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Three Experiences in Groups in Higher Education. Institutional Pedagogy and Self-Reflexivity

Abstract

This chapter presents three accounts of teaching and training experiences in higher education inspired by Institutional Pedagogy (IP) (Vasquez and Oury, 1967). Through situations marked by uncertainty, incompleteness, and perceived failure, the authors explore how pedagogical "institutions" such as the "What's up?", the Council, and work teams shape group dynamics and learning. Drawing on psychoanalytic and institutional analysis perspectives, the texts examine teachers' and learners' resistances, ambivalences, and subjective positions. Case studies from a bachelor's course, professional training in agro-arboriculture, and an online master's course during the Covid-19 crisis illustrate how failures can become productive moments for reflexivity. The chapter highlights how revisiting practices collectively helps to understand the issues of power, authority, and participation that may be at stake. It argues that Institutional Pedagogy fosters learning through an ongoing process of questioning, creativity, and working through tensions rather than through pedagogical certainty.

Keywords: self-reflexivity; institutional pedagogy; group processes; clinical approach

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1 Introduction

This chapter consists of three different texts written by four authors. These texts share the common theme of recounting experiences as teachers in higher education and refer to shared teaching practices inspired by an approach known in France as institutional pedagogy. For those who are unfamiliar with this approach, we will briefly explain what some of the "institutions" implemented in the training courses mentioned cover.

What links the three parts of this chapter are the dimensions of uncertainty, incompleteness or even failure present in the three experiences described. But while these dimensions may be negative, they were also moments that somehow forced the teachers to revisit what had happened in order to work it through further. The three experiences also provided an opportunity to observe shifts in the thinking of the people for whom the courses or training sessions were intended. It is in this sense that we are talking about self-reflexivity and that, in hindsight, we propose a few hypotheses to help us understand what may have been at stake during the moments reported here.

The first text, *Failing and revisiting institutions in pedagogy*, written by Mej Hilbold and Hélène Kolebka, reflects on an experience lived in the context of a bachelor's degree course in education and training sciences. The second text, *A device for listening to the saying?*, written by Patrick Geffard, recounts a period of work with a group of agro-arboriculturists trainers. Arnaud Dubois wrote the third text, *Institutional pedagogy and "Covidian life"*, which recounts some events in a Master's degree course during the Covid-19 crisis.

The training activities discussed in this chapter are part of an educational approach called "institutional pedagogy". This approach, which emerged in the 1960s (Vasquez and Oury, 1967), is based on three main contributions: the use of Freinet teaching techniques (cooperative learning, socialised productions, etc.); consideration of group dynamics in the training environment; and recognition of the effects of the unconscious during the learning process. Practitioners of this approach use the distinction between "establishment" and "institution" to refer, on the one hand, to what relates to the practical organisation, administrative statutes and official expectations, i.e. the "establishment", and, on the other hand, to what is implemented within it by those who coexist there in order to carry out the tasks they are responsible for. This second part is referred to as "institutions".

Therefore, we begin with a few details about three "institutions" mentioned in our texts.

- The "What's up?" section: a kind of "airlock" between the inside and outside of the group, where anyone can speak up and say whatever they want. There is no expected content, but a framework is set out (Geffard, 2015, 122). This space is characterised by an opening and closing ritual, a limited time frame, and the roles of chair and secretary. This institution is part of welcoming the subject into the group and into the work process (Dubois et al. 2023, 21).
- The Council: this institution is often referred to as the "cornerstone" of the institutional framework. The Council plays an essential role in connecting the various institutions and in coordinating the different voices required by the cooperative dimension. It is a forum for discussion, a regulatory body and a decision-making body. It helps group members to act co-operatively on their own functioning, regardless of their status (Dubois et al., 2023, 88).
- Work teams, in other words small groups of students who work together and produce a collective project. The issue is not only organisational, but also contributes to the "rearrangement of subjective positions in training situations" (Geffard and Dubois, 2016). The work teams are set up for a specific period; they may be reorganised by the Council.

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2 Failing and revisiting institutions in pedagogy

"Under certain circumstances failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world" (Halberstam, 2011, 2).

We have been sharing classes for many years in the education sciences program at Paris 8 University and tried since the beginning to set up "institutions" inspired by institutional pedagogy (IP). Our shared courses focus on the relationship between pedagogy and psychoanalysis, in particular cooperative pedagogy and their consideration of the child as the subject of their learning, with a desire for knowledge originating in the unconscious drives.

Each session of our course, which we teach alternately, lasts three hours. These three hours are divided into "What's up?" time, theoretical input, Council, and group work, with a 15-minute break halfway through the session.

The theoretical input lasts about an hour to an hour and a half. We define the themes of the sessions in advance: beyond presenting the main benchmarks in institutional pedagogy, we address psychological issues in groups, the question of the teacher's body in the classroom, the relationship to knowledge and its childhood sources, etc.

Our working methods mean that we speak to one another very regularly: after each session, we give our colleague feedback on the session, covering the content addressed (what was planned and what was actually covered), questions raised by the group about the organization of work or assessments, particularly those that we cannot decide on in Council because they involve the second teacher, but also our impressions of the session ("the group was restless today" or "it went well, but I'm concerned about the progress of group 2's work", etc.). These exchanges are part of a process of "working-through"[1] [Durcharbeitung], almost in a psychoanalytical sense (Freud, 1966a, 147–156), between the two teachers, which we can revisit afterwards and turn into a device for researching our practice.

In addition to these regular exchanges, we have longer working sessions each year, which aim both to review the year and prepare for the following one: what worked, what didn't work, how could we do things differently next year? We draw on the review time established during the last session of the semester, when we gather opinions, feelings, criticisms, and suggestions for improvement from the students.

Over the years, we have systematically reviewed and questioned everything we have tried to implement: should we provide more guidance or allow more freedom? Should we set a strict work schedule or rely on the creativity of the groups? These recurring questions are more than technical issues; they contribute to the working through of our subjective positions as teachers, as we confront our interpretations and readings of the encountered situations. Each point discussed can give rise to deeper questioning about how we approach our role and how we interpret our mission: what do we consider a "success" or a "failure" and in relation to what? What are we aiming for and for whom: for everyone or only for those who wish to engage with the course offering?

2.1 A failure: "What's up?"

Since the beginning of our collaboration, we have been implementing certain institutions, including a "What's up?" at the beginning of each class, which (in theory) allows space for the group, a moment of transition between what happened before this class and this class specifically. We see this institution as a time for sharing information, but also as a place to create a

1 Freudian 'working-through' is a psychological process rather than a concept. It is a movement of psychological transformation that is essential to the progress of treatment.

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new group, since some people do not know each other. What we have observed again and again is the failure to establish this institution. We see students who do not participate, no one wants to take on the presidency of the group, or they do so with little enthusiasm. Discussions are very rare. We have long wondered about the reasons for this failure and have formulated several hypotheses: the first is that, as the class starts early on Fridays, many students arrive late, which potentially disturbs the group, disrupts participation, intrudes and leads to chatter. Another hypothesis concerns the layout of the room. We accommodate 40 students in a fairly small space. The traditional classroom sitting arrangement does not allow students to see each other and probably leads them to adopt a traditional teaching style, which they are familiar with.

Finally, the probable difficulty for some is exposing themselves and making their subjective opinions heard. Most of these students have had a traditional school experience in which free speech has little place.

But if so, what do we do? Do we revert to a traditional teaching role, leading discussions and modifying the process? And if we persist in implementing a "What's up?" year after year, what drives us to do so?

Our common goal in shared courses can be formulated as a proposal for a different kind of training space, where participants can develop both reflexivity in relation to their own learning practices and acquire support for future practices that we would describe as "resistant". We understand this "resistance" as having a critical spirit and the ability to question the injunctions to which they will be subjected in their future professional practice.

For us, this critical stance involves bringing the figure of the Master into play, that is, allowing for the possibility of questioning our own authority over students. Indeed, in any educational relationship, as well as in any relationship involving the transmission of knowledge, we question the degree of submission to adult authority, to the authority of a teacher, insofar as it hinders learners' individual progress in their desire to learn and stands in the way of any possibility of thinking for themselves.

However, proposing an alternative model of teacher-student relations, an alternative way of organizing space and exchanges in the classroom, after such a long period of socialization at school as that experienced by students at university, encounters obvious obstacles in terms of their habits and incorporated models (to borrow from the vocabulary of sociology), or (to return to a more clinical perspective[2]) on the part of their modes of subjectivation and the reshaping of their subjective positions that a singular encounter entails. The clinical psychoanalytically oriented approach allowed us to revisit a few situations that were experienced at the time as failures: an initial reading, often supported by aggressive feelings towards the students, led us to believe that they preferred a magisterial form of relationship and resisted our proposals, which implied a process of deconstruction of their models. Through a subsequent analysis of these same situations, we also identified our own tendencies to return to a certain order, in moments that each of us found difficult for different reasons rooted in our individual histories.

The repeated "failures" of the "What's up?" moment may then point to a dimension that we have not yet addressed: our relationship with each other and what holds us together. Doesn't the teaching duo, which we chose and did not have imposed on us, serve as an institution for us, reminding us of the choices that each of us made in favour of institutions rather than magisterial power? This reminder can be experienced in a rather strict and rigid register,

2 "clinical perspective" in this context refers to an approach which takes into account the subjective processes at stake in the teaching or learning situation in terms of unconscious movements such as transference and counter-transference, identification, projection, group dynamics, etc.

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where the other teacher represents a commitment to be upheld, but it can also refer to those moments of joint analysis that we practice each year and which are one of the driving forces behind our practice. It would be the possibility of reflective review between the two of us that would sustain us and push us to take the risk of a subjective expression each year, both for the students and for ourselves.

2.2 Case study

The case study refers to a situation experienced by just one of us, Mej: it is therefore written in the first person singular.

During a class, five minutes before the mid-session break, I was finishing my presentation on the relationship to knowledge. I was feeling eloquent, I had the attention of most of the students in the room, I felt a little theatrical, captivating... when I noticed that a student at the back of the room had held her phone to her ear, horizontally, with the speaker of her phone against her ear. This image completely threw me off balance. I stopped, stared at her, stunned, and asked her in a slightly aggressive tone if she couldn't have waited five minutes to listen to her message during the break. She didn't answer me but put her phone back on the table.

This situation is a bit of a mystery to me, because it is both very ordinary and yet very violent: why is it so violent when I am used to seeing students busy with many other things besides my class? I have long since decided to address everyone, but not each individual at all times. In other words, if some students are present but do not feel very engaged, I consider that to be their prerogative as adult students.

I also know that attention spans fluctuate, that sometimes I talk too much and leave students in a position of passive listening, but also that while some follow attentively, others tune out, depending on what appeals to each individual. So why does this phone held horizontally to the ear have such a disruptive effect?

My initial hypothesis is as follows: cooperative teaching and its questioning of the figure of the "teacher at the center of learning" does not prevent phenomena such as seduction and narcissism[3]; this seems obvious. Even though I am not in a permanent position of magisterial authority, when I speak and try to make my remarks interesting, I invest my narcissism in the effect I am trying to produce on my audience. At the precise moment when I noticed this student, I was completely caught up in this narcissistic issue, and the image she reflected back to me was quite different, abruptly pulling me out of the illusion of seduction that I was operating on the group. I could probably have looked away and maintained the illusion, but there was something ostentatious about her gesture that radically contradicted, in full view of everyone, the fantasy scenario I had created about my effect on the students. In what I might describe as a paranoid interpretation, I interpreted her gesture as saying: "contrary to what you think, no one cares about what you have to say! See: we are continuing our social activities without your speech interrupting anything". A major narcissistic blow...

But my interpretation afterwards differs slightly from my initial reading, which focused on my narcissistic issues: if this student picked up her phone and put it to her ear in the middle of class, doesn't that reflect a kind of disengagement on my part towards students who don't participate? Does the violence I feel (being denied as a teacher) mirror that of feeling ignored as a student, in the sense that I don't call on everyone but let anyone who wants to speak do so? This hypothesis came to me as I thought back on discussions with Hélène, who seemed to want to "get everyone involved": I saw this as a directive stance linked to her experience in

3 Here, mostly in the meaning of "narcissistic defenses" which are psychic procedures utilized by the ego in order to protect its integrity and psychic endurance (Schmid-Kitsikis, 2005, 1111).

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primary education, not necessarily suited to higher education, where I thought I could rely on each person's free choice to pursue their studies and engage with them in the way that suited them best. This idea of what university teaching should be is deeply ingrained in me, and it is only while writing this story that I am finally questioning it, or at least confronting its limitations when it comes to my own practices and their potential significance for students who may not feel included or welcome. Where "making people participate" seemed too directive to me, "letting everyone do as they wish" now seems demotivating for some.

In the afterward discussion between the two teachers, we also thought about a situation that has recurred in various forms throughout our experience: students who come to the teacher at the end of class to ask them to settle a conflict or resolve an issue that should typically be discussed during the Council. This is a way of avoiding engaging with the institution... We often experience these moments as failures, but here too, it is a failure that needs to be revisited and used as a stimulus to continue our questioning.

Ultimately, we see these "failures" as very positive, because they allow us to question ourselves and be creative in our teaching. Rituals, habits, or the establishment of institutions can hinder innovation. The relationship we may have with the texts and figures of institutional pedagogy can prevent a movement of creativity and appropriation: the founders of the movement and first theorists (Oury, Vasquez, Laffitte) can act as authority figures on us as practitioners. This is why taking liberties with the original IP, and therefore with the established order, leads us to open ourselves up to instituting movements, as formulated in the theory of institutional analysis (Lourau, 1970).

3 A device for listening to the saying?

For many years now, I have been involved in training courses aimed at developing practices based on institutional pedagogy. Over time, the audiences I work with have become more diverse. In addition to professionals in the world of teaching and education, I am increasingly working with people in social work or medical-social work. These professionals welcome what I call the "primary audience", the audience for whom the activities of the people with whom I carry out my training and support work are intended, an audience that therefore consists of pupils, students, people in training or people in specialist institutions. I often feel close to a sentence regularly used by psychiatrist Jean Oury when he said that "institutional psychotherapy and pedagogy are the same thing". In a letter addressed to the educator Célestin Freinet, Jean Oury stated that "Freinet's techniques, techniques for facilitating, empowering, and structurally modifying space and interrelationships in a classroom [are] much the same as those used in institutional psychotherapy" (1986, 164). This emphasis on "techniques" does not mean a simple equivalence between the cooperative classroom and the psychotherapeutic institution from the point of view of the activities organisation. Beyond the implementation of concrete activities, which are indeed quite similar in some aspects, it is the functions that they enable to be deployed that lead Jean Oury to speak of the "same thing". What matters, regardless of the field of work, is to allow each individual's uniqueness to emerge within a collective, to create ways of differentiating between people, roles and statuses, as well as between the psychological registers at work, to encourage potentialities for investment in the available tasks, and to support the transferential movements that can unfold in the institutionalised space.

I will discuss here a recent experience I had in a context that was somewhat "out of place" for me compared to my usual practices. I was first contacted by the person in charge of organising a training module for professionals working in a field I know almost nothing about: agro-arboriculture. This field of activity involves tree cultivation, the study of plant physiology

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and how trees react to their environment. An agro-arborist is someone who works on various aspects of tree care, such as pruning, selection and treatment. It was not for these aspects that I was sought out. The request came about because a small group of agro-arboriculturists, each of whom also provided training in this profession, were apparently interested in organising their training courses from a cooperative perspective rather than in the form of lectures and a top-down approach. Through personal connections with social work trainers with whom I had already worked, I was asked to organise two days of training focused on institutional pedagogy practices in order to help the trainers draw inspiration from this approach in their own training work.

The training module was held over two consecutive days and, in order to maintain consistency with the pedagogical approach at the centre of the training, a few institutions structured this module. In particular, a "What's up?" session, an organisational Council, production teams and a time for review at the end of the day were set up.

The first day began with a round of introductions, starting with me and then each of the participants in turn. I should mention that the group consisted of about ten professional trainers, all relatively young men with an athletic build. My first impression was that we could just as easily have been in a rugby team's locker room as at a training course. When, at the appointed time, we sit down around the tables arranged in a large rectangle in the room, everyone is there except one. I start the presentation session, and that's when the last participant enters. He is greeted with a rather mocking remark from the person coordinating the administrative organisation of the module. The latter jokes that the newcomer must have arrived by boat and that it was obviously very windy. Our latest arrival is indeed dishevelled and seems more or less uncomfortable about arriving when everyone else is already seated. I continue to lead the introductions and then, once they are over, I comment on what has just happened.

I would point out that, in the various places where it is practised, institutional pedagogy is generally situated within a framework constituted by some laws, which are few in number but decisive in terms of the orientation of practices. The first of these is often "I do not mock". I add that in The Future of an Illusion (1927), Freud distinguishes between forms of prohibition that are limited in nature, expressed through contingent expressions, and those that are fundamental prohibitions forming the basis of a civilisation's existence. There are only three of the latter: the prohibitions against murder, incest and cannibalism. The law "I do not mock" falls within the register of the fundamental prohibition of murder, which, allied with prohibitions of incest and cannibalism, constitutes the regime under which instituting capacities can be constituted. The first reaction to my speech comes from the administrative manager of the module, who is keen to point out that he and the newcomer know each other well, that they are used to joking together and that there was no real mockery in his comments. The person who was the subject of the remark about his appearance agrees, while not seeming unhappy with what I had said.

We then move on to the organisational Council, during which I present my proposals for the content of our two working days, inviting everyone to discuss them or introduce new ideas. One of the group members, who has not spoken until now, begins to put together a proposal. We have just assigned a few responsibilities within the module, such as ensuring that the timetable is adhered to or taking care of certain displays, and he then suggests that there might be something to be done based on what I said about the prohibition of mockery. His formulation is gradual; he thinks it through as he speaks, while allowing other members of the group to question it or develop it further. This proposal, which emerges from the dialogue, ultimately leads to the idea that it might be interesting to create a responsibility that could be called "listening to the atmosphere". For those who wish to exercise this responsibility, the task would consist of being attentive throughout the day to the way we address each other,

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not from the point of view of what is said, but from the point of view of how it is said, the tone of voice used, and what it may convey emotionally or affectively. That is to say, focusing attention on the saying rather than the said, to borrow a distinction made by Levinas. For this author, the saying is "proximity to one another, commitment to approach, one for the other, the very significance of meaning" (1974, 6, personal translation).

Once agreement has been reached on the importance of establishing such responsibility, a new question arises: how to determine who will exercise it? A new proposal is put forward: anyone who wants to try to take on this responsibility should discreetly let me know during the break following the organisational Council. The group will therefore not be informed of who is taking on this role until the end of the day, when his identity will be revealed and they will be given time to tell us what they have learned from what they have heard during our discussions about the way we have addressed each other.

I am surprised by this proposal and by the way in which it has been collectively clarified and accepted. Of course, the organisational Council is there to promote instituting dynamics in the sense of Castoriadis (1975), in other words, the implementation of processes of collective imagination likely to bring about new forms of action, new rules and new goals. The organisational council seems to have enabled new tasks to be undertaken within the group (greater attention to interpersonal relationships), new decision-making procedures (the method of assigning a specific responsibility) and new objectives (taking into account what is happening here and now within the group). The emergence of this keen attention to what often remains veiled in intersubjective relationships surprised me and, at first, it seems to me that I welcome this novelty with pleasure and interest. This is the first time, in an experience spanning many years, that I have heard such a proposal formulated.

The creation of this responsibility was therefore decided during the organisational meeting, and during the break, the administrative manager of the module, the very same person who had welcomed the latest arrival with what seemed to me to be a mockery, came to tell me that he wanted to take on this role. I am a little unsure about the relevance of this choice, but I remain satisfied with this innovation and already curious to hear what we will learn at the end of the day.

But this promising moment of institutionalisation ultimately fails to deliver on its promises. The time allocated for feedback was not included in the daily schedule when the responsibility was created. At the end of the first day of work, I organised a "weather report" session, an institution that allows everyone to quickly express their feelings about the time spent together using coded gestures, but I forgot to give the floor to the "atmosphere listener", who was careful not to remind me of the role he was supposed to play at that moment.

What happened? Why was something that seemed desirable and unanimously accepted not accomplished? The question was not revisited during the module, and today I can only speculate in hindsight with some hypothesis about what appeared to me to be a failure.

The one I favour today is the formation, at the end of our first day of work, of a kind of negative pact, to borrow a concept proposed by René Kaës in 1989 and elaborated on in Les alliances inconscientes (Unconscious Alliances), a more recent work in which he indicates that certain group psychic dynamics may have the unconscious aim of "carrying out defensive operations to suppress, reduce or modulate representations or perceptions that would threaten the constancy and integrity of the individual psychic apparatus or that of the bonds in which two or more subjects are engaged" (2009, 105, personal translation).

In order to maintain our shared commitment to the tasks we had consciously set ourselves, did we not use this defence mechanism to consign to oblivion and silence what had once emerged about the potential issues in the way we addressed each other?

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At the time of writing this chapter, however, the story is not over, as a new training module with the same professionals will soon take place. I plan to revisit this experience of unfinished institutionalisation and put it to work in the group.

4 Institutional pedagogy and "Covidian life"[4]

4.1 An online master's course during the Covid crisis

This section of the chapter is a report on the practice of institutional pedagogy in a Master's course conducted fully online during the Covid-19 health crisis between January and April 2021. This course was originally designed to be delivered in person, and the move to an online format was required by the health situation. This practice is part of a first-year Master's course in Education Sciences at Rouen Normandy University. The students are preparing for various careers in the field of education. Some of them already have professional experience in social work or youth work. This course, focusing on counselling in education, is an optional course lasting thirty-six hours (twelve sessions of three hours each).

During the sessions, students have to work in groups to investigate topics suggested by the teacher. These investigations are then used to create a report presented orally to the other groups in the course. The sessions therefore alternate between team work and oral presentations. Each session starts with a "What's up?", followed by a Council to organise the session. The teams then have time to work in virtual rooms. If students request it, the professor can contribute by giving lectures, sharing readings, and answering requests from students during the Council. Students have "jobs" in their team. For example, one member of the group acts as chair or secretary. A digital space is available for sharing documents: work instructions, reports, various resources, etc. Survey presentations are scheduled three times during the semester and the results are collected in a booklet, shared during the last session.

Students must also individually write a final report of no more than five pages, including: 1) a summary of the work carried out during the semester as part of this course, mentioning the responsibilities they assumed. 2) A reflective review of the experience of working in teams and the functioning of the institutions in this course (Council, jobs, etc.). This section takes the form of a narrative followed by an analysis. For example, "I chaired the Council on such-and-such a day and this is how I experienced it...". This narrative is followed by reflections demonstrating the students' ability to take a step back and look at what they have experienced in the course. They have to describe what they have learned from this experience.

Here I present some parts from a report written by a student who attended this course. This report gives readers the opportunity to hear from a student who experienced working in institutions during this very unusual period, when every aspect of our daily lives was affected by the pandemic. In this course, team investigations allow students to learn about their chosen topics. In addition, the reflective writing assignment at the end of the semester helps students develop their ability to think about their social learning and their experience in groups.

4.2 Adeline's experience[5]

The first session of the course on counselling was completely new to me. Its originality lay in the content of the subject itself (the question of counselling in the context of "education and

4 This title is inspired by the book *Psychoanalysis and Covidian Life. Common Distress, Individual Experience* Edited in 2021 by A. de Stal et H. Levine (Karnac Books).

5 Adeline gave her consent for the publication of her work, which has already been published in French in a newsletter for practitioners of institutional pedagogy (Échos P.I., n° 84, 2022).

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psychoanalysis"), but also in the approach used, the teaching method employed: institutional pedagogy. I had already studied how it worked and its history, but I had never experienced it myself. This confused me somewhat the first time. The institutions, the teamwork, the freedom of speech, but also the fact that this course was conducted online made this a completely new experience.

This first session was an introduction to this teaching method, the institutions, the course structure and its objectives. My initial reaction was not positive: I would have to get involved, and above all speak up and chair the Council and/or the "What's up?". I also realised that I would have the same status as the professor, which was very confusing. Even though what we learn in education science is that traditional teaching methods do not give students enough space, when we are given the opportunity to take up that space as learners, we are not sure we want to accept it. I realised that learning the theory behind these teaching methods is much easier than applying them myself. So there were responsibilities such as chairing the "What's up?", chairing the Council and acting as secretary. But there were also roles in teamwork: secretary, production manager, team leader and head of oral presentation organisation. I held several positions and responsibilities during this semester, so I will describe my experiences and feelings. In my opinion, this subject had a dual purpose: to understand and discover institutional pedagogy, and to acquire knowledge about the current trends in education and psychoanalysis and the concept of counselling. I therefore chaired four "What's up?" sessions, three Council meetings and acted as secretary once. In my teamwork, I was responsible for production and secretary.

4.3 The "What's up?"

Based on the number of times I've participated, this institution is the one I've preferred to chair. It seemed simpler to me than chairing the Council. In fact, it required fewer interventions, generally lasted less time, and there were no "sections" to manage. It was difficult the first time, because I had to take on the role of chairperson and give the floor to the group, including the professor. The rules of "What's up?" had to be remembered at the beginning of each session. These included listening, respect, freedom of speech and confidentiality. But I also had to manage registrations, regulate everyone's speaking time and moderate if necessary. Personally, I didn't have any "What's up?" sessions that were difficult to manage. The most complicated thing, in my opinion, was when no student asked for the floor. I felt alone and didn't necessarily know how to react. It was also difficult to predict the total duration of the "What's up?", as I didn't know in advance how many people would ask to speak. This was one of my main difficulties, both in "What's up?" and in the Council. There was also the issue of registrations. Several times, students arrived late, or some had not signed up in advance to speak, so I didn't know if I could accept their registration. In the end, I accepted them every time. "What's up?" allowed group members to react and respond to what another student had said. Sometimes no one responded, and I was more bothered by the silence than by what some people said. What is interesting about my reactions and feelings is that even when we have the floor, the chair, which is a powerful word that defines the value of this role, the fear of judgement and of doing the wrong thing is always present. I was somewhat apprehensive about being a bad chair.

This institution was then a "gateway", a moment that allowed one to enter the class group while expressing one's own singularity.

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5 Conclusion

After recounting these three experiences and presenting some of the analyses they have prompted in hindsight, are there any common lines of thought surrounding these institutional pedagogy practices in higher education and training?

At present, we can identify two main areas: firstly, teachers' or trainers' resistance to the effects of the practices they themselves implement and, secondly, the presence of certain forms of ambivalence experienced during the experiments.

As far as resistance is concerned, we have seen above, from Adeline's comments, that this is not, of course, limited to teachers. However, it may seem more surprising in their case, as it appears to relate to practices that they undertake voluntarily, at least on a conscious level. In the chapter "Resistance and Repression" in Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis (1966b, 286-302), Freud indicates that resistances are very diversified, extremely refined, and often difficult to recognise and that these are the most paradoxical forms which can be linked to unconscious feelings of guilt.

In Das Ich und das Es [The Ego and the Id] (1923), Freud described what he calls the "negative therapeutic reaction" as a situation where the analysand seems to choose the path of suffering over that of recovery. According to this author, this surprising phenomenon founds its roots in unconscious feelings of guilt. Of course, in the case of education and training, we are not in a therapeutic situation, but can't we consider the possibility of some kind of a "negative educational response" from teachers or trainers when during their action they can be partially moved by an unconscious feeling of guilt? The question of where any feelings of guilt come from is unique to each subject, but considering the possibility of such "negative responses" can help to understand why sometimes the teacher's action seems to choose the path of failure over that of success. And the best way to deal with them is perhaps the same for everyone: finding the right mechanism to work through the encountered resistance.

As for the question of ambivalence, we may recall that at the end of Totem and Taboo, Freud tells us that he has "often had occasion to point out that emotional ambivalence in the proper sense of the term –that is, the simultaneous existence of love and hate towards the same object– lies at the root of many important cultural institutions" (Freud, 2004, 182).

Perhaps we need to accept that the ties that bind us to these institutional structures, which we continue to develop year after year and which constitute a large part of our social identity, are not really unambiguous, and that each of us may harbour an internal conflict regarding them. Perhaps we should also consider that the specific operating methods of institutional pedagogy are themselves conducive to the development of certain forms of ambivalence. Indeed, institutions that allow conflicts to be addressed rather than repressed, that lead the subjects involved to occupy different positions, that distinguish people from their statuses, also seem to have the effect of leading to ambivalent investments, sometimes torn between opposing forces.

It would probably be illusory to try to detach ourselves from one of these two motions in favour of the other. In order to continue on our path in an appropriate manner, a good enough manner, the surest direction seems to be that of a never-ending process of transforming underlying feelings into elements available for conscious thought, in other words what W. R. Bion calls "metabolization" (1962).

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