Beyond Individual Matters

Sloyd Teachers posts in a Facebook group

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Abstract: The reason for conducting this study was two-fold: sloyd teachers have over a period of time expressed a need for fellow sloyd teachers at their workplace in the beginning of 2016 felt that there had been an "attack" on their subject. Using thematic analysis, we studied 334 posts written by participants in a Facebook group called Nationellt Resurscentrum (National Resource Centre) during an "ordinary" month, April 2016. The results show that the posts were mainly concerned with the exchange of teaching experiences, functional discussions concerning matters such as internal and external conditions related to sloyd as a school subject, and information sharing related to the teachers' own continuing professional development, such as invitations to specific lectures. In terms of community of practice theory, the results of this study can be interpreted as demonstrating that this specific Facebook group strengthens the sloyd teacher community and allows them to initiate and assert ownership of discussions related to their profession. The result also shows that posts in this specific Facebook group made it possible for the members to transform individual competencies into a collectively possessed skills "toolbox" beyond individual matters.

Keywords: Experience exchange, Functional discussions, Information sharing, Communities of Practice, Sloyd Teachers

Introduction

Social media such as blogs, Twitter and Facebook have become useful resources for networks of teachers. Such platforms have given teachers new opportunities to comment and to share knowledge, information and teaching materials with each other (Hew & Hara, 2007; Liljekvist, 2016). Furthermore, it also offers the 'members' to ask questions and to get response from other members within the group. A foreshadowed problem (Malinowski, 1922) was that social media could be regarded as an arena for extended workplace learning. Previous research strengthens the assumption that Facebook could be an important communication and social networking tool (Aydin, 2012; Rutherford 2010). For this study, we have followed in the footsteps of such researchers as (Bissessar, 2014; Lacatus, van Bommel, & Olin-Scheller, 2017; Bissessar, Liljekvist, von Bommel, & Olin-Scheller, 2018). In so doing, we studied sloyd teachers and their communication within the context of a teacher-administrated Facebook interest group. This public group, is known as the *Nationellt resurscentrum för slöjd* (*National Resource Centre for Sloyd*). It could be described as a community of practice for people who share an interest in the specific phenomenon of sloyd. The Facebook group, which started in November 2012 (Frohagen, 2012), is open to participants with an interest for sloyd and school sloyd who have been accepted by the group's administrators.

This specific study of posts in the Facebook groups *Nationellt resurscentrum för slöjd* (*National Resource Centre for Sloyd* during spring 2016 was interesting for some reason. An article in the trade journal *Uttryck* (*Expression*) demonstrates the fact that Facebook groups can be important to Swedish

sloyd teachers. In the piece, a sloyd teacher conducts a discourse on the prevailing uncertainty regarding sloyd education and the fact that Swedish sloyd teachers often lack colleagues with whom they can discuss education-related matters and other issues at their place of work (Larsson, 2016). Similar accounts are to be found in the summary analysis of the national subject evaluations of art, music, and sloyd classes (National Agency for Education, 2015). The analysis done by the National Agency for Education found that a lack of colleagues in the workplace reduces sloyd teachers' opportunities to share experiences with each other and thus develop within their profession. Another reason was an incident, a sort of "attack," that was directed towards the school subject sloyd in January 2016. It started with an article in one Swedish newspaper where one of their columnists questioned why sloyd was still a subject in the Swedish upper secondary school (Marteus, 2016). That attack triggered a defence of the subject as well as a "counterattack" in the shape of a "love bomb" containing countless numbers of wooden butter-knives that were sent to the columnist (Rylander Lundström, 2017). Yet another reason is the fact that the school subject sloyd, for several years has been found to be the most popular of all school subjects according to pupils. Even so, neither they nor their parents seem to understand why sloyd is a subject in the compulsory Swedish school, according to national evaluations (Skolverket 1993; Skolverket 2005; Skolverket, 2015).

Liljekvist, von Bommel and Olin-Scheller (2017) have described that Facebook groups can serve as a gathering place for the organisation and development of teaching and learning, as well as for the professional development of educators. A distinctive feature of Facebook groups (which can be likened to communities of practice; see Lave & Wenger, 1991; Gilbert, 2016; Rosell-Aguilar, 2018), is that the communication is conducted via members who (a) write, (b) share, and (c) comment on each other's posts. One can assume that through such communication, the participants in a Facebook group like the *National Resource Centre for Sloyd* maintain and develop their didactic skills or abilities related to the school subject of sloyd. In the subject sloyd all students in the Swedish comprehensive school are given opportunities to learn to do sloyd work, that is to make physical artefacts founded in ttheir own ideas, in textile, wood, metal and other materials. They are taught by teachers with a specialization in sloyd, who beyond ordinary teaching skills, such as classroom management, through workshop sessions have become knowledgeable in their craft and proficient in the work of forming a crafted artefact (Johansson & Andersson, 2017). To put it in another way, perhaps it is the case that participants perceive the Facebook group as an "extension of the collegium" (Körling, 2013), a web-based place where participants are given the opportunity to express educational ideas and to hear other colleagues' thoughts and opinions. Such groups do not impose demands and duties; rather, they foster a sense of connectedness.

In light of the above introduction, the purpose of this article is to describe how a month's worth of posts made by members in the *National Resource Centre for Sloyd* Facebook group could be understood and explained from an external point of view. In order to do so we formulated the following research question:

What sorts of posts were shared in a Facebook group during an ordinary month?

Communities of Practice

The term "communities of practice" refers to a theory of learing, situated learning, and focus on humans with a common concern for something regularly interacts with each other while maintaining and transferring competence (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). The motive for joining a community of practice lies in the fact that members of the community of practice have something to gain by continuously interacting and collaborating with each other (Goodyear, Casey, & Kirk, 2014). They care about or share a passion for a common task, phenomenon or concept (in this case sloyd) and possess and develop a shared repertoire on the subject in question. According to Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002), such participants are actively striving to develop and deepen their knowledge within a defined field. The number of participants collaborating in the group can increase or decrease, and the focus may

vary over time depending on the members' interests. As expressed by Mitchell (2002), communities of practice may be understood as dynamic, because they can change their agenda to suit the interests of their participants. Communities of practice can be found everywhere, and people can belong to multiple communities of practice, in which they may be more central or more peripheral participants, depending on their needs and interests (Wenger, 1998; Gilbert, 2016; Rosell-Aguilar, 2018). The driving force for the communities can be said to be the ambition of developing a social identity and an interest in continued learning within the context of a defined practice (such as sloyd).

Wenger (1998) highlights three important aspects (or dimensions) that must be fulfilled in order for a group of individuals to be deemed a community of practice. These are: (a) *learning*, (b) *community* and (c) *practice*. These dimensions illustrate the difference between a community of practice and a club of friends or a network of individuals who are in contact with each other. The first dimension, *learning*, focus on the fact that communities of practice consist of participants who produce meaning in relation to other members in a constant process on negotiation of meaning. It also focuses on doing experience through reification of for example artefacts or lesson plans in order to influence other members. The second dimension, *community*, describes a mutual engagement to learning more. It is also about having an interest in developing and preserving a skill or ability through negotiating with one another. It also reflects a willingness to systematically encounter, challenge and share a repertoire with each other. The third dimension, *practice*, indicates that a community of practice is characterised by participants who share a repertoire of common resources, such as artefacts, concepts, experiences, languages and tools. In this manner, practice reflects participants' understanding of what is essential about the specific domain. It should be noted that a community of practice is not to be seen as cut off from external effects; rather, participants in the community collectively interpret and develop a mutual understanding of new influences. Hammerness et al., (2005) describe how teachers teach and how teachers' work evolves. They highlight *visions* as a fourth important dimension of communities of practice. Visions lay a foundation for functional learning and professional conduct, and also constitute an important learning aspect in communities of practice comprised of educators.

Furthermore, Wenger (1998) posits that communities of practice fulfil a wealth of functions for their participants. He singles out (a) *the sharing and interpretation of information* based on a common understanding of what is relevant to communicate, as well as how the participants share information. Moreover, he emphasises that communities of practice (b) *preserve knowledge* that mirrors participation in each specific community's aspects of interest. In this manner, communities of practice share tacit knowledge not contained in formal systems. Communities of practice (c) *manage competencies* in order to keep themselves abreast of the latest developments related to the content around which the community is constructed. This dimension involves the dissemination of ideas, the working through of problems, and keeping up to date with developments and changes both within and outside the domain. Furthermore, it (d) offers communities of practice an *identifying place* where participants can meet like-minded people how have a mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998).

Methodology: Case study

Miles and Huberman (1994) describe cases as phenomena that are tied to a specific context. This proposition would appear to be an apt description of our study of posts of some members in the Facebook group *National Resource Centre for Sloyd*. Member are anyone who is interested in the school subject sloyd and sloyd teaching - sloyd teachers, students, substitutes, craftsmen, researchers, politicians, school leaders and other enthusiasts for sloyd according to the Facebook-page for the group. According to Simons (2009, s. 21) case study is an "in-depth exploration from a multiple perspective of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or a system in a 'real life' context". An implementation of this type of in-depth, intensive, and detailed research (Lee, Mishna, & Brennenstuhl, 2010) is intended to describe experiences, relationships, events or processes that other comprehensive investigations cannot capture. Case studies are a form of small-scale investigation whose

intention is to obtain insights that may have further consequences (Simons; 2009; Menzies, Petrie & Zarb, 2017). Baxter and Jack (2008) argue that case studies are appropriate when researchers seek answers to "how?" and "why?" questions. In other words, case studies aim to accomplish an "in-depth description, exploration, or explanation of a particular system or phenomenon" (Lee et al., 2010, p. 682). Yin (1994) emphasises that the phenomenon being studied in a case study should be present in colloquial contexts - something that already exists prior to becoming a subject of interest for researchers. In our case, this phenomenon, posts from one month's communication between some members in the *National Resource Centre for Sloyd* Facebook group. In case studies, the focus is on in-depth understanding and the interpretation of complex and subtle real-life situations, which often consist of relationships and processes (Denscombe, 2009).

In conducting such an investigation, Baxter and Jack (2008) reason that the researcher must not be able to manipulate the conditions being studied. Case studies can be definition-driven or theory-driven (Denscombe, 2009; Simons, 2009). In definition-driven case studies, the researcher seeks to produce descriptions of what is happening by exploring key issues and making different kinds of comparisons. In theory-driven case studies, the aim is to use experiments to illustrate or justify theories. Our definition-driven case study is limited to a single month, April 2016. Insofar as is possible, it aims to examine the posts written by some of the 5867 participants in the Facebook group for sloyd teachers. The decision to study the posts during the month of April is based on the fact that we wanted to reflect upon what teachers discussed during an "ordinary" period that did not include the beginning or end of a semester or other kinds of breaks, e.g. autumn leave, or a period when teachers may be focusing on assessment and grading. Case studies should also be characterised by a clear connection, and should demonstrate a strong relationship to theories (Bergen & While, 2000; Yin, 1994) that aim to test or develop theories. In our case study, we are implementing the theory of communities of practice.

Analysis

In our study, thematic content analysis as described by (Braun & Clark, 2011) has been employed. In performing the investigation process, we followed the steps of this method of analysis. In Step 1, we acquainted ourselves with the communication by reading all 334 posts from April 2016. That month, besides being "ordinary," was chosen because it was relatively close to the "attack" and the "love-bomb" counterattack, yet with enough distance that things had returned close to normal again. While March was too close to the "attack" and the "love-bomb" counterattack, May was avoided because teachers were occupied with assessing and grading pupils' sloyd performance.

A post is, in this study, the same as a new message added by a member of the Facebook group. By reasoning in such a way, we separated posts from comments on posts. That seemed like a reasonable delimitation as we searched for the variation among posts during April 2016. A post could, for example, be about a lesson that had been interrupted when a student had to go and see the dental hygienist.
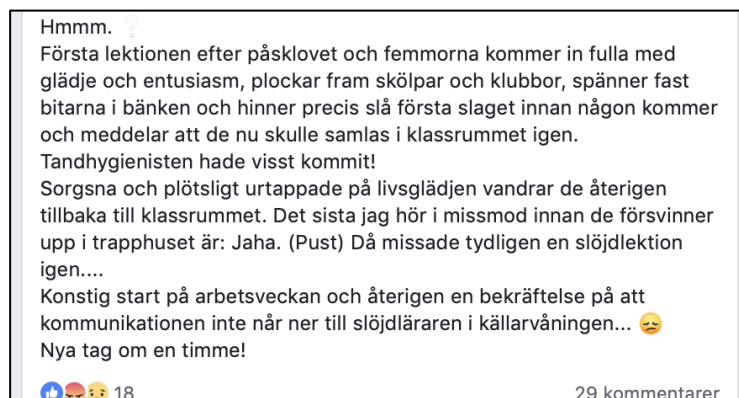

Hmmm.
Första lektionen efter påsklovet och femmorna kommer in fulla med glädje och entusiasm, plockar fram skölpar och klubbor, spänner fast bitarna i bänken och hinner precis slå första slaget innan någon kommer och meddelar att de nu skulle samlas i klassrummet igen.
Tandhygienisten hade visst kommit!
Sorgsna och plötsligt urtappade på livsglädjen vandrar de återigen tillbaka till klassrummet. Det sista jag hör i missmod innan de försvinner upp i trapphuset är: Jaha. (Pust) Då missade tydligen en slöjdlektion igen....
Konstig start på arbetsveckan och återigen en bekräftelse på att kommunikationen inte når ner till slöjdläraren i källarvåningen... 😞
Nya tag om en timme!

👍😡😢 18   29 kommentarer

Figure 1. Example of text message posts in the group during April.

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This post indicates that the sloyd teacher was not informed about the dental visit and that this is not the first time this sort of thing has happened. The post also shows that the sloyd teacher does not feel like part of the existing collegium at the school, and seeks understanding among other sloyd teachers in the Facebook group. The members in the Facebook group become an alternative collegium, beyond the existing colleagues for this teacher.

Post could include text and photos, as for example a photo of a carved gun and a invite to discuss if students should be allowed to produce "warlike" artefacts, and other forms of multimodal posts, as for example a YouTube clip about grades.

Figure 2. Example of multimodal posts in the Facebook group during April.

All analysed posts were published on the group's Facebook page by some of the 5867 group members during April 2016. Due to our research questions, the analysis was directed at the posts rather than at any member that wrote them. For this reason we did not analyse, for example, a number of posts by individual members. In Step 2, we took notes and made selections from the transcripts of the communication as we read, single words or sentences, thereby developing a coding system. As part of that we also noted in the prints of the communication if the posts had been liked or commented by someone else. When doing so we in Step 3 we searched for themes among our codes of posts. During the analysis process, codes such as subject status, were grouped into clusters around similar ideas or concepts which eventually resulted in three main preliminary themes. While maintaining a critical and circumspect point of view we reviewed the themes we had detected prior to advancing to Step 5, in which our three main themes were defined, consisting of a varying number of sub-themes. Finally, in Step 6, we produced our text. The hope was that the results of our research would provide a reasonable and fair picture from an external point of view, looking at the posts within the *National Resource Centre for Sloyd* Facebook group in April of 2016.

Ethical considerations

We took ethical considerations into account both prior to commencing the study and in the course of implementing our research. In addition to the requirements of the Swedish ethical guidelines (CODEX, 2012) we also considered the study's ethics according to the reasoning of the British Psychological Society (2017) regarding Internet Mediated Research (IMR). The BPS differentiates between *reactive studies* in which empirical data is generated through the interaction between participants and researchers and *non-reactive studies* in which the analysis is performed on empirical data available on blogs, discussion forums or as in our case study in a public Facebook group. On the one hand, publication in a public group forum means that anyone (including people who are not logged into Facebook) is permitted to access the published content. On the other hand, this does not give researchers the right to make use of the shared material (or in our case the communication between the members of the specific group) without first considering the ethical implications of doing so. One aspect of our considerations was showing respect to the individual participants in the Facebook group we studied. We therefore chose to omit names in the posts we thematised. In this way, we made an effort to take the need for confidentiality into account. We have also considered whether our study can influence the social structures within and around the Facebook group. To this end, discussions were conducted with the initiator of the group who, like us, saw the scientific value and benefit of an external description of the communication between the

group's members, provided that we considered our actions and took steps to minimise the risk that anyone would be negatively affected by our study.

Results

The result is divided into three distinct themes: (a) experience exchange (b) functional discussions and (c) information sharing. The first theme, experience exchange, had to do with how the participants used their posts to collect and share the opinions of others with regards to various aspects related to the teaching of sloyd. The second theme, functional discussions, refers to communication in which the participants endeavoured to clarify various types of functionalities, such as the Facebook group's function and the function of sloyd as a school subject. The third theme, information sharing, refers to how the participants shared information and informed each other about workplaces, products and/or opportunities for continuing professional development.

Experience exchange

The teachers' experience exchanges had to do with experience they had done during teaching. It could be divided into four sub-themes: (a) lesson planning, (b) the implementation of teaching, (c) the monitoring of teaching, and (d) aspects related to the teaching environment.

Lesson Planning

The members in the Facebook group shared different types of experiences involving the educational programming of course content, as well as adaptations of teaching methods and the planning of collaborative projects between sloyd and other theory-based school subjects such as mathematics, natural science or social science.

One example of an experience exchange related to work activities involved a teacher who described how he/she implemented the use of an old-fashioned "axe plane," a hand plane with transverse handles that resemble the handlebars of a bicycle and that is meant to be used by two people working in tandem. The teacher noticed that the design made it easier for pupils to complete the planning activity, because the axe plane made it possible to work in pairs. Experience exchanges related to work areas could also concern the planning of ordinary work areas such as knitting/yarn techniques. Furthermore, these posts could address lesson planning related to less common work areas, such as teaching wooden frame screen printing. In addition to such time-limited plans, teachers also exchanged experiences regarding education plans that extended over longer periods of time, or larger work areas that extended over the course of an entire semester. The participants' experience exchanges regarding the planning of work activities or work areas were seldom commented on by other members of the Facebook group, and the comments that were made tended to be very short.

In the communication between the participants, group members discussed various types of adaptations that they considered when planning their lessons. In part, such discussions dealt with different groups of pupils and specific shortcomings (such as how sloyd education focused on textiles could be better adapted for unsupervised student. The adaptations sometimes had to do with poking fun at instructions written by the National Agency of Education, as shown in the post below, where a sloyd teacher transformed the instructions that all pupils should be able to write with both hands, trying this with her pupils during a sloyd lesson as well.

Figure 3. Information about the need for a pupils to learn to use their "other hand" in sloyd as well.

General shortcomings were another topic of discussion; how could the teacher manage his/her time in such a way that he/she could successfully teach a given subject? Participants said that they had attempted to employ *3B4ME*, a teaching method that trains pupils to learn independently. *3B* stands for *brain, books* and *buddies* – the three elements that the pupil must take note of, consider, or try to use before (*4*) asking the teacher (*Me*) for help. Another participant suggested that pupils who require help should ask three friends first, which would serve to reduce the number of time-consuming and ill-conceived questions he/she asked the teacher (which were a major cause of the teachers' feelings of inadequacy). However, this participant's experience was not shared by all of those who answered the question, as was made clear by their responses.

Another proposal regarding how to manage one's time was to structure one's teaching by means of so-called "help lists," where pupils could write their names and receive help when it was their turn. Participants argued that such forms of turn-taking strategies would cause pupils to become passive while they awaited help from the teacher. In addition, pupils sometimes changed the order of the help lists, which prevented them from serving their intended purpose. Further suggestions were provided by another group member, who posited that one successful strategy was to forbid pupils to ask the question "What do I do now?" The participant pointed out that it took pupils three tries to figure out that when asking for help they had to provide their own suggestion of how to resolve a problem or question. In this way, the teacher eliminated unnecessary questions and at the same time trained the pupils to become more independent.

Other participants in the Facebook group explained that they showed their classes pre-recorded instructional videos (published on YouTube channels) pertaining to specific lesson elements. The help provided by such instructional videos made teaching easier and also allowed the teacher to use his/her time more efficiently, because the pupils were able to receive instruction on their own (by watching the videos). Some participants raised objections and criticised these instructional videos for being too dialogue-heavy. They argued that such videos ran the risk of becoming boring or tiring for the pupils. In another adaptation of standard teaching techniques, some teachers made special instructional signs and hung them up in the sloyd room. The participants' experience exchanges regarding adaptations were commented upon frequently, as other members of the Facebook group contributed their thoughts on the subject.

Another type of planning focused on teachers' experiences with organising collaborative projects between different school subjects. For example, the participants exchanged their experiences of planning two-party collaborations between sloyd and natural science subjects or sloyd and social studies subjects. One example of a two-party collaboration between sloyd and the social studies subject of geography involved constructing a map of Sweden. The provinces were sawed out in carpentry and metalworking sloyd class. Then forests, lakes and croplands were roll-felted in textile sloyd class. The borders of the provinces were then finger-felted, and towns in each province were marked with red wool embroidery.

An example of a multiple-party collaboration between sloyd, art, and mathematics classes was the project "The Joy of Sloyd: Using straight lines to make curves" that was shared from one of the members in the Facebook group.

Figure 4. Information about inspirational material for collaboration between mathematics, sloyd, and art.

Through such collaboration, pupils gained inspiration for future projects in embroidery, chip carving, fabric printing and wire-working. Posts relating to collaboration between different subjects were rarely commented upon by other participants, but were "liked" by the Facebook group's participants.

About Implementation of Teaching

The teachers in the Facebook group shared different types of experiences related to the implementation of work activities, work areas, or technical solutions, as well as the implementation of teaching with the help of ICT.

The experience exchanges that focused on how different work activities could be carried out dealt with specific work activities (such as different kinds of sloyd crossword puzzles with words related to wood composition for the carpentry and metalworking study path). The experience exchanges that focused on how work areas could be implemented were often part of lesson planning (such as the year 3 wall-mounted coat hanger project). There were also other descriptions that were more clearly focused on inspirational material for the implementation of a larger work area. In both cases, the participants themselves had developed and described how these work activities or work areas could be carried out, or else the teachers had drawn inspiration from various teaching materials.

Participants also requested other teachers experiences of specific techniques or technical solutions, such as how they could cut out and sew something made of chocolate wrappers.

Figure 5. Questions about others' experience using materials other than the ordinary ones for sewing.

Questions like the one above about others' experience often received many answers, as well as links to video documentation and blogs. Participants engaged in this form of experience exchange, offering both comments and "likes" regarding the implementation of work activities and work areas or the execution of technical solutions.

The experience exchanges regarding the implementation of teaching with the help of ICT focused on digitisation or programming and differed from other exchanges in that the subject being discussed tended to polarise participants, who took clear positions as being "for" or "against" the idea in question. In one such example, a participant asked how she/he and her/his colleagues might incorporate computer programming into sloyd class. An answer to the question related to the subject's respected status, and reasoned that incorporating programming might raise the status of sloyd at the school. Other participants reacted to this idea, one participant, for example, opining that she/he did "NOT" need to raise the status of sloyd by incorporating programming. In this Facebook post, computer programming was linked to industrialisation, and was pitted against simplicity in the form of "simple" tools for producing personal expressions. In the experience exchanges related to teaching with the help of ICT, participants got involved by "liking" and contributing comments.

Planning Monitoring of Teaching
The monitoring of teaching dealt with how different assessment rubrics for sloyd could be developed and implemented, and what experiences other people had had when it came to using them. In some cases, this involved the use of matrices for individual activities, and in other cases rubrics were used to evaluate year-long courses (most often years 6-9). Monitoring could also involve a participant who had created some form of technical support, such as an application for assessment rubrics for entire classes. One such post was commented on by a participant who had gained experiences by using the application.

Planning the Classroom Environment

The participants also exchanged experiences concerning aspects related to the learning environment. One such aspect dealt with how sloyd rooms could be furnished with respect to their function and how sloyd rooms designed specifically for one of the two study paths (carpentry/metalworking and textiles) could be combined, as well as how a new room for one of the two specialisations could be planned. Another aspect dealt with various materials options and the purchase of such materials. A third and final aspect concerned safety in the sloyd room. In part, it dealt with safety issues pertaining to various electrical machines that were frequently used in the carpentry and metalworking study path. It also dealt with a compilation in the form of a safety information sheet concerning the handling of chemicals in sloyd classes. This post was liked by many participants but inspired few comments.

Functional Discussion

Participants' functional discussions could be divided into three sub-themes (a) the function of the Facebook group, (b) the function of sloyd teachers and (c) the function of sloyd as a primary school subject.

The Function of the Facebook Group

Discussions regarding the function of the *National Resource Centre for Sloyd* had to do with the fact that some participants felt supported by the group's existence and by the posts of its other members. In one published post, a group member remarked that "reading posts on this page gives me a greater appreciation for my colleagues, school and headmaster." Most of those who commented could relate to the post, agreed with its content, and felt that it was well written. For example, comments focused on the participants' sense that the Facebook group provided both new perspectives and inspiration. Other participants found the post heart-warming but nonetheless added that "things are so bad that I feel I have no other choice but to go back to school and get another degree."

The Function of the Sloyd Teacher

Role discussions regarding the work of a sloyd teacher revolved around the alienation experienced by many group members, who felt that their colleagues were disinterested and unwilling to collaborate. One such post was about a participant who had become frustrated in connection with a morning meeting at his/her school. He/she noted that other teachers discussed things and covered for each other, but few or none of them asked him/her about solutions related to the school's sloyd class. Some participants shared similar experiences and felt they could relate to the situation, commented on the post, and contributed concrete tips about what one could do about this problem. Suggestions included participating in teacher discussions, getting to school early, becoming (more) active in meeting colleagues, daring to continue to bring up the topic in performance reviews. It was also about making sure not to end up spending all one's time between lessons in the sloyd room (i.e. by buying oneself a coffeemaker and keeping it in the room, thus isolating oneself from one's colleagues and making it even more difficult to co-operate) or (alternatively) changing one's workplace. On the other hand, a retired sloyd teacher who had worked for 40 years discovered the Facebook group and expressed that she/he had missed being in contact with other sloyd teachers since he/she had retired, and hoped to be able to contribute to the Facebook group.

The Function of Sloyd as a Primary School Subject

Discussions regarding the function of sloyd as a school subject focused on internal and external threats to the subject as such. Internal threats included a lack of understanding of the subject or of the conditions necessary for teaching sloyd; these threats came from within the school. In one such example, a participant posted about his/her frustration that sloyd class had been cancelled due to a school visit by a dental hygienist. Another question about internal threats focused on other participants' experiences with sloyd classes that were held on Fridays. This participant asked, "Are all the pupils' hours eaten up by free Fridays and weekend Fridays?" This prompted other participants to provide suggestions for

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different types of solutions which among other things, dealt with the possibility of always holding the same year-long course on Fridays, of creating rotating schedules that are changed each year, of generously proportioned hours on Fridays, of a "scheduled Friday" on a different day of the week, or suggesting that the scheduler calculate how much time had been lost to other activities or holidays and then add it to the remaining lessons. One participant concluded by noting that this was "a very good question!" External threats had to do with attacks on the school subject of sloyd from those outside the school. One example of this type of threat consisted of an open letter published on April 11 on Spotify by its founders, Daniel Ek and Martin Lorentzon. The letter's title, "We must take action lest we be left behind!" was followed by a three-part description of the issue in question. Each section dealt with an obstacle that was problematic to the growth of Sweden as a country. In the description of the second obstacle – our education system – sloyd was highlighted in a passage in which the authors wrote that "Sloyd remains a mandatory subject in Swedish schools, but computer programming is not." In addition to various responses to this open letter, another open letter was written to Daniel Ek by the sloyd teacher who taught him when he was in primary school.
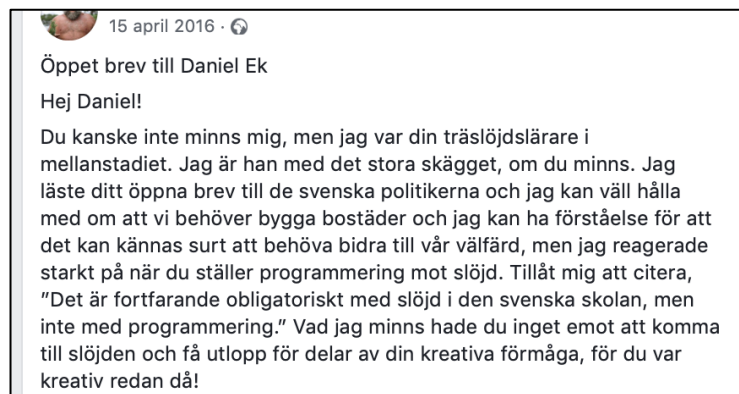

15 april 2016 ·

Öppet brev till Daniel Ek

Hej Daniel!

Du kanske inte minns mig, men jag var din träslöjdslärare i mellanstadiet. Jag är han med det stora skägget, om du minns. Jag läste ditt öppna brev till de svenska politikerna och jag kan väll hålla med om att vi behöver bygga bostäder och jag kan ha förståelse för att det kan kännas surt att behöva bidra till vår välfärd, men jag reagerade starkt på när du ställer programmering mot slöjd. Tillåt mig att citera, "Det är fortfarande obligatoriskt med slöjd i den svenska skolan, men inte med programmering." Vad jag minns hade du inget emot att komma till slöjden och få utlopp för delar av din kreativa förmåga, för du var kreativ redan då!

Figure 6. A response with arguments about skills that are learnt during sloyd lessons.

The response addressed by the former sloyd teacher included a personal tone as well as memories from the time when the founder took part in the school's sloyd lessons. It highlighted as well the many ways in which primary school sloyd classes foster creativity and innovation, and received many appreciative comments by other participants in the Facebook group.

Information Sharing
Participants' information sharing could be divided into the two sub-themes (a) continuing professional development and (b) job and product advertisements.

Sharing Information about Continuing Professional Development
In this type of information sharing, participants informed other members of the Facebook group about invites or reminded them of continuing professional development opportunities in the form of training or specific lectures. One such example was shared by a few teachers who were scheduled to give lectures on "the sloyd of the future" at the Scandinavian Educational Technology Transformation (SETT 2016) conference and trade fair, which focused on innovative and modern learning. Another form of continuing professional development related sharing focused on information available via various broadcast media. One such share had to do with the radio programme *Språket* (*Language*) and a specific listener's question about the difference between tools and instruments, which one participant also considered to be of relevance to sloyd teachers. Another example involved the TV programme *Kobra* (*Cobra*) and a specific episode that focused on sloyd. Participants in the Facebook group were informed of the existence of this programme via several different posts published by different participants.

Figure 7. A comment and question to other members about their feelings after watching a TV
programme about sloyd.

After the episode aired, one participant recounted that he/she had developed teaching materials based
on its content, and that he/she would appreciate feedback regarding his/her efforts. The third example
involved the UR series *The Teaching Lab: The power of aesthetics,* and the content related to a
discussion concerning the use of language and professional language. Posts about continuing
professional development were both "liked" and commented on by participants in the Facebook group.

Sharing Information about Job and Product Advertisements

Participants in the Facebook group occasionally shared information about job vacancies (for shorter or
longer periods of time) at various schools. Information about both schools and municipalities was
likewise shared. In some cases, information about products was shared (such as different kinds of
materials for the carpentry and metalworking sloyd study path or the textiles study path).

Discussion

The purpose of this article is to describe how a month's worth of communication as posts made by sloyd
teachers in the *National Resource Centre for Sloyd* Facebook group could be understood and explained
from an external point of view.

Based on the description of the results, we can ascertain that the Facebook group *National Resource
Centre for Sloyd* offers there members a forum, an domain (Wenger, 1998), an "expanded collegium",
(Körling, 2013), a broader platform for communication and development of sloyd education (Bissessar,
2014; Rutherford, 2010), of themselves as sloyd teachers, and of sloyd as a school subject where they
can meet like-minded people The results can be understood as a communicative triangle (cf. didactic
triangle) or as a metaphorical three-legged stool that can be rotated and adjusted depending on the task
at hand, regardless of the nature or external challenges posed by the foundation on which that
triangle/stool is positioned. The three sides of the triangle/stool are comprised of the focus of the sloyd
teachers' communication on (a) instruction, which is discussed in the theme of experience sharing, (b)
the sloyd teacher, which is discussed in the theme of information sharing, or (c) functionality (of the
Facebook group, of sloyd teachers, and of the subject of sloyd), which is addressed in the meta-theme
of functional discussions (cf. Wenger, 1998; Hew & Hara, 2007). The posts written in the month of
April 2016 indicate how current events such as the open letter from the Spotify founders or the TV
programme "Kobra" have an impact on the communication. On the one hand, such communication may
take the form of educational opportunities (such as radio and television programmes). One the other, it
may address threats from external pundits.

In other words, it was possible to understand that the posts positioned certain things in the foreground
or the background, depending on what was going on in the outside world and how these events were
interpreted by participants in the community of practice (Wenger, 1998). It therefore seems reasonable
to suggest that the *National Resource Centre for Sloyd* fulfils an important function for sloyd teachers
who have few or no sloyd colleagues at their place of work when it comes to sharing and interpreting

information (Larsson, 2016). On the one hand, communities of practice enable sloyd teachers to interact with colleagues who can offer support for the ideas published in posts on the Facebook group's page. On the other hand, they can also pose as devil's advocates or naysayers who problematise and critique the published posts. This was the case in the theme experience exchanges. In this way, the participants both receive support in the form of agreement, or encounter challenges (in the form of disagreement) with their ideas. This benefits their social identity development as well as mutual professional learning while preserving knowledge (Wenger, 1998; Rutherford, 2010; Bissessar, 2014; Goodyear et al., 2014).

The participants' posts (in the form of information sharing, experience exchange, and functional descriptions) attest to a strong commitment to sloyd in general and school sloyd in particular. It is therefore reasonable to posit that the *National Resource Centre for Sloyd* should be regarded as a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger 1998; Goodyear et al., 2014). It qualifies as a community of practice because of the focus on *learning*, and the members ongoing process on negotiation of meaning and doing experience through reification. Similarly, the Facebook group is a *community* where participants interact and share and comment on information and ideas shared by other members. This allows them to develop together. As has already been demonstrated above, such interactions may take the form of experience exchanges, but can also consist of meta-discussions that focus on various functionalities. The Facebook group can also be understood as a *practice*, which generates discussions about shared resources (such as syllabus/lesson plans related to relevant work areas) and allows for the exchange of tried and tested experiences. The posts that have been analysed provide a good picture of the participants' understanding and meta-understanding of what they believe to be essential to this domain. Information sharing and experience exchanges can also be considered to reflect the expression of a *vision* of functional learning and professional conduct by sloyd teachers. This is in line with what Hammerness et al., (2005) have described concerning how teachers teach. The results can also be understood as demonstrating that through communication, participants in the Facebook group transform personal experiences or individually held expertise into collectively possessed, shared knowledge (Colnerud & Granström, 2015).

Implications

In conclusion, we can confidently assert that the *National Resource Centre for Sloyd* offers participants a new platform (Goodyear et al., 2014) where they are given the opportunity to demonstrate what they do and what they know, to consider and react to the ideas and opinions of others, and thus to grow as a profession. This argument is supported by the fact that the experience exchanges generated significantly more comments than the information sharing posts and functional discussions. We believe that this in itself should serve as a basis for continued internal discussions within the community of practice. Externally, perhaps the Facebook group can serve as a resource centre for guardians, policy makers, and pupils whose interests may differ in part from those of sloyd teachers. Through the *National Resource Centre for Sloyd*, external agents gain opportunities to learn about and participate in the preservation and development of sloyd in general and of sloyd classes in particular. The communication of posts shows how informal learning takes place for sloyd teachers, similarly to the way Liljekvist et al., (2017) describe informal learning by mathematics teachers. As a result of this article, sloyd as a subject, sloyd classes, and the conditions for sloyd teachers may receive more attention than they currently are afforded, because this subject is rarely discussed publicly other than when it is attacked by pundits or when IT entrepreneurs argue that it is outdated (Rylander Lundström, 2017). The *National Resource Centre for Sloyd* Facebook group can likely tackle and solve such challenges, if its participants find it reasonable and desirable to do so!

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