

# Redescribing the theoretical approach to Reflective Practice-based Learning

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# Reflective Practice-based Learning

## The theoretical approach

Starting point: *White Paper on Reflective Practice-based Learning* (Horn et al., 2020).

## Reflection in the learning process

- Critical thinking (Dewey, 1910)
- Reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983)

## Experience, thinking and action

- Learning is a continuous process grounded in experience (Kolb, 2015)

(In addition: Six Pedagogical principles)

# Objective

To formulate a *redescription* of the theoretical approach to Reflective Practice-based Learning.

- Reflection
- Action

## **Theoretical framework**

Sociological systems theory by Niklas Luhmann.

# Methodology

## Redescription

- Must not repeat a description.
- Must not describe something new (Luhmann, 2001).

## Self-description

- Redescription is a self-description.
- A self-description is communication, and therefore is operating in the medium of meaning.
- Meaning: the difference between what is actually given and the possible result from it (Luhmann, 1995, p. 74).

## Meaning dimensions

- Factual
- Temporal (time)
- Social

Luhmann (2013), p. 340-341

# What is reflection?

- Common sense understanding (Moon, 2004) – reflection is:
  - something that we do while learning to understand something more detailed.
  - something complicated that results in a solution that was not obvious from the beginning.
  - done on purpose.
- Dewey (1910) defines *reflective thought* as the active, persistent, and careful considerations one can have about beliefs and knowledge and the conclusions based on these.
- “From Technical Rationality to Reflection-in-Action” (Schön, 1983)

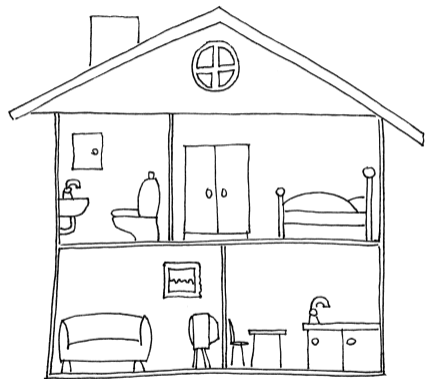
# Three forms of self-references

## Self-references for social and psychic systems

- Basal self-reference
- Reflexivity
- Reflection

## House metaphor

- The building materials that make up the house are connected.
- The house and its rooms change over time.
- The rooms constitute the house.



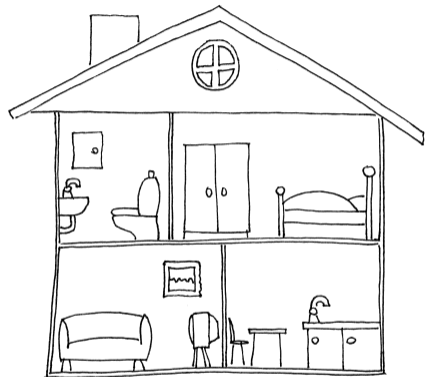
# Basal self-reference

## Teaching as a social system

- Communication events refer to each other.
  - Questions, repetition, building on what was uttered.
  - “Do you mean...?”, “I agree...”

## Student as a psychic system

- Conscious events refer to each other.
  - Rethinking the same things (mind spin).
  - A narrative is forming, an explanation.



We cannot really call it “reflection”, but basal self-reference is the connection between the elements/event.

# Reflexivity

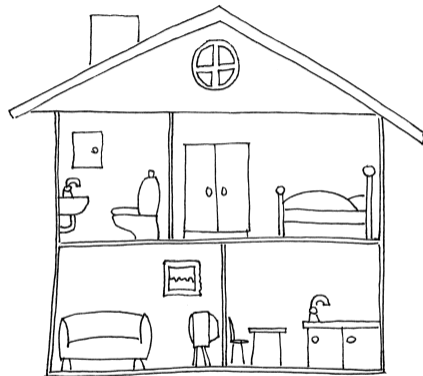
## Teaching as a social system

- Communication changes over time.
  - This can be the theme of the communication.
  - “Yesterday we talked about. . . , but today we will talk about. . . ”

## Student as a psychic system

- Conscious events change over time.
  - Rethinking the same things
  - Learning about learning
  - “I had now idea yesterday, but today I understand. . . ”, “I still don’t get it. . . ”

Writing down thoughts and/or communication to help the memory.





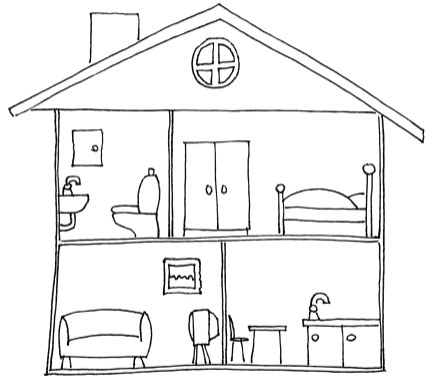
# Reflection

## Teaching as a social system

- Communication can refer to itself as a system.
  - We can agree to meet tomorrow.
  - The “common” understanding of use as a group.

## Student as a psychic system

- I observe myself as distinct from something/somebody else.
  - “I am ...”, “My understanding is ...”



# Example - the portfolio

Qvortrup & Keiding (2015) point out the important distinction between reflection and reflexivity.

## Communication

- Students learning can only be observed in communication.
- The teacher has no direct access.
- They need a structural coupling through communication.

## The portfolio

- Scaffolding the students' self-assessment in relation to learning results.
  - The reflection of the system.
  - Observes achievements in relation to the better/worse code.
- Scaffolding the self-assessment of the learning process over time.
  - The reflexivity of the system.

# What about actions?

## Communication constitute social systems

*The elementary process constituting the social domain as a special reality is a process of communication. (Luhmann, 1995, p. 139)*

But, if we only see communication as a chain of utterances, we miss the selective events – the actions that can be attributed to the communication (Luhmann, 1995, p. 164).

## Actions as reduction of complexity

- Communication
- Meaning
- Decision making

# Theory and practice as situation

## Theory vs practice?

*The word “practice” is ambiguous. (Schön, 1983, p. 60)*

- (– and therefore could also be working with theory)
- Practice is an action like any other action.

## Situation?

I suggest to moving from the distinction between theory and practice to the distinction between event and situation.

- Communicative events are attributed to a situation.
- A specific system.
- A situation “carries” both the system and its environment.

# Redescription of RPL

## Self-reference

- Reflexivity (temporal dimension – before/after)
- Reflection (social dimension – system/environment)

## The system

- The psychic system (consciousness)
- The social system (communication)

## Situation

- Communicative event.
- Specific self-reference.

## Action

- Reduction of complexity
- Decision making

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