

Transmission of learning between contexts and arenas: A qualitative study of young boys in vulnerable positions, their learning identities and possession of knowledge

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Abstract

This article illuminates transmissions of learning between informal and formal contexts. Three young boys with low socio-economic backgrounds, unstable family relations and challenges at school, are examined through their general interest and fascination for aesthetic phenomena, such as music, art and animation. How these boys benefit from their interests and knowledge at school, highlights factors that promotes and inhibit the transitions between their personal lives at leisure and a school context. The following research question is asked: *How do boys in vulnerable positions benefit from their own interest and knowledge at school?* To provide answers to this question, perspectives from the approach of *learning lives* offers a suitable theoretical framework. From this theoretical view, the focus is on how people create their own learning identity and use their own concepts of knowledge in different contexts. To interact with the boys and acquire insight into their experiences and their life, a research interview with an indirect approach is used. The method can be characterized as an informal conversation, based on the informant's own subjective perspectives. Analyzed and framed as a narrative study, the finding shows that fruitful transitions seem to depend on how these boys' knowledge, skills and interests *are met* at school. The meetings between the boys and the school are therefore affected by the social relations that occur in these contexts, and whether the boys get the opportunity to benefit from *the way they like to work and learn*. This is discussed through theories which can help to illuminate and recognize these elements, for to then put them in a theoretical framework.

Key words

Learning, knowledge, interests, contexts, aesthetics, vulnerable youth, school, leisure, indirect approach.

Introduction

Drop-out is a common international and national concern, as the phenomenon is often seen in the context of young people's vulnerability and risk of being marginalized. This is based on an ongoing trend, where school-based-learning has become significant for youths' ability to find work and participate in society. Drop-out can thus be a risk factor which can move young people towards social exclusion or the outskirts of society (Hammer & Hyggen, 2013, p. 16-19; Moshuus, 2017, p. 36). Several studies show that school interruptions often develop over time. This means that students who drop out, often have tendencies of low engagement and dissatisfaction toward school, early in their education (Helms Jørgensen & Nielsen, 2013, p. 25; Markussen, 2016, p. 37; Reegaard and Rogstad, 2016, p. 11-13). This article will therefore focus on drop-out as a meeting or interaction between the individual and the system, which has developed over time and as a result hasn't succeeded (Bunting & Moshuus, 2017, p. 1; Markussen, 2016, p. 37).

So, what is the school's role in this meeting or interaction? The answer to this question is of course complex with multiple causes. However, in line with the ongoing concern for drop-out, there is a growing interest to identify factors that can affect these processes and reduce the drop-out rate

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(Markussen, 2016; Rumberger, 2011). With the aim of finding such factors, I find relevance in the application of international and national research embracing the approach of *learning lives*. The framework offers a broad understanding of young people's learning and their contextual factors. At the same time, it argues for a curriculum based on these ideas, as a way to make more students succeed at school (Biesta, Hodkinson, Goodson, Field & Macleod, 2016; Erstad, Gilje, Sefton-Green & Vasbø, 2009; Lawy, Bloomer & Biesta, 2004, p. 205). With this as a theoretical framework, I have examined what three boys with low socio-economic backgrounds, unstable family relations and challenges at school, tell about how they like to learn, how they benefit from their skills and knowledge at school and whether this affects their school engagement. The expression "vulnerable positions" is therefore used to describe these boys' contextual frames and their risk of being marginalized (Hammer & Hyggen, 2013, p. 16-19). As we also know that boys are failing and dropping out of school at a higher rate than girls, it seems relevant to highlight these elements from a boy's perspective (Markussen, 2016, p. 28 and 32). The following research question is asked: *How do boys in vulnerable positions benefit from their own interest and knowledge at school?*

To answer this question, I have approached these boys' stories through their common interest and fascination for aesthetic phenomena, such as music, art and animation. As they all talk consistently about these phenomena, I have chosen to define them through the general term of aesthetics. I therefore use Dewey's (2008, p. 205) definition of aesthetics as the human's perception and enjoyment of art. Thus, aesthetics is seen as a value in these boys' everyday lives, rather than an object of high culture (Dewey, 2008; Li, Kenzy, Underwood & Severson, 2015, s. 568). The theoretical approach learning lives, can further be applied to illuminate this interest and fascination in the interface between different contexts (Erstad et al., 2009; Lawy et al., 2004, p. 205).

Learning lives approach

The concept of learning lives was first used by Biesta as an approach to study adults' learning trajectories through life courses. In a Norwegian context, the approach is rather used as a theoretical framework towards youth research, by exploring their community and learning across various contexts (Erstad et al., 2009, p. 100; Sefton-Green & Erstad, 2017). Despite the differences between the field of research, the approach focuses on the same ideas or the coherence between learning, identity and opportunity to act (Erstad et al., 2009, p. 100). For gaining insight into this coherence, the interface between formal and informal learning has been found relevant to study, as a source to understand how people position themselves as learners across different locations and contexts (Erstad, 2009, p. 100; Lawy et al., 2016, p. 205). This can be examined by emphasizing young people's personal narratives (Erstad et al., 2009, p. 100-101).

When young people explore and create their own *learning identity*, there will be processes which interact in these creations. Erstad et al. (2009, p. 100) highlight among other things the processes occurring *between people* as significant to the individual. Different relationships and different social contexts influence young people's identity and learning. This is related to how each individual often relates to other people or objects in the process of learning, in order to position themselves. At the same time, the approach focuses on the idea of *knowledge concepts*. This means that young people often have an idea of where their knowledge comes from and often relate *what they know and can do*, to different contexts (Erstad et al., 2009, p. 101 and 105; Lawy et al., 2004, p. 205-208). Thus, the learning that occurs outside the school within informal contexts is considered significant in the creation of knowledge concepts and learning identities (Lawy et al., 2004, p. 205-208).

The purpose is however, not to study contexts separately, but how to find fruitful transitions between the different dimensions of the young people's lives (Erstad et al., 2009; Sefton-Green & Erstad, 2016; Lawy et al., 2004;). As mentioned previously, it is argued that more students would succeed at school,

if they could profit from a curriculum, which among other things emphasizes youth's own experiences, knowledge concepts and identity as learners (Lawy et al., 2004, p. 205). Lawy et al. (2004, pp. 205 and 208) use the term *catalytic* when such transitions seem to succeed. School becomes an accelerator toward learning, while connecting, coordinating and transforming experiences and understandings from different dimensions of life. Not unlike, Erstad et al. (2009, p. 100) argue that the concept of learning lives maintains a holistic approach toward learning, because it breaks down the distinction between formal and informal learning. By doing this, the school seems to interact in the process of learning, which operates across different social contexts and arenas (Sefton-Green & Erstad, 2016, p. 4; Erstad et al., 2009, p. 100). I therefore wish to highlight the phenomenon of *learning* as something lifelong, which embraces a broader scope of human life and occurs in different contexts (Sefton-Green, 2016, p. 247).

As the learning lives approach states, the interface between informal and formal contexts or the transitions between different areas in youths' lives, can give valuable insight in the mechanisms that interact in school-based learning. With regard to drop-out, Bunting and Moshuus (2017, p. 1) also focus on these transitions and the mechanisms, as they claim that young people often leave school due to complex situations connected to several arenas in their lives. Young people often justify educational interruptions with single excuses, such as missing an exam or failing to get an apprenticeship. As they start to tell their stories more in more depth, Bunting and Moshuus (2017, p. 17) have discovered how these single excuses grow in complexity and are affected by several processes in different arenas of their lives. Bunting and Moshuus (2017, p. 1 and 17) therefore focus on drop-out as a complex process, where both individual and structural factors are involved. By studying the interaction between the individual and the system, this approach also highlights some of the elements as the concept of learning lives (Bunting & Moshuus, 2017, p. 1). With this as a starting point, we can approach the boys' stories or narratives with a holistic perspective, as we try to illuminate several arenas of these boys' lives.

Methods

The study can be characterized as a qualitative, narrative study, which give the individual stories value. Unlike generalization, prediction and control, narrative studies aim to get closer to the informants by studying their life-experiences and the contexts which they are surrounded (Creswell, 2013, p. 70-73, Thagaard, 2013, p. 133 and 139). Narrative studies have different interpretations and approaches to philosophical framework, but in this article, Dewey's (1925) pragmatic philosophy is embraced as a means to understand experience as something fundamental to our meeting with the world. Dewey (1925, p. 1-5) argues that when we experience something, it isn't the experience we experience, but nature itself through stones, temperature, rocks, health and so on. We can therefore say, that all kinds of experiences represent something real, though they constructed from our meeting with the world. In this way, Dewey's thoughts and worlds gives a philosophical framework to approach these boys' experiences and their contexts.

Moshuus & Eide (2016, p. 1) claims that it is possible to form a picture of how marginalization processes operate within cultural contexts, by studying these contexts in young people's lives. Therefore, the use of an indirect interview technique was found expedient, a technique Moshuus and Eide (2016, p. 7) highlight as a way to create trust between researcher and informant. This is based on the idea that marginalized youth often live in secret worlds, which can be difficult to discover. By putting away a research agenda with professional motivated question, the method's aim is to interact with the youth by allowing them to lead a conversation based on their own perspectives. An indirect approach can therefore be described as an informal conversation, where the researcher might experience that unasked questions get answered (Bunting & Moshuus, 2017, p. 6; Moshuus, 2012, p. 122; Moshuus &

Eide, 2016, p. 7). Furthermore, field notes are written right after the interviews, to provide complementary information regarding to the interview situations.

This method of interviewing is used as a common approach in an ongoing project, named *MaCE*¹, in which I have been participated. The project gives students the opportunity to conduct interviews, transcribe them, analyze and so on. By doing this, the students became co-researchers, while they operate in a fellowship with other students, teachers, researchers and professors. Because of my participation in MaCE, I have also been given access to the database of UngSA, which is a longitudinal study in Norway. Both projects, MaCE and UngSA, try to gain knowledge about marginalization processes and how they operate through the educational system, with aim of finding factors that reduce the rate of dropouts (USN, 2018).

Three boys between the ages of 18 to 21 were selected for this study. To preserve confidentiality, the boys have been given the fictional names Martin, Kjetil and Isaac. Two of them are informants from UngSA's database and one of them is interviewed by the author, during my participation in MaCE. The boys seem to have several elements in common, such as their low- socioeconomic backgrounds, unstable family relations and challenges at school. The boys also tell stories which include various elements, such as violence in close family relations, drug-abuse, learning disabilities and school interruption. At the same time, the boys share a strong interest, passion or fascination for aesthetics, as they all speak generally about their experiences with either music, art or animation. I have chosen to acknowledge the selection of these three boys as a *Purposeful Sampling Strategy*, as the informants have characteristics which can provide valuable insight in this article's and the project's theme (Creswell, 2013, s. 154-155).

As a co-researcher, I have been conducting research through the fellowship of MaCE. Group discussions and reflections, seminars with common themes and practical exercises are some of the factors which have strengthened this study's validity. I believe that several people, both students and professionals, have challenged my mindset and the interpretations I have made. At the same time, MaCE appears as a project which promotes innovation. One of the aims is to change systems, so society can assist vulnerable youth and avoid drop-outs to a greater extent than today (USN, 2018). We can see this as a pragmatic validity, since Dewey and other pragmatists, claim that knowledge becomes true *when it works*. With this as a foundation, we strive for knowledge which is practical, innovative and useful (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 74). Through a narrative analysis, the boys' stories have been studied chronologically and are presented thematically through the concept of aesthetics, with the aim to highlight the transitions between these boys' personal leisure and school context (Thaagard, 2013, p. 135).

Analysis

The three boys talk generally about their interest and passion for aesthetics, such as music, art or animation. The boys enjoy various activities related to music, which include playing the guitar, composing rap-music and listening to music. One of them also informs that he enjoys drawing, painting and making animations. Martin, for example, says that he has played guitar since he was thirteen and has normally practiced for several hours every day. He is now twenty-one-years-old and is neither employed nor attending to school. During his youth, Martin had to move from his parents to a foster care, since his father suffered from drug-abuse and Martin and his mother didn't get along. Martin

¹ The article is based upon an Erasmus + project, called *MACE- Marginalisation and Co- Created Education*. The project is also connected to a Norwegian, longitudinal study, called *UngSA- Youth, Completion and Dropout in Telemark*. Both projects use an indirect interview technique, developed by the Norwegian researchers Geir Moshuus and Ketil Eide.

also tells that he struggles with anxiety and has tried drugs. School was a place Martin never liked and he was therefore often absent from his vocational studies. Nevertheless, he completed two years of vocational studies and thereafter got the opportunity to start studies in music. This year can be seen as a contrast to his previous school experience, and he describes it as the "best year of his life". He says his fellow students were including and open, and he could also play the guitar every day:

M: It was okay, I played guitar all the time.

I: Mhm. Okay, yes.

M: I had played like eight hours every day, all the time.

I: Mm, it's no wonder you've become so good.

M: No, maybe not. But ... it's like... I had been sitting in my room, playing for eight hours a day, and then I started at a school where we have six hours of playing with a band. After this I didn't have anything to do, so then I sat in the garage and played even more, waiting for food and doing the same thing every day.

In this quote, Martin shows that he has great capacity when it comes to music and practicing. The fact that Martin has to practice a lot at school doesn't seem to put an end to practicing after school. Despite the fact that everyday life is filled with playing and practice, Martin says that this is the best year of his life. The learning process through music seems pleasurable to Martin and differs from his previous reactions and behavior directed towards school-based learning. In this way, Martin's narrative shows that he works better in a school context, when he gets the opportunity to benefit from his interest and the knowledge he possesses.

Another boy named Kjetil, seems to value aesthetics as an important phenomenon in his life. He tells that he likes to draw and create animations in his spare time, and that when he was younger, he was fond of art subjects at school. Kjetil, who is twenty-one-years-old, tells about his unstable family relations, anxiety and how he had failed to find apprenticeship after two year at vocational studies. He also seemed to struggle at secondary school as he had learning disabilities and found school boring. Kjetil tells that he often remembered things better when he could draw things. This is described in the field note: "He had problems with mathematics and at one point he said he struggled to remember people's names and at the same time, could forget what he was doing. But when he could draw it, he remembered things better". When Kjetil started at his vocational studies and learned about machines, the teachers often asked students to draw. This seems to be a way of working which Kjetil valued and mastered. The teachers also gave Kjetil a lot of credit for his drawings:

Also, you have some hours where you should draw and so... So, I got a lot of credit for the drawings, which were clear and all that Yes, the teachers at vocational studies were very impressed... Instead of just explaining how the machines are built up, we could draw how the machines works.

In the quote, Kjetil tells that he experiences success at school, when he is allowed to express himself visually through drawing. This can be seen in the context of Kjetil's other challenges at school, which consist of learning disabilities and boredom. This story shows that Kjetil benefited from his interest and passion for visual arts in a school context. The fact that the teachers give him credit for these drawings, seems at the same time to be significant to Kjetil. As he emphasizes the value of presenting something visually rather than just "explaining", he also seems to have an idea of what affects his own process of learning.

As mentioned, Kjetil did not get an apprenticeship after vocational studies and remains without work. He therefore gets help through NAV² to find out what he can do next. Kjetil says that the people at NAV, said that "he was good enough" and that he had to think through what he wanted for the future. He says, "I didn't really think very much about what I wanted to be until I started up there." After this, he applied for a study which focuses on visual expression through art and animation. After high school, he continued in higher education within the same subject. It's an advisor/counsellor at high school, which helped Kjetil to find a study which seemed relevant to him. As a whole, Kjetil's narrative shows that there are teachers and other adults in the system, who are aware of the knowledge and interest he possesses, and who then hope to put it to good use.

Another boy named Isaac, tells about his interest in rap-music. He composes rap to various beats on youtube and writes lyrics. He tells that he enjoys it so much that he can work on it for hours every day. Isaac is now eighteen-years-old and lives at a child welfare institution. He grew up with his mother's drug-abuse but was moved to a foster care at the age of seven. He was later sent to several institutions across the country. Isaac told that he has been using drugs from the age of thirteen, but is now, trying to become drug-free. He has therefore distanced himself from the social environment he has been a part of for many years. When Isaac was fourteen, he refused to show up at school and later interrupted his high school studies. Through Isaac's narrative, it appears as he has few positive experiences from school. He says he was isolated from his classmates, the teachers regarded him as an angry boy and some of the teachers bullied him or treated him unfairly. He couldn't imagine going back to school at this point in his life. According to Isaac, this has nothing to do with his intellectual capacity, but the fact that he is lazy toward schoolwork and dislikes it. Isaac would rather rap as a living but does not speak of any music education. In following quote, he tells about his experience from music lessons at secondary school:

A: I was not so fond of music...there was always a lot of music that was not my type of music. And it was ... no, I wasn't so fond of music. But I'm happy when I can make music of free will and when I, I'm the boss and in charge [laughing] of the work. Then I like it.

I: Because you felt that music was a bit like, it was decided what you were supposed to do...

A: Yes, it was decided which song we should learn, what we were supposed to do... It wasn't that fun.

In the quote, Isaac explains that he does not like the context surrounding music at school. He uses expressions like "it wasn't that fun" and highlights the value of autonomy and creativity when he composes at home. It might be possible that Isaac's scholastic history, where he experienced being treated badly, has affected his experiences, also regarding subjects he otherwise enjoys and has knowledge of. The music genre at school is also described as something negative, and later in the same sequence of the interview, he calls the music "old-fashion". It appears that Isaac may not like what the school represents through these music lessons, despite of his interest and passion for music.

Despite the boys' common interest, passion and knowledge toward aesthetic phenomena, there still seem to be differences in how they benefit from this at school. Martin and Kjetil are those, who get the opportunity to use their knowledge and what they like in a school context, and which results in a following engagement. Isaac on the other hand, seems to have too many negative experiences with school to benefit from his interest and knowledge. We can therefore presume that Martin and Kjetil's

² The Norwegian welfare Administration, which administers part of the national budget through schemes such as employment benefit, work assessment, allowance, sickness benefit, pensions, child benefit and cash-for-care benefit.

stories represent fruitful transitions between their personal leisure times and a school context, while Isaac's story shows the opposite.

As we study the interaction between the boys' personal lives at leisure and at school, it's possible to identify elements that promote and inhibit these transitions. One of these elements is showed through Kjetil's story, as he seems to value how the teachers and supervisors give him credit and help him to find a study that suits him. The teachers and supervisors seem to be aware of his interest and the knowledge he possesses. On the other hand, Martin's story shows that the transition is being promoted, when the way of working at school has similarities to the way of working at home. When studying music, Martin therefore has great knowledge regarding to what to do and what's expected from him. In contrast, Isaac's story indicates that the transition seems to be inhibited through his many negative experiences at school. This makes it difficult for him to take advantage of his personal interest and knowledge. Common for these boys are still their statements and ideas of *how they like to learn and work*. Martin seems to value the fact that he can play guitar for hours, just like he did at home. Kjetil on the other hand, says directly that he likes to draw things in order to learn. Despite Isaacs negative experiences from school, he also has an idea of how he likes to work. He emphasizes the way of feeling free and in charge of his own work, so that he can be creative and compose rap-music.

Based on the interpretations of these boys' stories and their quotes, there seems to be a recurrent element which can be formulated in the following way: The transition between the boys' personal lives at leisure and at school seems to be possible but depends on the boys' meeting with the school. The meetings appear to be affected by the social relations that occur in these contexts, and whether the boys can benefit from the way they like to work and learn. The finding can in this way show that these fruitful transitions seem to depend on how students' knowledge, skills and interests *are met* at school.

Discussion

The analysis shows that it can be possible to find fruitful transitions between personal lives at leisure and in a school context, but that the transitions seem to depend on how students' knowledge, skills and interests *are met* at school. Theoretically-speaking, Erstad et al. (2009, pp. 100 and 105) also claim that the school can relate to what happens outside the school, and in this way, create meaningful transitions between learning that takes place in different arenas. If the school manages to do so, they argue for more students to succeed in a greater extent than today.

We saw in the analysis that one of the boys, Isaac, liked to compose when he was home and could express himself on his own terms. Kjetil also told that he remembered og understood better when he could paint things. Martin never uses such words directly but tells that he used to play his guitar for hours every day. These stories indicate that the boys have an impression of how they prefer to learn and work, based on what creates meaning for them. It's interesting to connect this to the concept of learning lives by Lawy et al. (2004, p. 205; 2016), as an approach to understanding the relationship between human learning, identity and the ability to act in one's life. If we study the interface between formal and informal contexts and situations, we can gain knowledge regarding how young people position themselves and create identities as "learners" (Erstad et al., 2009, p. 100). Furthermore, we can understand the boys' descriptions of how they like to learn, as a way of constructing their own identity out of the learning processes they operate within, both at school and in their personal lives at leisure. It's worth studying these learning identities as they follow them through different contexts of life.

It also seems like the boys' learning identities interact in the transition between the boys' personal lives at leisure and school. If we, for example, study Martin's narrative, his commitment and engagement toward school seems to change when he attends studies in music. Martin, who used to

practice on his guitar for hours at home, had the opportunity to continue with what he likes it, the way he likes, in a school context. As mentioned previously, Lawy et al. (2004, pp. 205 and 208) use the term *catalytic* for such transitions. This means that the school becomes an accelerator for learning, because it creates connections, coordinates and transforms experiences from different dimensions in life. Thus, the knowledge Martin possesses will be transformed into a school context, and as a result of this transition, strengthen Martin's commitment and engagement to school (Lawy et al., 2004, p. 214).

Erstad et al. (2009, p. 100) argued that social relations that occur in different contexts can be significant for these processes. In Kjetil's story, this contributes to his engagement at school. We saw that Kjetil's teachers gave him credit for the drawings he made. He also told that supervisors at NAV and an advisor/counsellor at school helped him to choose his education, by focusing on his interests and the knowledge he possesses. This shows these professionals' use of Kjetil's interests, knowledge and skills as a way to meet him, create positive experiences and engage him in learning processes at school. Erstad et al. (2009, p. 100) claim that the processes that occur between people in different social contexts play a significant role in how learning identity develops. Learning-methods and tasks at school can in this way, always be related to the social contexts they appear within and the relationships *between people*, that follow. As a result of how Kjetil's interest, skills and knowledge are met, Kjetil creates a learning identity as a committed and engaged student. Based on Lawy et al.'s (2016, p. 214) argumentation, we can understand this as a process in which knowledge concepts and the individual's understanding, are transformed together through the social world.

As a counterpart to this, it appears that Isaac defines his identity within a school context as someone *who doesn't fit in*. This seems to inhibit the transition between his personal life and the school. Isaac says that he is lazy and doesn't bother to do schoolwork. Nevertheless, he still sees himself as productive and creative when he can compose music on his own terms at home. As earlier described, Erstad et al. (2009, p. 105) claim that young people often relate their knowledge to different arenas. This means that they have an idea of *where* their knowledge concepts have originated. In Isaac's case, it may seem like he relates his concepts of knowledge to his leisure time, rather than school. As a whole, Isaac's story never portrays school as a useful arena for learning.

On the other hand, we can see these transitions as more complex than the learning lives approach offers. The fact that Isaac says he's lazy and doesn't like to do schoolwork, can at the same time indicate other things. If we study his story, we know that he has lived in foster care and several child welfare institutions since he was seven-years-old. He has also dropped out of school, used drugs from the age of thirteen and had many negative experiences with school. Not unlike the learning lives approach, Bunting & Moshuus (2017, p.1) also focus on the transitions that exist between different arenas in young people's lives. These researchers (2017, p. 1, 14 and 17) refer to drop-out as a complex interaction or meeting between the individual and the system, which develops over time. They also claim that simple explanations which focus on why students choose to leave school, often conceal far more complex factors. For one to say that he is lazy and doesn't like schoolwork can be seen as an isolated, individual problem. Bunting & Moshuus (2017, p. 17) nevertheless explain that these isolated problems often grow gradually and end up in a complex situation, involving many arenas in the young person's life. According to Isaac's story, we can therefore imagine that there are several factors which have influenced why he hasn't benefited from his interests and the knowledge he possesses.

One may interpret Isaac's life situation and his school experiences as so complex that approaches like learning lives might be superfluous. Despite this, we still see that Isaac has created a kind of learning identity. In this way, it may seem like his learning identity isn't just about how he learns something effectively but is related to what makes sense to him. If this identity is met in a way that gives it leeway,

this discussion argues for a stronger engagement and commitment toward school (Lawy et al., 2004; Erstad et al., 2009).

Conclusion

To conclude, two of the boys have experiences with aesthetics, which become important for them in a school context. The discussion imply that they bring their own interests, knowledge concepts and their own learning identities into their meetings with the school (Erstad et al., 2009; Lawy et al., 2004). The fact that the teacher and advisor/counsellor are aware of this, seems to be significant for one boy, especially. If such transitions were explored, the discussion indicates that more students can become engaged in school-based-learning (Erstad et al., 2009). On the other hand, we see that one boy's experiences with aesthetics, don't get reflected as a positive phenomenon in a school context. It has been suggested that he has too many negative experiences from school in general, which dominate his story. These negative experiences seem to interact in a complex process, which also include other arenas in his life (Bunting & Moshuus, 2017, p. 17).

Based on this study, I would like to argue for an indirect approach to pedagogy where teachers can be trained to search for learning situations which young people who are identified as vulnerable, practice in settings out of school. Such learning situations might strengthen the interaction between these students and the school, as the students develop the ability to use their own concepts of knowledge, learning identity and interest in this context. This untraditional concept may be challenging to practice in the everyday stress at school. Still, I want to embrace this idea, as it highlights the study's epistemological approach through pragmatism, describing knowledge as *something that works* and makes us capable to deal with the world (Dewey, 1925; Kvale et al., 2015, p. 357). In this way, we can understand the transition between personal life at leisure and at school as fruitful and useful, because it may appear as a way to create meaning in the lives of vulnerable youths and encourage them to engage in furthering their education (Dewey, 1925, p. 1; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 74).

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