Response to Diederik Schönau and Ernst Wagner

The notion of an ecology of competences needs recognition.
Remarks on the Preface of 'Art – Ethics – Education'

From Dennis Atkinson, Carl-Peter Buschkühle and Raphael Vella

We don't think we argued that "being disobedient is the ultimate goal of learning" as suggested by Diederik and Ernst but that the process of learning, viewed as a process of individuation, often involves a movement into a new phase of practice that changes or shifts the ground of practice. Disobedience is used in this way, as a becoming into a new phase of practice. There is no "ultimate goal of learning" except the process of continuing to learn that involves these phases of individuation and ontogenesis.

In the actual process of learning, the here and now of learning, its thisness (haecceities), its processes of investigation and exploration etc, we often do not know what we are doing and we do not know the ensuing consequences, until of course, we begin to comprehend (or do not) the outcomes. In the book we argued that rather than work from a list of pre-established competences that may constrain how we view and assess practice, a better way to proceed would be to be guided by the idea of an ecology of competences that emerge from the existential ground of each learners' practice. Such ecologies are always local and mutating.

The difficulty, as we see it, relates to the difference between the universal and the particular. Lists of competencies are usually generalised abstractions whose values are transposable across heterogeneity. They operate a hylomorphic force. This contrasts with those values that emerge from the existential singularities of practices that may be occluded by generalised competencies. I think we have to be careful in constructing and deploying competences or standards in our domain because if we use them as templates through which to view practice, which is what assessment criteria in my experience do, then practice is already constructed through them, or swayed by them. If it is possible to see competences as emerging immanently from local grounds practice in their heterogeneity and diversity, competence would then be viewed as *immanent* to practice and not act as a kind of transcendent arbiter *across* practices.

This suggests that when working with the heterogeneity of childrens'/students' modes of creative practice we can of course put together a series of competences and use these as criteria for assessment, trying to make them more and more granular in the search for more effective criteria. On the other hand, we can consider each practice and try to comprehend the local values and operations that are immanent to them in order to inform our response. In pedagogic work we think it is important to value the heterogeneity of practice and its potentials as a gift that can extend how we understand and develop pedagogic work...which therefore has to be considered in terms of *learning-with* as well as *learning-from.* Learning-with continually emerges in the here and now of practice, a learning that may modify or even transform prior practice and its forms of comprehension. When we approach a child or student's practice we try, as it were, to 'feel' its borders, experiment with questions, that are hopefully

relevant to the learner and his or her particular ways of paying due attention to the learning encounter which is what makes each practice exist.

The idea of learning-with has to be grounded upon the heterogeneity of learning-from which consists of the teacher's inheritance of learning and the learner's inheritance of learning. Both inheritances are 'brought' to and iterated in the pedagogical encounter so that both learner and teacher individuate simultaneously. Learning-with thus moves from substantialist views of the relations between teacher and learner and sees the pedagogical relation as a dynamic flux of actual and virtual domains. The ecology of competences about which we speak is therefore a tool for inquiry that allows us to explore what might be happening as it emerges from the immanence of practice, a device not to take things for granted.