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Taustaa

Tutkin väitöskirjatyössäni kansalaisuuden ja vapaan sivistystyön välistä suhdetta. Olen erityisesti kiinnostunut kansalaisuuden ilmenemismuodoista opintopiiri- ja kansalaisopistotoiminnassa. Tässä yhteydessä pidän kansalaisuutta toiminnan kautta ilmenevänä, sosiaalisessa kanssakäymisessä löytyvänä ja oppimiseen ja sivistymiseen kytköksissä olevana. Tutkimuksen teema liittyy laajemmin aikuiskasvatuksen ja vapaan sivistystyön yhteiskunnallisen ja kollektiivisen roolin ymmärtämiseen ajassamme, jota kuvaillaan entistä yksilökeskeisemmäksi ja pirstaleisemmaksi. Tutkimukseni empiria koostuu kolmesta etnografisesta kenttätutkimuksesta. Olen osallistunut kansalaisopiston järjestämälle senioreiden puutyökurssille, filosofian opintokerhoon opintokeskuksen puitteissa sekä englannin kielen kurssille, joka kuului ruotsalaisen opintojärjestön (studieförbund) kurssitarjontaan.

Oheinen teksti on luonnostelma, jota työstän kirjaluvuksi vuonna 2016 ilmestyvään aikuiskasvatuksen käsikirjaan (Palgrave Macmillan's Handbook on Adult and Lifelong Education and Learning). Luku olisi samalla mahdollisesti yksi väitöskirjani julkaisuista. Ensimmäinen, seniorinikkareiden työmoraalia ja kansalaisuutta pohtiva artikkeli julkaistaan tänä syksynä. Filosofian opintopiiristä olen kirjoittanut ryhmässä harjoitettavasta akateemisesta identiteetistä konferenssipaperin. Englannin kielen kurssista (jota kuvailen alustavasti koulun jatkeena ja yksilöllisenä investointina) on määrä kirjoittaa konferenssipaperi lokakuuhun mennessä.

Alla seuraa ensin pidennetty abstrakti, josta voinee selvimmin hahmottaa ideani. Sitä seuraa enemmän tai vähemmän hajanaisia hahmotelmia sisällöksi. Pahoittelen mahdollisia ajatushyppyjä ja epäselvyyksiä. Toivon teiltä muilta osallistujilta kaikenlaisia reaktioita, kysymyksiä ja kriittisiä näkökulmia.

Citizenship learning in study circles in Finland and Sweden

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of Nordic popular education from a citizenship perspective, focusing especially on study circles in the contexts of Finland and Sweden. The chapter is addressing the micro or grass-root perspective on democratization and citizenship, at the same time contextualizing this in its specific educational context. A short overview over the historical development and current state is provided, in order to illustrate some key features and values. Some significant differences between the Swedish and Finnish systems are also highlighted. Thereafter, a discussion dealing with some current dilemmas follows. The chapter ends in a discussion of possible solutions, contrasting the notions of inclusion and excellence.

Study circles in Finland and Sweden – similarities and differences

In this part, I describe the emergence of popular education as the first form of institutionalized adult education in the Nordic countries. The societal changes and the ideological backgrounds are brought to attention. Focus is on education as a perceived possible solution to occurring societal problems and a means for supporting democratization. (Korsgaard, 2008.) Narrowing the scope to study circles, a description of general features is provided, highlighting extensive state subsidies, high level of participation and an ambivalent relationship to the state (see for instance Laginder, Nordvall & Crowther, 2013). This is followed by a discussion of the slightly different developments in Finland and Sweden. However, I argue that the concrete activities have been and are very much alike. The differences in background and terminology are interesting, however, since they present a possibility to discuss tensions within study circle settings found in both countries.

An attempt to define study circles is also made. Defining study circles is not an easy task, partly because there has never been a clear definition, partly because their roles and functions have changed during the course of time. Study circles could be defined as adaptable to changing circumstances and the needs and interests of the participants. Another central feature is the emphasis on conversation and equal participation, in other words democratization, even though the emphasis can differ according to what is understood to be the nature of the subject of the study circle. (See for instance Larsson & Nordvall, 2010)

Current dilemmas

Study circles as an institutionalized activity have a long history with diverse and also contradictory roles and functions. On that account, I highlight some current dilemmas.

Despite the long history and the changes in the surrounding society, the organization of study circles remains still today fairly unchanged, as are the main aims and a substantial amount of the subjects. One could argue that this is only to be expected, since the aims of democratization are timeless and study circles are able to adapt to the needs of the people. Still, one could also ponder whether society has changed considerably, and is now potentially in a new era of changes. Should this then not be reflected to a larger extent also in the study circle settings? Furthermore, it could also be argued that popular education itself in fact has changed, turning into a “frozen ideology”, as a result of a stable position in society. (See for instance Kane, 2013)

The need for knowledgeable citizens is still recognized today. But now the responsibility of succeeding is to a growing extent put on the individual. This well-known trend of

individualization could be regarded as one sign of changing ideas in the surrounding society. It seems like learning for personal development is becoming the norm and partly replacing the transformative and emancipatory purposes, which to a certain extent conflicts with the collective orientation and interests of the study circle. (See for instance Korsgaard, 2008)

Inclusion or excellence?

Some say popular education is struggling to find its place in a new educational landscape (Salo, 2004). Should it prove itself useful in the ever-changing expectations of the global labor market, or should it try to address questions of democracy, social justice, and emancipation? What would be the role and place for popular education in a time obsessed with continuing education through life? Two possible solutions to this dilemma are presented, inclusion and excellence.

Inclusion is present in the renowned Nordic welfare state model emerging in the 20th century. Here the collective is responsible for everyone having access to a fundamental standard of living – economically, socially and politically. Everyone has an equal right to education and political influence. The goal is social cohesion. (Antikainen, 2006)

Excellence is present in the new era of accountability and active citizenship where the individual is made responsible (see for instance Nicoll et al., 2013). This will lead to exclusion, both economical and social, since competition is the main contributor to development. Knowledge is not a democratic right to the same extent as in the previous era. Everyone should still learn and knowledge continues to be a key to a better society. The fundamental difference lies in that knowledge accumulation becomes a contest and is no longer a shared, collective endeavor.

Citizenship learning in study circles in Finland and Sweden

Participation in voluntary adult education activities is often linked to democratic goals. This is a central task and function often stressed in descriptions of Nordic popular education. The support to democracy refers both to distribution of knowledge and a background and justification in the interests and needs of the people. The content of the activities is seen as an important part of promoting democracy by offering an opportunity for all to learn new knowledge and skills. Acquiring democratic attitudes and experiences is understood to happen through the organization of the activities, i.e. participatory influence on how the activities are organized.

Citizenship can in a broad sense be defined as being a full member of society. According to Marshall's (1973: 70–72) often-cited definition, citizenship is a contract between citizens and society, guaranteeing the same rights for all members of society. These rights are further divided into civil rights (e.g. freedom of speech), political rights (e.g. right to vote), and social rights (e.g. the right to a certain standard of living and education). Apart from this status dimension, citizenship also consists of an identity dimension. Citizenship is thus also a relationship in some kind of public sphere between the individual and other members of society. When understanding citizenship as comprehending also social and cultural aspects, citizenship is not only a static entity but also a constantly changing one, constructed through actions. (Biesta, 2011; Dahlstedt & Olson, 2014; Isin & Wood, 1999; Korsgaard, 2004) Acting as a citizen is ultimately about meeting in an *agora*, a public space, in order to translate "private worries into public issues" (Bauman, 1999).

Learning for citizenship and acting as a citizen are intertwined and constructed in a social context (Bengtsson, 2008; Biesta, 2011; Korsgaard, 2004). By living in a democratic society there is always situations in everyday life where learning for citizenship can take place. Seen from an educational perspective, this ultimately connects to the idea of the human being able to cross the borders set up for her by nature and nurture. The thought of an inner potential for learning and education (*Bildsamkeit*) means that the human can become something else than what is prejudiced by inner predisposition and living context (Gleerup, 2004: 33–34). Through *Bildung* a human being can use their knowledge and understanding to develop oneself and one's situation through a process, which is personal and in relation to others.

Popular education as context is often described as social and welcoming and should fit the description above. The activities are expected to be informed by a democratic mindset both in the activities and in the organization. As a result, popular education is often described as a school in democracy (Åberg, 2008).

The activities mainly take place in different group settings and should consequently provide an opportunity to interact with people of different background – also an important feature of promoting democracy. This task of democratization is still today given in the legislation. It is also a widely accepted assumption among practitioners and researchers that popular education is contributing to a functioning democratic society. In sum, popular education has a potential role in supporting democracy by encouraging both personal and societal change. (Andersson & Laginder, 2013; Gustavsson, 2013; Laginder, Nordvall & Crowther, 2013; Larsson, 2001; Larsson & Nordvall, 2010)

Study circles in Finland and Sweden – similarities and differences

Popular education (in Finnish *vapaa sivistystyö*, in Swedish *folkbildning*) can be considered the first form of institutionalized adult education in the Nordic countries. The history stems back to the middle and later parts of the 19th century. The ideas can be traced back to romanticism, enlightenment, nationalism, as well as workers' movements and other popular movements. Especially the first centuries of Nordic popular education are characterized by aspirations to enlighten the uneducated people. This stance is gradually replaced by views stressing the importance of recognizing the needs and interests of the people themselves. The target group remained the same, however – the low-educated workers and farmers. The democratization of the Nordic countries is the overlapping macro societal change creating a need for adult education. In this era of societal and social changes adult education is seen as a need and a possible solution to problems occurring at this time. The fundamental changes brought up by increasing urbanization, the decreasing influence of the church through secularization and also an extensive economical deregulation all contribute to the problems and needs a growing body of adult education is trying to address. Some say our times are again characterized by the same kind of rootlessness. (Korsgaard, 2008)

This tradition of non-vocational, non-formal adult education is considered to have similar features and a shared history and background in the Nordic countries. Both have their roots in the same ideas. In Finnish literature, the contacts to Sweden and Europe are usually stressed (for instance in Niemelä, 2011). In Sweden, popular education appears more often to be described as a unique form of adult education, not found in other countries and not possible to translate to other languages (for instance in Åberg, 2008).

There is a substantial difference in the vocabulary used to label what I this far have been calling popular education. This issue needs to be addressed. The difference in translation usually employed into English reflects this. At the same time it sheds some light on the versatile assumptions, goals and values that Nordic popular education stems from. On one hand there are the roots in the popular movements with collective agendas, striving for transformation or emancipation, for the people and through the people (Laginder, Nordvall & Crowther, 2013). On the other hand there are the roots in the ideas of freedom and liberty - freedom for the organizations and activities from the state but also freedom for free citizens to educate themselves in their spare-time.

The difference in background, values and assumptions highlighted by the difficulty of translation can also be seen in the difference in organization of the popular educational activities in Finland and Sweden. In Finland, the largest number of activities that I label study circles in this text are courses organized through municipal adult education centers (*kansalaisopisto*) while in Sweden the activities are organized through ten national study centre associations (*studieförbund*). The outcomes could be described as quite alike, though.

Folkbildning - popular education; activities are organized through "studieförbund", study associations, with connections and relations to popular movements, the concrete activities are named "studiecirklar" study circles

Vapaa sivistystyö - free work for enlightenment/*Bildung* or liberal adult education; activities are organized through "kansalaisopisto", citizen's institutes or liberal adult education centers, which are mainly organized on a municipality level, the concrete activities are named courses

In the rest of this text I will use the term popular education (in accordance with for instance Laginder, Nordvall & Crowther, 2013). The choice of using the term study circle is also a bit problematic, since this is not a familiar term to use to describe the Finnish equivalent, which is referred to as courses. I argue, that the concrete activities are very much alike, and therefore this problem in terminology does not affect the validity of writing about Finnish and Swedish study circle systems as having similar features.

Study circles in both Finland and Sweden are part of state financed non-vocational and non-formal adult education. Defining study circles is not an easy task, partly because there has never been a clear definition, partly because their roles and functions have changed during the course of time. Study circles could be defined as adaptable to changing circumstances and the needs and interests of the participants. Participation is always voluntary and free from curricula and exams. Another central feature is the emphasis on conversation and equal participation, in other words democratization, even though the emphasis can differ according to what is understood to be the nature of the subject of the study circle. (Larsson & Nordvall, 2010) For instance language learning is often considered to leave little room for shared decision-making on form and content. The courses are organized often during evenings. Popular subjects include handicrafts, languages, sports and cooking. Literature and music were considered important both for the educated worker and an educated people (Larsson & Nordvall, 2010). The level of participation is notably high, both in Finland and Sweden (Laginder, Nordvall & Crowther, 2013). The fees are fairly low, due to the extensive state subsidies. There has been subsidies since the beginning of the 20th century, increasing in amount after the second world war. The extensive state subsidies also lead to an ambivalent relationship to the state.

When popular adult education began to grow in volume of activities and participants, the argument was that democracy needs educated, knowledgeable citizens. There has, especially historically, been a strong emphasis on the role of scientific or theoretical knowledge. The content of study in the study circles should be scientific. But at the same time study circles can be regarded also as an important new form of democratic knowledge production. (Laginder, Nordvall & Crowther, 2013) The emphasis on theoretical knowledge can also be understood as a counterweight to the otherwise physical working life of the original target group of popular education. This is an aim of popular education also today - to function as a counterweight to working life and other demands of everyday life. Also a political movement, the aim to reach societal change or an individual project, trying to make room for other interests than the demands of working and domestic life. (Laginder, Nordvall & Crowther, 2013) There have been debates about what real study circles should be like and what content could be inappropriate. The trend has been that almost everything is possible to arrange as a study circle, regarding both form and content. (Larsson & Nordvall, 2010)

Differing ideas of the nation-state and the good citizen

[This section is perhaps the most fragmented one at this stage. I have an idea about it being worthwhile to contrast the slightly different historical developments and ideas influencing popular education in these two countries – based on how this is described in central literature in the field of popular education.]

Swedish popular education is described as having taken up the ideas of enlightenment to a large extent in popular education. This implicates a belief in progress, science, reason and

the usefulness of knowledge (Gustavsson, 1996; Niemelä, 2011). This is to be understood as a contrast to Denmark and also Finland building in contrast on romantic ideas about making the people aware about their unique place among other nations. According to Niemelä (2011, 138) Sweden has also been emphasizing the democratic agenda of popular education to a larger extent than the other Nordic countries. In Sweden, the connection to popular movements is often stressed and seen as an essential part of the characteristics making up popular education.

The Finnish popular education and society at large has been more influenced by the ideas of romanticism. These ideas are characterized by thoughts of the importance of nations in the course and development of history and that each nation is a unique unit sharing a common language and culture (Niemelä, 2011). The national-romanticism also had significant political implications leading to independence from the Russian empire in 1917. A crucial part of this struggle was to give rights to the Finnish language (Niemelä, 2011, 144). (As a consequence of Finland being prior a part of Sweden, the language of administration was Swedish). The fight for the Finnish language was a struggle for education in Finnish and a struggle for the right of the Finnish people, as Niemelä (2011, 144) puts it. Shortly after the declaration of independence, a civil war broke out in 1918, which arose doubts among popular educators about the success of the project of educating the people.

The differences aside, popular education in both countries originates from similar ideas about the importance of education (*Bildung*) being accessible to (more or less) the whole population. Another central idea was the thought of society developing and prospering as a result of the education of the people. Popular education was to be realized through the individuals' free and voluntary aspirations for *Bildung*.

Current dilemmas

Despite the long history and the changes in the surrounding society, the organization of study circles remains still today fairly unchanged, as are the main aims and a substantial amount of the subjects. One could argue that this is only to be expected, since the aims of democratization are timeless and study circles are able to adapt to the needs of the people. Still, one could also ponder whether society has changed considerably, and is now potentially in a new era of changes. Should this then not be reflected to a larger extent also in the study circle settings? Furthermore, it could also be argued that popular education itself in fact has changed, turning into a "frozen ideology", as a result of a stable position in society. (Kane, 2013)

The need for knowledgeable citizens is still recognized today. But now the responsibility of succeeding is to a growing extent put on the individual. This well-known trend of individualization could be regarded as one sign of changing ideas in the surrounding society. It seems like learning for personal development is becoming the norm and partly replacing the transformative and emancipatory purposes, which to a certain extent conflicts with the collective orientation and interests of the study circle. (Korsgaard, 2008)

Today, both Finnish and Swedish popular education is being influenced by the same kind of macro movements, such as neoliberalism and globalization. Even though the history is described somewhat differently, the dilemmas seem to be quite similar today.

A trend in popular education recognized in both Finland and Sweden is the turn towards learning for personal development instead of for emancipatory purposes. (Niemelä, 2011, 62; Korsgaard) (And by the way – who is in need of emancipation and who is not?) In Finland, perhaps to a greater extent than in Sweden, the problem of this development and the lack of community aspects is recognized and discussed (Niemelä, 2011, 63). (?)

Marketization is a trend influencing also popular education (Wijkström, 2012). Earlier, engagements and membership in different popular movements played a central part in influencing society as a citizen. Today the membership is replaced by customer relations in different market settings. As citizen and member, the task of the individual in relation to developments in society is to initiate suggestions and express opinions in relation to others' suggestions. For the customer the task is to consume on the market functioning according to the principles of supply and demand. According to Wijkström (2012), popular education used to have the role of channeling the voices and needs of the citizens, but today the role has changed to functioning as a service producer in society.

Inclusion or excellence?

Some say popular education is struggling to find its place in a new educational landscape (Salo, 2004). Should it prove itself useful in the ever-changing expectations of the global labor market, or should it try to address questions of democracy, social justice, and emancipation? What would be the role and place for popular education in a time obsessed with continuing education through life? Is popular education having a role providing societal and personal counterweight? Two possible solutions to this dilemma are presented, inclusion and excellence.

Inclusion is present in the renowned Nordic welfare state model emerging in the 20th century. Here the collective is responsible for everyone having access to a fundamental standard of living – economically, socially and politically. Everyone has an equal right to education and political influence. The goal is social cohesion. (Antikainen, 2006)

Excellence is present in the new era of accountability and active citizenship where the individual is made responsible (see for instance Nicoll et al., 2013). This will lead to exclusion, both economical and social, since competition is the main contributor to development. Knowledge is not a democratic right to the same extent as in the previous era. Everyone should still learn and knowledge continues to be a key to a better society. The fundamental difference lies in that knowledge accumulation becomes a contest and is no longer a shared, collective endeavor.

The organizations are no longer at the core of adult education and of educational societal goals in society at large. Popular education is struggling to find its place in this new landscape. Should it prove itself useful in the ever-changing expectations of the global labor market, or should it try to address questions of democracy, social justice, even emancipation and so on? What would be the role and place for popular education in a time obsessed with continuing education through life?

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