: "We are born into a scene and we have to coordinate with each other" (Pearce in Kristensen, 2007A).

A few translated examples of the primary coding of the Danish transcription:

- (1)..it is hard to see which cracks and openings there are... It is the way of being invited...they are inviting to a dialogue...
- (2) A mission is the roots, the flowers are our values and the stick is communication and that is really important.
- (3) To be sure I understand it right: New employees are starting up and something (more systemic education) needs to be done all the time?

1.	Text from Green Coded Transcription	Systemic Categories, Influence and Inspiration	Researcher Comments
2.	..we have the possibility to tell a new story about that kid	To tell a new story	Improving possibilities for students with new stories
3.	Every question we ask to the system creates change	Changes as part of a systemic approach	Awareness of words and questions creating social worlds....
4.	I can see what happens when respected employees have accepted this way of working. It spreads out in the group...	Respected teachers' voices spread "it" in a good way in the team	Sharing and listening seems to work... What is the impact of "respected employee"?
5.	A worthy dialogue appreciating the work of the pedagogue. P 5	Worthy, appreciative dialogue initiated	Appreciative leadership values in action?
6.	..because it is the way to be invited – as in the team- to a dialogue P7	Invitations to a dialogue.	Dialogue seems to have changed the system
7.	Earlier it was more like a behaviouristic approach and lots of rules what was allowed or forbidden.	The school as an organization has changed from a very restrictive, rigid position to a more open position.	The language at the school is changing from "black or white" to? By looking for cracks in the wall or?

Out of the coded parts of the interviews, seven themes of special interest for my systemic constructionist research emerged. I grouped statements belonging to each theme.

1. Leadership
2. Values
3. Development
4. Teaching skilled people
5. Positioning
6. Mentoring
7. Appreciative Language
8. Models and frames

In the next table I have shown some examples of the connection between the systemic categories and the themes in the interviews concerning the interviews.

Systemic Categories and Inspiration (Themes from the Interviews)	Researcher Comments The 1st Circular Process	Relating to my Values and Ideas. The 2nd Circular Process
Teaching Skilled People		
Experienced teachers resist against systemic changes.	How do we share knowledge with skilled people?	A model for skilled people “who knows everything” is very important in my work place (AI and CMM tools?)

Reflexive context as a help towards resistance	How was reflexivity part of showing the employees the system they are part of?	reflexivity
Positioning		
New positions are a consequence of systemic development	Changes and positions	Positioning models
Positioning the student as an important helper and mentor	Positioning and responsibility creates growth	New positions and Students as mentors!
Mentoring		
Personal inspiration or mentoring is highly appreciated!	How can mentoring be part of systemic ways of working?	Personal mentoring and mutual inspiration is highly appreciated- it must be part of a model!
Respected teachers' voices spread "it" in a good way in the team	Sharing and listening seems to work... What is the impact of "respected employee"?	"Respected employee" creating a mentor group at each school? A CMM level approach
Personal mentoring seems to be the most powerful inspiration to the systemic world for the interviewee!!	Very interesting to see the strong impact of single persons! How can this be part of a school development model?	Mentoring- again!
Language		
The school as an organization has changed from a very restrictive, rigid position to a more open position.	The language at the school is changing from "black or white" to?	We could work with language at the school at all different CMM levels, examining emails, letters, invitations and much more.
We have to tell new stories! How can you guide in a "black and white" language?	How can we play with different language games in guiding and mentoring?!	How can I appreciate and differentiate "black and white" language?
Values		
Empathy, respectful, present and honest. -really want to be there for another human being	Empathy, respectful, present and honest curiosity. Really want to be there for another human being	Key values

The same values as the story of C., but more symmetric	Private and professional values are similar, but different in action levels	Values and “being appreciative as a human being”
Leadership		
Important that the leaders are exponents for the values of the school	A leaders level is seen as very important for the development of a systemic organization- connect to my CMM model?	A leaders level CMM model is very important
Leadership coordinates with the organization	Leadership should coordinate with the organization- CMM levels	CMM levels, Coordinated leadership
Models and Frames		
AI Question types Invitations	Very interesting and powerful tools. How can these ideas intertwine with new ideas?	AI Question types Invitations are mentioned and I agree
The interviewee see himself as: Good at Listening Trustworthy Inviting to dialogues	What skills are embedded in the metaphor of “the brilliant systemic teacher”? Compare with the levels from Dreyfuss & Dreyfuss?	“the brilliant systemic teacher”? Are these levels as learning steps interesting to create a direction?
Examining life values Dream talk	Curiosity emerges the relations and dream talk get future oriented Invitations.	Visions and dreams AI Peter Lang’s “invitations” Now- moments, Shotter & Stern

My Story of a Systemic Constructionist Influence and Development at Ringe Kostskole – a Web site in Progress

My findings in the interviews were generated into a narrative in the form of an imaginary homepage structured by the eight themes concerning the systemic constructionist influence at RK.

When I highlighted some of the remarkable themes that showed up in the interviews I suddenly realised, that if I rewrote the statements, these themes could be guidelines for a very meaningful story about the development of a systemic constructionist approach at Ringe Kostskole and maybe other schools as well!

At the same time this story can be seen as an organizational and practical answer to my research question from a practitioner's level, confirming and describing how systemic theory as well as practice actually has influenced the school in many ways.

I have presented the description to the interviewees and their pedagogical leader in a focus interview to learn from their reflections. The story was intended as a way to feed back my interpreted knowledge and considerations to the school in a way I hope they would find useful. There could be other themes as well, but the chosen themes created a clear and powerful picture of *some of the ways systemic theory in my opinion already have and will continue to inform and develop the teaching and learning practices at RK under "a systemic umbrella"*.

The Story

The following story is a rather short version of how I imagine the story of the systemic constructionist influence on Ringe Kostskole, a Danish boarding school, could show itself on their official web site.

Leadership

Delegating "balanced responsibility" is a powerful action embedded in the way we try to develop systemic leadership in our organization.

Trust and responsibility creates the greatest appreciation one can get! This is a very important part of sharing knowledge and creating possibilities among the teachers and pedagogues, and it works amazingly fine co-creating a new position with more responsibility in a personal dialogue with the students.

Values

We are already experiencing increasing professionalism as the teachers and pedagogues moves from "private practice" towards "coordinated and shared professional practice". The main values that show up as context marking values in our practice are; to be curious in an empathetic, respectful, present and honest way towards other people - that is students, associates, parents or who ever we are co-creating new social worlds with.

Development

Professional and personal development seems to be embedded in each other under “the systemic umbrella”. We are giving up the notion of “truth” and instead we look for meaningful ways to go on.

How can we make the invitation of all voices through questions and interviewing create complexity and more ways to go on? We look for appreciative complexity in the stories told at RK. Yes, we know changes takes time, and persistence is one of our main values with students as well as employees!

Teaching Skilled People

We have experienced that education embeds changes and that “practicing techniques” co-creates new ways of being in the teams without judging the statements of the team members. Our goal is to be respectful to the context the new teacher or pedagogue brings with him, and maybe even to resistance people show in their stories towards some ideas. Reflexive contexts, as mentioned above, seem to be helpful towards resistance, we have experienced already.

Positioning

We are going through large changes in our way of positioning ourselves and each other in these years. The leaders as well as the employees are moving from a lot of individual judgements, for example in the classroom, doing what each of us thought was appropriate, to being positioned as responsible towards all others in the team; and in the larger system of the school as well.

Circular questions and actions with students and between students create changes at both ends of the relations. The feeling of being valuable to others, often makes our students position themselves differently and suddenly meet a new student the same way as the employees do.

We are continuously working hard with our language in our never ending developing process.

Deliberately positioning ourselves as appreciative grown ups and at the same time very clear role models in a professional way, creates new realities for teachers and pedagogues as well as students.

Appreciative Language

The language at the school as an organization is slowly changing from “black or white language” to another, more nuanced, and more cooperative way of working and communicating. We see it as our duty to enable every possibility of telling a new story, where borders are crossed and new patterns co-created with the students - through language.

The change of language is moving RK from a “family institution” to “a professional organization”. We are among others changing the language game from “personal guilt” to focusing on “cracks in the wall” and improving possibilities for students by co-creating new stories.

Empathy, respectful, present and honest curiosity is some of the keywords or values mirrored in our language when we do best. It is an exciting way of being a human being!

Metaphors are very important parts of our appreciative language, we realized. When we say we are “looking for cracks in the wall” it embeds a whole story of appreciative behaviour and when we “put the light on what works” in the stories told, it gives different, but very helpful ideas in peoples minds.

When we are “gold hunters” and we are “looking for gold” in “the luggage of the students” we see images so clear that they actually influence the language games. These metaphors are powerful and we will play with the idea of how to embed this way of working in our pedagogical development. Maybe the students could help us find a lot of metaphors and help us find an appreciative angle to interpret it!

Mentoring

Personal inspiration or mentoring is highly appreciated at Ringe Kostskole at all levels.

The employees see personal mentoring by the leaders as a very powerful inspiration to the systemic world. Personal mentoring seems to be a very powerful inspiration as a support to using the ideas from the systemic education.

The feeling of “psychological oxygen” in this mentor relation created on humour, engagement and demands in a mix-up, makes us think of how we can be just as inspiring mentors to the youngsters we take care of! What will make it happen?

The reflections have created awareness of the language games and we are increasingly conscious to change the relation from “doing to,” to “doing with” the student. Focusing with the student on new stories creates confidence and new positions in the stories.

Models and Frames

Appreciative constructionist ideas and language, inviting to share knowledge at different levels, embeds the values we have decided for RK. Under a “linguistic umbrella” we think it can be useful to create some models and ideas to keep the appreciative processes going along a time line and at the same time dig deeper into the gold mine of increased complexity and new actions. We will play with models such as CMM to coordinate the complexity of contexts in the social worlds, we create at the school. In the development of new, appreciative language games we could play with different ways of being curious, asking certain question types and creating different kinds of reflexive contexts for everybody.

Different perspectives and certain language games, such as metaphors have a very strong power embedded. We need to create a circular system giving space to and connecting to formal demands from laws and decisions, as well as local rules; and at the same time create a continuing transparent systemic development.

Gender and communication is a topic we should address in the future to see what is helpful and when, for the students. Could we develop new language games to address different kinds of communication with fewer words as well?

Dream and vision talk is an essential model, which is very helpful for the development of hope and direction in the lives of frustrated youngsters at RK. And reflecting together with the teachers about their personal network might cause some pain, but in the end it creates possibilities of influence on a more satisfying future. We have experienced that the students are actually able to formulate values and visions from the 8th grade. Maybe we can develop this helpful model further to collect all the stories where the student succeed and feel proud?

There are plenty of possibilities to develop in this vision work, so we see lots of working points and lots of inspiring dialogues ahead in our never ending systemic constructionist development process. Emerging processes has become a state of mind as an employee at Ringe Kostskole!

The Feedback Process of the Story

I presented the story for the two interviewees and their leader in a two hour interview. I sent the materials a week ahead to be sure they had the chance to read it carefully before the interview and to be sure I was transparent about the context of the meeting.

Shortly after, I got an email from the leader with an impressive message:

“Thank you. *It suddenly strikes me how much we have obtained already and what we are going for and it gives me a deep sense of happiness, pride and satisfaction” (My translation).*

Mariann Kordif, Pedagogical Leader, Ringe Kostskole

This statement in itself created a feeling of the first circle being closed in a respectful way with a feedback story that seemed useful for the school as well.

In the meeting I invited any comment they might have into the light. The overall answer from the interviewees was that they could see themselves all through the story and that they found it inspiring.

There were no points at all they wanted to be changed.

The leader felt witnessed by the story and she added that it suited their ideas and created transparency in the expected development at RK.

The participation of the leader was very enriching for me, because it created varied perspectives in the understanding. The leader had been the one to introduce a systemic constructionist approach at the school years ago and therefore it was a valuable story to her, embedding a lot of details of how this process was developing.

I presented the story bit by bit. The interviewees connected to their own words, which I had carefully embedded in the text. They found the text very attentive.

I suddenly realized how brilliant this way of re- and co- creating a story created “differences that made a difference,” tightly connected to the interviewees’ own words!

An important statement emerged from one of the interviewees: ***“We will be here as leaders on behalf of the values and the organization”.***

They were very occupied by turning the power language, which had been the language of the organization for many years, into a respectful language.

Appreciative language, including metaphors, was inspiring to connect to in the focus group. They named as an example “*working with new stories*” instead of talking about “*splitting*⁴⁶” and similar “*power language*” words.

Concerning development in the organization the frames were decided and *the participants reflected on whether personal or team development came first.*

The idea of letting the staff discuss their idea of “a brilliant systemic teacher or pedagogues” was seen as very helpful as a metaphor helping to create a developmental direction.

The notion of mentoring inspired the interviewees and they saw lots of possibilities in developing this approach at different levels!

The interviewees wanted to use parts of the story for their own development in a Leadership Diploma, connecting to their considerations about their own positions as they were both intended to be members of a new leaders’ team. I saw this as a valuable way of creating circularity and “keeping the reflections alive”.

I explained my idea of a second circular process. *I showed my ideas and they were very positive towards my suggestions, but it was too far from their context right now to go into detailed discussions.*

Closing the 1st Circular Process

I experience that the mutual prospective (Penman) in “1st circular process” has been closed in a meaningful way. The process gave back useful information and I learned a lot about the power of a new narrative based on interviews. I imagine it would have been even more interesting if I had interviewed several employees and embedded their story in the research. I chose two interviews because of the limited frames of this study.

⁴⁶“Typically youngsters moving between very different feelings for the same person”.
(<http://www.netpsykiater.dk/Htmsgd/borderline.htm>)

Research based Considerations

The 2nd Circular Process

The themes in the findings, and ideas embedded in the interviews and “the web story of RK” created inspiration “towards good change”(Penman) and to evolve a second circular process mirroring some ideas of ways to go on prospectively (Penman), based on the themes from the interviews.

Making the research influence my own way of teaching and creating learning processes changed my way of teaching as a parallel process to the research from the very beginning.

A few examples from my emerging practice:

- I introduced “interviews” as a tool to share different experiences in general between teachers at my courses
- Video analyzes of “cases from real life” with students **representing different positions** and levels (Daisy, CMM⁴⁷) worked out fine. (Positioning each other and the students are an important key word at RK as well).
- I intend to slowly develop “case work” as an action research based model for small “units” at each school.⁴⁸
- I am going to try out an idea from Peter Lang (In Kristensen, 2007D) about teachers visiting each others’ schools and observe and ask reflexive questions. I would like to co-develop this idea with my students as a form of mentoring, which is seen as very powerful in the interviews!
- Appreciative values and language as keywords, has made me attend new groups of students with more interviews in details about their values/punctuations and how they actually show in their private lives and their work life.

These changes have until now given me a lot of positive feed back from the students and inspired me to keep developing the ideas!

⁴⁷ Pearce’s daisy model and my idea of developing further my “school CMM model” The first attempts can be seen in a paper from last year (Kristensen, 2007B).

⁴⁸ I am considering an idea of translating “Action Research for Teachers” by McNiff and Whitehead and maybe co-create a Danish perspective and context.

Circular Models

Bateson's idea of circularity embedded in the story of the blind man and his stick makes it meaningful for me to talk about two different circles in my research. On the other hand the inspiration from the first circle is closely interwoven with the second circularity through the themes and their experiences as shown above. I can see the two circles as one overall action research in my own perspective, but as one first circularity process for the interviewees, relatively closed by the focus interview at RK. It has been very important for me to end this "first Circle" in a respectful ethical way feeding back to the system before I went on. The focus group interview confirmed that the work with models was my context, so I have extracted ideas and inspiration from the first circle to the next level embedding the ideas in new perspectives.

Research Reflections and Learning

I have been writing reflections and field notes in a learning log book as basis for my own learning, especially in the research process, in order to become a trustworthy researcher (Kvale, 1997) in dialogue with myself, my group and my advisors.

I have tried to embed some of my discussions and reflections in the dissertation and I have tried to be open minded to the deontic logics (Pearce, 2007), that are actually conducting parts of my possible actions.

I have experienced the importance of clarifying my language and set up through a pilot interview.

I send the semi-structured questions to the interviewee to offer the best possible openness and create possibilities for reflexivity before going into the interview. These ethical perspectives have shown their value to me in the way the interviewees felt respected and secure in the situation.

Professor Kevin Barge has been important creating reflexivity in my research, and my very powerful networking group at the M.Sc. study has been very important adding irreverent curiosity and support for the development of my research!

At a practical level the interviewees were considered as my co-creators together with their leader in their feeding back to me in the focus group interview based on the "web-story".

In this study I have had endless considerations of “how, when and who” in order to frame an ethical and respectful research. I have made a lot of choices and learned a lot about how to do and a few things about what I should not do next time - such as using complicated techniques in the transcription phase. I guess a very important consideration was to narrow down my research to two interviews. It gave me the chance to go deeper into the material. This was a necessary choice limited by time and space, but it gave me even more valuable results.

I was surprised by the effect of the analyses and how the themes showed up as an impressive answer to my research question and I have learned much more about the power of a reflexive, prospective primary research. I have been struggling with my deontic ghost⁴⁹ (Kristensen, 2006C), in my teaching and this research has changed my capability to let go the control and introduce “tiny bits of primary research” into my teaching and conducting open learning processes.

I started out my research by asking in my research question for the influence of the systemic constructionist theory, but I have realised through the research that practice was just as, or maybe even more influential on teaching and learning practices, so I added “and practice” to my research question!

My own Interviewing as a Research tool

In this 2nd circular process I went through the interviews again looking for signs of how my interviewing was working compared with my stated values. I found words that showed respectful, appreciative and transparent language as well as reflexive questions, generating space for new perspectives for the interviewees. I experienced that the “neutral and confirming sounds and words” such as “Ok”, “yes”, and “hmmm” increased the attention and the energy in the interview.

The open ended questions such as “What made this story a success? “ created a safe environment for reflections and my curiosity mirrored in my body language (video recorded) supported the “invitational approach”. It would be a natural part of a larger project to ask the participants for more details on what went well and what should be developed in my “Interviewing style”, but I have trained interviewing pretty much over the years, so I choose another focus this time.

⁴⁹ My “internally ruling” idea of being in control and to be presenting stuff to be “a real lecturer.”

In all I, as well as the participants, experienced the interviews as successful, but I did find some examples as well, where I was disturbing too much with new words or my own words instead of connecting to the language of the interviewee, so training is the way to go on. Asking for models was my own context and too far from the context the interviewees were occupied by. A few more examples in the table:

Text	Systemic categories	Researcher reflections
“Ok”, “yes” and “hmmmm” is very often used to confirm and coordinate the conversation	Confirming and asking for details.	It creates energy
What made this story a success? Any special things that made the difference?	Asks for details and turning points	Increasing complexity and reflections
What difference do you see when the whole organization is joining in connection to what happens in the team?	Asking about the relation between the org. and the team changing	Circular, reflexive question, that makes the interviewee bring in new aspects.
Are there certain ideas, things or ways to act, which inspires you especially? It could be a theory or a model.	To much disturbance- I try to be transparent mentioning a row of ideas I have thought of as possible answers from my position.	I have to be connecting instead of bringing in new ideas - the question was not clear.

Values and Transparency

My research has intentionally been conducted according to my values, listed in the beginning of the dissertation. I have struggled to plan and carry out my research as a **reflexive, appreciative** approach, looking for **skills, abilities and possibilities**, creating **respectful** and **safe relations** and so far my co-creators have been positive towards it.

I actually see myself **living out in practice** and research the same “**basic equality**” morality⁵⁰ as I try to expose in my teaching and the feed back from the participants has confirmed my story so far and I think my examination of my interviewing confirmed equality in behavior and language. It would have been interesting to go deeper into self reflexive learning, asking the interviewees what worked. I choose to leave that out because of the limited space.

Ideas and Models – a part of my 2nd Circular Process

How can I use the results of the first circular process to improve my own practice - as a lecturer working with theory? I will describe some themes and perspectives extracted from the interviews and intertwined with my knowledge and practice so far.

The late Norwegian Professor Tom Andersen asks his clients in therapy to “talk me into the word”⁵¹. I sense that “invitations” and “transformative words” are two important metaphors to “talk people into” Through models or structures, as I will describe in the following:

A CMM School model – a Suggestion of a Structure

This primary model is a hierarchical structure based on and inspired by Pearce & Cronen’s CMM hierarchical model. This basic structure has been developed in a former paper (2007B) with appreciative support from Barnett Pearce⁵².

- **Culture / subculture**
- **Externally decided frames at each school**
- **The parents and the local society**
- **The personal story of the teacher**
- **The teacher in the classroom**
- **The basic relations**
- **The episode**

⁵⁰ Peter Lang suggests that in every action we embed our morality

⁵¹ Personal conversation

⁵² This supportive co-creation was made via email and a meeting in Aarhus, Denmark, 2007

I have adjusted this model quite a lot based on the “levels in schools” I interpreted from the stories and values in the interviews.

Below I have added some examples from the interviews and my “translation” to the “school levels,” I have described in the new and extended model. It is important to stress that I do not consider this a normative model; it is rather a way to ensure that we embed sufficient complexity in the appreciative development of schools by attending different levels.

If I present the model in a school development project, they can always negotiate adding or removing levels to make the model as meaningful for their local processes as possible.

In the table I have chosen some examples of my interpreted levels as they show in the extended model:

Interview fragments	Levels in the school hierarchy model
To see development from a group to being a team	The teachers co-operating in the school frames including their teams
It is not just a profession, it is a way of being	The personal story of the teacher
It is our work to look for cracks in the wall and look for what works.	The basic relations
In theory they could, but they did not want to put words into it..	The episode
We are moving from a "family institution" to a professional organization.	The parents and the local society
The whole organization is changing to be a professional one	Culture /and subculture
We should find out what kind of school we were after the new structure in the Societies	Externally decided frames at each school

The extended CMM School Model

- 1. The episode to be contextualized**
- 2. The “big C” Culture /and the local, “small c” culture**
- 3. Externally decided frames – the production domain, the laws and rules**
- 4. The students’ mutual relations**
- 5. The reciprocal relations in the leaders’ team and the staff**
- 6. The personal story of the teacher and the students in the episode**
- 7. The teacher and the students in the classroom systems and positions**
- 8. The parents and the local society**
- 9. The language games embedded**

The intentions are to examine and differentiate the story of a whole school or maybe a striking moment, an event or episode,⁵³ in different context layers in order to create complexity and make possible ways to go on appear in new stories or language games.

Professor Nordahl refers (Nordahl in Hansen, pp 38, my translation) to important conditions in school development that works and I see his research based notions as strong arguments for my choice of levels. It is especially interesting from my view that the two main points concerns relations between teachers and students and among students which is embedded in my levels 4 to 7.

Embedding Future Actions

This model is “merely a place marker”⁵⁴ so it might lack the potential of future talks in the headlines as noted by Peter Lang, but I think it is possible to embed appreciative inquiry and dream talk in the work at the different levels. The future will show itself if we embed circular and reflective questions⁵⁵ and ends a session with some action- oriented questions as developed by Carsten Hornstrup et al. (2005, p 71).

⁵³ Barnett Pearce’s expression for a narrative we are working with.

⁵⁴ Barnett Pearce’s expression about the LUUUT model.

⁵⁵ The Milan group developed these questions and inspired among others Karl Tomm and KCCF.

Monitoring Pedagogic Practice learning Processes

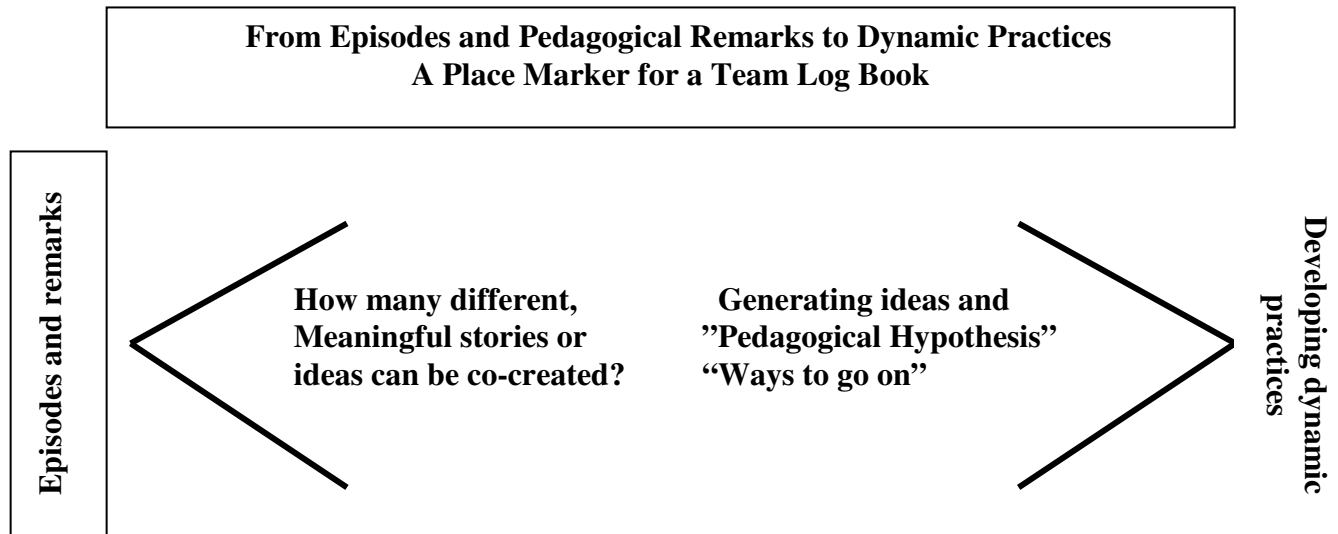
I have suggested a model for conducting practice learning at different levels based on specific episodes through sharing processes and learning with the whole school.

This model has been developed from a primary model, and it has been changed according to the themes in the interviews, and the very important “circularity model” accumulating knowledge over time, has been added. This model is coherent to the interview statements appreciating the power of an **appreciative positioning** of all participants in **mentoring/supervising** processes looking for changes instead of failures. A respectful model to **teach skilled or even resistant people** by creating a good environment as requested in the interviews and to **keep the practice development alive**.

This model could be useful as the place marker within a log book project for a team work, **digging for gold**. It could be the frame of questioning with dignity and genuine curiosity as well, as requested in the interviews:

Systemic Categories and Inspiration	Researcher Comments	Relating to my Values and Ideas. The 2nd Circular Process
What works: Questions, taking care of dignity and being genuinely curious	Values and ideas that works.	Models focusing on what works
Create good environment at a meeting without judging.	The dialogue is embedded in an appreciative context - how do we create this?	Asking without judging
Implementing a new way of thinking	Implementing is an ever lasting process in a systemic society. How do we do that?	Continuity in time A circular model through more semesters?
Skills and abilities Analyzing practice Create space for observation of what we are doing	“A good systemic leader and teacher” some interesting values	How to develop “the best” leader or teacher” Create “a scene”, environment
Reflexive context as a help towards resistance	How was reflexivity part of showing the employees the system they are part of?	reflexivity
To tell a new story	Improving possibilities for students with new stories	Meta level language

A place marker for a team log book



The intention is to work with a “daily life episode” they are concerned of, in the context close to the participants.

Instead of “Black and white” language as named in the interviews, the teachers and pedagogues are encouraged to talk together and find as many different meaningful stories about the episode as possible. Based on these good stories and successes the teachers together or with a mentor/supervisor reflect on how they can find new ways to go on.

The supervisor or mentor facilitates the learning processes and develops ideas with the participants on how they think the skills embedded in the episodes could be useful in other situations.

Trying out all good ideas and noticing in the log book the increasing number of successes; will be the next part of the process! No one is blamed and significant successes are likely to be highlighted.

The next very important process in the log book is described in fig. 2. In my interviews, there were concerns on how to keep the process going at RK. How can new employees or just people from another team learn from the success of the students or the employee?

This model is my suggestion of a way to support the process and create a “Gold digger book” or a “Super success Diary” to generate the important new ideas and skills that shows up.

A log book telling the success stories and generating what the student invites us into, can be the start of the new identity- narrative for an arriving youngster and it can create learning and complexity out into the different clusters of the organization as a whole.

A circularity Model for a Log book, Sharing and Maintaining Circular Knowledge over time

Fig. 2



This model embeds the professional, as well as the personal development, by connecting to increasing meta- reflective complexity and the possibility of positioning an internal mentor in different parts of the process. The processes embedded are much more complex and non-linear than the arrows indicate, but some parts are more primary than others as a foundation for the reflexive processes.

Team Based Action Research

My research has encouraged me to create “mini action research processes” at different context levels in the organization, but primary at the team or cluster level, and then feeding the new considerations as reflections and questions into the development at the school as a whole organization, which would be coherent to the organizational metaphor of a brain based cluster design with “the whole” built into the teams. (Morgan, p 100)

I see action research processes as a very inspiring way of keeping the systemic constructionist process alive over a longer time span for example at RK. The action research approach can be adjusted to the themes that occupies the organization right now and at the same time easily connected to further education as wanted at RK. To me an action research process connecting to “mentoring” between students and between staff members, could be a most inspiring action research project to start up in new school development projects and even in connection to a new course for experienced advisors I am conducting next year at the UCL.

Mentoring and Positioning

In the interviews the notion of mentoring at different levels was very significant as inspiration for me as well as for the interviewees at the focus group interview. Some examples show that the interviewees were very inspired by single persons and that mentoring is highly appreciated between the employees as well as the students. I see a clear connection to my way of “learning Peter Lang” in Maturana’s understanding. Embedded in the mentoring processes I see the possibilities of “re-positioning” others through “a meta- language⁵⁶” (Pearce in Kristensen, 2007A) and future- oriented actions.

Systemic Categories and Inspiration	Researcher Comments	Relating to my Values and Ideas. The 2nd Circular Process
Personal inspiration or mentoring is highly appreciated!	How can mentoring be part of systemic ways of working?	Personal mentoring and mutual inspiration is highly appreciated- it must be part of a model
Mentors to help newcomers	Mentoring as a tool seems very valuable for the school	Mentoring show all the time
Role model between the students		Mentors and role models are powerful
Personal mentoring from a leader seems to be the most powerful inspiration to the systemic world for the interviewee!!	Very interesting to see the strong impact of single persons! How can this be part of a school development model?	Mentoring- again!
Respected teachers' voices spread "it" in a good way in the team	Sharing and listening seems to work... What is the impact of "respected employee"?	"Respected employee" creating a mentor group at each school?

Based on the energy in the mentoring approach in the interviews, I will introduce my new students at University College Lillebælt to "Tiny Action Research Projects" concerning the following themes:

- **Leaders mentoring employees.** Peter Lang's appreciative approach will be in focus.
- **Teachers mentoring new colleagues.** Haakon Haartveit among others shows a splendid, systemic model for guiding without a supervisor. (in Kristensen, 2006)
- **Teachers mentoring each other.** Peter Lang suggests teachers to visit and observe each others' schools and work together reflecting on strength and abilities. (In Kristensen, 2007D, A DVD interview).
- **Teachers mentoring students.** The stories in the interviews shows how enabling new positions for the students. "Looking for cracks in the wall" and "digging for gold" in the students' stories embeds a respectful and powerful way to mentor change processes and highlight them.

Pearce suggests changing the meta-language in a local culture in order to change the positions (in Kristensen 2007A). This is a possible approach to enable that.

- **Student mentoring student.** The new stories of themselves make the students position themselves different in new contexts, such as in the meetings with new students. The experiences at RK show lots of possibilities and I think we can develop the language and the ways to create the frames for this challenging group of students as well.

Pedagogical Remarks and Transformative Words

I had a dream of ending up with some pedagogical remarks⁵⁷ and some transformative words⁵⁸ enabling me to go on in different ways based on my findings in the interviews, and through the theoretical journey I have been through these years at the master's study.

I am amazed how much “the story of me” has changed through the work with this Dissertation. I have experienced that some “transformative words” must have been hiding in the text as I experience large changes in my own way of working at the UCL already.

The ideas and findings below are valuable pedagogical remarks to me, containing transformative language for my future work:

Developing schools as organizations at different levels through appreciative language within a flow-based respectful witness approach

- 1. The Extended CMM School Model – a suggestion of a structure**
- 2. A place marker for a team log book - monitoring pedagogic practice learning processes**
- 3. A circularity model for a log book, sharing and maintaining knowledge over time**
- 4. Mini action research projects for teams or small clusters in schools**
- 5. Mentoring and re-positioning through transformative meta-language**

⁵⁷ Inspired by Wittgenstein's idea, that he was only able to make remarks in his writings...

⁵⁸ Peter Lang, private conversations.

My Dreams of the Next Ten Years

As a lecturer I will try to make the ideas and topics emerge in my teaching at the University College Lillebælt as well as in a broader sense through my presentations and writings in different contexts.

I have already obtained lots of changes in my personal, professional development and I want this process to continue embedded in a systemic constructionist environment.

I intend to use Peter Lang's invitational approach and "invite students into the good news" through my courses.

I am the editor of a new anthology about systemic constructionist theory informing teaching and learning practices in schools, and I expect an article based on my research to be part of the anthology in order to get transformative words and action out to a broader audience and create flow generating witness thinking.

Kolding 10. 05. 2008

René Kristensen

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www.kcc-international.com (KCCF)	www.keldpetersen.dk (Front page)
www.macmannberg.dk (MacMann Berg)	www.RKris.dk (My home page)

Web based Enclosures for my Research

The enclosures will be available from my homepage for 6 months for the readers of this dissertation in order to present my premises in a transparent way. They are copy protected and not for public use.

If these enclosures would be of interest for your reading and interpretation of this dissertation after 6 months in a research context, please send me an email.

Headlines of the enclosures	Links
Information package for the school board, The school leaders and the interviewees	Enclosure 1 Leaders, board, interviewees.pdf
Interview guide, the revised edition (in Danish)	Enclosure 2 Interview guide dansk.pdf
Systemic categories and inspiration and my research comments	Enclosure 3 Int. 1 and 2 syst. categories.pdf
Systemic constructionist categories and inspiration, generated into eight themes	Enclosure 4 Themes in the interviews.pdf
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CMM School model levels “extracted” from the interviews	Enclosure 7 Analysing different levels - CMM school model.pdf



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