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Navigating the Boundaries between Home, Work, and School

Teaching Values and Literacies in VET

1. Introduction

A key challenge for teachers in vocational education and training (VET)/career and technical education (CTE) is the multi-site and poly-contextual nature of such programs. Students traversing various learning sites typically require a range of strategies to adapt to discrepancies between norms, values, and expectations (Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1991). Studies of work-based learning emphasize that the tacit and implicit forms of understanding related to practice are as important as the explicit demonstration of achievement through symbolic languages; what counts as knowledge therefore is enacted through embodied doing just as much as it is expressed on conventional tests (Sefton-Green, 2013, p. 25). The notion of boundary crossing in VET has therefore attracted interest among educators and policymakers aiming at disrupting the academic-vocational divide and creating innovative pedagogical approaches to support VET students (Harreveld & Singh, 2009).

Moreover, teachers in VET are often responsible for students who are economically or educationally disadvantaged. These students constitute a heterogeneous population, are not always able to satisfy literacy demands in education, and may struggle with basic skills

(Mellard, Woods, & Lee, 2016). Even though instructional techniques used with children can be adapted to adult learners, effectiveness has traditionally been measured by standardized assessments and not by the more ecologically valid functional outcomes associated with adult literacy (Hock & Mellard, 2005). Thus, for such adolescents there is a dearth of research on how to structure literacy education in efficient, effective, and motivating ways (Copeland, McCord, & Kruger, 2016).

The current study shows how a "third-space" approach can support teacher and student boundary crossing in a VET context. The article relates the narrative of a teacher attempting to create a third space in which discrepancies in and between home, academic, and vocational contexts can be explored. Specifically, by linking literacy practices across contexts to questions of values in and out of school, the study shows how teachers can mediate home, school, and vocational literacies and values. Outlining three pedagogical moves for boundary crossing between tacit and explicit understandings in academic and workplace learning, the study offers a conceptualization of the role of values and literacies in VET pedagogy.

Initially, I will discuss the concept of third space and its application in educational contexts, followed by a discussion of VET as a third space. I will then present my research design and findings. Three key moves in the practical application of third-space theory will be presented: mapping, embodying, and brokering. Finally, I will discuss how VET for adolescents can be reimagined through the lens of third-space theory and what implication this may have for students and educators.

2. Third-space theory

2.1 Third space in Critical Theory and Educational Research

Boundaries occur both between and within the domains of work, school, and everyday life, and students encounter various kinds of boundaries between school and work practice forcing them "to relate to different values and norms and find their own position" (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011, p. 138). For example, low-performing students in school can accomplish significant feats of literate problem-solving outside formal testing situations, suggesting that they have great potential for learning and participating in social contexts. This points out the importance of "persuasive examples of the necessity of attending to, building on, and incorporating the social, cultural, and linguistic resources that students bring to school" (Hull and Schultz, 2001, p. 593). The need to connect learning in school with out-of-school learning and activity without colonizing other cultural domains with adult values of academic achievement and success has been pointed out, where the suggested aim is rather that schools should build students' capacity by expanding and diversifying their interests, and by promoting equity and meaningful learning through values, relationships, and full participation in healthy communities (Ito et al., 2013). Researchers have therefore addressed the gap between learning in and out of school settings, the equity issues associated with this gap, and possible solutions for increasing student participation and engagement in learning across contexts (Leander et al., 2010; Moje, 2013; Phelan et al., 1991; Sefton-Green, 2013).

Attempting to re-imagine the role of space in learning, educational researchers have employed the notion of *third space*, a concept borrowed from critical theory. Soja (1996) finds space to be "real-and-imagined", arguing that spatial thinking must take into consideration our physical bodies and surroundings on the one hand, and the significance of representations of space on the other. Third space is a theoretical construct by means of which such an epistemological critique can take place. Criticizing the limitations of binary thinking,

Bhabha (2004) argues for the need to appropriate and renegotiate the meaning of cultural symbols without polarizing or assimilating them. According to Bhabha (2004), third space is a space in-between singular categories, such as gender, generation, and institutional location, where cultural differences are articulated, and where a "terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood" (p. 2) is created. Third spaces can therefore reveal new hybrid ways of signifying, destabilize previous notions of identity, and displace conventional narratives.

The concept has been employed by educational researchers in numerous contexts, including minorities (Lipka, Sharp, Adams, & Sharp, 2007), sexual orientation and gender identity (Mayo, 2013), intercultural contexts (English, 2005), teacher education (Skerrett, 2010; Williams, 2014; Zeichner, 2010), school-university collaboration and partnerships (Martin, Snow, & Franklin Torrez, 2011), relations between home/family and school literacies (Cook, 2005; Pahl & Kelly, 2005), and early childhood studies (Levy, 2008). It has also been applied in such disciplinary contexts as language and literacy (Cook, 2005; Maniotes, 2005), science (Richardson Bruna, 2009), mathematics (Lipka et al., 2005; Lipka et al., 2007), drama education (Greenwood, 2001), and music education (Johnson, 2011). However, third space is not a well-defined theoretical construct.

Some educational researchers envision third space primarily as a creative and socially aware dimension enabling researchers and practitioners to catch a glimpse of alternative possibilities for participation, practice, and self and social organization. Developmental work in a third-space perspective can therefore provide opportunities for professional creativity, inquiry, and learning (Hulme, Cracknell & Owens, 2009). Similarly, the term is loosely used in action research to represent a generative space suited for professional growth, collaboration, and reflection (Arhar et al., 2013). For example, Williams (2014) suggests using ongoing reflective journal writing as a tool for evolving the personal and professional identities of educators, developing new practices, and negotiating delicate relationships with

others. In this sense, the act of writing itself may be considered the construction of a third space.

Others have emphasized the contested nature of third space, for example by characterizing classrooms as "polycontextual, multivoiced, and multiscripted" (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Tejeda, 1999, p. 287). Gutiérrez et al. (1999) suggest that tension and conflict in various learning activities can lead to a transformation in the activity and the participation and discourse practices therein. The use of multiple, diverse, and even conflicting mediational tools promotes the emergence of third spaces; the construction of such learning environments therefore entails mapping the activity system of official space on to the unofficial space, identifying discursive and social practices and a range of cultural and linguistic resources to be used in a learning context (Gutiérrez et al., 1999). Moje et al. (2004) identify three conceptualizations of the third-space construct in educational research: 1) as a bridge between conventional academic learning and other marginalized knowledges and discourses, 2) as a navigational space in which the crossing of discursive boundaries of specialized content areas opens for multiple funds of knowledge to be employed, particularly in secondary education, and 3) as a space of cultural, social, and epistemological change where both out-of-school and academic discourses and literacies are challenged and reshaped for the purpose of fostering new critical understandings. Accordingly, the concept of third space serves as a tool for a critique of the conventions of binary thinking (e.g. teacher vs. student, disciplinary vs. home literacies, vocational vs. academic learning) and as a possibility for renegotiating identities, relations, and practice. This is of particular value to researchers and practitioners seeking to manage or improve difficult situations in educational contexts (Brooke, Coyle, & Walden, 2005).

The permeable nature of third-space classrooms offers rich opportunities for research due to the connections between microprocesses at the classroom level and the wider personal

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and institutional contexts of both students and teachers (Gutiérrez et al., 1999). For example, literate practices and cultural devices are valued differently in spaces such as home, community, peer groups, and schools; schools should therefore teach students when, how, and why they should engage in different practices valued by the discourse communities they cross (Moje, 2013). However, in charting the development and interrelations of such theoretical notions as third space, hybridity, and hybrid literacies, Moje (2013) notes that few studies offer substantial evidence of actual development of new critical understandings that integrate academic and everyday worlds. Moje also suggests that even though literacies and identities should not be seen as hybrid, the need to navigate between and across various discourse communities and the practices they value leads to the production of hybrid spaces. The work of producing and navigating in such inherently unstable spaces is seen as an act in which all participants should engage (Moje, 2013). Such a third-space perspective, however, has rarely been applied to VET (Harris & Simons, 2006).

2.2 VET as Third Space

Challenging epistemic stances in VET requires an understanding of the situated nature of literacy in it. Teachers in VET programs can maintain dichotomies between academic and vocational learning, seeing "the classroom" as distinctly separate from "the shop", or even referring to vocational trajectories as an escape from conventional language arts instruction (Kohnen, 2015). However, even though vocational teachers report their understanding of literacy as primarily an academic phenomenon, they still expose students to multiple multimodal texts and expect them to use non-linear reading in order to solve problems (Darvin, 2006). Furthermore, practitioners in VET must negotiate their identity as boundary crossers, outsiders, or even defectors in the borderlands between school and work; positioned between private enterprise and public education, such practitioners are able to foster

knowledge creation by adding value to authentic workplace learning experiences and making explicit the informal knowledge gained in various contexts (Harris & Simons, 2006).

When working in the complex interstitial spaces between school and work, educational leaders must broker issues arising from disjunctures between expectations, norms, and values (Harreveld & Singh, 2009). Brokering entails making connections between communities of practice, enabling coordination, and opening new possibilities for meaning (Wenger, 1998). Brokering the boundaries between work and school typically requires a set of intellectual and practical tools to create spaces for learning, development, and change (Tuomi-Gröhn, Engeström, & Young, 2003). Collaborative projects in vocational teacher education benefit from focusing on various representations of knowledge where learning is mediated across contexts; for example, a space between educational institutions and workplaces can be constructed where participants question and analyze mediating artifacts from the workplace, the practical tasks they relate to, and the professional values associated with them, making students partners in curriculum planning and encouraging them to act as mediators and boundary-crossers (Lambert, 2003). Creating "hybrid" spaces for academic and vocational learning can therefore be seen as an option for teachers.

However, as Moje (2013) argues, the notion of hybridity entails a risk of colonization and dominance. Appropriations of out-of-school literacy practices in formal educational settings can lead to tensions and dilemmas in which the value of merging literacies and knowledges from various contexts is called into question (Skerrett, 2010). Researchers have therefore warned against applying conventional educational theories to out-of-school contexts (Sefton-Green, 2013). Accordingly, teachers must recognize that many students face the dilemma of either adopting school perspectives (thus appropriating an identity foreign to their own) or resisting participation in activities (thus alienating themselves from the school community) (Ferdman, 1990).

In this study, I conceptualize teaching in VET as an instantiation of boundary crossing and navigation, framed in a third-space theoretical perspective. The study relates the story of a teacher and a teacher educator (author) collaborating on the creation of a third space in a VET classroom, and how the polycontextual and contested nature of this space allows for explorations of discrepancies between literacy practices and values across academic, home, and vocational domains. The aim has not been to "hybridize" practices or identities, but rather to develop teacher moves for boundary crossing in a VET context, to enable students' navigation across contexts and sites, and to facilitate a third space where both students and the teacher can participate in explorations of discrepancies between literacies and values.

3. Research design and methods

3.1 Participants and sites

This study draws from data collected as part of a research project where one teacher at an upper secondary school in Norway sought assistance from a teacher educator (author) so she could manage difficult experiences in the classroom. Janne (pseudonym), a 34-year-old female teacher living in a working-class town, was a teacher of both Norwegian language arts and vocational subjects. She was asked by her principal to teach in a VET special program for particularly vulnerable young men. The students were designated by the school authorities as "at-risk" due to low academic performance, truancy issues, and a lack of motivation in previous educational contexts. Consequently, they were offered a two-year program consisting of one day of schooling in three academic subjects (Norwegian language arts, social studies, and mathematics) and four days a week of paid vocational training at a local business. Vocational contexts spanned from logistics and petroleum service businesses to social services and childcare. The students had agreed to take part in the program, but the

teachers, on the other hand, were simply assigned to the class and were given no special training or support. They were not involved in the selection of and application for workplace training, as this had been taken care of by the school staff.

The students in the class were ten white adolescent males aged 16-20. All were majority-language speakers. They lived at home or in foster-care environments in which negative remarks about school, education, and teachers were commonplace. In her own words, Janne described the students as carrying a lot of emotional baggage and lacking in impulse control. Apart from being designated as "at-risk", little was known about their actual learning difficulties or potential.

Teaching took place in a large and quite unpleasant room in the school basement. While it had a blackboard and an interactive whiteboard, the room primarily served as a storage space for surplus classroom furniture. In wintertime, temperatures often fell below 12 degrees centigrade. Lack of motivation and a two-hour bus ride to school for some students contributed to truancy, with half of the students absent on some days. Although national policy mandated that textbooks and laptop computers were to be made available to each student, they were not allowed to take books or computers home. These were kept under lock and key at school due to the perceived destructive behavior of some of the students. Consequently, the students showed up for class with only their mobile phones, which they used for gaming or social media communication in class.

As the Norwegian Education Act provides teachers with the leeway to adapt the curriculum to students' needs, Janne could make substantial changes to the content of the program. However, she immediately realized that she was not equipped to teach students with such diverse and complex needs. Knowing about me through a teacher education program early in her career, Janne decided to contact me and ask for guidance.

As a teacher educator, former language arts teacher, and academic with a working-class background, I empathized with Janne's desire to improve the students' opportunities through literacy education, as well as her anxiety and insecurity in facing a particularly challenging group of adolescents. On the theoretical level, my participation was motivated by – to paraphrase Gutiérrez (2008) – my desire to explore the ways boundary crossing reinforces, extends, and conflicts with individuals' dispositions and repertoires of practice, and to better understand how teachers can support such students in the process of developing richer and more ecologically valid ways of learning. I therefore saw our collaboration as an opportunity to explore the relation between values, literacy practices, and the various spaces Janne and her students moved between.

The delicate nature of Janne's request and the difficult working relations within the school made it impossible to include students, other teachers, or school leaders in the study. I introduced Janne to her pseudonym, and she chose to adopt the name as part of her ongoing reflections during the project period. The pseudonym effectively became a hybrid entity of its own through which Janne could channel her frustration and with which she would construct imagined scenarios as part of her own development. Ethics approval was obtained from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

Drawing on socio-cultural research on literacy and values (Ferdman, 1990; Purcell-Gates, 1995), we sought to explore the significance and use of reading and writing across school and out-of-school worlds in the lives of the students. We heeded Ferdman's (1990) advice to "explore one's own values and attitudes" (p. 201) before attempting to understand those of the students. Following Gutiérrez and Rogoff (2003), our collaboration adopted an approach according to which we established strategies to explore the students' short- and long-term histories. This approach enabled us to construct a classroom space in which literacy practices from home, work, and school contexts could be compared and contrasted, and in

which the values that overlapped with these practices could be acknowledged and reflected upon.

3.2 Methodology and data collection methods

My epistemological stance for collaborating with Janne was interpretive, founded on the belief that Janne's teaching (and consequently the students' learning) could be better understood through an inquiry into her teaching experiences, the meaning-making processes she engaged in, and the judgment she exercises on a daily basis. An interpretive stance implies that methods are adapted to serve a contextualized hermeneutic process, and that the specific characteristics and constraints of the study dictate method decisions to a certain degree (Levitt, 2015). I therefore situate the study in a methodological borderland between narrative inquiry (focusing on the lived experience of educational change) and post-structuralist theory (using a third-space lens to analyze narratively configured data) (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007).

Since teaching and teacher knowledge are often seen as an expression of embodied stories, teachers' lived experiences and their actions in context can be represented narratively (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narratives permit inquiry into the multiple ways of knowing and meaning-making that characterize human experience in general and the negotiating of the boundaries of such knowledge domains (Hendry, 2009). By foregrounding particularities and context, a narrative approach affords the interrogation of human agency in a case-centered perspective; furthermore, representing data through stories makes it possible to generate concepts or categories for further theorization (Riessman, 2008). Given the complex interplay between tacit and explicit ways of knowing, this is of particular importance in a VET context.

Throughout the six months of our collaboration, I collected four types of data: a) written diary entries from Janne and the e-mail exchanges between us spurred by these, b) field notes from our weekly telephone meetings, c) texts and artifacts used for instruction, and d) an in-depth semi-structured interview with Janne conducted at the school.

Diary studies afford continuous analysis close to actual events, transitions and affective processes, and their relation to daily work performance (Ohly, Sonnentag, Niessen, & Zapf, 2010), making it possible for the researcher to engage participants in recursive processes of writing, discussing, and reflecting upon recent experiences. For research purposes, diaries are defined as "self-report instruments used repeatedly to examine ongoing experiences" in a context-sensitive manner (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003). Even though conventional interviews may provide significant insights into a participant's thoughts and emotions, the fixed schedule of reporting in diary studies provides data over a longer time period, thereby reducing the biases inherent in retrospection and capturing the temporal dynamics in teaching cycles (Bolger et al., 2003). Janne's diary entries show how she uses writing to reflect on her own successes and shortcomings with the students:

> After the lesson was over, I sat there thinking about my own classroom behavior, and whether I'm the kind of teacher who's wearing the "teacher armor", and who needs to claim her chair in order to show them who's the boss. Does this serve my relationship with these students? What happens if I let go of being in control? Their behavior makes me angry and frustrated. Will I gain anything by talking about feelings with them, or do they lack the empathy needed for our relationship to be more trusting? I definitely must not lose it in front of them (…). I wonder how they see me.
> (Janne's diary, November 4)

After receiving each diary entry, Janne and I discussed the entry and planned forthcoming lessons in telephone and e-mail conversations.

I wrote field notes during and immediately after our conversations. In my field notes I noted how our collaboration developed into an exploration of literacy practices and values across contexts and the borders that both Janne and her students needed to traverse:

> Janne explains how her ambitions for her students go beyond curriculum goals: "I would like them to read a text and understand it, whether it's ironic or fact-based or a joke. I want them to open their eyes beyond the world of school, and to show up for lessons and read other texts than just the textbook. But I need to figure out what they like." Based on Janne's observations, I recommend buying car magazines. She says she knows little of these things. (Field notes, November 7)

I also interviewed Janne at depth in her hometown at the end of our collaboration. Due to the collaborative nature of our project, we conducted a reflexive dyadic interview (Ellis, 2004, p. 62) exploring the interactively produced meanings and emotional dynamics of our collaboration. The interview lasted for 113 minutes and included reflections on literacy instruction in general as well as the particulars of Janne's teaching situation (daily experiences at work, the organization of the program, tensions between different norms and values at the school), thereby obtaining descriptions of phenomena in Janne's professional lifeworld (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 3). The interview was recorded and transcribed in full by me.

Positioning myself as a researcher outside the classroom hindered my ability to contrast Janne's storytelling with observations of the students. This is a clear limitation of the methodological strategy I have chosen. However, the lack of research within VET encouraged me to adopt an opportunistic stance. Also, as Moje (2013) notes, studying navigational moves does not necessarily require long-time work and robust data sets. I therefore wrote extensive analytic memos throughout the process, providing grounds for the development of rich understandings of our collaboration. In the following section, I will describe the process of coding and analyzing that led to the findings.

3.3 Data analysis strategy

Initial data analysis was conducted using a narrative coding procedure (Saldaña, 2015). I read and re-read field notes, diary entries, and the analytic memos, probing the meaning of the data and exploring possible connections to existing theory. For example, when Janne observed that students compared their experience of being in school to a prison, attempts were made to draw on educational research exploring students' experiences in juvenile prison facilities. Consequently, particular attention was paid to the role of literacy practices and values in Janne's teaching practice.

In the second phase of the analysis, I chose a spatially sensitive research approach based on a method outlined by Mannion, Ivanič, & the Literacies for Learning in Further Education (LfFLE) Research Group (2007). Mannion et al. (2007) define literacy practices as "the knowledge, feelings, embodied social purposes, values and capabilities that are brought into play through the reading and writing of texts" (p. 16). This approach provided the opportunity to study the diversity of contexts in which literacies and values played a major role, and inspired us to "map" instances of boundary crossing and navigating in the lives of the students. Furthermore, it allowed researchers, practitioners, and students to participate in the mapping. In organizational psychology, diary studies have shown how the spillover of experiences, behavior, and mood from one work context to another can be complex and fraught with both positive and negative consequences, for example when differences between white- and blue-collar professions create role conflicts between contexts (Poppleton, Briner, & Kiefer, 2008). A key finding in the analysis was the role of and conflicts between literacies and values across contexts, and the development of pedagogical moves targeted towards navigating these knowledge domains.

I then proceeded to explore third-space theory in order to relate Janne's experiences and actions in the classroom to a broader theoretical framework. Three pedagogical moves emerged as particularly important in constructing a third-space classroom: mapping, embodying, and brokering. In the findings section, the development of these pedagogical moves will be presented in a storied format.

4. Findings: Mapping, Embodying, and Brokering Third Space

4.1 Mapping Third Space

Janne's initial ambition was to connect with student interests. Participation varied from one student to the next. Some never took part in discussions, whereas others commented incessantly, interrupting instruction with profanities or irrelevant digressions. She therefore sought to identify what forms of writing the students would value, and how this related to her own expectations.

In an attempt to make explicit the possible connections between writing in school and vocational experiences, Janne developed a writing frame for students to use in writing a report from their workday. The attempt failed because the students apparently did not understand how this artifact worked (e.g. noticing the words "Your name" at the bottom of the writing frame, one student apparently did not understand the function of this scaffolding device). However, based on her desire to equip the students with functional skills, Janne then designed a literacy activity in which students would pretend to apply for a job. They had little practical experience in writing applications, and had not been involved in applying for positions at the workplaces. This suggested that their familiarity with the conventions of a relatively ordinary literacy task in vocational contexts was low. This assessment was validated when Janne

distributed a constructed and highly exaggerated job application to the students which they initially took to be authentic.

Janne reoriented her teaching towards mapping out-of-school literacy practices. Noticing that one student was interested in cars, she realized that she knew little about car magazines. She therefore encouraged the students to keep literacy logs (Bean, Bean, & Bean, 1999) describing the multiple literacy practices they encountered at home and work. Janne and I explored the students' logs together, uncovering a limited range of literacy practices: sending text messages, writing posts in social media, reading comic books, and playing games on mobile devices.

Based on these limited findings, Janne introduced a number of activities in which the students themselves were invited to map their familiarity with literacy practices across contexts, as well as the values associated with them:

- Talking about recent work experiences
- Reading authentic news articles (crime, animal rights) and responding to them by sending text messages to the teacher or the local newspaper
- Photographing texts at work, transferring image files to the school computer, and explaining the context and meaning of the text in class
- Reading and commenting on a mock job application
- Writing a resume for use in future job applications
- Describing praise received from mentors or others at work, and reflecting on the relationship between literate behavior, praise, and emotional responses
- Talking about personality traits valued in vocational contexts, such as being sociable or flexible, and how future employers might ask for these in job interviews
- Creating a list of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors in school and work contexts

By inviting these practices into the social sphere of the classroom, Janne attempted to destabilize the students' expectations of conventional classroom writing practices. Mapping their knowledge of vocational literacy practices and their associated values accordingly led to a deeper understanding of the navigational work needed to traverse various spaces successfully.

References to popular culture are often absent in typically hegemonic teacher scripts, and are as such an unacknowledged form of local knowledge (Gutierrez et al., 1995). In an effort to create an engaging context for a series of written assignments, Janne decided to draw on *C.S.I.* (*Crime Scene Investigation*), a popular television series. The educational purpose was threefold: 1) to increase participation in and production of extended texts, 2) to motivate students by drawing on out-of-school media literacy experiences, and 3) to develop the ability to provide a written report in a vocational context. The task was completed by many students. Students used phrases such as: "when we arrived at the crime scene" ["når vi ankom åstedet"], "the man was transported to the hospital, [and] declared dead shortly thereafter" ["Mannen ble fraktet til sykehuset, kort tid etterpå ble han erklært død"], providing textual evidence of familiarity with the discursive features of the genre.

Through the mapping process, several students came to realize that successful boundary crossing between vocational, academic, and out-of-school literacy practices and values constitutes a key part of the formation of a professional vocational identity. The students did not seem to be aware that this kind of boundary crossing between academic, vocational, and personal spheres is relatively common. For example, since several students struggled to characterize themselves in a positive manner, Janne grasped the opportunity to discuss such concepts as *qualifications* and *interests*, noting that future employers might want to know a little about their personality and hobbies. Consequently, practicing the literacy skills and moves associated with such situations became important.

In combining academic, vocational, and out-of-school literacies, Janne and the students co-constructed a classroom space open to the many experiences of students across various vocational settings. Although her theoretical understanding of literacy remained relatively unarticulated throughout our collaboration ("I just can't explain it," she exclaimed, struggling to define the concept), Janne's unshakable belief in the value of language acquisition and her mastery-oriented approach indicated that she saw literacy as a functional construct necessary for the performance of basic tasks, as well as a broader set of competencies employed in work, learning, citizenship, and leisure activities.

4.2 Embodying Third Space

Based on the emerging interest in navigating literacy practices and values across spaces, Janne and I attempted to increase participation in classroom discussions. Reflecting on the values attributed to the participants in the program, Janne wrote: "They feel like they're worth less than other students. The attitudes and values esteemed in the school culture contribute to revealing the students' weaknesses". When Janne read professional literature about vulnerable adolescents she realized "how different we are in life" and decided to use discussions to promote understanding of choices and consequences in adult life.

In the classroom, Janne used her newfound awareness of differences in life experiences to explore value conflicts between home and work environment through a Socratic seminar. Students rarely volunteered in such discussions, but Janne was happy to note that this interested the young men. For example, one student, whose vocational practice was in childcare services, firmly responded that he wanted to become a disability welfare recipient like his mother. Janne responded in a Socratic manner, challenging the student to imagine what this meant for his future life situation, and whether he enjoyed working with

children. The student admitted that the experience of contributing to children's lives was meaningful to him.

The embodied aspect of the Socratic seminar encouraged Janne to look beyond written texts as a means of navigating borders and exploring literacy practices and values. Looking to further explore differences in language use between school and workplace contexts, Janne devised an activity using a *value line* where students were asked to take a stance on an issue, voice their opinion, and debate across an imaginary line in the classroom (Green, 2000). Five students were present during the lesson. In her diary, Janne describes how she framed the activity:

> I spoke to them about values and how values can mean different things to different people in relation to their conscience and what they experience to be right and wrong. Then, I introduced the value line exercise, and it seemed like all of them felt it was an okay assignment.

Janne then distributed the numbers 1-10 in the classroom and asked the students to walk to the number corresponding to their level of agreement with a series of statements:

How much do I appreciate…

1. negative comments from fellow students while the teacher is speaking in class? (all answered 1)
2. the teacher asking me how I'm doing, or how I've been lately? (answers varied)
3. having a teacher who cares? (answers varied)
4. positive feedback from the teacher? (all answered 9)

All the students participated in the exercise. Janne then asked the students to suggest their own statements for the value line, to which they responded with the following:

5. going to school? (answers ranged from 1-9)

6. being listened to by colleagues in the workplace? (all answered 10)

7. getting time off from work? (all answered 10)

8. being treated respectfully and not receiving complaints? (all answered 10)

The value-line exercise served as an opportunity to embody discrepancies between students and between school and work. Janne was pleased to see how much the students enjoyed having a constructive and positive classroom climate, and how they – despite truancy, low participation, and disruptive and often negative remarks from fellow students – enjoyed being treated with respect and care in school.

In the subsequent discussion, the students also commented on value discrepancies between work and school. Whereas teachers seemed to accept any excuse for showing up late, taking a break, or skipping class entirely, their workplace mentors had made it clear that a high level of effort was expected, and that they would not accept any snarky remarks. The students described school as a space where eating and relaxing were accepted at any time. One student also remarked that work felt "more free" than being at school, suggesting that vocational experiences were liberating and/or associated with opportunities. In order to shape productive values and highlight the literacy skills needed for decision making and discussion, the value line therefore added an embodied dimension to the classroom, forcing students to physically take a stand, participate in the defense of their choices, and discuss discrepancies in values across persons and contexts.

Janne appreciated the embodied aspects of the value line, remarking that the sense of community created by the practice opened a space for individuals to share their values and thoughts. However, this space was easily interrupted, and when two students arrived late for class, for example, the "whole thing was ruined". Attempts to recreate and consolidate the

discussion in a later lesson were futile, indicating that the space for discussion is context-sensitive, fragile, and in need of constant negotiation.

4.3 Brokering Third Space

The need to broker discrepancies between literacy practices and values emerged as a crucial aspect in constructing a third space for the students. Brokering involved negotiating discrepancies between Janne and her colleague, between students, and within Janne herself.

Firstly, Janne experienced discrepancies between her own teaching practice and that of her colleague. The teacher responsible for mathematics and social studies expressed views congruent with a deficit mindset (e.g. the students could not expect more than to barely pass the academic subjects in the program; the teachers should be "patient" and have low expectations for student learning and participation; the students suffered from difficult family backgrounds and could not be expected to concentrate fully on academic learning). Despite being the designated coordinator, he did not contact the workplace mentors to follow up students and also suggested at one point that disability welfare may be an actual alternative to education for students who failed to show up. Although this teacher voiced his opinions in a value-laden rhetoric of care, patience, and social awareness, Janne observed how his fast-paced lecture style of teaching and lack of genuine interest in student learning and well-being revealed a discrepancy between lofty ideals and actual teaching practice. "We cannot accept responsibility for these students if we do not follow through," Janne commented angrily.

Secondly, as trust grew in the classroom and the students' willingness to share experiences with value discrepancies increased, Janne encouraged them to share anecdotes through which conflicts between students' values could be exemplified. One student volunteered to report an embarrassing episode in the workplace to point out such a

discrepancy: A mentor who was responsible for two students inquired about their out-of-school interests. "Do you do anything besides sleeping and playing?" he asked. One student proudly answered, "I play video games all the time," a reply that made the other student feel embarrassed. Listening to the first student's answer, he felt that such an attitude was not valued by the mentor. Instead, it confirmed stereotypes of lazy and passive adolescents. What seemed especially embarrassing was the lack of awareness of vocational values represented in the answer – the student did not seem to register the subtle moral condemnation in the mentor's question. By telling this story in the classroom, the student was able to express his understanding of value discrepancies in workplace contexts. This invited others to reflect on the stereotypes and prejudices that might exist in masculine blue-collar contexts.

Thirdly, as Janne attempted to construct a classroom atmosphere where value discrepancies could be challenged, she struggled with inner turmoil. A mother of three children, Janne's professional ethics were deeply rooted in her personal identity. The intense experiences with the students, however, nourished feelings of self-doubt and ambivalence. "I want to make them eager to please," Janne commented, but in practice she was often haunted by fear and by the necessity to turn to self-preservation and protection tactics. She admitted in her reflective writing that the appearance of some of the students still made her physically unwell, and that she was happy when these students were absent: "I pity them, yet they disgust me," she confessed in her diary.

As our collaboration progressed, she often referred to her diary entries as a way of systematizing her experiences and as a way of developing deeper understandings of the students' lives. The reflection space in the written diaries reinforced her motivation for work and provided an opportunity to broker challenging emotions, ideas, and practices. For example, Janne realized that teacher comments on student behavior and the display of resignation were counterproductive moves on her part. This in turn affected her style of

classroom management: Whereas she would normally maintain absolute deadlines, she now found herself responding more flexibly to latecomers. Furthermore, writing allowed Janne to explore, validate, or reject her own experiences and interpretations. "It's truer when I've talked to you," she comments in our conversations. "When I started working as a Norwegian teacher, I thought reading and understanding were important to me. But now it has become even more important that the students master it." Reflective writing therefore strengthened Janne's understanding of her teaching situation and offered a mediation space between discourses and contexts.

Activities such as the Socratic seminar and the value line enabled students and the teacher alike to navigate contextual boundaries, creating a third space in which tensions and possibilities could be mapped, embodied, and brokered. Similarly, the pseudonym, diary writing, and conversations functioned as a third space for imagining, reflecting on, and planning constructive teaching moves. These examples show the potentially destabilizing effect of third space on literacy practices and value sets. They also suggest that third space has an ephemeral quality, that it requires awareness of students' social backgrounds and self-concept, and that it must be continuously co-constructed by teachers and students if learning experiences are to be sustained and meaningful. Additionally, the opportunity to reflect on mapping, embodying, and brokering third space in the classroom constitutes a third space of its own, where epistemological shifts, identities, practices, and ways of teaching can be questioned, imagined, and reconfigured.

5. Discussion

Reimagined as a third space, VET classrooms have the potential to destabilize epistemic boundaries, clearing the stage for new ways of thinking about literacies and values. By integrating literacy practices from home, work, and school, teacher and student repertoires can

be expanded, thereby increasing the cultural resources available for learning. Mapping, embodying, and brokering relations between literacy practices and values across contexts can be productive moves in the construction of such third-space classrooms.

Additionally, navigating boundaries between home, school, and workplaces may be of importance for particular groups of students. Moje et al. (2004) highlight how the need for conversation between academic and everyday knowledge and discourses is especially critical for low-achieving and low-effort students due to their willingness to reject any aspect of schooling that does not seem meaningful or relevant in their cultural context. However, there is a risk that the hybridizing of institutional and personal spaces will lead to a colonization of students' valued personal spheres. When creating third-space classrooms, students or teachers should therefore not be asked to hybridize their existing identities. Rather, developing critical insights into the discrepancies between home, school, and vocational spaces can benefit students in acts of navigation and boundary-crossing and contribute to the development of new strategies of selfhood.

Teaching navigations requires a set of basic reading and writing skills, strategies, and the ability to navigate across spaces, contexts, and relationships (Moje, 2013). Thus, one challenge for VET teachers is to develop and teach strategic acts of navigating across contexts without losing sight of valued curricular goals or appropriating out-of-school practices for school purposes. This may prove difficult if the curriculum does not provide opportunities for boundary crossing. Consequently, VET teachers themselves must become skillful boundary-crossers and navigators, forging relationships with other practitioners to learn about possible discrepancies between contexts.

Teachers cannot bridge the gaps between academic and vocational cultures simply by overlaying language arts assignments in vocational subjects (Kohnen, 2015). Rather, mapping, embodying, and brokering third space implies considerable epistemological shifts as

well as disruptions of tacit and explicit sets of cultural values across academic and vocational boundaries. The multivoiced nature of such classrooms can reveal differences in deeply held beliefs among teachers and students, requiring individuals to scrutinize their views on literacy practices and the values they attribute to them. Therefore, participating in developmental work in a third space not only represents a possibility for reflection, personal growth, and collaboration. The creation of third-space classrooms in VET may also lead to deeper insights into the complex and sometimes problematic ways in which workplaces and schools appreciate certain forms of literacy practices, and how such practices are associated with specific values.

Moreover, when the classroom becomes a third space in which students can explore practices and values, a second space for teacher reflection, creativity, and inquiry may be needed. Such a third space could be constructed through reflective writing or through collaboration with other educators. Teachers should therefore continue to be critical inquirers into the various contexts in which literacy practices are used, looking closely at the knowledge domains and value systems they originate from. They should continuously consider the implications for student participation, identity, and interaction in the classroom, and develop moves appropriate for VET pedagogy. This can improve educators' understanding of students and the spaces they navigate, the tacit and explicit expectations in the academic and vocational contexts in which they work and learn, and the many boundaries they must navigate as part of their education.

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