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These are results and thoughts from my research at Swedish theater academies.

Within a time span of about three years, I have interviewed just over 40 students from the four theater academies in Sweden. Driven by an interest in their view of collectivity and individualism in relation to education, the acting profession and society. For the same purpose I have also talked to and interviewed a number of teachers from theater academies about their experience of contemporary students in relation to collectivism and individualism, in a teaching context.

We live in an individualized society; the contemporary is individualistic. (A common opinion.) The teachers I talked to generally experience today's students as individualists. (Click Keynote, Teacher quotes) The common experience can be summarized as follows: the younger generation (generation Y or Millennials) is individualistic. They behave differently than previous generations. They want to know why they should expose themselves to certain knowledge and why this particular knowledge is important to them, right now. They want to choose specific parts of the education that they perceive as important for their individual development and future. (Click Keynote, "Millennials" quote) They have lower or no beliefs in authority¹ and do not see school as the only important thing in their lives.

The students I interviewed.

The students all had a clear idea of how present society works and what characterizes the time we live in now. (Click Keynote, Students quotes) ~~They also generally seem to have a clear idea of their position and how their future will unfold.~~ On issues of collectivity and group commonality, a vast majority expressed the importance of cooperation and everyone identified them self as having a very good cooperative ability. Generally, they were clear on the importance and the necessity of working in groups. They know what a collective is and the importance of a collective in class and for actors. They yearn to work in strong collectives and create together with others. To be a cog, or a part. Surprisingly, many of the students expressed a dream of a permanent employment at a larger theater institution after graduation. Or maybe this desire is entirely logical.

¹ Millennials don't disrespect authority (some do, sure, but as a whole); we disrespect authoritarianism. What I mean by this is that Millennials value direction, leadership, and the authority that is based in know-how and experience. But we resist the type of authority that originates in a "because I said so" attitude. We want to know *why* things should be done a certain way. (<https://leadership.lifeway.com/2015/02/19/authority-authoritarianism-and-the-millennial-generation/>)

In an increasingly harsh working climate, you may dream of stability and a secure future. Almost all students (96%) self-evaluate as easy to work with and good cooperators.

Now, here we have two different images of the same object.

Contemporary society, I borrow a quote from Zygmunt Bauman: "liquid modernity". Meaning, a society that is difficult or impossible to grasp. A world that is so complex that no one can penetrate it, or overview it. We live in an individualized time and everyone is involved in it, regardless of position or age, Bauman again: "individualization is a fate not a choice"

So, back to school.

In this sense we are, like the younger generation, trying to manage a more individualized life. Maybe in a slightly different way, but we are coping with the same problem. Generally, throughout society, organizations have 6 times more goals to achieve now than 50 years ago. 6 times more goals to achieve! Every new goal to achieve makes the organization more complex and difficult to understand.

We live and work in an individualized time, which doesn't necessarily mean that we are all individualists.

(Click Keynote, Words) A complex society. How are human beings affected by our mobile, international, elective, complex society? Is there a future? Or to zoom in; How does an art student handle our time in relation to the given teaching?

When our complex world seems incoherent, it is easy to lose or experience a lack of control. Control is an important ingredient in a person's quest for identity and self-confidence. But if you do not have the ability to control, or grasp the world you live in, you will, never the less, try to control what you can grasp or overlook, or what you think you can. To create a tangible, controlled reality, it is quite natural to try to take control over your own immediate future; education, identity, extended identity, your body. Some of the students felt anxiety for their future opportunity to find work, based how they appear on social media. They felt from day one at school objectified and rated. I met students complaining about the lack of collective training at their school and also students who had chosen their school according to its collective approach in education.

But, as I've argued before, we all are operating in an individualized era. So, when we complain about the individualistic students we do it from a more individualized position, like it or not. And in doing so we may be singling out problems that should be seen as a part of a bigger or broader picture. What I mean is that we have to see this present society we all live in as the core tone of these individuals. So, they are just a logical result of this time. What we need to take a closer look at is how do we create the best foundation for students, living today, to be able to create, to learn both collectively as well as individually.

How do we convince these millennials to go to classes even if they don't know the instant benefit for their own process? How do we convince them to learn by seeing others work, not just focusing on their own work? Of course there are no absolute answers to these questions. But let me talk about three different concepts in three different layers of a school organization.

First; The accountable leadership

A school organization that have the possibility to create an educational pedagogical foundation, put the different work teams in focus and create sound conditions for them; time for reflection and psychosocial development, can succeed in creating an accountable organization².(Click Keynote, Richard F. Elmore: Accountable Leadership)

A school organization with a common pedagogical foundation should be more stable than a school relying more on individual teacher's performances. Not saying that skilled teachers are not needed!! This organization is stronger, would provide better academic results, and be better suited to stand up against or implement external requirements without losing its organizational identity.

(Click Keynote, Collective intelligence; Philip Runsten, Kajsa Asplund, Andreas Werr)

Second; Collective intelligence:

For the individual teacher: In this individualized time it may be important to remember, although contradictory, that we educate individuals, in a more or less collective environment. The admission is personal. The learning is personal, through a collective arena. To reach the best results in group classes, the teacher's role is to create the circumstances for an intelligent collective to flourish. Where the group have opportunities to gain collective knowledge. (Click Keynote, Collective Intelligence)

How? The most important thing is to create "safe spaces". Not just in the sense of places free from any form of threat or abuse. But create safe places in a psychological context.

² Richard F. Elmore: Accountable Leadership

Third; Psychological safety, (Click Keynote, Psychological safety; A.C. Edmondson)

Can be defined as the experience of a group being in a safe place for interpersonal risk taking. If we as members of a group are free from feelings of threats to our person or identity our ability to share and embrace knowledge will increase. Group members are then willing to share experiences and perceptions and shortcomings; we sponsor the ability to create collective intelligence!³

My teaching is based on 3 concepts:

Be on time. Have fun. Make mistakes or be wrong?

Be on time: It's basically the foundation that is required for a collective to emerge and continue to exist. A group of people in the same place during the same period of time.

Have fun: To have fun requires a feeling of safety, to feel secure. Having control of the situation.

Make mistakes, be wrong: To move forward, develop, challenge to extend too far and then of course fail, again and again, until you succeed.

Be on time, have fun, be wrong (make mistakes). I implement these principles at the beginning of a teaching process and in doing so handing over some responsibility to the group.

I try to create safe spaces by admitting to not having answers to everything, stop at any point to take discussions, make room for communication. Talk about contemporary life, ordinary and digital, the reality outside the class room. Your students will play a part in spreading the performing arts throughout society at some point, so let society play a part in their education.

Finely:

Risking making myself look ridiculous, I want to present an organizational chart. Images have performative effects, in the way reality is produced the reality is defined. Here's a normal and common organization overview: (Click Keynote, Organization chart-ordinary)

The student box is not connected to the others. And mostly, the student isn't a part of organization charts at all. It's like if the students are some kind of disturbance. (Click Keynote, Student vanish)

The manager/leadership is at the top of the organization chart. In reality, not seldom in an office high up in the school building, (preferably a corner office with a view). This of course have a performative effect, it signals and gives power and importance. And sometimes this is important and adequate. But, what is a school? An organization for learning, creating knowledge. Who

³ A.C Edmondson

obtains the knowledge; the students. The central thing, what the organization should include and embrace, is the student in learning. And a chart reflecting this perhaps would look like this: (Click Keynote, Organization chart-inclusive)

This has nothing to do with being fluffy. It's about making the organization relevant to its task. Everyone in the organization are engaged with providing knowledge for the students. When a student walks into the organization they should feel safe to express their anxieties, lack of understanding and failures as well as skills, ideas and successes. Safe from every form of direct or imaginary pressure from the outside world. Direct or indirect pressure, analog or digital threats. A safe human being is able to learn more. A safe group gains more knowledge than any one person can alone.

I think I'm done now. Thank you for listening. (Click Keynote, Thinkers)

(Click Keynote, a last time)

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