

Abstracts

Return of the Authority as Empowerment? Work and Subjectivity in Transformation - A Materialistic View on the 'New Spirit of Capitalism'

Peter Olsén

This article suggests a materialistic interpretation of new pivotal trends in work in western late capitalistic countries with a specific view to the implications for 'subjectivity at work'. To begin with, early phases of 'the spirit of capitalism' are described - with emphasis placed on Fordism and its social divisions and contradictions, including workers' orientations. From an empirical study of Tayloristic work, specific forms of authority and workers' defense are pointed out. The defense mechanisms in question are not interpreted as a general 'resistance to change'; rather as a manifestation of conflicts of interest, containing political resistance as well as discipline.

Following this; pivotal trends in the globalization of neo-liberal late capitalism - from the eighties and later on - are described, including the implications for companies' 'post-fordist' organizational structure and working conditions. The new conditions impact on the traditional demands including the relationships between employer and employees, management and workers, but they do not simply eliminate or supersede them. They rather overlay and restructure them; thereby adding new characteristics to conflicts and contradictions.

Finally, an empirical study of a post-fordist organization in flux is presented. Here,

resistance is 'overcome' - i.e. defeated - as employees seemingly give up their former orientations and experiences in order to comply with endless demands of 'development'. In a mixture of compulsion and motivation, a *specific subjective dynamic* appears - characterized by a 'flight forward'. The study hereby demonstrates 'empowerment' - not in the sense of liberation and self fulfilment, but in the sense of a '*broken autonomy*'. Learning hereby playing the role as a new version of discipline.

On this basis, seven basic theses are suggested in regards to new contradictory conditions which management and employees have to come to terms with, given the neo-liberalistic forms of organization and work. The article rounds off, further presenting theses on the consequences for new subjectivity, discipline, and stress - and (potential) forms of solidarity and resistance to work.

Practice Theory and Working Life Studies.

Anders Buch

The article introduces the practice theoretical perspective as a conceptual framework for understanding working life. Practical theory is a long and wide spread tradition within the human and social sciences. It sets out to understand people, work and society based on the activity and actions performed in sites. This article explains the basic assumptions and concepts

of the practice theoretical perspective. The article focus on how recent practice theory – in the version of Theodore Schatzki's theory of social life - develops concepts to understand how social life is organized through practices and how normativity in practice helps to determine actions. It is argued that the practice-theoretical approach can offer working life research concepts that enable a systematic and reflected study of working life as bundles of practices.

WORK AND LEARNER IDENTITY

Sissel Kondrup

This article outlines how Archer's Critical Realist approach and concepts of personal identity, natural, practical and social concerns (Archer, 2000, 2003) and Salling-Olesen's Life-historical approach rooted in Critical Theory (2002, 2007) conceptualise the relation between work and identity. The life historical approaches suggest that identity is continuously formed, maintained or transformed in experience processes mediated by peoples' *immediate experiences*, their *life historical experiences* and *objectified experience/ cultural knowledge*. Archer's concepts of a fragmented reality and natural, performative and social engagement in the world emphasize that engagement always affords both natural, performative and social concerns influencing the formation of identity. The article points at how Archer's and Salling Olesen's concepts can contribute to a theoretical framework, enabling researchers to examine how peoples orientations, especially their *learner identities*, are formed through on-going engagement in specific work lives.

Such a framework is crucial in order to grasp how different groups have distinctive conditions for forming a proactive learner identity and engage in formal learning, and

thus for meeting the obligations prevalent in both national and transnational policies on lifelong learning. The framework was developed as part of an empirical study aiming to understand how people working unskilled jobs perceive the meaning of adult education and training, and how their perceptions are conditioned by their work life experiences.

Consideration of the differentiated nature of human engagement illustrates that the content and organization of work plays a significant role when people form, maintain and transform their learner identity. Task variations, physical strain and risk of degeneration, work procedures, speed and noise, degree of opportunities for creative problem solving, autonomy, career patterns, training and recruitment programs, etc. condition how people perceive their need and opportunity to engage in different kinds of learning activities in relation to their work situation.

The application of the dialectic concept of learner identity outlined in the article enables researchers to examine how peoples' perceptions of needs and opportunities to participate in job related adult education and training are formed by their individual life historical experiences and by the bodily, performative and social concerns they have in relation to their current and future work life.

Focusing on work life experiences and concerns can thus reveal how different kinds of work form the specific conditions for the development, maintenance or transformation of learner identities and for the opportunities of positioning oneself as an educable subject.

Generational differences between the professionalism in two generations of daycare pedagogues

Jo Krøjer, Steen Baagøe Nielsen & Kevin Mogensen

The significance of daycare institutions for society and for peoples life opportunities is a recurring subject in Danish, public debate. Daycare institutions are at the core of the organization of the Danish welfare state and the way it functions. In addition, daycare institutions are an example of how citizens, employees and welfare societies meet in institutionalized settings. In this sense, we find daycare institutions to be emblematic for the specific, societal development in the relationship between citizens, work and society that has evolved since the beginning of the welfare state. Here, researchers have long identified New Public Management as a major turning point in the welfare society and its institutions. Many studies have focused on the effects of NPM in different trades and organizations regarding the perception of the employees of their work tasks. In this article, we raise the question of whether it is possible to identify a before and a after when looking at NPM and its effects of employee understanding of their own professionalism. Our study has a critical perspective on the work in daycare institutions, while viewing them as an example of a welfare institution that employs a very large group of people. Our analysis indicate that NPM has had clear effects on pedagogues' ability to establish their professionalism. We find apparent differences between daycare educators' understanding of their own professionalism, depending on whether they have work experiences from the time before NPM or if they exclusively have experiences from the post-NPM period in the daycare area.

How do Danish workplaces handle work-related sickness? - Experiences from employees with mental disorders, low back pain or skin disease

Yun Ladegaard, Cecilie Nørby Thisted, Ulrik Gensby, Janne Skakon & Bo Netterstrøm

Mental health and musculoskeletal disorders constitute the largest health and safety challenges at the Danish labour market. An increasing number of employees are notified with these occupational diseases in the Danish Workers Compensation System. The primary objective of this study is to examine the nature of workplace disability management practices, when an employee is sick listed due to work-related disease. Secondary objectives are to analyze stakeholder roles and engagement at the workplace and to examine possible differences in relation to the type of disease. The experiences of employees with notified occupational mental disorders (N=436), low back pain (N=202) and skin diseases (N=132) are compared. The results indicate that employer efforts and preventive actions to accommodate the sick employees varied. Some employers applied accommodations at the individual level, but there appeared to be a lack of changes at workplace level, even though the disease was caused by the working conditions. Employees with work-related mental disorders perceived top management, line managers and the occupational health and safety representative more negative, and the union more positively than employees with low back pain or skin diseases. However, in most cases the occupational health and safety representative and the union representative were not directly involved in the process. Additionally, it seems that the work environmental authority seldom inspected the workplaces, even though an occupational disease was

notified. 35,1 % of the employees experienced that they resumed work too early, and 2-4 years after the disease was reported, 39,2 % of employees with mental disorders and 47,5 % with low back pain were unemployed. The findings point to challenges in workplace disability management practices and regulation at the Danish labor market, stressing the need for renewed policy attention that brings all stakeholders to the table.