

Co-creating spaces for imagination and hope in higher education

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Paper

Text

Using the three artefacts below as entry points, I will, in this work, take an autobiographical approach to explore my own role in higher education and possible connections between teaching, research and activism. From my own position as a teacher and researcher in higher education and university pedagogy, a central element in my teaching is to create a space that allows me and the students to learn and relearn together by acknowledging each other as partners in the education process. Following Freire's (1970) argument that teaching and learning is never a neutral process, but always a political one, my aim is to develop a counter narrative to dominant neoliberal discourses in the classroom. A narrative that emphasizes the collective instead of individualism, trust instead of accountability, and maybe most importantly a narrative that allows us to re-imagine higher education in a time where it is increasingly difficult to think radical and dream of a different society.

I argue that at the intersection between teaching and research, activism emerges as praxis that aims at challenging neoliberal ideas of higher education. My intention is not to only critique the marketization of higher education in my research, but to develop and explore alternatives together with the students. It is through dialogue, "a moment where humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it" (Shor & Freire, 1987), and building upon everyone's diverse experiences that new forms of higher education can emerge. In addition, I argue that this approach can help students to learn how to ask difficult questions about the status quo and re-imagine a different kind of society and way of being. Or in other words, the focus is on creating opportunities for students to learn and engage in central processes that precede and underly activism.

At the same time, I sometimes feel guilty of not marching in protest, of not looking beyond the boundaries of the university. Is, what I believe is activism, just another form of teaching and research that merely promotes my own career? Relating to the work of Giroux (2010), I want to hope. I want to hope that teaching can be "an act of moral imagination that enabled progressive educators and others to think otherwise in order to act otherwise" (Giroux, 2010, p. 719). And I want to hope that by coming back to the question of how to act upon my research, I will be able to contribute to change. "I-[WE] go to seek a great perhaps" (original François Rabelais – modification Naomi de la Tour)

Question: What it means to be an activist and whose values we represent?

Keywords: Hope, dialogue, co-creating spaces, teaching as activism, re-imagine higher education

References:

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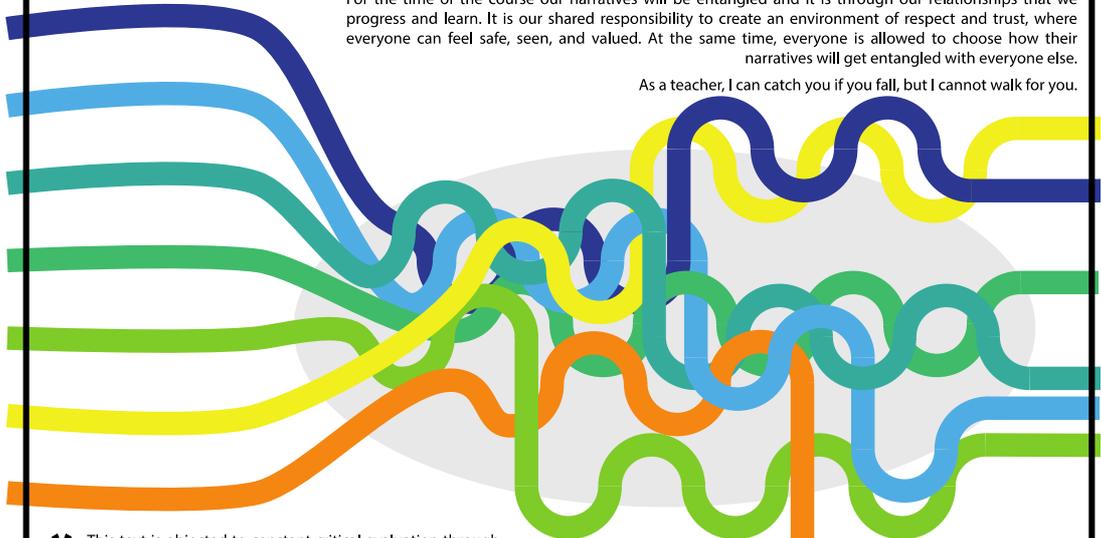
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Entrance ticket
to a potentially
Perspective
Changing
Experience

* The vision for this course is that we all come together to consider, reflect upon, and to some extent expand our perspectives on a large variety of things. That everyone who is part of the course has the possibility to share their perspectives, inspire others, and critical question their own stand-point. This critical questioning is within the responsibility of each individual - when listening to others we only ask questions to better understand, but we do not judge.

For the time of the course our narratives will be entangled and it is through our relationships that we progress and learn. It is our shared responsibility to create an environment of respect and trust, where everyone can feel safe, seen, and valued. At the same time, everyone is allowed to choose how their narratives will get entangled with everyone else.

As a teacher, I can catch you if you fall, but I cannot walk for you.



This text is objected to constant critical evaluation through



Artefact 2 - "Reclaim the public" -
The idea is to take research and teaching out to the streets and create a space for engagement (inspired by Stefanie Chae).

is send to students before the course starts.

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I am exhausted but happy. Kirsti, Maud, Håkon, and I just finished recording another long dialogue on relations and play in higher education. It is so great that we started this project to explore what shapes and is shaped by higher education.

For me our dialogues during the last months have been really important, something I have been looking forward to. I was curious what would happen what turns our conversations would take. It has been thought provoking and sometimes unsettling. I have been thinking about what we talked about a lot.

For me these dialogues are in some way the core of education. I feel that it is here that we can learn and relearn, where we can be challenged and reconsider our own perspectives.

But it leaves me also with the question of how many of these dialogues we have and what role they play in the education landscape. I am afraid, but I am also hopeful, because we had so many moments of surprise and wonder in this project.

Artefact 3 - "Personal diary entry" -
This was written in connection with a research project that I am working on together with three students, where we aim to explore relations and play in higher education.