Teachers’ Relational Practices and Professionality
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Abstract

This dissertation attempts to deepen our understanding of teachers' work and professionality, which involves not only their reasoning about what, and why, to teach, and how to teach it, but also what it is that makes education possible. This is accomplished by exploring a highly influential, if underestimated and under-researched, dimension of teacher practice and professionality: the relational dimension, involving the establishment and maintenance of educational relationships with and among students. Given the imperatives and challenges of the 21st century the importance of highlighting the relational dimension seems to be a concern of increasing importance. Through interviews and observation that have generated the empirical material, the relational practices of eleven teachers are analyzed in accordance with a particular methodological scheme. Apart from providing a descriptive mapping of these practices, this study presents the practical arguments given by informants to substantiate their use. The numerous examples of relational practices and practical arguments that are herein provided serve to empirically confirm the pervasive relational character of a teacher's work. What emerges is an understanding of an educational relationship that is established and maintained by practices that seek genuine human contact with students, and that views relational attributes such as trust, benevolence, and openness to the other as being of vital importance to the entirety of the educational process. In addition, the practices involving enacting educational communities among students, marked by equality and classmate relationships, are shown to have significance for the educational process. What emerges as well is a conception of relational professionality as something that can be learned, meaning that teachers are made not born. Moreover, “being professional” is here conceived, in pedagogical rather than sociological terms, as something that involves the quality of a teacher's actions rather than the fact that s/he belongs to a particular profession. It is also held that no amount of knowledge and awareness will suffice if the teacher's task perception does not take into account the significant relational conditions that are involved in a given situation. The findings of this study strongly suggest that relationships in schools often require conscious attention, rigorous work and delicate negotiations on the part of teachers in order to be (or become) educational. The process of education is sustained by an array of subtle relational conditions. The attempt of the teacher to deal with these conditions requires specific professional experience, understandings and practices.

Keywords: relationships, professionality, professionalism, teacher knowledge, practical arguments, practical knowledge, teaching, relationer, professionalitet, professionalism, lärares yrkeskunnande, praktisk kunskap, praktiska argument, undervisning

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Lexe, Gävle, February 24, 2010

Anneli Frelin
Prologue

Both my daughters sing in a community choir. Four years ago, when my eldest daughter was eight years old, the choir she sang with participated in a local Christmas Concert. During the intensive last week of rehearsals leading up to the concert, the choirmaster asked the parents to be present on a rotating basis to handle minor eventualities (of the tangled tinsel and urgent toilet kind). I volunteered for one of those days and found myself sitting in a back row for long stretches of time, often deeply absorbed in course literature on discourse analysis. Occasionally I would look up and wave at my daughter as she and the others rehearsed. When lunch time arrived, I was there to help my daughter and her friends get out their lunch packets and eat their meals in an adjoining room. As I looked out upon the sea of children and youths, I noted that the situation seemed remarkably familiar, yet somehow strange. I was no longer a teacher and these were not my students.

After lunch, the choirmaster politely asked me to take the children into the concert hall and temporarily seat them in one of the rows. It was a relatively simple task, and one that I had performed numerous times as a teacher: gather up a group of people and escort them from this place to that. I shifted stance without thinking. As I came before the about 20 children, to my own surprise, I began to joke with them! Where did that come from? Up to that point I had kept a very low profile, only speaking when spoken to. Now I was actively seeking to make contact. Why? When I judged that the group appeared to be ready, I walked them into the concert hall, quickly determined a suitable section and led them to their seats. We sat down and waited for rehearsal to resume. Although at this point my assigned task may have been finished, I still felt responsible for the group and kept a watchful eye on their conduct, telling them not to jump in the chairs or behave in ways that I deemed inappropriate. Not until the choirmaster returned and led the group onto the stage did I sink back into my chair. I could hardly focus on discourse analysis any more. What had just happened?
Introduction

While teacher professionalism obviously involves knowing one's content matter and the ways in which that content matter can be learned, it also involves managing the relationships with students. It is this latter aspect that constitutes my primary area of interest, although I regard these all as intertwined. That is, educational content is not restricted to subject matter but continuously created through students' and teachers' meaning making in educational processes (Englund, 1986). The prologue consists of a description of one of the incidents that caused me to reflect upon the relational dimension of teaching. Because the choirmaster had changed my circumstance by giving me a new responsibility, I automatically began to act as I had when I was a teacher. The responsibility that I had been given, in other words, had unconsciously altered my responses towards the children. Using humor and feeling responsible for children were daily experiences when I worked as a teacher, although at the time there were not many opportunities to reflect upon these aspects of the job. Beyond this, the experience of working in close cooperation with several colleagues had enabled me to observe that at least some teachers had developed a specific approach towards, and relationship with, their students. Having regularly discussed the matter of teaching with them, and knowing something of the way they reasoned, I could understand that they established relationships with their students for various reasons, some of which were tied to practical considerations, and others of which were tied to what might be regarded as wider human concerns. My observation was that the approach adopted by some teachers towards their students was deeply intertwined with their sense of professionality, but that they weighed this more human concern against other circumstances, in complex deliberation.

Working as a teacher throughout the 1990s, a decade characterized by spending cuts in all public spheres, my experience was that it became more difficult to accommodate the human concern for students as classes grew larger and time for individual attention shrank. It appeared as if certain political decisions had been made without enough consideration for the realities of teacher practice and school environment. Apart from this, my various conversations with new teachers and teacher students in both schools and universities led me to conclude that the matter of direct instruction was
not as much of a problem for them as was the relational work entailed in their profession.¹

The vital role of relational work in teaching


As it would be impossible to teach without (at least imaginary) students, relationships can be considered central to the process. Teachers regularly strive to establish and maintain relationships with their students, to educate and better their lives. Positive teacher-student relationships are particularly important for students from disadvantaged circumstances (Hamre & Pianta, 2001, p. 636). Especially for youths with experiences of neglect or abuse at home, school can be a haven wherein they are confirmed and supported. However, when this support is deficient, school can increase the pressure instead. Benjaminson (2008) has argued in this regard that when teachers lack the time and/or energy to relate with students on a ‘human’ level, this adds to their feelings of emptiness and insecurity (p. 135). Other research has shown that teacher proximity has an influence on student effort and confidence (see e.g. den Brok, Levy, Brekelmans, & Wubbels, 2005, p. 29), and for student resilience (Johnson, 2008, pp. 395-396).

A 2005 Swedish study indicates that close and trustful teacher-student relations enable students to better attain their goals (Skolverket, 2005:273, p. 156); another highlights “time spent with teachers” as being valuable for certain groups of students: secondary school students with minimally educated parents achieve better results when there is an increase in teacher density, whereas teacher validation has a greater impact on students with more extensively educated parents (Andersson, 2007, pp. 12-13).² While these studies appear to indicate that time spent on developing closer teacher-student relationships is of value to certain groups of students, they do not specifically address what actually goes on in these relationships, what makes them valuable in terms of education, and what type of teacher professionalism they might require.

¹ This picture is corroborated by research; Paulin, for example, (2007, e. g. p. 169), has identified relationships and conflicts as posing the greatest difficulties for new teachers (see also e.g. Fransson, 2002; McNally, Blake, Corbin, & Gray, 2008; Stukát, 1998; Veenman, 1984; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998). (Indeed, even seasoned teachers report experiencing uncertainty and dilemmas when it comes to relational issues, see for example Gannerud, 1999, pp. 160-161; Klaassen, 2002, pp. 152-157; Lindqvist, 2002).
² In support of this finding, the results of an American research program that focused on pupil-teacher ratios indicated that smaller classes helped to close the “achievement gap” between African-American and White students (Molnar, et al., 1999).
An important point of departure for the present study is that teachers can, but do not automatically, make a positive difference in their students' lives. Labaree (2000) speaks of the “unpredictable elements of will and emotion” (p. 231) as being at the heart of the educational process. Thus teacher-student relationships are never the sole responsibility of the teacher. On the other hand, unlike students, teachers have a professional responsibility relative to the relationships that are established in school.

I maintain that a teacher’s ability to create and sustain relationships with and among students is not merely an inherent quality, or something that concerns the particulars of her or his personality; teachers are not born, they are made. Moreover, both human agency and human complexity make the very word “ability” subject to debate, since one can never ascertain beforehand that a given teacher’s actions will produce the desired results. This notwithstanding, it is common knowledge that some teachers succeed more often than others in establishing and maintaining relationships with their students that are positive in terms of educational ends. The present study places teachers relational work with students at center stage, considering it as something important that parallels or is done in the shadow of direct instruction. It argues that such practice is guided by a relational professionalism that is both important and underemphasized.

Purpose and questions

For purposes of discourse and analysis, teacher professionalism has been commonly divided into three general categories: 1) disciplinary knowledge relating to a given subject matter; 2) pedagogical content knowledge relating to the manner in which a given subject matter is taught; and, 3) pedagogical knowledge relating to teacher knowledge of students. A contention of this study is that these divisions of professional knowledge can often obscure what I have termed its relational dimension, a central feature of the teaching process that is related to, but that goes beyond, teacher knowledge of students. The attempt herein will be to single out this dimension, as expressed through relational practice, and to analyze it in terms of three aspects that highlight the complex relational conditions under which education occurs. It is here important to note that the singling out of the relational dimension is largely for purposes of analysis; in the reality of the teaching situation all dimensions of teacher professionalism are usually conflated, and thus difficult to discern. Moreover, a given teacher’s relational professionalism is here not conceived as a pre-package ability that can be

\[\text{\footnotesize \textsuperscript{3}}\] For further categorizations, see Chapter 3 under Teachers’ knowledge in research.

\[\text{\footnotesize \textsuperscript{4}}\] This study does not claim to address teacher professionalism in toto; it only claims to explore its relational dimension, which in certain teaching contexts can be indispensable. Neither does it claim to provide a complete rendering of this dimension. The empirical study contained herein constructs contextualized examples that serve to direct attention to relational features of teachers’ work and professionalism.
called forth and applied in each and every instance. Rather, it is viewed as action in pursuit of relational ends that are beneficial for educational purposes. As such, the meaning of these ends and the degree of professionality of a given action cannot be entirely determined prior to the act itself; this is one of the circumstances that ties relational professionality to its context.

Teachers and students are always in some form of relation. However, not all such relations are necessarily beneficial for educational purposes. The relational conditions that schools provide carry important implications in terms of what students learn. Because of this, relational conditions are an integral part of a teacher's responsibility and practice. In the present study, teachers' intentional work on their relationships with and among their students is treated as a practice in its own right — i.e., relational practice. In sum, teachers' relational practices consist of actions with the (sometimes single) purpose of establishing, maintaining and/or enhancing relationships that are beneficial for education, or aimed at preventing the opposite: relationships that impede or obstruct students' educational possibilities. As such, actions in pursuit of relational ends are not divorced from those in pursuit of other educational ends; indeed, all such ends are often concurrently pursued.

The present study aims to contribute to the field of teachers' professional lives through the development of a practice-based theoretical language that furthers understanding and stimulates discussion relative to the relational dimension of a teacher's work. Another aim is to develop new methodological tools in order to study teachers work in ways which foreground the complex relational conditions of teaching. Its target audience consists not only of researchers, policy makers and teacher educators, but of teachers and student teachers as well. When focusing on relationships, and specifically on the teacher's work of developing relationships with and between students, other features of practice are left in the periphery, including those that are involved in the development of other types of relations that are also part of a teacher's work — e.g., with parents, colleagues and administrators.

The empirical material that informs and serves as the basis of this inquiry consists of firsthand accounts of the teaching practices of eleven teachers, that include explanations of the grounds for those practices as given by the

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5 For a more detailed discussion, see Chapter 4 under Teaching in relation to learning.
6 I am aware of the ambiguity of leaving the concept of educational purposes without problematization, as it can always be asked: According to whom? Here, I deliberately refrain from answering this question (see Chapter 5 under Methodological viewpoints).
7 This argument is elaborated in Chapter 3, Teachers' relational work in the classroom and in Chapter 4, The educational environment.
8 I want to emphasize here that the assumption that human action has one single purpose is a common misconception; actions often have multiple purposes, and this adds to their complexity (see Chapter 1, The influence of context and complexity). This, however, does not preclude discussions of teachers' professionality departing from contextualized examples of particular practice.
teachers themselves. What follows are the primary questions that this study attempts to answer. Here it is important to emphasize that these questions were generated and developed in the course of the empirical work, and were not formulated beforehand. They pertain to teacher practices and are thus associated with various educational ends:

- How do the teachers recount and reflect upon those practices that are directed towards establishing and maintaining relationships with individual students?

- How do the teachers recount and reflect upon those practices that are directed towards establishing and maintaining relationships among students?

- How can teachers’ relational practices be studied in order to foreground the complex relational conditions of teaching?

The content of the answers to the above three questions is then applied to the answering of a fourth, more general, question:

- How can the study of teachers’ relational practices contribute to developing conceptions in order to enhance discussions and understandings of teacher professionality?

Overview of the dissertation

In Chapter One I outline my position relative to the field of Didaktik and direct attention to the various difficulties that teachers face, such as contextual influences, the difference between matter and meaning, and the complexity of purposes, means and ends. In Chapter Two I explore the concepts of profession, professionalization, professionalism and professionality; these are placed in relation to each other, as well as to the current context in which forces of professionalization and de-professionalization are in play. Here I take a critical stance towards notions of teacher professionality that disregard relational aspects. The research overview in Chapter Three encompasses two areas: 1) teaching research that is focused on teacher knowledge, with special emphasis on strands of reflection and practical knowledge as well as emotional and embodied aspects of knowledge; and, 2) research on the relational dimension of teaching that touches upon social, gender and moral aspects.

In Chapter Four I outline my relational approach, which views education in terms of social interaction and communication and acknowledges the fact that teachers and students presuppose each other. I also highlight the educational environment, where relationships play an important role, and
the concept of authority from a relational point of view. Chapter Five describes the methodology of the present study, that employs an empirically grounded qualitative approach with narrative elements. Here I present the informants, the design and procedure of the study, and the motives for the choices I have made while eliciting teachers’ practical arguments through interviews and observations. Here I also describe the three different phases of my analytical process: constructing practical argument structures, constructing categories, and fleshing out aspects of relational practice. The chapter is concluded with an introduction to Chapters Six to Nine, the results segment of this study.

Chapter Six, the first result chapter, contains the practical arguments of my informants relative to the aim of establishing and maintaining relationships with individual students for the purpose of education. Presented in three themes, these illustrate how teachers negotiate trusting and humane relationships with individual students, with concern for their self-image. The relation between the personal and the professional is attended to. In Chapter Seven analytical layers are added to the accounts. I discuss two stories in terms of authority and embodiment, and present a conception: an educational relationship, that a teacher negotiates with students, and in which the teacher is sensitive to the student’s meaning making. I also address conditions for these negotiations and the difficulty of separating personal and professional experiences. Chapter Eight contains the practical arguments of the informants relative to the aim of establishing and maintaining relationships among their students. Here, the informants argue that their relational practices are aimed at building on positive conditions, balancing ambiguous conditions and counteracting negative ones. In Chapter Nine analytical layers are added to these accounts, whereby they are understood in terms of what I describe as the relational practice of negotiating an educational community among students. This community contains so called classmate relationships, which are equal and open for the others’ differences. I also attend to the border work that teachers do relative to this community, trying to draw students in, and their work to counteract social violence. Chapter Ten discusses the contributions of the present study. It is argued that the study has empirically underlined the significance of the relational dimension of teachers’ work, and the professionality required to manage this dimension, and has contributed to the theoretical language for discussing these.
1 A *Didaktik* point of departure

In this chapter I initially point out disciplinary landmarks. I also highlight important points of departure in the present study. The focus on teachers' choices of action, and the possible consequences of those choices for education, stems from a tradition of curriculum research in which content has been understood as being contingent, historically-socially constituted and unfixed (see e.g. Goodson, 1988). In Sweden, this curriculum-theory tradition of *Didaktik* has stressed the political dimension, as well as conflicts between different social forces (see e.g. Englund, 1986, 1997; Säfström, 1994; Östman, 1995). Yates (2009) connects the concept of curriculum to “issues about what is being conveyed (or is intended to be conveyed), and in particular issues of choices being made about values and emphases and directions that are not simply derivable from ‘evidence’” (p. 20). This view is consistent with the present study’s point of departure, which emphasizes value issues implied by teacher actions, as well as the fact that different approaches to educational content inherently contain different conceptions of teacher practice, and hence professionalism.

Issues in the curriculum field are connected to the context from which they stem, to cultural habits and to educational institutions (Reid, 1998, p. 24). Words carry different meanings in different national contexts and cannot be translated literally; for instance, *Didaktik* will not allow itself to be translated to *didactics* which has different connotations (Gundem & Hopmann, 1998, p. 2). In Sweden, Pedagogik constitutes a social science discipline, whereas in the English-speaking world the term pedagogy is mostly used to describe teaching philosophy or style. Pedagogy has also been used to describe the study of classrooms and teaching within the field of Curriculum Studies (Yates, 2009, p. 18). Or, as Henderson and Slattery (2005) urge, “say ‘curriculum and pedagogy’ without taking a breath – without making any hard and fast distinctions. We want you to recognized [sic!] that curriculum and pedagogy are deeply embedded in one another” (p. 2). The concept of pedagogy has been used in areas such as critical pedagogy (McLaren & Giroux, 1989) and feminist pedagogy (Lather, 1991) to emphasize relationships and actions. And Hamilton (1999, p. 135) suggests that the European didactics (in my reading, the *Didaktik* tradition) and the
Anglo-American pedagogics discourses are divided by language alone. In the present study I will use the concept of *Didaktik*, while acknowledging its similarity to the concept of pedagogy, as well as to certain issues that have been recently broached in the American Curriculum Studies field (see e.g. Grumet & Stone, 2000; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1998; Slattery, 2006).

Attending to the difficulties of education

Within the notion of curriculum there appear to be three possible conceptions regarding its temporal occurrence: 1) curriculum as something brought to the educational situation; 2) curriculum as something enacted within the framework of the situation; and, 3) curriculum as something created through the process of education. I suggest that these different conceptions are indicative of different views of learning, calling for a different view of education and the role of the teacher (I will return to this matter below). While learning often follows teaching, the relationship is more “probabilistic” than causal, as noted by Uljens (1997, p. 35). The meaning of what is taught is not pre-existent or external, but must be created, and this condition makes education difficult.

German *Didaktik* has a long tradition of dealing with the content, means and purpose of education, connected to the *Didaktik* questions regarding what to teach, how to teach it, and why it should be taught. Teachers are guided in their *Didaktik* reasoning by the notion of *Bildung*, an untranslatable notion, the many facets of which have been condensed by Klafki (1998) into three abilities or elements: “self-determination–co-determination–solidarity” (p. 313). Within the critical-constructive *Didaktik* that he represents, it is argued that self- and co-determination are mutually conditional and dialectically linked

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9 The German tradition uses the word Didaktik with a “k” and sometimes a capital “D” in order to distinguish it from didactics, but there are also those that use didactics in the sense of Didaktik (see e.g. Kansanen, 2002, p. 430).

10 Ben-Peretz (1990, pp. 23-24) makes a distinction between curriculum as intended outcomes and as learner experience. According to Carlgren (1999, pp. 49, 52), the practice of planning has not been acknowledged as practice involving action; instead it has been reduced to ‘thinking’, or something occurring prior to action. Uljens (1997, p. 65) has developed a model in which this practice is visible. It is also connected to classroom practice as it seeks to show teachers’ and students’ continuous planning and reflection as situated in activity, school and cultural contexts. In his model, curriculum is visualized in the practice of planning, implementation (which includes learner experience) and an evaluative phase that may affect new cycles. Although it visualizes the cycle of re-planning and re-evaluation that students and teachers employ in the classroom, it does not provide a clear image of how these are interrelated in negotiation.

11 See From policy to practice further on.

12 The most common questions are the three that have been mentioned here. According to Jank and Meyer (1997), the object of Didaktik is about who, what, when, with whom, where, how, through what, why and for what one should learn (pp. 17-18). They define Didaktik as the theory and practice of teaching and learning.
According to Hopmann (2007, p. 115), the vagueness of the concept of Bildung has been necessary as it pertains to the core aspect of the student’s meeting with the world, where Bildung is that which remains beyond the situated meeting with the content. From the perspective of Bildung, the purpose of teaching is then “the Bildung of the learners. Thus, Bildung can not be achieved by Didaktik. The only thing Didaktik can do is to restrain teaching in a way opening up for the individual growth of the student” (Hopmann, 2007, p. 115).

The German Didaktik conception implies a wide task and enables a high degree of professional autonomy. Didaktik holds the importance of separating the content that is offered from the content received:

As the connection of matter and meaning is no ontological or ideological fact, but rather an emerging experience which is always situated in unique moments and interactions, there is no way to fix the outcome in advance. Of course, with experience, one can expect that certain contents meeting certain students within a certain age range and under certain living conditions will often lead to this or that emerging substance. If there was no chance of expecting specific patterns as more or less probable, there would be no Didaktik. However, neither would there be a Didaktik if the pattern was fixed in advance. Didaktik is the necessarily restrained effort to make certain substantive outcomes possible, while knowing that it can always turn out completely differently from what was intended (Hopmann, 2007, p. 117).

The acknowledgement that each situation contains both probabilities and indefiniteness embraces both the possibility and difficulty of teaching. Students may, but do not have to, learn what teachers teach. Importantly, however, teaching facilitates the creation of certain meanings while restricting others.

Meaning is viewed as being created within social practices. In keeping with the argument of Biesta (2004, p. 17), this makes curriculum representative of practices within schools such as the practice of mathematizing or historicizing. The understanding of curriculum as involving the complicated conversation of the participants and not only prescribed textbooks, standardized examinations and official policy is also reflected in the later turn in the American field of Curriculum Studies (Pinar, 2004, pp. 18-19). This understanding is concurrent with the one in the present study.

The influence of context and complexity

Conditional circumstances that affect teachers’ decisions and actions include the contents and objectives of policy documents such as curricula and syllabi; assessment procedures; contents of teaching materials; groupings of students and other organizational measures; student responses and social relationships among students (Klafki, 1998, pp. 324-325). The circumstance that different factors can be contradictory and in conflict constitutes a source of uncertainty
in teaching (Labaree, 2000, p. 231). In practice this circumstance leaves it up to teachers’ discretion to deliberate and negotiate their actions. As Boote (2006) notes: “The vagueness, ambiguity, and dilemmas in most teachers’ domains of curriculum practice very often mean that they must choose among inadequate curricular resolutions to perennial and emergent problems of practice” (p. 468). In different situations teachers’ work may be more or less circumscribed, and the teacher may assign different levels of importance to the different aspects. Swedish teachers are not expected to be curriculum deliverers only. They are expected to be active in the process of producing curriculum at the local and individual level (Carlgren & Klette, 2008, p. 123). Framed within this context, in the following I address three sources of complexity that contribute to the difficulty of education.

First there is the complexity of content. Content constitutes the ‘what’ of curriculum. One of my points is that this ‘what’ is, in any educational situation, plural (see Frelin, 2006a, p. 180). A student presentation in a given biology class, for instance, can contain both the end of improving presentational technique and listening skills and the end of understanding the role of fibers for digestion simultaneously. This example indicates that the plurality of ‘what’ can be intended.13 Within Didaktik research concepts such as educational conceptions (Englund, 1986) and companion meaning (Östman, 1995) have been developed in order to inquire into the socialization of students that occurs at the same time as learning of knowledge. Methods for studying companion meanings include Communication Analysis of Companion Meanings (CACM) (Lundqvist, Almqvist, & Östman, 2009), and analyses of teachers’ manners and their role for students’ meaning making (Lundqvist, 2009). The plurality of ‘what’ that can, according to studies of companion meaning, often be unintended. In this regard, researchers have paid attention to the things students learn just from being in school. In his seminal study, Philip W Jackson (1990 [1968], pp. 33-35), for example, used the concept of hidden curriculum to describe that which the student needs to master in addition to the official curriculum if s/he is to get through school.14 The crowdedness of schools, the power of teachers and the praise they give combine to make students’ institutional conformity important for success in the educational

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13 In Sweden and many other countries, for example, along with the syllabus goals connected to specific school subjects there are overarching educational goals that are directed towards such matters as the education of democratic citizens. In Sweden’s national curricula it is stated that this task is given to each and every teacher; democracy is to permeate all facets of school work (Skolverket, 2006b, 2006c, 2006d).

14 Biesta (2004, p. 17) argues that the reason the hidden curriculum is so effective is that it is located within the practices – i.e., in the real life of schools that children take part in.
The present study seeks to address both the intended and unintended content that education contains.16

Another source of complexity that adds to the difficulty of education concerns the complexity of means that teachers confront when deciding what actions to take. In everyday practice, situations can evoke contradictory demands in quite spectacular ways, as is illustrated by the following example given by the teacher Josie in Golby (1996, p. 429):

How, for example do you deal with a girl who is distraught because her cat was run over last night and 29 boisterous Year Seven pupils who are waiting for their English lesson in a far from decorous manner at the same time?

Or as the teacher Oskar (in Alsterdal, 2006, p. 16) asks himself:

Should I run out of the classroom to catch the fast-running parallel class who devote themselves to throwing water at each other in the corridor, or is it more important not to interrupt the shy student who finally dares to read aloud in front of the class?17

Some parallels run through these examples. First, the teachers find themselves in situations where no matter what choice of action they make, including the choice of refraining to act, it will most likely have negative consequences for someone. Second, the teachers experience responsibility not only for their students' learning, but for their emotions as well.18 Third, a student's peers are involved in the course of events, as paradoxically enabling and limiting her or his actions. For instance, the shy student reading aloud to a group could not practice this without the presence of a group to read before; on the other hand it is the very presence of the group that makes reading aloud so hard. Fourth, contextual knowledge can contribute to the decision making process. For instance, the teacher Josie might know that the girl who has lost her cat has a caring brother in a classroom on the next floor that might be able to comfort her. She might also attempt to combine the two predicaments by changing her lesson plan and having her seventh graders write abounding poems on the suddenly relevant topic of loss. In other words, professional knowledge (or rather knowing) in teaching is addressed in relation to the

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15 As Jackson aptly puts it: “The point is simply that in schools, as in prisons, good behavior pays off”. (Education has also been criticized for reproducing injustices and for serving the powerful, see e.g. Apple, 1990).
16 One limitation: it can only account for unintended consequences that the informants are aware of.
17 Please note that all translations from Swedish to English are my own unless otherwise stated.
18 I am aware that the extent to which teachers assume, or are expected to assume, responsibility for their students' emotions may vary among teachers. It is also a contextual or societal issue; in Freeman's words: “[A]lthough there are people who ‘teach’ in every society, the term ‘teacher’ will have different meanings within those societies reflecting tacit, de facto social agreements about the boundaries of the term” (Freeman, 2000, p. 304). However, students everywhere do have emotions.
practice in which it is enacted, and to the inevitably normative character of
the means that teachers have (cf Doyle, 2006).

Finally, teaching practice differs from many other professional practices
when it comes to complexity of purposes. The conditions under which teachers
work involve

- a host of interrelated and competing decision situations both while planning
  and during teaching. There are no perfect or optimal situations to these
decisions. A gain for one student or in one subject matter may mean a
foregone opportunity for others. A motivationally and intellectually profitable
digression may reduce time devoted to the mandated curriculum (Clark &
Lampert, 1986, p. 28).

Such conditions ask teachers to accomplish goals that are complex and even
conflicting (cf Colnerud, 1995, p. 43). In comparison, in other complex
professional practices such as building a fine sounding musical instrument or
conquering a given disease there can sometimes be a dispute regarding the
best methods to employ, but there is rarely a dispute when it comes to
purposes. Gene Glass (1993) once compared educational research to a
debate:

> Some people expect educational research to be like a group of engineers
working on the fastest, cheapest, and safest way of traveling to Chicago, when
in fact it is a bunch of people arguing about whether to go to Chicago or St.
Louis (p. 17).

Glass viewed dispute as inevitable rather than problematic because education
is not an isolated phenomenon but part of society. Korthagen (2007) argues
that “the complex psychological and sociological phenomena influencing
educational processes” (pp. 305-306) contribute to the divide between
research and practice in this discipline. Biesta (2009a, pp. 15-16), addressing
the distinction between building bridges and building people, claims that rather
than being a form of poiesis (a means to an end), education is a form of praxis,
which requires judgment about what is educationally good. Processes of
reasoning in teaching are concerned with ends and means, and knowledge in
teaching must deal with both (Shulman, 1987, p. 13). From this it follows that
theories regarding teachers professional practice must acknowledge and contain
the deliberation of ends and means, without treating either as entirely pre-
determined. Hence the attention given in this study to the difficulties of
education, and their consequences for theories concerning teacher professionality.

In order to reconnect discussions on education with the question of
education's purpose Biesta (2009b) suggests a framework that starts with the
functions of educational systems, of which he identifies three: qualification,
socialization and subjectification. Qualification is a major function of education that provides understanding, knowledge and skills, as well as dispositions and judgments that allow for the ‘doing [of] something’, be it the performance of a particular job, or a more general form of doing which requires life skills and so forth (pp. 39-40). This function is particularly, but not entirely, connected to economic arguments. The socialization function concerns the implicit and explicit role played by education in assisting individuals in becoming members of different ‘orders’, such as those of a social, cultural and political nature. Although there are both desirable and undesirable aspects to socialization, this function is nonetheless important for the continuation of culture (p. 40). The last of educations three functions is subjectification, which, in contrast to socialization, is aimed at making the individual more autonomous and independent in action and thought. Because he views these three functions as overlapping, Biesta considers the question of good education to be composite – i.e., to include an understanding of the interrelatedness of all three. Moreover, discussions with regard to these three functions need not be restricted to policy makers alone, but can take place among teachers as well, to assist in the making of educational choices.

From policy to practice

The mismatch between the intended and the implemented curriculum has received attention on the policy level in Sweden. Although there may be several reasons for such mismatches, in this section the focus will be upon the manner in which, on the level of policy and practice, different perceived educational ends are connected to different views of the teacher’s role in fulfilling them. Drawing on Miller’s curriculum positions, Campbell (2009) elaborates on how the different positions of transmission, transaction and transformation can be understood relative to both the educated person and the responsibilities of the teacher. These different positions entail different content, means and purposes of education, and, as such, different answers to the Didaktik questions what, how and why. As the positions are ideal types, it may be possible to find several positions within one policy document or expressed by one and the same teacher. However, the different positions highlight complexities which contribute to making education difficult. Her argument is summarized in the following table:

19 Educational policy has become dominated by demands for measurably effective education. Effective education, argues Biesta (2009b, p. 35), is an instrumental value, which says nothing about what effective education is to be effective for, that is, the purposes of education. And even if it is a difficult issue to settle, in democratic societies the aims and ends should be continuously discussed (p. 37).

20 See e.g. Clear goals and knowledge demands in the compulsory school (SOU 2007:28, pp. 28-43).
Table 1: Derived from Campbell (2009, pp. 373-374).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>The educated person</th>
<th>The responsibilities of the teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transmission</td>
<td>Recipient of curriculum – highly knowledgeable in terms of content awareness, retention, and appreciation.</td>
<td>Transmitting of curricular knowledge judged independently of the student to be valuable by dominant standards, traditions, values, and assumptions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transaction</td>
<td>Problem solver – critical thinker able to apply his or her own constructed knowledge based on e.g. higher-order thinking skills to future learning.</td>
<td>Facilitate the dynamic relationship between the student and a fluid, rather than fixed, curriculum, and draw out the student’s innate capacity to learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformation (I)</td>
<td>Free and self-fulfilled individual – fully able to grow holistically and reach his or her ultimate potential, both cognitively and affectively.</td>
<td>Avoid hindering or restricting this personalized growth and instead the students positive potentials let this positive potential develop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformation (II)</td>
<td>Committed to social justice activism and radical systemic change – recognizes and seeks to disrupt societal divisions and inequities, and sensitive to how issues of power.</td>
<td>A change agent – directly influencing students and impose particular beliefs. Enable social transformation by using both alternative curricula and alternative pedagogies to challenge existing patterns.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concluding remarks

Curriculum is viewed in the present study as dynamic and reciprocal practice, in the sense that schools inevitably involve human relationships.21 Curriculum practice entails something beyond merely conveying the (predefined) content a certain subject matter to students; teachers are required to deal with the entire classroom situation in all of its complexity, extending to content, means as well as purposes. When teachers ask themselves the Didaktik questions of what to teach, why to teach it and how to teach, there are tensions and contradictions that need to be attended to, on many levels. Along with the intended content, there is unintended content which is also being created within the situation. Education has the functions of qualifying and socializing students, but can also have a subjectification function. Different views of the educated person suggest different responsibilities of the teacher. Attending to the difficulties of education entails analyzing practice in ways that do not neglect the complexities of content, means and purposes. While discussions on curriculum practice generally focus on subject content, the present study addresses those curriculum practices in which teachers’ relationships with their students are salient. This relational dimension is an ever-present feature of the educational process, whether it is officially recognized or not.

21 See further Chapter 3, under Teachers’ relational work in the classroom.
2 Teacher professionality

In this chapter the concept of teacher professionality that is used in the present study is contextualized and chiseled out. Conceptions of teacher practice differ in terms of such contextual variations as the age of the children taught, the country in which teaching is performed and so forth. Different conceptions are mirrored in for example mainstream research and policy documents, and these, in turn influence teachers’ conceptions of their practice, here understood as “the beliefs about teaching that guide a teacher’s perception of a situation and will shape action” (Lam & Kember, 2006, p. 694). Conceptions of teachers’ practice are connected to teachers' professionality in the sense that from a certain definition of teachers’ practice follows a certain definition of the professionality required to carry it out. Dall'Alba and Sandberg (2006) explain:

[W]hen teaching is understood as knowledge transfer, efforts to improve tend to focus on the teachers’ presentation of content. When teaching is understood as facilitating learning, developing skill in monitoring and enhancing the learning that occurs is emphasized. In other words, the way in which professional practice is understood […] is fundamental to how the practice in question is performed and developed, both by individuals and collectively (p. 390).

In my empirical study I do not have a pre-conceived notion of teacher professionality, but rather start from my informants' practices as described in their stories. These, however, are situated within the context of differing, and partly changing, conceptions of teachers’ practice and hence professionality. Goodson (2005, p. 24) argues that when context is left out of the discussion on teacher professionality, education risks being reduced to a technical fulfillment of external demands. In the following I give a brief outline of discourses that influence the education and society of today.

In a report issued by the National Swedish Agency for Education (Skolverket, 2006a), the answer to the question of what characterizes a good teacher is sought in students' answers to three questions: “1) Is the teacher good at teaching? 2) Is the teacher good at explaining when you (as a student) do not understand? and 3) Does the teacher give fair grades?” (p 13). The results of this inquiry indicate that for all categories of students save one, perceptions as to who is and is not a good teacher correlates positively with teachers having received teacher education. The exception was the lowest-
achieving students, for whom there was no correlation at all. While the authors were unable to explain this result on basis of their data, they mention that it might have been due to such factors as subject-specific teacher education, design of teaching, lack of student motivation and the like. A closer look at the three involved questions, however, intimates that they all more or less pertain to direct instruction and only marginally to the wider interpersonal dimension of teaching.

According to Endres (2007, p. 182), the value of interpersonal interaction can be recognized if it has been shown to affect central purposes in an abstract system such as school. However, when educational reforms are launched in Sweden, teachers' professional knowledge regarding the relational dimension is not very prominent. For example, when the government spent 3.6 billion SEK on teacher in-service education, they prioritized reading, writing and calculus for primary teachers and subject specialization for secondary teachers. The launching of this reform can be interpreted as an attempt to ameliorate specific shortcomings in teacher competence. The failure to prioritize teachers' work with relationships can be understood in one of two ways: as perception that teachers are in no need of in-service education in this area, or as neglect of its significance. In light of the problems encountered by both new and experienced teachers, this lack of emphasis seems a bit surprising.

Conceptualizations of professionalism and professionality

Any imagination that there is a clear-cut definition of what constitutes a profession, or professionals, will inevitably lead to disappointment. This is because, among other things, professionals are always situated within a certain time and place, and there is always the inevitable question of, “Professional according to whom, and for what purposes?” As such, the matter of who and what is a professional is contested in research, and subject to an ongoing struggle between professions. Because of this, the concept appears to be undergoing constant transformation. This notwithstanding, five commonly stated criteria for professions are thought that they provide an important public service, involve a theoretically as well as practically grounded expertise, have a distinct ethical dimension which calls for expression in a code of practice, require organization and regulation for purposes of recruitment and discipline and that they require a high degree of individual autonomy

22 http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/8544/a/80855 [Retrieved 080904] (Similar tendencies have been noted in other countries, see e.g. Goodlad, Sirotnik, & Soder, 1990).
Professional status involves the question of power, or “control of work by professional workers themselves, rather than control by consumers in an open market or by the functionaries of a centrally planned and administered firm or state” (Freidson, 1994, p 32). The process of enhancing the status of a given profession can be distinguished from that profession’s internal quality and standards of practice. Englund (1996) terms the first of these professionalization, regarded as a sociological project, and the latter professionalism, regarded as a pedagogical project (e.g. pp. 76-77). This distinction, however, points to the difference between viewing a profession as either something to be enacted or something to be achieved.

One can also make the distinction between being professional (behaving professionally) and being a professional (belonging to a profession) (cf Helsby, 1995, p. 320). The concept of professionalism comes closer to capturing what is actually practiced within a profession. Englund (1996) regards professionalization as a manifestation of the historical and social ambition of an occupational group to achieve status and position in society. Professionalization is, in that sense, a measure of the societal strength and authority of an occupational group. Professionalism, on the other hand, focuses on the question of what qualifications and acquired capacities, what competence, is required for the successful exercise of an occupation […] - which, in the last instance, is assessed by external forces (p 76).  

The distinction here drawn between the two concepts is the one that is applied in the present study. I elaborate on the relation to professionality below.

In many countries, the teaching profession has been continuously subject to forces of professionalization, de-professionalization and re-professionalization (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996, pp. 3-4). In some ways it has become more collegial and extended, in others overextended and more exploitative (Hargreaves, 2000a, p 166). Commenting on the process of teacher professionalization, Englund (1996, p. 76) notes that the project of professionalization is risky because it can lead to a narrow technical-rational
view of teachers' work; professionalization and professionalism are not always complementary projects. Hargreaves (2000a, p. 152) argues that they may even be contradictory, such as when standards are defined in high-status and technical ways that lead to the neglect of students and their learning; greater professionalism does not always follow from stronger professionalization (cf Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996, p. 20).26

Competency standards that “reinforce a view of effective teacher professionalism as the developmental sum of separate and independently cultivable skills” have been identified by Carr and Skinner as a key problem that erodes or discourages more integrated perspectives on educational practice (Carr & Skinner, 2009, p. 146). In interpersonal professions such as teaching (Endres, 2007, p. 176), practitioners are subject to contradictory expectations since, on the one hand, they are expected to serve individuals in formal institutions as impartial experts, while on the other, their success depends on being attentive to and involved with these individuals (p. 179). Thus, while the process of teacher professionalization as status achievement can result in a higher degree of professional autonomy and influence on working conditions, it can also risk decreasing them. In my view there is reason to pay attention to the relation between the processes of teacher professionalization and professionalism in terms of their connection to professional practice – or, as one might put it, enacted professionalism.

Professionality: the instantiation of professionalism

Counteracting attempts at professionalization and de-professionalization occur from both inside and outside of the teaching profession. It is reasonable to imagine that professionalization efforts are aimed at professionalism – i.e., improved practice. In reality, however, the end result is sometimes just the opposite. Evans (2008, section 3) questions how well demanded professionalism translates into enacted professionalism, without which professionalism would

26 The sociological approach to the professions has received criticism from several directions. Hoyle (1995, pp. 12-13) points to its reification, declining relevance and limitations in terms of portraying reality, as well as its use by leading professions to maintain status and closure instead of standards. Labaree (2000), drawing on Parsons, questions the descriptions of professional relationships as “distinctive types of role relationships: (a) affective neutrality versus affectivity, (b) specificity versus diffuseness, (c) achievement versus ascription, (d) self versus collective orientation, and (e) universalism versus particularism. As the theory goes, professionals in their interaction with clients are governed by the first orientation in each of these pairs” (1951, as cited in Labaree, 2000, p. 229). According to Labaree, the typical professional fits with the first characteristic in each pair. Such an understanding, however, renders teachers and others that function in more complicated role environments incapable of meeting the criteria. The tendency to privilege special knowledge and technical skills in reform movements aimed at professional status for teachers has also been noted by Goodlad, Sirotnik and Soder (1990, p. xiii). They point out, however, that they would like to have seen more references to the moral dimensions of the profession of teaching within these reform movements.
be nothing but an idea. A changed professionalism of substance, she claims, requires that professionals share, at least to some extent, “a commitment to the specific required or imposed change: a belief in, or at least receptivity to acceptance of, its potential to offer a ‘better way’” (p 15). Evans also calls for more research on what professionalism is and on its constitution particularly within the context of education. In her view, the inherent diversity that professionalism imposes on professionalism remains under-recognized. Professionalism as practice belongs, by definition, to a community of practitioners, although the instantiation of professionalism, which Evans terms professionality, inevitably belongs to the individual practitioner:

Though I accept that in everyday parlance it is acceptable to talk of an individual's professionalism, the majority of definitions […] suggest a general conception of professionalism, like professional culture, as a collective notion: as a plurality, shared by many. Yet the basic components and constituent elements of professionalism are essentially singular, since they reflect the individuality representing the individuals who are the constituency of the profession delineated. The ‘singular’ unit of professionalism – and one of its key constituent elements – is, I suggest, professionality, as I interpret the term (Evans, 2008, p. 6).

Thus, I hold, while professionalism and professionality depend on one another, they are also in tension, threatening to fall into something else if pursued too far in either direction: professionalism suggests a group of professionals that have something in common, without which they would only be separate individuals with differing individual practices. On the other hand, if nothing was left up to the individual to decide upon, one could hardly talk about professionality. Carr (2000, p. 24) argues that it is only in problematic situations which have no obvious answers that a practitioner can be professional – i.e., situations which demand a certain kind of judgment, experience and sensitivity which cannot be captured in technical systems (see also Schön, 1983).

I mean that one way of dealing with this tension would be to conceive of professionalism in terms of the results of practice – i.e., what it achieves, –

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27 Munby et al (2001, p. 899) avers that professional action is the essence of professionalism, while Hoyle (1995) holds that the term professionalism sometimes refers to “the rhetoric and strategies used by occupations in their professionalization project” (p. 12). The later usage would then be of professionalism as an idea.

28 In this regard, Goodson (2001) writes: “It is no longer sensible to limit the work on educational change to internalistic or even externalized models of institutional change. The enduring flaw in both these models has always been the degree of disconnection to individuals' personal projects. In post-modern times, with the salience of individual identity projects, this enduring problem is much exacerbated. When teachers detach their identity projects, their ‘hearts and minds’ from school, change is unlikely to be successful” (p. 55). (See also Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kingston, & Gu, 2007, p. 4)

29 Svensson (2006, p. 580) also defines professionalism as an outcome of an ethical culture and of knowledge acquired by education and experience, probable to produce legitimacy.
and to think of *professionality* in terms of the *practice* itself. For example, there are several means of bringing about student learning. But if the overarching goals are sufficiently common, at least at a certain time and in a certain context, one can speak of professionalism. Evans (2002) defines professionality as: "an ideologically-, attitudinally-, intellectually- and epistemologically-based stance on the part of an individual, in relation to the practice of the profession to which s/he belongs, and which influences her/his professional practice" (pp. 6–7, original in italics). In relation to this my view is that professionality cannot be displayed outside of practice, or descriptions of practice, as it is always purposeful action, towards one or several purposes. Moreover, the professional act is influenced by former experience, situational circumstances and value judgments. By tying professionality to the act rather than the person – when focusing on action this is the consequence – an act determines professionality and thus it cannot be professional before its occurrence.

**In sum:** while there are competing definitions of what constitutes a profession, in order to be viewed as a profession, the practice has to fulfill certain criteria, involving, for instance, extensive training and autonomous judgments. Professionalism can be viewed as the result of the collective achievement of a corps of professionals who strive together towards the same end, and professionality can be viewed as the instantiation of that collective effort by a single individual. Tying professionality to the act does not mean that all teachers have the same preconditions for acting professionally, only that all *can* act professionally.

**Contemporary international influences on education**

As previously stated, conceptions of teachers’ practice are contextual and influenced by the dominant discourses of education in society. In the present climate of educational reform and globalization, politicians are influenced by powerful agents such as the OECD and the World Bank to align their education systems with systems in the private sector, thus facilitating the commodification of core public services (Ball, 2003). Countries differ

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30 For instance, Sachs (2001, p. 159), referring to Australia, argues that two competing discourses dominate education policy and practice; managerialist and democratic, and that responses to these give rise to different professional identities. She suggests that the democratic discourse on professionalism emerges from within the teaching profession while the managerialist discourse is reinforced by employing authorities by an emphasis on accountability and effectiveness (pp. 149-150).

31 Changes in educational systems have taken place in many countries. In the United States, an act commonly known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was passed in 2002 which created stronger federal control of education, centering on testing and accountability. At the same time, it made way for marketization and privatization (Apple, 2007). (This shift towards a market-oriented discourse seems to include the European countries as well, see e.g. Jeffrey,
though in their tendencies to dilute or enhance such impulses in their educational systems (Weiner, 2002, p. 284). Common for many countries is a perception among teachers of loss of respect, a consumerist attitude towards education and/or blaming teachers for students’ failure (see Müller, et al., 2007).

Hoyle and Wallace (2007, pp. 428-ff) claim that metaphors of management quickly came to dominate educational language during the last decades. This shift has been conceptualized in several ways. Biesta (2006, pp. 17-19) traces the rise of what he terms the language of learning to a range of partly contradictory developments. In this regard, he has identified four contributing trends: 1) new theories of learning which shifted the attention to students and their activities rather than teachers and teaching, where learning became more central and teaching conceptualized in terms of facilitating learning; 2) postmodern doubt framed education as a modern project in need of questioning; 3) the growing market for non-formal adult learning as a mainly individualistic activity has made use of the word learning; and, 4) with the erosion of the welfare state the relationship between governments and citizen has been, in many cases, re-conceptualized into an economical relationship between the provider and the consumer of public services. All of these trends contribute to the language of learning.

Concepts such as ‘lifelong learning’ and ‘the knowledge society’, according to Säfström (2005a) constitute parts of this language, in a discourse where learning is the way for the individual to be included in a given system where labor market politics rather than educational issues are prevalent. The language of learning conceives of teachers as providers or facilitators of learning and the students as consumers of knowledge, according to Biesta (2006, pp. 21-24). He argues that this conception makes it difficult to discuss the purpose and content of education, including the matter of the teacher’s contribution to the educational process. Biesta’s concern is that the dynamics of educational relationships are misconstrued when they are described in

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2002; Moos, 2006; Rinne, Kallo, & Hokka, 2004). According to Dovemark (2004, p 46-47), results from OECD-inspections are more or less mirrored in Swedish school policy. Levin (1998, p. 137) describes the phenomena of countries borrowing each other’s ideas as a ‘policy epidemic’ as they seem to miss learning from the experiences of others. Smyth (2007) uses the term “educational policy deafness” instead (p. 228).

32 Drawing on an analysis of the school policy debate present in the editorial and debate pages of the largest Swedish newspapers, Lilja (2009) found “two opposing discourses of teachers and teaching [that] coexist in contemporary Swedish society. One is championed by leading politicians, large newspaper editorials and to some extent even teacher unions. The other is expressed in the national curriculum and supported, at least publicly, by the community of educational researchers. The former is heavily influenced by a global economical/political narrative of a knowledge economy, where market style solutions are applied to educational problems in order to create an effective and competitive educational system for a global economy, while the latter is more based in the traditional Nordic model of education where the fostering of democratically competent citizens and the complexity of teaching, for example its moral dimensions, is highlighted.” (p. 10).
economic terms. As I read Biesta this also narrows teachers’ possibilities for professional influence on the educational process.

Tendencies of (de-)professionalization in Sweden

In the case of Sweden, around a century ago teachers were active in research and policy as a professionalization movement (see e.g. Florin, 1987). Circumstances changed in the fifties when teachers were separated from research and development, a period which Carlgren (1999, pp. 46-47, 2009, p. 12) describes as one of de-professionalization, initiated from outside the profession (see also Englund, 1996, pp. 80-81). As the decentralization of decisions carried out from the 1980s on entailed an increased possibility for teachers to control their practice in terms of how it should be carried out, Carlgren and Marton (2004, pp. 105-107) view this as a re-professionalization initiated from outside of the profession. However, the teacher unions have taken initiatives in connection to this development, such as forming common principles of professional ethics which were agreed upon in 2001. There are also discussions regarding a probation year for newly qualified teachers in the future, and registration of teachers. There is presently a wide political consensus about the principle, even though the ideas of design differ.

Ringarp (2008, p. 162) argues that union strategies interfered with professionalization strategies during the decentralization period, and that this had a negative impact on the status of the profession. Carlgren (1999) characterizes the shift during this time period as a way of amplifying teacher accountability:

> After several decades of denial of teachers’ knowledge, a period when teachers were seen as problems rather than problem-solvers, they were now considered - as professionals - to be the solution to many of the problems (p. 43).

According to Carlgren (1999), educational research that has striven for the implementation of reform has contributed to the perception that problems in education are largely the result of teachers’ lack of professional knowledge. Because of this, she notes, evaluations of schools have tended to emphasize what they are deficient in, as opposed to what schools factually are. In Carlgren’s view, this is problematic because in comparison with these “utopian

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33 (This development is not unique for Sweden, see e.g. Goodson, 1999; Hargreaves, 2000a).
34 See http://www.lararesyrkesetik.se/ [Retrieved 080211]. (For work on the process of teacher professionalization in Sweden see also Florin, 1987; Persson, 2008; Ringarp, 2008). What is termed “new ‘professionalism” (e.g. Robertson, 1996) is related to Carlgren and Marton’s notion of re-professionalization, since both have been initiated from outside the profession.
35 (For a more elaborated, and critical, discussion about the proposed design see e.g. Fransson, 2009; Fransson & Gustafsson, 2008).
36 (For a more elaborate discussion regarding the concept of responsibility in relation to the concept of accountability, see Englund & Solbrevkke, 2009).
visions”, all real schools are bound to fall short (p. 44). “When physicians say they cannot cure a certain form of cancer, nobody doubts it. If teachers say they cannot teach certain things to certain children, teachers are considered to be in need of further education” (p. 48).

Today, as in other countries, educational reforms in Sweden are affected by global influences where the OECD has great influence (Carlgren, 2009, p. 14). Carlgren, referring to the balance between governing from inside and from outside the profession, views the present situation as one in which governing from the outside tends to be the stronger of the two (see also Krantz, 2009). This means that the de-professionalization of teachers can be initiated from outside the profession. Examples of this include reforms that presupposed a knowledge base that, for various reasons, remains inadequate, underfunding in research and questionable conditions for a professional practice (pp. 17-22). She summarizes:

So far the professionalization of teachers seems to be more rhetoric than reality. The obstacles for a professional exercise are many and growing rather than diminishing. While there is much talk about the necessity of raising teacher status and increasing the attraction of the teaching profession, much of what is done points in the opposite direction (p. 13).

The effects of educational reforms can be quite different from those that were originally intended they force the teachers to depart from their primary engagement of teaching to focus on other areas (Goodson, 2005, p. 98). An empirical study by Ranagården (2009, p. 217) indicates that due to reforms and spending cuts, teachers perceive that they lack time for teaching and working with students. At the same time, this is what they perceive to constitute their professionality in teaching (cf Brante, 2008).

For instance, Nytell (2006, p 171-2) describes how a “quality regime”, which arranges a school’s problems and solutions “according to quality terms and procedures”, has brought about a technical view of school. According to Lundahl (2006, p 440), external assessments such as this, which presents quality indicators in the form of figures, tend to direct teacher professionalism towards limited sets of curriculum objectives. The risk of de-professionalization is also there within the profession. Aili (1999) argues

37 She also describes how the attempt to establish a research based knowledge development in teacher education through tying resources to the different teacher education facilities was changed into a central committee that favored established research environments outside of these facilities (pp. 17-18) Carlgren (2009) rather dramatically describes teacher education as “a piece of meat ripped apart and eaten by the voracious institutions of the university” (p. 20).

38 Assessment in itself thus serves to influence practice in forceful ways; Lundahl (2006, p 440) views it as knowledge re/production. The consciousness of how assessment influences pedagogical processes in school seems according to Lundahl to have been present in discussions in Sweden before the 1990-s. What he thus hints at is that such consciousness has diminished and that the consequences are beginning to influence school practice. For empirical accounts of features of such influences see e.g. Lam and Kember (2006).
that although the classroom is an arena which frequently produces ‘deviant cases’, as with students in different kinds of difficulties, the teaching profession has no system of knowledge for handling them, resulting in a handing over of this responsibility to other professional groups. According to Aili, while preventing teachers from feeling a sense of failure it also deprives them of the possibility of developing competence relative these sorts of problems. In addition, the development of a professional meta-language by which teachers can communicate their knowledge, is impeded by their working conditions and other circumstances (Colnerud & Granström, 2002, p. 57; cf Lortie, 1975).

Conditions for teacher professionality

According to Goodson (2005, p. 39), governments in many Western countries are trying to influence the teaching profession towards a more technical work, where they supply pre-packaged solutions and guidelines, and hand out grades. The language in policy documents, because it influences (de-)professionalization, serves to influence teachers’ practice in many ways. For instance, as a consequence of the demands for accountability teachers may feel pressed to neglect curricular goals and guidelines in favor of binding regulations regarding requirements for different subjects stated in the syllabi. This may have unforeseen consequences relative to the educational process. One such consequence concerns the tendency of assessment practices to privilege “the skills and knowledge that will be tested, neglecting more complex aspects of the subject” (Hursh, 2007, p. 506). It has been shown that assessment practices have a very strong influence on teacher practice – e.g., on the potential to allow concern to guide their work (cf Gewirtz & Ball, 2000, p. 266) and to create consistency between their conceptions of good teaching and their approach to teaching in practice (Lam & Kember, 2006, p. 711).

Gewirtz (1997) has included a “decline in the sociability of teaching” among the changes that have occurred in teachers’ work (p. 230), highlighting that monitoring and recording students’ work takes time away from that spent collaborating with teaching colleagues and interacting with students. Other results from embracing market principles in education include centralized curricula, which decrease the room for judgment and autonomy on the part of the teacher (Hargreaves, 2000a, p. 168). Within this culture of standardization teachers’ knowledge is described by Raider-Roth (2005b, p. 168) as losing “its currency”. Englund and Solbrenke (2009) argue that within concepts like ‘consumers’ interests’, ‘competitiveness’ and ‘efficiency’ and ‘accountability’, ideas become embedded in the language of professionalism;

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39 As neo-liberalism tends to subordinate groups and individuals to the free-play of the forces of economy, it also works to “de-professionalize” them (Weiner, 2002, p. 277).
thus the moral dimension of a teacher’s knowledge becomes diminished, thrusting professionals into a “utilitarian attitude at … expense of the moral claims” (p. 6).

Professionals are dissatisfied with the predominance of managerialism, and there is some public skepticism as to whether measurement really equals improvement (Hoyle & Wallace, 2007, p. 435). It is for instance suggested that standards are developed and pursued for the sake of standardization itself, and for the sake of wide applicability, rather than for the sake of improvement of, or appropriateness for, practice (Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002, pp. 347-48). Critics of this development also claim that it, in addition to narrowing curriculum, is counter-productive. For example Bingham and Sidorkin (2004) argue that the academic

purification of educational purposes tends to destroy the already fragile layers of public education conducive to development of flourishing human relations. And ironically, once the relational basis of a school organization is destroyed or severely limited, it becomes more and more difficult to achieve high academic standards. This concern goes well beyond the abstract discourse about the purposes of public education. Even the most narrowly constructed “back to basics” purposes of public schooling may become unachievable if schools lose the ability to foster human relationships that allow them to function (p. 2-3).

What Bingham and Sidorkin also stress is the significant contribution of the teacher, including how relationships can constitute means for achieving the purposes of education. Empirical research on these matters will be addressed further on. Goodson and Hargreaves (1996, pp. 18-19) have emphasized that attention to teachers’ task complexity is vital for improving professionalism and that it should be recognized and rewarded. This means, for example, that teachers have opportunity to exercise discretionary judgment over the issues involved in teaching, including the moral and social purposes involved. The opportunities are, however, not disconnected from the context: in Goodson’s (2005) words: “Teacher professionality and engagement are like the delicate ecology of nature, and the role of reform and change should be to create sustainable environments where this professionality can continue to prosper” (p. 107).

Concluding remarks

Lundgren (1998) has made the point that different conceptions of schooling infer “quite different school systems with quite different tasks” (p. 153). He adds: “To ascribe to a school system the role of changing society implies a different school system than one that should adjust to changes in production and markets. What is the best school system is not an empirical question!” (p. 154). Bearing this in mind, during different time periods the various changes
within the educational system have entailed changed roles for the teachers functioning within it, as well as various changes in their professional influence. Professionalization efforts have been in play from parties with an interest in education, as well as efforts resulting in de-professionalization. Professionalization, as in the efforts aiming at higher status, is neither detached from nor causally linked to professionalism – i.e., the collective achievement of the profession.

Here a question left unanswered is whether or not teaching is a profession? The answer to this I will leave to those interested in the sociological aspects of professionalism. Do I argue that teachers can act professionally? Yes, I do. However, throughout the present study I will refrain from pinpointing what this entails prior to the act itself; instead I will explore professionality in terms of practice (this question will be revisited below).40 Professionality is defined as the instantiation of professionalism, here viewed not as a characteristic of a person but rather as a characteristic of an act. From this perspective, discussions on professionality will also include human relationships that are embedded in the situation. These are of importance to professionality in teaching.

Hoyle and Wallace (2007) argue that academics who start from metaphors that teachers live by, which are likely to have a strong connection to the processes and purposes of education, may find a potential for the creation of new meanings (p. 440). This hints at one possible answer to the question of how to counteract the negative consequences of professionalization and improve the practices (or professionalism) of teachers. Perhaps it can be done by the development of a language that is capable of: 1) connecting well with and capturing teacher practices; and, 2) assisting teachers in forming a deeper understanding of what it is they do. Language can be employed for good or ill in a variety of ways. As Hoyle and Wallace suggest, in the case of teaching, language carries the potential of being deployed tactically in order to counteract ineffective, outmoded or harmful practices within education (p. 437).

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40 See Chapter 5, under Methodological viewpoints.
3 Teachers’ knowledge and relational work with students

Teacher professionality, in the pedagogical sense, has been primarily addressed in terms of teacher knowledge, which is why I use this concept in the present chapter. From the perspective that professionality and practice are interrelated, I also address research on teachers’ work, including their thoughts and reasoning concerning their work. I then focus on research concerning teachers’ work with relationships in the classroom that is of relevance to the present study. My aim in this regard is not to provide a comprehensive treatment of these vast fields, but only to provide a brief overview of the relevant areas within them – i.e., those that are connected to teachers’ relational professionality.

Teachers’ knowledge in research

Research on teaching has been conducted for nearly a century and has, over time, moved in the general direction of an increased space for teachers’ voices. For example, when so-called process-product research, which focused on teacher behavior and student results, failed to produce substantial results that could be converted into usable knowledge, hopes turned to novice-expert research instead (see e.g. Arfwedson, 1994). This line of research has been successful for making knowledge more visible in several professions. However, it does not deal with normativity issues, meaning that in specific relation to teachers it problematizes neither the purposes of education nor the work of the expert (the ends and means). Grossman and McDonald (2008) describe the last 50 years of research on teaching as having moved from “looking primarily at teacher characteristics – such as enthusiasm or authoritarianism – to looking at teaching behaviors, teacher decision making,

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41 This as opposed to the sociological sense, which is beyond the scope of the present study; see Conceptualizations of professionalism and professionality in the previous chapter.
42 Ropo (2004) summarizes the following common features of teacher expertise: It is developed in a narrow field and has its knowledge base bound to a certain context; experts react automatically to situations which recur frequently; they are more sensitive to specific students and characteristics of situations; their observations are faster and more accurate than novices; their representation of a problem takes longer time to come up with but is better than that of novices; their knowledge is both more hierarchically organized and wider as to the abstraction level than novices'.
teacher knowledge, and teacher reflection and dispositions” (p. 185). They further argue that over the past two decades, researchers have primarily concentrated their inquiry on teacher cognition, and that more attention needs to be given to both the intellectual and the relational demands of teaching.

Jackson’s (1990 [1968]) seminal anthropological study contributed to the acknowledgment of complexity in teaching, and introduced concepts such as the ‘hidden curriculum’\(^{43}\), which teachers instigate through their position of power and their praise (p. 34). He also introduced important distinctions such as that between pre- and interactive thinking.\(^{44}\) This distinction has been widely used within teacher thinking research – e.g., Clark and Peterson (1986), who use it in their review of research on teachers’ thought processes, in connection with the fields of teacher planning and decision making. It was now recognized that teachers not only planned before lessons, but that classroom contingencies made them plan continuously during lessons, in response to student actions. In a sense, the rise of teacher-thinking research in the 1980s entailed a rediscovery of the seemingly obvious fact that teachers were thinking – and of the influence their thinking had on their actions (Carlgren, 2009, p. 16).

Attempts to classify teacher knowledge have been numerous. One of the more widely known of these is Shulman’s (1987, p. 8; 2004, p. 227) divisions of content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners, knowledge of educational contexts and knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values.\(^{45}\) These are interrelated in practice, and significant to varying degrees, depending on the situation at hand. Elbaz (1983, p. 45) and Grossman (1995, p. 20) make similar categorizations but with the addition of knowledge of self, which works to filter theoretical knowledge.

**Personal practical knowledge**

Over the last several decades, teacher knowledge has been explored by different strands of research that have used various methods. One such strand, which has made significant advances in the field, has employed narrative methods and a longitudinal perspective. Connelly, Clandinin, & Ming Fang (1997), and Elbaz (1983), for example, have used this approach to argue that knowledge is tied to the person and connected to past experience, present embodied experiences and future images. Clandinigi and

\[^{43}\] See also Chapter 1 under *The influence of context and complexity.*

\[^{44}\] In comparison to Lortie (1975), who conducted the other famous study of that time, Jackson seems to have done more for the understanding of teacher thinking.

\[^{45}\] Shulman’s main contribution, pedagogical content knowledge, has been criticized by such scholars as Hopmann (2007) for its failure to “reconstruct subject matter as open space for the invention of future meaning” (p. 121).
Connelly’s metaphor of *practical knowledge landscape* is used to capture the complex environment that teachers work in, which includes physical, intellectual and personal features (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). So that teachers can cope in the rapidly changing school landscape, their knowledge must also include an understanding of how to live, or navigate, within the realm of this context (Clandinin, Downey, & Huber, 2009, p. 146). From the life history/biographical perspective, it is claimed that in order to understand teaching one cannot rely only on studies of professional practice; it is also important to understand the person who teaches (see e.g. Goodson, 1981; Tornberg, 2006b) in order to understand practice. Life histories have also made contributions to understanding the context in which the teacher works, and research using this method has given valuable insights into matters such as how reforms affect teacher resilience and effectiveness (Day, Stobart, Sammons, & Kington, 2006).

Although teachers’ beliefs are sometimes contrasted with their knowledge, they have an important influence on teaching. However, to understand the nature of that influence, and how beliefs factually operate in teacher practice or in the educational situation, one cannot analyze them or assess them in isolation. As has been noted by Pajares (1992), one must understand individual beliefs in terms of their connection to a broader belief system:

> Seeing educational beliefs as detached from and unconnected to a broader belief system, for example, is ill advised and probably unproductive. [...] When carefully conceptualized, when educational beliefs and their implications are seen against the backdrop of a broader belief structure, inconsistent findings may become clearer and more meaningful. It is also clear that, if reasonable inferences about beliefs require assessments of what individuals say, intend, and do, then teachers' verbal expressions, predispositions to action, and teaching behaviors must all be included in assessments of beliefs. (pp. 326-327)

That is, teachers’ beliefs and teachers’ personal practical knowledge are similar concepts, even if the latter has been given more consideration in research.

Swedish studies on teachers’ personal practical knowledge include for example Magnusson’s study on teachers common versus person-specific knowledge (1998), the relations between student perceptions, teaching and research (Claesson, 1999) and teachers’ skills and Liberal Education (El Gaidi, 2007).

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46 See also Chapter 5, *Considerations on method of data collection.*
Thinking and reflection

Another strand of research emerged from attempts to enhance educators' practical knowledge by way of reflection. It is inspired by the writings of Donald Schön (1983, 1987), whose seminal work investigated the practice of professionals such as psychotherapists, architects and town planners. Schön's experience was that the prevailing technical rationality fostered selective inattention to certain professional competence – i.e., the practical. Giving birth to the reflective practitioner he maintained that there is a knowing-in-practice that is rarely articulated, but that works as reflection-in-action (1987, p 26). It helps the practitioner to deal with conflicted, uncertain and unique situations which occur in practice. Practice, according to Schön (1983), is similar to a swampy lowland wherein problems are messy and confusing, and defy any technical solutions on the high ground of theory.

Zeichner (1994), in what he terms the “reflective practice movement” (p. 10), characterizes the rise of reflection as a reaction against top-down reforms and the view that teachers are mere technicians. As such, attention to teachers' reflective practice can be described as a professionalization attempt. From the notion of reflection, a large body of research aimed at understanding and improving practice has emerged. In teaching, such research includes teachers' metaphors (Russell, Munby, Spafford, & Kallo, 1988) and craft knowledge (Grimmett & Mackinnon, 1992; Leinhardt, 1990). Swedish research on teacher thinking includes Carlgren and Lindblad (1991, p. 513) who stress the importance of context when considering teachers' practical reasoning and Alexandersson’s (1994) study on teachers' direction of consciousness in relation to content and method.

The recognition of practical knowledge, which was to be gained through reflection in practice, and not only through formal education, also challenged the standard paradigm of formal learning when research showed the importance of informal workplace learning (Beckett & Hager, 2002, see chapter 6; Eraut, 2000, 2007; Hoekstra, Beijaard, Brekelmans, & Korthagen, 2007). Eraut, (2007, p. 405) rather uses the term cultural knowledge for describing knowledge that has not been subjected to codification. He claims that it plays a key role in many practices that are work-based. It is learned informally, through acting in practice, and its influence is often unconscious, since it is taken for granted.

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47 According to Johannessen (1999, p. 10), professional knowing, which has been described as tacit, is primarily expressed in the exertion of the profession itself. It is a different mode of articulation than the verbal, which makes access to it restricted. Johannessen (1999) defines praxis as knowledge that, unlike rule-bound knowledge, can be documented only through practice: “Praxis knowledge displays itself in other words partly as a proficiency when it comes to using statements and partly as a certain familiarity with the context that the statements say something about.” (p. 39, italics in original).

48 (See also contextual knowledge, e.g. Hultman, 2001). In this regard, Boshuizen (2004) describes how a reasoning process in a certain domain starts from lines of reasoning consisting
However, reflection, in and of itself, does not improve action; “reflection for the sake of reflection” (Zeichner, 1994, p. 17) is not the answer. Liston, Whitcomb and Borko (2009) criticize narrow practices of reflection in teacher education: “Rather than being employed as a means to examine and explore the variety of educational ends and values as well as our personal engagements, reflection is too often employed as a technique to evaluate the achievement of prespecified outcomes.” (p. 109). The multidimensionality and immediacy of teachers’ decision making has raised questions regarding the suitability of the concept of reflection for teaching (see e.g. Beckett, 1996; van Manen, 1999). In contrast, Delamont (1990) has assigned ad-libbing as “an essential element in good teaching” (p. 70). Alternatives to the concept of reflection have included intuition-in-action (Johansson & Kroksmark, 2004) and anticipative action (Beckett, 1996; Beckett & Hager, 2002, pp. 34-35, p 34-35). The latter of these alternatives, anticipative action, is said to include both understanding of and confidence in how to proceed; it “expresses the ways that human purposes are played out in creation or performance of accomplishment. What counts as an accomplishment is only known when it is efficacious. Acting anticipatively rehearses, in a fairly open-ended way, what might contribute to that accomplishment” (Beckett & Hager, 2002, p. 36). The confidence to try is apparent in the extension of patterns to new situations and makes the actor move beyond just following rules (p. 35). According to Beckett and Hager, anticipation is appropriate action for certain purposes, in which both action and purposes are open to contingency (p. 36). The aspect that Beckett and Hager stress in their theory of expertise is confidence and improvisation. The confidence to try, with no guarantee of success, emanates from prior experience of similar, although not identical, situations in which action has been successful.

of chains of small steps, resulting in an integrated knowledge network. The next step consists of knowledge encapsulation, when direct links are established between the first and last concept in the line. From further experience script formation ensues. Scripts are knowledge structures where sequences of action are stereotyped. They also indicate what is really necessary and where variations can be allowed. As for experts, scripts are automatically activated and checked for relevance, rendering a low demand on cognitive capacity.

49 Critique of the reflective practice stance for teaching also includes its inability to take into account the irreversibility and messiness of classrooms, as these, in the words of Carlgren (1999) “are not virtual but real worlds which do not ‘talk back’ in nice, simulated ways. Rather, real worlds hit back. It is impossible to erase in the classroom. In the real world the practitioner is constrained by what has been called ‘the practical imperative’. She cannot try out an idea and then change her mind. She has to do the right thing at the right moment. And when it is done, it cannot be undone” (p. 52). Carlgren further argues that theoretical knowledge and teachers’ tacit professional knowledge stand in contradiction when the theoretical reduction suppresses the social dimensions of teaching and thus misinterprets what teachers do (Carlgren, 1999, pp. 48-49). Korthagen (2004, p. 78) also would like to see more clarity concerning the content of teachers’ reflection when promoting it in order to improve teaching.
Emotional aspects of teachers’ knowledge

Discussions regarding how to understand practical teacher knowledge have, according to Beckett (1996, p. 138), mainly focused on reflection and critical thinking. At the same time both cognition scientists (Gärdenfors, 2005) and neurologists (Damasio, 2002) emphasize the role of emotions in decision making. While emotion and reason (or rationality) are commonly held in opposition, Barbalet (1998) argues that this opposition has its ground in a discounting of so-called “background emotions” (pp. 29-30), which are regarded not as emotions, but rather as customs, attitudes and so forth.

The role of emotion in practical rationality, then, is to permit action which would be inhibited if it were to rely on logic or calculation alone. The emotional contribution to rationality is to provide a feeling of certainty concerning the future, which is necessary if action is to occur and the actor to proceed (p. 49).

Emotions are basic for understanding social action and processes, as they situate beings in the context of relations or environment (pp. 170, 174). Teaching as an emotional practice has also been addressed by Hargreaves (1998, 2000b), who argues that the misrepresentation of the role of emotions extends to inquiries into teaching. In his view, work on the role of emotions in teaching has tended to represent emotions and emotionality in psychological, personal and individual ways, which has entailed that emotions are seen as a matter of moral commitments, private virtues or personal dispositions (Hargreaves, 2000b, p. 813). As I read Hargreaves, this way of representation has served to separate emotions from professionality. According to Labaree (2000, p. 229), research on professionality has mainly attended to so-called secondary relationships (e.g. doctors seeing a patient), relationships that tend to be more limited and distanced. Primary relationships, on the other hand, in which one is extensively and emotionally invested, have been placed in contrast to these. In an earlier work (Frelin, 2008), I argued that “professional distance can according to this logic, where the implicit dichotomy distance/closeness works, be viewed as natural while professional closeness is made invisible” (p. 181).

The separation of emotions and professionality has deep roots. Within education, teacher professionalism has been criticized for its association with liberal ideas stemming from Kantian and Cartesian traditions of thought, reproducing masculine ideals like “the notion of the teacher as a ‘rational, instrumental actor’” (Dillabough, 1999, p. 374; see also Noddings, 1996). Dillabough claims that the gendering of teacher professionalism serves to downplay practices coded as feminine, such as building meaningful student-teacher relationships, at the expense of pedagogies in which the teacher serves only as transmitter of knowledge. An example of research that seeks to bridge the gap between emotions and professionality is Entwistle et al (2000,
who includes in an expanded awareness of learning and teaching cognitive aspects such as knowledge of subject matter, presentation and students’ development and learning, but also affective aspects such as expressing feelings in connection to subject matter, commitment to the promotion of understanding and having relationships with the class and students characterized by empathy. Hargreaves (2000b, p. 811) highlights the importance of including emotions in inquiries on teaching: “Teaching, learning and leading […] are always irretrievably emotional in character, in a good way or bad way, by design or default” (Hargreaves, 2000b, pp. 812, italics in original). According to Hargreaves, teachers scan their students, resulting in an instantaneous emotional understanding – or misunderstanding - that draws on past experience, which he argues makes continuous and strong relationships between students important, as they, in time, learn to “read” each other (p. 815).

Using the concept of teacher integrity, Ball and Wilson (1996) highlight the fact that teachers’ deliberations include not only their students’ knowledge, but also their feelings (p. 175), and that their commitments include not only knowledge but care (p. 178). These deliberations, when made with integrity, include intellectual honesty interwoven with the moral dimensions of teaching. Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006) describe “presence” as trustful relationships in which teachers’ responses to students and their learning are compassionate and engaged:

a state of alert awareness, receptivity and connectedness to the mental, emotional and physical workings of both the individual and the group in the context of their learning environments and the ability to respond with a considered and compassionate best next step (p. 266).

Presence, as such, is the ability of the teacher to respond to her/his students, including their emotions.

In a theme edition of the Cambridge Journal of Education, Nias (1996, pp. 293-294) presents the following three reasons for considering affectivity to be fundamentally important to teaching, despite its neglect in research: 1) teachers have feelings about their pupils, and this affects their professional efficacy; 2) emotions are rooted in cognition, which makes affectivity inseparable from judgment, as well as from efforts to improve practice that are connected to teachers’ attitudes, beliefs and values; and, 3) teachers’ views of themselves and others are socially grounded and contextually shaped, and thus are of collective concern.

Embodied aspects of teachers’ knowledge

In everyday situations, we constantly rely on knowledge that is implicit – what Polanyi (1967, p 8) describes as tacit knowledge or knowing more than
you can tell. Building on Gestalt psychology, Polanyi (1967) claims that our tacit knowing shapes or integrates experience into knowledge. He uses examples such as being able to identify a familiar face out of a crowd of thousands, while still not being able to ascertain the means by which such recognition is made possible. Lately, cognitive scientists have argued that our thoughts are primarily unconscious, and our minds inherently embodied, making reason shaped by the body (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 5). This goes against the grain of the common picture of the mind as the pilot of an unpredictable and sometimes unruly body which O'Loughlin (2006, p. 5) claims has been retained in the educational policy, theory and practice of Western societies. It also challenges an idea of the neutral and rational actor with the notion of an “emotionally charged agent of embodied praxis” (O'Loughlin, 2006, p. 10) who is embedded within intersubjective relations. Conceiving of the person as embodied includes an understanding of the body as the ground of, shaper and user of our conceptual system; we can only know ourselves, the world and others from the concepts that our perceptual and motor systems have formed (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 555). What ‘knows’ are “our multiple sensory powers” (O'Loughlin, 2006, p. 11).

The separation of the mind from the body has reinforced the division of mental activities from the corporeal, which has put forth a view of reasoning as independent of bodily perception and motion (O'Loughlin, 2006, p. 60). It has also downplayed aspects of situations and events related to the body, what O'Loughlin (p. 61) calls practical consciousness which she argues happens at the margins of consciousness. But the circumstance that the body is not mainly conscious does not make what it knows any less significant (p. 105).

Our responses to the world are always embodied as we inhabit places in which we enact our lives, motivated by feelings, desires and needs arising directly out of our corporeality. The intersubjective realm, too, is corporeal – it is always an exchange of visual and tactile activity, of speech, emotions and ways of seeing and understanding (O'Loughlin, 2006, p. 72).

Claesson (2004, pp. 151-152) uses the concept of teacher holding to emphasize that a teacher’s intentionality, which includes embodied features such as gestures, movements and facial expressions, is based upon the way s/he perceive things in the classroom. In professional activities, embodied knowledge has been addressed within the field of professional knowing. The use of the body in professional action is acknowledged by Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986), whose theory of human expertise is widely cited. According to them, expertise is embodied and viewed a part of the self, which makes experts only as aware of their skill as they are of their own

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50 Skill acquisition, from novice to expert, is divided into five stages: novice, advanced beginner, competence, proficiency and expertise. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986, pp. 16-ff, 50) claim that we move from context-free rule following to intuitive judgement.
body (p. 30). Experts intuitively respond to patterns in situations, associate plans that have worked before with present situations, and cannot always provide explanations of their decisions (p. 34). Dreyfus and Dreyfus have an understanding of intuition as “the product of deep situational involvement and holistic discrimination” (p. 29), and claim that the ability to discriminate the enormous amount of situations comes from experience (p. 32).

Using the concepts of Aristotle, many researchers have discussed teaching in terms of phronesis, or practical wisdom, rather than knowledge. Biesta (2009c) connects phronesis to teachers’ professional judgment as these “are not only about what is most effective, but have to include judgments about what is educationally desirable” (p. 187). He suggests viewing practical wisdom as a way of both seeing and being – i.e., seeing situations in particular ways (through the lens of values and ideals) and responding to these situations (or judging what needs to be done) (p. 188). On basis of this, Biesta concludes that teachers’ value judgments should be viewed as integral to their professionalism, and that professional wisdom can be learned. In this regard, he notes that the most important conditions for such learning are time and collegiality: time to attend to ones own value judgments and collaborating with colleagues (p. 191).

Teachers’ relational work in the classroom

Research regarding the relational dimension in schools is represented in areas that are quite diverse, ranging from psychology in Classroom Management to sociology of education and ethnographic research on the moral life of schools. My intent is to provide examples of this diversity while maintaining my focus on teachers’ relational work with students. I have not specifically attended to studies that focus on the relationship between the individual teacher and the class (a collective of students) as they are beyond the scope of the present work. Moreover, because these studies generally focus on the relationship of the teacher with the class, they tend to neglect relationships between individual students.

Classroom Management and relational work

In the field of Classroom management, research has developed from a more narrow focus on classroom order to a broader one that includes “the actions teachers take to create an environment that supports and facilitates both

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51 Practical wisdom can be described as the ability in a given situation to coalesce moral principles and possible actions, taking into consideration demands for uniformity and consistency in action (Johannessen, 1999). It adds an ethical dimension to know-how: doing the right thing for the right reason. Practical wisdom constitutes the instantiation of virtue. It is also is context dependent and value laden, and draws attention to ethical purposes beyond efficacy or prudence (Beckett, 1996).
academic and socio-emotional learning” (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006, p. 4). The classroom environment, as summarized by Doyle (2006, pp. 98-99), is characterized by multidimensionality, simultaneity, immediacy, unpredictably, publicness and history. Teachers and students are involved in a complex negotiation process that shapes the demands of academic work (p. 111). The purpose of classroom management is, according to Evertson and Weinstein, twofold: making academic learning possible through the establishment and maintenance of order in the classroom and enhancing the moral and social growth of students. As such, teachers’ classroom management tasks are intended to:

1. develop caring, supportive relationships with and among students;
2. organize and implement instruction in ways that optimize students’ access to learning;
3. use group management methods that encourage students’ engagement in academic tasks;
4. promote the development of students’ social skills and self-regulation;
5. use appropriate interventions to assist students with behavior problems (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006, p. 5).

This research field has moved towards emphasizing relationships, especially positive teacher-child relationships. Several studies have indicated the importance of qualities in the teacher-student relationship that fulfill the purposes of education (see e.g. Adalsteinsdóttir, 2004; Cornelius-White, 2007; Margonis, 2004; Pianta & Hamre, 2009; Raider-Roth, 2005a; Smyth, 2007). In order to sustain students’ academic work, a delicate balance has to be achieved, subject to shaping by events in the classroom, where there is a convergence of the classroom tasks of teachers and students (Doyle & Carter, 1984, pp. 132-133).

However, although this research has demonstrated that the qualities of relationships between teacher and student are an essential feature of learning, these qualities have been difficult to study (Brophy, 2006, p. 38; Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006, p. 266). According to Walker (2009, p. 127), this may be one reason for the sparse empirical research on the role of relationships for learning, despite teachers’ stress on their importance. The significance ascribed to teachers as “warm demanders” that provide care, responsiveness, warmth and support to their students, in combination with having high expectation for their work, is a recurring theme within the field (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006, p. 11). The focus lies upon the personal qualities of the

\[52\] In a meta-analysis on research in person-centered education Cornelius-White (2007) highlights a common emphasis on “teacher empathy (understanding), unconditional positive regard (warmth), genuineness (self-awareness), nondirectivity (student-initiated and student-regulated activities) and the encouragement of critical thinking (as opposed to traditional memory emphasis)” (p. 113). The qualitatively different ways in which teachers respond to students, such as honoring their voices or encouraging their learning, are here termed “relational practices” (Cornelius-White, 2007, p. 115). In my use of this concept I do not build from this psychological
teacher and the views they have of their mission. Research on teachers' views of school discipline has highlighted teachers' different underlying assumptions, in a framework distinguishing between traditional, liberal progressive or socially critical views (Johnson, Whittington, et al, 1994).

Social aspects of relational work

In sociology of education, ethnographic research has generated insight into school life from both teacher and student perspectives. In one of these studies, specifically directed towards teacher knowledge, Woods (1990) theorizes that “creativity, orchestration, and generating an educational climate” are the three essential skills of a teacher (p. 23). Orchestration is said to involve skills such as the ability to construct a social structure that is acceptable to all, and that reduces the need for vigilance and maintenance on the part of the teacher. While the teacher is an obvious part this structure, if it is able to function even when she is not present, the construction is said to be more successful (p. 66). Drawing on the notion of school ethos, Woods and Measor (in Woods, 1990) describe it as “a moving set of relationships within which different groups and individuals are constantly in negotiation. It is largely expressed in symbolic form, notably in language, appearance and behaviour.” (p. 77). Teachers have been shown to make links to, and appropriate relevant parts of, student culture in order to further their aims. Woods and Measor (in Woods, 1990) use the notion of middle ground to indicate the meeting point between different cultures – a response to the problem shared by both teachers and students of how to live together in school. Middle ground is something that one strives for and works at in order to conduct the official business of the school. However, it is not always achieved.

In his study of minority students' oppositional cultures Erickson (1987) makes an argument for a culturally responsive pedagogy, claiming that student assent to the exercise of authority involves trust that its exercise will be benign. This involves a leap of faith – trust in the legitimacy of the authority and in the good intentions of those exercising it, trust that one's own identity will be maintained positively in relation to the authority, and trust that one's own interests will be advanced by compliance with the exercise of authority. In taking such a leap of faith one faces risk. If there is no risk, trust is unnecessary (p. 344).

Erickson identifies the student's trust in the teacher as a factor that should not be neglected. From the perspective of social differences, Davidson (1999, p. 339) inquires into how these can be stigmatizing and function as borders that
separate teachers and students when they have differing norms, values and expectations. By taking note of the perspective of these students, she indirectly arrives at those forms of conduct and practice that actually work in terms of engaging them in school practices. Students who face social borders are especially appreciative of teachers’ attempts to reduce social distance through the development of personalized relationships, the use of humor, and other similar forms of behavior (pp. 344, 349-50). They are also appreciative of teachers that care about them and show confidence in their capacities, even when their performance is poor; when treated in these ways, they become eagerly compliant and willing to accept a broad range of teacher behaviors (pp. 352, 365).

A large Australian research project that highlighted the concept of productive pedagogies, identified four dimensions that contributed to student achievement (see Lingard, Hayes, & Mills, 2003): intellectual quality, connectedness, engagement with and valuing of difference, and supportive classroom environment. The findings of this project indicate that there are significant positive correlations between all four dimensions and the performance of students, both academically and socially. The focus was on the role of pedagogy: what teachers do within the contextual limits of their work.53 Anchoring reasoning in critical research, the project was concerned with better outcomes for all students, especially those from underachieving backgrounds. Improvements in both academic and social outcomes were accounted for (p. 410).

Exemplifying the Swedish field, Aspelin (1999) has studied the microworld of the classroom from a social psychological perspective, with the purpose of conceptualizing its significance for the social life of the class. Aspelin emphasizes the sublime undercurrents of interaction through the study of non-verbal communication, and discusses ways in which emotions expressed through such communication are involved in forming social bonds. In terms of productive teaching, which symbolizes relationships in which neither pride nor shame are suppressed, neither teachers nor students view themselves as predestined role figures (pp. 236-238). Wedin (2007), who uses a contextual perspective in her ethnographic study, highlights the relational knowledge involved in ‘reading’ students and situations. She also notes that although this relational work may not be visible at a glance, it nonetheless exerts a great influence on teachers’ decisions, before, during and

53 Lingard, Hayes, and Mills (2003) write: “Whilst we acknowledge that we too are bound up in a discursive moment, with associated losses and gains, we claim that our recentring of pedagogical knowledge is an attempt to mediate the negative thesis of increased surveillance, accountability and responsibility of teachers with a positive thesis about the salience of quality teaching for improved student learning, the importance of a supportive professional culture to the diffusion of productive pedagogies and the role of teachers in the production of pedagogical knowledge” (p. 404). They also argue that centering on pedagogy instead of teachers disperses responsibility and acknowledges the influence of cultures, contexts and school structures, being more realistic about what can be achieved by teachers and schools.
after the lessons. The strategies used by the teachers in her study, which are conceived as being synonymous with knowledge, include joking, chitchatting, caring, listening, keeping promises, being a person instead of playing a role, and adapting to the age group (p. 262).

Critique from gender research

The acquired qualities of relationships between teachers and students have often been attributed to the personality of teachers, which makes teachers' relational work hard to describe as professionality – i.e., personal traits are viewed as innate, not acquired. Britzman (1986) connects this attribution to teachers' personality to three cultural myths, that emerged from a study on student teachers: “(1) everything depends on the teacher; (2) the teacher is the expert: and (3) teachers are self made” (p. 448). These myths, according to Britzman, compel the exertion of institutional authority, contribute to reification of knowledge and obscure the importance of context and social relationships. By exaggerating the significance of personal autonomy, the myth that teaching style is merely an extension of personality contributes to “the mystification of the process whereby teaching style develops” and also denies “the institutional pressure for social control and the social basis of teaching” (p. 451).

Teacher-student relationships have been described as a foundation for teaching practice (Wedin, 2007, p. 148) and as a precondition for student wellbeing and the development of learning (Gannerud, 2003, p. 56). Drawing on Fletcher's (1999) concept of relational practices, Gannerud (2003, p. 24), argues that only limited aspects of what she terms the socio-emotional dimensions of teachers' work (e.g., bullying) are present in the general debate. In this regard, she criticizes the lack of discussion about everyday relational practices. Relational practices are, according to her, “an expression of a conscious relational work towards socio-emotional goals, a work which simultaneously promotes the students' development of knowledge in a more content-related sense” (p. 93). According to Gannerud, everyday relational practices demand skills such the ability to interpret people's emotions and reactions, remove obstacles to goal achievement (p. 86-87), negotiate contradictory information when resolving conflicts (p. 89), understand and respond to the emotional context (p. 91) and utilize long-term and contextual thinking.

54 Although Gannerud (1999, pp. 4-5) makes a distinction between pedagogical-didactical and socio-emotional practices, presented as education and care (p. 129), she claims that they are only analytically separable, reciprocal and interwoven. The teachers in Gannerud's (2003, p. 55) study argue that the socio-emotional work of creating a community of belonging is parallel to and on the inside of activities organized around the content, but there are also activities aimed at relations specifically. The teachers are attentive to situations in the everyday practice where relationships can be built, also those
Moral aspects of relational work

The work of teachers can be largely described as being directed towards educating children and youths to become competent, responsible adults who can manage well in society. Because education requires a student to learn certain content, and because this requirement calls for the student to change, educating others carries certain ethical implications (cf Biesta, 2006; Säfström, 2005b; Todd, 2003). Quoting Terhart (1998): “schooling, compulsory schooling – and that means forcing our children and youngsters to go to school every day – can only be legitimated by what they learn in this place and how they learn it” (p. 121, italics in original). Thus, the professional objective of teachers is student learning, but not just any learning or learning in any way. Education, in this sense of always seeking the betterment of the student, implies that the role of teacher is infused with moral responsibility. This would include such things as

helping students learn to think in broader rather than narrower terms […]

fueling rather than draining students’ sense of agency and confidence,

strengthening rather than weakening students’ skills in reading, writing, numerating, and more, and deepening rather than rendering more shallow students’ engagement with the larger world they inhabit (Hansen, 2001, p. 10).

In this context, I must say that despite the aim of working for the good of their students, teachers also, inadvertently, become implicated in causing children and youths some measure of damage. In my experience, a school in which teaching does the student nothing but good is, and will remain, an unattainable ideal, regardless of how well intentioned its teachers may be. In this regard, there appears to be broad consensus among researchers that teachers would benefit by having at their disposal language that better enables them to deal with the moral aspects of their work (Jackson, Boosstrom, & Hansen, 1993; Noddings, 1988; Sackett, 1993; Sackett & LePage, 2002; van Manen, 2000). In the following I present a selection of research directed towards providing such language.

Teacher tact, as described by van Manen (1991), emerges from a responsibility that teachers share with parents to act on behalf of student (e.g. pp. 4-5). He contends that intent is pedagogical if it is characterized by

outside of the official classroom situation, and highlight time and continuity as a precondition for building relationships (p. 67-68). The activities of creating community are aimed at a good working environment (p. 80).

While teachers represent interests similar to parents in that they are both concerned with what is best for the student, they differ in scope: while parents are responsible only for their own children, teachers are responsible for the entire group of students. This makes their deliberation on goals and their weighing of needs much more complex. They also differ in terms of task: teachers in schools are given the task of educating students by society, and, as such, must remain representatives of society. The question of how the responsibility should be
regard for who the student is and can be, and marked by continuous reflections on what is best for the student – including reflections on such matters as the tension between freedom and control (e.g. pp. 17, 23). Pedagogical intent can be described as a stirring responsiveness that is called forth from the teacher because of facing the child (p. 20). Pedagogical tact manifests itself as “holding back, as an openness to the child’s experience, as attunement to subjectivity, as subtle influence as situational confidence and as an improvisational gift” (p. 149). Tact is more a way of acting in relation to others than knowledge per se; it cannot be planned but prepared for (e.g. p. 125).

Seeking a moral base of teacher professionalism, Sockett (1993, see Chapter 4) places five virtues at the center of professional expertise:

- First, since teachers deal in knowledge and trade in truth, questions of honesty and deceit are part of the logic of their situation. Second, both learning and teaching involve facing difficulty and taking intellectual and psychological risks; that demands courage. Third, teachers are responsible for the development of persons, a process demanding infinite care for the individual. Fourth, fairness is necessary to the operation of rules in democratic institutions or, indeed, in one-to-one relationships. Finally, practical wisdom is essential to the complex process teaching is [sic!] and, of course, may well demand the exercise of those other virtues (such as patience) that are contingent to the teaching situation (pp. 62-63).

Sockett argues that these virtues, as practiced in teaching, should be used to describe professional expertise.

In their study on the moral life of classrooms, Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen (1993) found nearly invisible enabling conditions that are distributed between parents and society has been subject to much debate, (see e.g. Gutmann, 1999) and in different societies there are varying views as to the degree of influence that the users (parents and students), the state and the professions should exert. For more on commonalities and distinctions between the two see e.g. (Zhang, 2007).

56 Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen (1993), in their investigation of the moral life of schools searched for expressions of moral significance and came up with eight categories in two groups (p. 42). The first group consists of activities that are deliberately moral in intent, while the second group consists of less obvious influences that embody the moral (pp. 3-4). The first group includes:

- Moral instruction as a formal part of the curriculum
- Moral instruction within the regular curriculum
- Rituals and ceremonies
- Visual displays with moral content

These have in common the intention of making the student a better person, or leaving a moral mark, which is not the same as saying that this is what actually happens. The second set of categories pertains to things that turn out to be very influential morally although they do not have that purpose (p. 43). Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen (1993) consider such influences to be “in operation all or most of the time” (p. 44, italics in original). These are:

- Classroom rules and regulations
- The morality of the curricular substructure
- Expressive morality within the classroom (1993, p. 42).
composed of “shared understandings, beliefs, assumptions, and presuppositions” (p. 16) that undergird education. The first consists of truthfulness – i.e., that teachers and students tell the truth. The framework of mutual trust that both students and teachers strive to create and maintain is thus a condition that enables education (p. 17). Whether or not the parties actually are truthful is not as vital as whether they are perceived as truthful by the other party (p. 22). A failure to presume that the other is truthful – i.e., a display of distrust – can be costly for the relationship (p. 17). The second enabling condition consists of the assumption of worthwhileness without which the process of justification for each activity would make education impossible (pp. 24-25). The condition of worthwhileness is said to rest on the underlying assumption that schools are for the good of the student, meaning that students need to have faith in the good intentions of the school (p. 25).

The third enabling condition consists of social justice which surfaces most noticeably when it is lacking – i.e., when practices are perceived as unjust (p. 28). All three of these conditions involve the element of trust. When there is a lack of trust the practice of teaching becomes difficult, to say the least. Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen’s (1993) last category, expressive morality within the classroom, is said to especially develop from the facial and bodily expressions of the teacher into what they refer to as teacher style; “the teacher’s typical ways of handling the demands of the job” (p. 37). According to them, teacher style is more task-specific than personality, and was noticeable only over time as the teachers responded to situations in fairly consistent ways. The authors point to the general moral complexity of the school environment – to subtle conditions that are most noticeable when they are lacking, and to teacher-style, which is only noticeable over time.

More recently, Hansen has referred to the ideal of tenacious humility (Hansen, 2001, e.g. p. 167), where tenacity involves the continuous expansion and deepening of the teacher’s moral and intellectual agency and sensibility, and humility involves respect for the student’s and one’s own humanity, including the limitations this entails. “For teachers, the ideal aspect of tenacious humility gives an orientation to their thought and imagination, while the regulative aspect helps guide their concrete approach in the classroom” (p. 170). In another study, Fibæk Laursen (2004) building on Taylor’s (1992) concept of authenticity, examined 30 teachers and found that in their teaching they shared several common personal competences (or qualities). The factors that these teachers have in common, argues Fibæk Laursen, are: A personal purpose, an embodied message, respect for the students, frames for the work, collaboration with colleagues, knowing what one wants and responsibility for one’s own development.

In an effort to merge virtue with method, Fenstermacher (2001, pp. 642-648) has described six methods that teachers employ for fostering moral conduct: 1) constructing classroom communities by laying out instruction,
rules and norms; 2) didactic instruction, by which he means instruction that presents what is morally or intellectually desirable; 3) task structuring, which denotes how the teacher sets up tasks that permit didactic instruction; 4) call-outs pointing to particular conduct; 5) private conversations; and, 6) showcasing students. Fenstermacher suggests that manner and method are connected, and that a strong community may make the manner of the teacher less of a requirement (p. 651).

Representing the recent Swedish field, Landahl (2006, p. 206) argues that today the relationship between the teacher and the student is more intimate than it was in the past, and that the teacher is also expected to take more responsibility for the suffering of the student. Colnerud (2006) has problematized the notion of being a morally good teacher, arguing that the context in which the teacher works has to be taken into account. In her view, teachers have “to navigate through a minefield of conflicting forces and manage to be loyal both to society’s educational ends and the pupil’s perception of the meaning of school” (p. 380). As I read Colnerud, this means that the context can contribute to making it easier or more difficult for teachers to be morally good.

Holmgren (2006), in his micro-analysis of the classroom situation, uses concepts from Lévinas (such as Saying and the Said) to understand ethical relationships in the classroom and help teachers articulate their experiences through a language of ethics (cf Säfström, 2005b). Connecting communication to interdependence and vulnerability Holmgren argues that a conscious teacher who communicates with the class, and the pupil as a whole, can make the lesson easier. Bergmark (2009), also drawing on Lévinas, similarly stresses the need to strengthen communication in relationships, since ethical dimensions become visible in communication. When analyzing central features of moments of connection described by teachers, Lindqvist and Nordänger (2007) draw on Buber’s I-Thou-relationship instead. In this regard, the presence and connection felt by teachers are compared to moments of I-Thou-relationships. According to Lindqvist and Nordänger, this kind of teacher-student encounter is conditioned on one’s “laying oneself bare” to the student (p. 185), but also on one’s openness for the student.

Concluding remarks

Teachers' knowledge has been described in many ways and from many different perspectives. Much attention has been given to practical knowledge and situated judgment. The emotional and embodied aspects of such knowledge have also been addressed in research, pointing to their significance for teacher work. The relational dimension of work in classrooms is the object of research in traditions such as Classroom Management and Sociology of Education. The work in these fields has directed attention to the qualities
of relationships in school, and their importance for fulfilling the purposes of education. In gender research, criticism has been directed towards the tendency to conceive of features of knowledge that are commonly assumed to be connected to so-called feminine characteristics as something natural or innate rather than learned. The moral aspects of relationships in schools as well as the language used to discuss them have been identified as contributing to the understanding of teachers' work and knowledge. The main focus of studies that concern knowledge and relational work has been on the teacher's approach and actions towards the student. The research that has attempted to describe these phenomena has been largely focused on the identification of these actions and approaches as well as the relational conditions that are encountered in the course of a teacher's work. They have also addressed the relational ends towards which teachers work. Nonetheless, there is need of continued research regarding the complexity of a teacher's work, studying closer the kinds of relationships that teachers seek to attain within their practice. By making use of an alternative relational lens, the purpose of the following chapter is to extend our understanding in this regard.
4 A relational approach

We, the teachers are persons. Those whom we would teach are persons. We must meet them face to face, in a personal intercourse. This is the primary fact about education. It is one of personal relationship … We may ignore this fact; we imagine that our task is of a different order, but this will make no difference to what is actually taking place. We may act as though we were teaching arithmetic or history. In fact we are teaching people. The arithmetic or the history is merely a medium through which a personal intercourse is established and maintained (Macmurray, 1949, as cited in Fielding, 2007, p. 192, italics added).

In this chapter I introduce and outline theories and concepts related to the approach that I apply in the present study. The fact that education takes place in terms of relations between persons is one reason for applying a relational approach, although the term is here not used in the psychological sense. A relational approach to education can be found within various theoretical traditions, with roots all the way back to Aristotle. Lately there have been attempts to frame these under the concept of relational pedagogy (or pedagogy of relation) (Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004, p. 1), which typically involves the question of how teaching and learning are affected and defined by interhuman relations, and which has risen partly as a response to the neo-liberal educational reforms that borrow their logic from the business world. Such logic is seen as a threat, both to the flourishing of relations in schools and to the achievement of the aims of public schooling (pp. 2-3). However, these are not the only reasons for choosing the relational over other approaches: the notion of a relation also has a temporal emphasis built in, which has a good fit with teaching practice. I begin with the notion of teaching and learning and, from there, move on to education as communication set within a complex moral environment. The concept of authority is given special attention as it has proved to be useful for understanding relational practices.

57 The concept relational theory, e.g., was introduced in feministic research; Gilligan (1977) challenged mainstream theories of growth by listening to women’s experience. The picture of the adult as an independent individual was shown to be based on public sphere characteristics, and an alternative model, growth-in-connection, drawing from private sphere characteristics such as collectivity and interdependence (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991) became part of the relational theory where growth is thought to occur as result of relational interaction of a certain kind.

58 Examples from different traditions range from ethics to democracy and gender (Buber, 1993 [1953]; Dewey, 1959 [1916]; Noddings, 1984).
Teaching in relation to learning

Uljens’ (1997, p. 41) defines teaching as an activity where the teacher intends to support (not force) someone else to reach some sort of competence. The teacher strives to be aware of her/his intention, in a process wherein s/he believes that the student is expected to and/or intends to learn, or at least study. This wide definition concurs with Fenstermacher’s (1986, p. 39) analysis of the concept of teaching, in which he draws a parallel between teaching and studenting rather than teaching and learning. Fenstermacher claims that since teachers and students presuppose each other, they have a relationship of ontological dependence. It is thus not teaching and learning that are parallel, but teaching and what he terms “studenting or pupiling”. As teaching does not equal learning, although it is central to teaching to enable the student to learn, learning is the purpose of the relationship. Thus, the activity of teaching, in the present study, is described as having the intent that someone else will learn. The processes of teaching and learning accomplished in institutionalized settings are called education. But teaching does not equal learning. If it did, teaching would be a simple affair and the present study would be unnecessary.

At times, education can appear effortless, a mere transferring of content from teacher to student. One reason for the prevalence of the transfer metaphor of education can be traced to the philosophy of consciousness which focused on the interaction between teacher and student as an asymmetrical relation: the knowing, thinking teacher and the not yet knowing, not yet able to think for her/himself student (Vanderstraeten & Biesta, 2006, pp. 163-164). Thus, since students lack full subjectivity, educators are meant to transform them into subjects through education. That is, the educational relationship is considered to be structurally asymmetrical (Biesta, 1994, p. 303). The educator then has to foster individual agency: “one has to be taught in order to become a part of humanity, to become a self-fulfilled rational subject” (Säfström, 2003, p. 21, italics in original). Education, from this perspective, has been analyzed from either the teacher’s or the student’s point of view, focusing on either instruction or learning, which Vanderstraeten and Biesta (2006) claim is reductionist:

What this perspective did not do was focus on education as itself a social phenomenon. It did not acknowledge, in other words, that education might be something different than the simple sum of the activities of the educator and the activities of the child, that education might be something more than the simple sum of teaching and learning. It did not acknowledge that education constitutes a reality sui generis, which can and should be analyzed in its own terms, i.e., in terms of communication and social interaction (p. 161, italics in original).
When approached as teaching or learning, they claim, the process of education is actually left out as an object of investigation (Vanderstraeten & Biesta, 2006, p. 164). This approach is inconsistent with one in which relationships are central – i.e., a relational approach.

Education as communication

Moving the focus from individuals to relations, the symmetry and asymmetry of relationships becomes a matter of importance. Biesta (1994, p. 307), drawing on Dewey (1958, see chapter V), argues that meaning making is dependent on interpretation, and meaning is the outcome of the collective activity of the participants in the situation, supposing that there exists an agreement in experiences close enough for a continued cooperation. Communication is then “the establishment of cooperation in an activity in which there are partners, and in which the activity of each is modified and regulated by partnership” (Dewey, 1958, p. 179).

The meaning of what is taught is not pre-existent: understanding education as “a co-constructive process, a process in which both participating organisms play an active role, and in which meaning is not transferred, but produced”, according to Biesta (1994, p. 312), places the focus on the intersubjective field of participation where education happens. It also views the educational relationship as symmetrical in the sense that students are not receivers but producers of meaning. As I read Biesta, it is in this sense that the relationship is structurally symmetrical, whereas it can still be empirically asymmetrical (see Biesta, 1994, pp. 314-316). Communication of meaning or education is made possible through participating in social practices where meaning can be formed, and transformed; thus one can say that it is the situation, in which both teacher and student participate, that educates the student, not just the intentions of the teacher (Vanderstraeten & Biesta, 2006, p. 167). Merely by participating in the situation, the teacher becomes a potential learner as well, and it is also in this sense that the relationship is symmetrical. The implications of this theory include the fact that it is the relationality of the relationship, rather than its participants, the theory is about (Biesta, 2004, p. 13).

Teachers and students both have a possibility to affect the emergent meanings which could result from the educational situation. Biesta (2004, p. 19) introduces, radically in the situation, the performance of meaning; drawing on Bhabha's concept of the Third Space of enunciation he avers that “I can in no way control the meaning that my utterance will have in the space of enunciation” (p. 20, italics added). It is no longer a transfer of meaning but a process that is transformative and ambivalent. Biesta sums up the performativity of the process of education as follows:
The fact that education exists only in and through the communicative interaction between the teacher and the learner [...] highlights, in other words, the enuciative [sic!] nature of all education. [...] This also gives us a better understanding of the relationality of the educational relationship. It helps us first of all to understand that education has indeed a relational character, that it doesn’t exist in any other sense than as a relation and “in relation” (2004, p. 21).

Thus educational relations are neither direct nor simple due to this transformative gap, the denial of which only serves to make either teachers or students accountable when education fails (Biesta, 2004, p. 21).

The reciprocity of the teacher-student relationship

The notion of reciprocity blurs the borders between the teaching teacher and the learning learner. For example, Uljens (1997, p. 77) argues that students educate the teacher through the way they study or in their expressions of need for support, whether it is intentional or not. The teacher, according to him, remains a continuous learner when it comes to teaching. While I hold, as stated earlier, that teaching practice provides important opportunities for learning, as with any learning opportunity, the success is contingent. Practice does not always result in learning. The possibility of misunderstanding in the space of enunciation is always present for students as well as teachers; the teacher can be more or less susceptible to the student’s responses or these may be more or less difficult for the teacher to make sense of.

While both teachers and students can be said to be involved in the activities of teaching and learning, their parts and the content of what they learn differ to a large extent. In addition, reciprocity does not rule out conflict. In Davies’s (1982) terms, students and teachers have agendas which run parallel, sometimes of mutual benefit but also in conflict. Students may have agendas more or less aligned with the teachers, but many times they do not. Agendas may change over time and context and influences over agendas are relational and mutual. Such a view will serve to direct attention to educational situations where conflict is part of the process, something that also affects the possible educational outcomes (cf Frelin & Grannäs, in press).

Coming from a dialogical perspective, which views education as communication, Burbules (1993) describes how relations are formed and sustained through dialogue. In a dialogical relation people “are drawn into a particular dynamic of speaking with and listening to one another” (p. 22). The interaction is shaped by the expectations, attitudes and emotions of the participants, but also by the value of the dialogue which is, in part, formed by the dynamic of interaction. Dialogical relations have the tendency to take their own course, carrying participants along on an uncharted journey, in which interaction takes its own direction and ends up beyond the intended goals, giving insights that are new and unexpected (p. 20). In other words,
even if we try to set the goals or estimate the value of the interaction between student and teacher in advance the dynamic of interaction has the possibility to alter them during the course of interaction.

Burbules draws attention to the importance of commitment as a characteristic of dialogue that first draws participants into dialogue and then keeps them connected even when it brings confusion, conflict or frustration (p. 19). This commitment to dialogue draws both from cognitive interests, such as learning about oneself and others or reaching agreement, and emotional interests such as concern, trust and respect (pp. 35-36). Listening, according to him, involves creating an environment in which silenced voices feel secure or confident to speak, but also to exhibit respect, interest and concern for the other (p. 33). Since it takes time for ideas and understandings to unfold, participants' concern for and commitment to one another becomes important, because without these relational qualities it may be difficult to continue the dialogue when difficulties arise (p. 36). “Sometimes we speak and listen for other reasons, and educational gains come as a side benefit” (p. 41). Burbules suggests that it is important to use a relational perspective for understanding

Education as communication, from a relational perspective, is not perceived as mere sending and receiving information but as contingent and contextualized meaning making situated in contexts in which the qualities of relationships play an important part.

Michael Fielding (2006) develops thoughts on the role that relations play in our encounters with others, drawing on Macmurray’s concepts of functional and personal relations, where functional relations help us get things done and personal relations help us be and become who we are through relations with others. These two are mutually dependent; every meeting carries features of both. Functional relations constitute means for expressing the personal, and the personal is needed, to some extent, in order to achieve different purposes (p. 301). As to education, Fielding outlines four different types of organizations (see e.g. Figure 1, p. 302): 1) impersonal organizations, in which the functional marginalizes the personal; 2) affective communities, in which the personal marginalizes the functional; 3) high performance learning organizations, in which both the functional and the personal relationship, their function for education, is acknowledged; and, 4) person-centered learning communities, in which these are acknowledged as well, but in a very different way. That is, while high performance learning
organizations put efficiency first, and use personal relations for the sake of the functional (i.e., as a means for achieving predetermined, market oriented goals), person-centered learning communities use functional relations for the sake of the personal, and are committed to enabling relationships in which students take part in the dialogue concerning curriculum.

The educational environment

I turn to Dewey's conception of environment in order to delve more deeply into the notion of the situation that educates. It serves to highlight the indirect manner of teaching; in Dewey's words:

the only way in which adults consciously control the kind of education which the immature get is by controlling the environment in which they act, and hence think and feel. We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment. Whether we permit chance environments to do the work, or whether we design environments for the purpose makes a great difference. And any environment is a chance environment so far as its educative influence is concerned unless it has been deliberately regulated with reference to its educative effect (Dewey, 1959 [1916], p. 15).

The environment of an individual differs from her surroundings in the sense that it makes her see, act and feel in certain ways: it denotes the continuity of an individual's surroundings with her active tendencies (Dewey, 1959 [1916], p. 9). Note that Dewey does not rule out the educative potential of the chance environment, but says that education cannot be left to chance only. As I read Dewey, the environment consists of the relevant features (or the differences that make a difference) in any given situation. Other features which do not make a difference, then, make up the surroundings. Dewey (1959 [1916]) writes that “[t]he things with which a man [sic!] varies are his genuine environment” (p.9). His concept of environment is thus inherently dynamic and changing due to the activities one participates in. Whether or not a student wears a blue sweater may not be part of the environment in, let's say, a math class, since it makes no difference to the activity of doing math. However, if blue sweaters are worn by one of the basketball teams in physical education, it suddenly becomes something important, since it designates the ones that the blue-sweater-wearing student should pass the ball to. Here it is the activity that determines the environment.

According to Dewey (1959 [1916]), any group has a formative influence on its members, and the activities of the others have direct influence on each member's activity (p. 17). Thus a student's school environment is social in

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59 Bateson (1972), from the perspective of systems theory, addresses the differences that make a difference.
that it involves other people who condition what s/he is able to do, both enabling and constricting actions. The work of the teacher is then to make the environment educative in this particular situation. In addition, the situation has externally imposed frames that structure the interaction of the participants, e.g., physical frames such as buildings and class size and behavioral frames such as rules and expectations. In any given situation, these frames may or may not be part of the educative environment.

Frames have the double function of enabling and constraining what can happen; put differently, they can enhance “particular types of experiences — at the expense of others” (Vanderstraeten & Biesta, 2006, p. 170, italics in original). While it is not possible for the teacher to change some of these, s/he can creatively use features of the environment in order to enrich it in certain directions. In Biesta’s (2004) words, “teaching is about the construction of a social situation, and the effects of teaching result from the activities of the students in and in response to this social situation” (p. 18). The immediate social situation includes the teacher-student relationship, but also the relationships between students. In addition, other relationships, such as those with parents, other teachers and so forth, can also influence the educational situation, which then makes them part of the environment. In cases where these constitute part of the educational environment, they become part of teachers’ practice. However, the latter relationships are outside the scope of the present study.

Relational risks in schools

It is a fact that for almost all forms of education, learning takes place in a relational context. Jackson (1990 [1968]) talks about the crowdedness of schools which promotes conformity, but this condition entails more. Adding to the complexity, Biesta (2006, p. 25) argues that learning is always risky: one might not learn what one wanted or learn something one didn’t want to learn — about oneself, for instance. Schools are risky places. Raider-Roth (2005b) describes how the students search what and whom they can trust as they “experience a tremendous relational and cognitive load that at times can feel onerous […] they act politically by sharing and suppressing knowledge based on their understanding of classroom relationships” (p. 6). For instance, teachers’ experiences of a student may not conform to how the student views her/himself (p. 21).

In his dissertation, Räihä (2008, p. 192) provides vivid examples of how teachers juggle dilemmas that unexpectedly occur when they are drawn into the complex social relationships between students and parents. In one of these examples the students are given the assignment of writing a letter to a parent, and one student writes angrily to her father, not a suitable reading for the parent. As the students are informed beforehand that they are to show the letters to the parents, the teacher is left with two bad alternatives: if she asks the student not to show the letter, she implicitly asks the student to keep secrets from her parent, and if she shows it, the teacher’s relationship to the family is affected (pp. 13-14).
The relational environment in schools is characterized by Bansel, Davies, Laws and Linnell (2009, p. 66) as being both officially and unofficially regulated; where the unofficial regulation consists of practices of exclusion and inclusion in social groupings, of maintaining categories and memberships. These are not stable or even possible to always ‘get right’ which calls for a constant monitoring on the part of the student. Some children, Bansel, Davies, Laws and Linnell argue, are vulnerable to unforeseen violations. They ask:

How might we understand the school as a site, as a community, as a community of actors and actions, where possibilities for violence, for violation, for ridicule, are always present? How might we understand what happens in this site as more than the acts of individual autonomous agents, good and bad, but as actors or agents always already constituted through multiple relations and experiences of power? (Bansel, et al., 2009, p. 66).

That is, even if the intentions of education are connected to equality, school can also be a place for the reproduction of inequality. A vivid example of how such inequality is upheld is provided by Edling (2009), in which a student acts meanly as a way of upholding her superior position:

Well, I wasn’t really bad towards [others], well, we were a little fancier. And it was like you sort of pushed yourself before others in the line at the cafeteria. But you didn’t think about it [because] there wasn’t anyone who said anything. They wouldn’t dare. We were always so mean. We didn’t bully people or hit anyone, but we were the snobs, so to speak (p. 129).

This student describes the positions possible to take in her upper secondary school as nerd or queen bee, and if pushing oneself before others is perceived as necessary in order to remain a queen bee that is what the student has to do (p. 128). The fact that no one did anything about it can be seen as a sign of powerlessness, which Young (2000, p. 75) includes in practices of oppression.61

The ways teachers construct and frame problems influence the ways in which they go about solving them. For instance, Bansel, Davies, Laws and Linnell (2009, pp. 60-61) argue that bullying is usually conceptualized in individual terms. As to the practice of labeling individuals as deviant, they refer to research on deviances divided into primary or secondary, where a secondary deviance links the behavior to the identity of the individual. The consequence of assigning the label “bully” to a particular person can be that only individual solutions to the problem are sought. A relational construction of this problem on the other hand illustrates how

a moment, an apparently isolated act or incident, is interleaved with other moments and acts. There is an embodied reverberation of experience over

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61 Young (2000) has in her work conceptualized the five faces of oppression; cultural imperialism, violence, exploitation, marginalization and powerlessness. See further Chapter 9.
time and place, an embodied memory that calls up and makes present prior acts and incidents and feelings. The acts of violence are not autonomous acts, free-floating from their histories and contexts that can be accounted for through the character of one faulty individual (Bansel, et al., 2009, p. 66).

Violence or the threat of violence is thus not just connected to individuals or independent of the relational environment. In a similar vein, Bliding (2004, pp. 277-279) argues that relation-building among students involves practices of inclusion and, as a consequence, also exclusion. As she sees it, when an individual framing of problems does not take into account the complexity of the situation, the consequences of exclusionary practices can go unrecognized. Following this argument, relational framings of problems can thus contribute to more constructive solutions.

The impact of relational complexity on teaching

Teachers are also vulnerable in their relations with students, and respond to this condition in various ways (see Kelchtermans, 1996, 2009). Irisdotter Aldenmyr (2007) found that teachers who draw boundaries for their engagement, separating their personal from their professional lives in order to cope, can end up with a “pragmatic, authoritarian, efficiency directed strategy, where the teacher disengages from ethical responsibility as well as sensibility for individual students and reflection on one’s attitude” (p. 63). She places this response within a market-oriented attitude, where competition between schools, labor market demands and goal attainment are in focus. Irisdotter Aldenmyr also describes another response to vulnerability which she terms “strife for a clearly formulated professionality” (p. 63), where both one’s own and students’ needs are considered.

Traditionally, if an ideal situation is one in which both the teacher and the students agree to the importance of dealing with the (predetermined) content at hand (and nothing else), and they have already enough in common to make communication look like a simple transfer, the professionality of the teacher would primarily concern having a good grasp of the content and being able to bring it out in a “transferable” state. Although there may be situations that approximate this ideal (which, at least from a democratic perspective, is a questionable one), I argue that the conception itself is built upon a reductionist view of education. In the words of Kelchtermans (2009):

Teaching/being a teacher is too exclusively thought about as a matter of intentional and purposeful action. This way, however, important aspects of teaching are neglected, ignored or downplayed. The aspect I want to stress here is the fact that teaching – because of its relational and ethical nature – is also and importantly characterised by passivity, by being exposed to others and thus being vulnerable (p. 265, italics in original).
Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, teachers and students are human beings, with intentions, worries and life projects that are part of the educational environment and that influence the educational situation in unpredictable ways. The notion of the situation as that which educates has the implication of making the teacher responsible for its entirety, not just certain parts of it.

The passivity that Kelchtermans (2009) addressed above is according to him a positive reality. He argues that only when teaching is carefully prepared and professionally performed, the meaningful and unforeseen can be allowed: “Since not everything can be planned for, authentic interaction between people can take place and that interaction can have deeply meaningful educational value just because it ‘happened’, it ‘took place’” (p. 267). In other words, as Vanderstraeten and Biesta (2006, p. 171) argue, it means that teachers should be prepared for classroom interaction, but still remain open for the emergence of educational potentialities within the situation, and, in addition, able to draw on them.

This attunement to the situation requires additional professional traits. Using Shulman’s (2004) categories, these would be framed as “knowledge of learners and their characteristics” and “general pedagogical knowledge, with special reference to those broad principles and strategies of classroom management and organization that appear to transcend subject matter” (p. 227). But knowing students and knowing principles of classroom management is not a sufficiently particular description of the professionality in relations with students. In the following I address some of the reasons why.

Teaching and moral concern

In this section I introduce a more specific understanding of morality, in which the focus is not on the teacher, but on the quality of the relationship. Education can be described as an intervention into the student’s life motivated by the idea that it will make life better in some way (Biesta, 2006, p 2). The mission to change the student for the purpose of betterment, charges the teacher with responsibility, most obviously for student learning, but also for student well-being. As Carr (2000) puts it:

Good teaching is not just teaching which is causally effective or personally attractive, it is teaching which seeks at best to promote the moral, psychological and physical well-being of learners, and at least to avoid their psychological, physical and moral damage (p. 9).

This quote contains within it a rarely touched upon, but for many students quite real, phenomenon; teaching is not good per se. Although teaching is intended for the betterment of the student, it might also do damage. It also
highlights the moral dimension of teacher professionalism. As Biesta (2006) reminded us above, educators interfere in the lives of their students – an interference that can have deep impact. This interference, which makes education possible, entails a responsibility not only for how well one teaches or how much the students learns, but also for the subjectivity of the student – for her/his uniqueness (p. 29-30). Since the teacher can never know every single thing about the student, nor what the future consequences of her/his teaching will be, the teacher can never know what s/he is responsible for (p. 30).

Teaching is considered “as a relation between human beings that is direct, open-ended and unpredictable” (Säfström, 2003, p. 20). With the notion that teaching is an act of responsibility comes a recurring question: “Have I the right to teach?” (p. 19). Säfström argues that such a question must be continuously asked and answered within the situation where teaching takes place. By continuously asking her/himself this question, the teacher will be able to perceive and relate to his students as moral subjects (Säfström, 2005b, p. 73). That is, the teacher’s insecurity in relation to, and openness in the face of, the student becomes a necessary precondition. This calls for a moral framing of teacher professionalism where relationships, complexity and ambiguity are in focus, and where answers are not given before the question is made.

For this purpose the notion of concern is useful. Biesta and Miedema (2002, p 174) argue that the teacher’s tasks of instruction and pedagogy, which serve to pass on knowledge and values respectively, are only part of an encompassing concern for the whole person which according to them is the core task of the school. The notion that encompassing concern for the student is the foundation of teaching supersedes the notion that fostering and teaching are two separate phenomena (cf Biesta & Miedema, 2002, p 180). As such, this perspective does not make a qualitative distinction between, for instance, a teacher dealing with solving a calculus problem and a teacher dealing with solving a conflict between students, in the sense that these are both things that students need to learn (cf. Frelin, 2006a, p. 187). In addition, it does not leave unproblemized the relational ambiguity inherent in human action; concern can be perceived by the student as smothering and offensive as well as caring and supportive. Concern is conveyed in action when establishing and maintaining relationships

Another source of complexity is that the teacher’s responsibility exists towards the individuals and the group simultaneously, which can easily give rise to discrepancies when the teacher must choose between needs or weigh an individual’s needs against the needs of the group. Such discrepancies cannot be predicted, but turn up depending on "the way in which the participants orient themselves to the course of events in the classroom" (Vanderstraeten & Biesta, 2006, p. 168). Being responsible for the choices of action (or non-action) in teaching, and their moral consequences, calls for both openness and determination. Bansel et al (2009, p. 67) argue that the negotiations of order and openness requires ethical reflexivity. An openness
to difference is, according to them, integral to ethical practice; however, while normalization forces create safety and predictability, they also preclude the possibility of difference, both in relation to others and within oneself. According to Young (2006, pp. 97-98), while normalization processes can produce injustice, this is not a reason for rejecting norms as such.

Some norms are morally legitimate. What are the criteria for determining which are? Norms are morally acceptable when their purpose is to promote equal respect or to facilitate inclusive social cooperation, or when they further the particular mission of institutions and organizations without entailing disrespect, or systematic disadvantage for some groups of people (p. 98).

Thus, having a professional grasp of the situation that educates includes having an openness to its normalizing processes and of their moral implications.

Authority

Teachers and students come to education with different responsibilities, and I argue here that since teachers are given responsibility for the student’s education, the matter of authority is relevant to discussions about the teacher-student relationship. In this section I will flesh out the concept of authority, using a relational approach. Although the concept of authority has sometimes been used in a negative manner, I argue that through a relational framing of teachers’ professional authority, the concept can be used in the sense of teacher’s relational practices of negotiating relationships of authority.62 Here I draw mainly on Pace and Hemming’s, as well as Burbules’, work on authority, since these provide tools for analyzing such negotiations.

Authority has been defined by Weber (1983) as the probability of a person gaining voluntary obedience from others, which in turn rests on others’ belief in the legitimacy of her/his actions. Pace and Hemmings (2006b, p. 3) apply his three ideal types of authority, which have different sources of legitimacy for teachers: 1) traditional authority, which is based on the longstanding tradition of giving superior status to teachers just because they inhabit that role; 2) charismatic authority, which comes from a teacher’s exceptional qualities and evokes emotional attachment and commitment from students; and, 3) legal-rational or bureaucratic authority, which comes from rules and policies, but sometimes depends on power (e.g., the ability to

62 A widely used distinction when using the concept of authority was introduced by Baumrind (1966, pp. 890-892), who in her work on parental control distinguished between three types – permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative. Whereas authoritarian control rests on a stern attitude, punishment and a set standard of conduct, authoritative control rests on such things as reinforcement, recognizing the interest of the child and reasoning. See also Walker (2009).
use rewards or punishments), suggesting that compliance is not voluntary. They also bring up a fourth type of teacher authority: professional authority, which rests on the legitimacy of teachers' expert knowledge and/or pedagogical skills and so forth.

I concur with their notion of teachers' classroom authority as a dynamic social construction, “jointly negotiated through the symbolic actions of teachers and students and […] shaped by local contextual forces and larger social, political, and cultural factors” (Pace & Hemmings, 2006b, p. 1), that is, internally and externally influenced. Such authority is dependent on students' consent to the teacher's legitimacy and a shared moral order, and is enacted through students and teachers engaging in dynamic negotiations which could involve conflict in open or subtle forms (p. 2). According to Barnard (1950, in Pace & Hemmings, 2007, p. 7), the conditions for consent are that directives be understood by subordinates, viewed as consistent with organizational purposes and compatible with self-interests, but also that they be possible to fulfill by the subordinates. From this it follows that consent cannot be given if someone is asked to do what s/he views as the impossible. But contextual factors influence which authority relations that are possible to have. For instance; pressure on students and teachers to raise test scores due to a focus on instrumental goals and academic competition implies increased bureaucratic authority at the cost of professional authority, and may impede a genuine involvement in student learning (Pace, 2003, pp. 1566, 1581).

Pace's (2003) ethnographic study shows, on the classroom level, how authority-as-hybrids consisting of different kinds of authority relationships are the result of teachers' and students' negotiating of their agendas in a context of conflicting demands. Pace locates the problem in hybridized authority relations wherein teachers' directives and underpinnings are unclear, drawing on a combination of orientations and creating ambiguous messages which undercut the significance of the subject matter. Establishing and maintaining authority in a relationship is an important precondition for teaching, even if the legitimacy of the attained authority varies over contexts and with students. As the result of social and political transformation, shifts

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63 Wills (2006, see Ch. 2) presents a case study of a school that exemplifies one teacher's practice of narrating history with the help of the students. In this case, students were encouraged to ask authentic questions and make reflective comments, activities that gave them meaningful roles in the knowledge production process. This practice allowed for students to make meaningful connections to their lives outside of school and facilitated the maintenance of trusting relationships. When teachers were pressed for time, they started to implement curricula in ways that were efficient and quick rather than authentic and meaningful. Education was conducted in a way that made students' participation circumscribed – i.e., information transmission preceded student understanding. Wills claims that when the character of interactions changed, the authority relations were changed in a way that threatened the culture and moral order of the school. This example addresses the influence of the temporal dimension – i.e., how authority relations are played out in a practice that has a history which needs to be attended to.
in authority relations have taken place, on a societal level, from traditional authority to professional and bureaucratic authority, under the model of social efficiency (Pace, 2003, pp. 1562-1564). According to Landahl (2006, p. 226), changes to the way that authority is experienced in Swedish schools include individualization, “schoolification” and normalization of discipline problems, along with an increased collegiality.

Teacher authority

Those who are involved in an intersubjective relation of authority are placed within certain social circumstances, but also in a position to make choices and act within that relation in different ways (Bingham, 2004, p. 29). The student thus has the agency to accept or reject the authority of the teacher as someone which has something to offer the student. Bingham emphasizes that the content of education is, itself, not disconnected from this relation; the student can decide to accept or reject the content the teacher offers along with the teacher. The possibility for implementing curriculum, then, can be viewed as emerging within a relation between teacher and student although the student could make the choice to accept the content while rejecting the teacher.

Pace and Hemmings note that teachers’ professional authority rests on the legitimacy of their expert knowledge, pedagogical skills and so forth (2006b, p. 3). They also argue that authority is “most salient for teachers because it speaks to their ability to accomplish educational goals” (Pace & Hemmings, 2007, p. 7). Authority per se is neither good nor bad, but can be used to accomplish good or bad things. While acknowledging the risks of excessive reliance on the knowledge of teachers, and false confidence in their rules, which could lead to injustices and blindness to others’ problems, Burbules (1993, p. 24) claims that if there was literally no authority in relations, this would abrogate any possibility of education inventions. Authority is neither meant to be taken for granted nor to persist unchanged over time; to some degree, its aim should be to undermine itself (pp. 33-34). That is, the teacher should strive to make students non-dependent on such relationships for their learning.

Concluding remarks

A focus on relationships, as opposed to the characteristics of individuals, highlights the intersubjective processes that play an important part in understanding professionality as human action. These include relational features such as reciprocity, legitimacy and authority, and the partly unconscious contextualized and embodied processes that sustain them. Applying a relational approach includes viewing teaching and learning as
communication that is neither linear nor easy, but dependent on meaning making. It also denotes a reciprocal relationship, that is symmetrical in the sense that meaning is not controlled by either part. This relationship, which is part of the situation that educates, conditions teachers' practice and has deep consequences relative to their teaching decisions.

This situation contains the risk that acting in relationships with others invariably entails. The risks and rewards of relationships are highlighted, with regard to both students and teachers. Teaching is viewed as an act of responsibility towards the student. This places the teacher in a position of necessary moral uncertainty in relation to the student: “Have I the right to teach?” (Säfström, 2003, p. 19). Thus the professional act consists of acting out of concern for the student, without having determined what this may entail prior to the educational situation and outside of the relational interaction. Considering the differences in responsibility with which the teacher and the student enter into the relation, I have discussed the concept of authority as one that is of relevance to education. Authority is viewed as something that is created between teacher and student, and established on different bases of legitimacy. I argue that by applying the relational approach developed in this chapter, teacher practice can be explored in ways that can further the discussion on teacher professionality.
5 The empirical study

In this chapter the methodology and reasons for making different choices for the empirical study are described. The aim to explore teachers' relational professionality from the viewpoint of teaching practice, or rather teachers' accounts of and arguments concerning this practice, directs the choice of methods of collecting data towards a qualitative interview study. Interviews have been conducted in order to collect teachers' stories of practice and their practical arguments in relation to this practice. These interviews have been complemented by contextual observations. When writing from empirically grounded and analytically derived concepts, it can become a tightrope walk to present the study in ways that satisfy the sometimes contradictory demands of rigor and readability. It is initially pointed out to readers that concepts which seem to have been present beforehand actually have emerged in the course of the study even if the mode of presentation may sometimes suggest the opposite.

Methodological viewpoints

How can one inquire into something as debated as professionality when the question remains: professional according to whom and to what purposes? I see three lines of argument. Firstly, if professionality is to be located radically in the enactment, the situation, one may say that this makes it impossible to talk about professionality beyond the single instance at all. This would not be very productive. Secondly, attempts to derive a notion of professionality in order to establish certain competencies and pre-defined standards for purposes of discussion and prediction also become problematic when they leave out of account the practical realities of situational practice. In Beckett and Hager's (2002, p. 57) view, which approximates mine, standards approaches ignore that competency is a relation between people's abilities

64 Attempts to predict, for example, good teachers by defining relevant personal characteristics which were viewed as competences have not been very successful according to research reviews. (For examples, see Arfwedson, 1994; Fibaek Laursen, 2005). This says something about the difficulty of trying to disconnect professionality from the context in which it is enacted. There are studies indicating the opposite (e.g. Adalsteinsdóttir, 2004). Adalsteinsdóttir's study has been conducted on already practicing teachers. It does not answer the question posed whether it would have been possible to predict good teachers before teacher education.
and their completions of appropriate task in specific settings; that is, competence is relational in character. So, I would argue, is professionality.

A third alternative is to acknowledge that due to the complexity of teaching, research can only serve to guide attempts to solve problems, not claim to solve them; that is, what has worked before is viewed as significant for, but not determining, practice in the present."65 Teachers act on what Barbalet (1998) terms a *conditional inference*; on speculation about what might happen. All action is taken in the face of an unknown future. Indeed, any given action changes the conditions of all future actions. This means that the unknowability of the future is not something which will be overcome in time (p. 42, italics in original).

For teachers another complicating factor is the fact that the outcomes of their work are not always visible at once, or even visible at all. In addition, the significance for the individual student is neither entirely knowable nor in correlation with its measurability. As Labaree (2000) writes:

A teacher can measure how many of the spelling words introduced this week a child can spell on Friday or how well a student can solve word problems of the type just covered in class. But what does this show about the larger and more meaningful aims the teacher had in mind when teaching these subjects? The most important outcomes that we want education to make possible, the preparation of competent, productive, and socially responsible adults, are removed from any particular classroom interaction between teacher and student by many years and many other intervening factors (p. 231).

From an epistemological point of view it has been argued that attempts to justify practical knowledge are not sufficient when drawn from performance alone, but must be established on reasonable grounds, linking the purpose to the outcome that one has in mind (Fenstermacher, 1994, p. 27). And even if this approach has its flaws (reasonable according to whom?), it can be one pathway for rendering claims to practical professional knowledge defensible within a scientific discourse.

Within practice-based research, images of practice are created by means of theory, which when collected together in fruitful ways serve to develop a powerful language for the understanding and discussion of practice (Liberg, 2005, pp. 83, 103). I argue that from the interpretative analysis of (rich) examples of practice it is possible to contribute to research given that these can provide material for the readers to make analogies between features of these examples and their own experience. The link between purpose and action that Fenstermacher highlights is important to consider here. It is not

65 (For a thorough discussion on the subject, see Biesta, 2007).
66 (Cf Osberg & Biesta, 2007).
sufficient to observe the action per se; its intended purposes need to be included which turns the focus towards teacher reasoning.

When using a qualitative approach one has the purpose of reaching a deeper understanding rather than of making generalizing predictions, and the resulting theoretical models give us new ways to recognize and understand events, and thus other possible ways of handling them. They also serve as systems for processing information quickly, which helps interpretation and analysis of local events (Doyle, 1997, p. 97). In the present study the starting point is an empirical notion, first described in the introductory chapter, that is explored and developed throughout the research process. The research questions and possible concepts have remained tentative and shifting during the process; their function rather being to direct research focus, without which the process can be overwhelming; a research process where the researcher strives to remain open to the empirical material strengthens the empirical validity of the concepts, since the ones that stay throughout the process have had to prove their empirical worth (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 536).

A successful analysis results in a new view of reality; new categories for thinking. It can consist in concepts, mechanisms or that a phenomenon has been possible to relate to a context, which makes something previously incomprehensible reasonable – that one can understand it (Larsson, 2005, p. 28).

The knowledge base is enlarged through the manner in which the study is created; Larsson (2005) calls this heuristic quality in a study.

Considerations on method of data collection

Considerations on method include choice of object of study which carries consequences for the claims that can be made. For instance, observing behavior does not give access to teachers' arguments in the way that interviews do. Interviews provide good access to situations which can be significant for the study, but only from the teachers' point of view. The use of observations would ameliorate this problem. Asking teachers to write diaries or logbooks for the researcher to analyze is another alternative that gives access to situations, but no room for follow up questions. For the present study, interviews with the addition of a contextual observation have been chosen; they give a rich array of teachers' stories but add the possibility to connect these to an observed context.

Methods that have been used to inquire into teacher reasoning include *stimulated recall* (Alexandersson, 1994; Clark & Peterson, 1986). By returning a participant to a particular situation, often via video recordings, memories are evoked and elaborated upon. This has proved valuable for understanding teacher reasoning concerning shorter episodes. The relational
practices of teachers, which constitute my focus, are usually temporally more stretched. The period within which teachers have relationships with their students usually ranges over months and years.\(^{67}\) My assumption here is that the expected length of the relationship has significance for teaching practice.\(^{68}\) Representing teachers' relational practices would then preferably be less constricted to a particular situation, which is one reason for rejecting the stimulated recall method.

A commonly used methodology is life history (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Mishler, 1999) where, in a collaborative manner, the oral life stories of teachers are converted into written life histories through the research process (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, pp. 39-40). Goodson and Sikes (2001, p. 57) argue that studying teachers' lives contributes to the understanding of teaching since it deals with values, understandings and motivations that influence professional practice, which is based on relationships. Tripp (1994) has made the distinction between a "critical incident" approach and a "holistic" approach, criticizing holistic teacher biographies for relating only to parts of teachers' practices, and only in general terms (pp. 66-68). He suggests starting from critical incidents, by which he means events from the everyday life in the classroom, in order to understand how the past lives in the present. The critical incident approach has also been used for understanding teaching (see e.g. Husu, Toom, & Patrikainen, 2008).

The main object of study in this dissertation is somewhat narrower than life history approaches, as it mainly stays within teachers' professional practices; whereas it is wider than in a typical critical incident approach, because it involves stories stretching out over extended periods of time. However, while it is acknowledged that professional practices are influenced by participation in other practices in other spheres (cf Frelin, 2008), my main focus still narrows down to teaching practice, which is why I argue that life histories are not suitable for my purpose. On the other hand, stories as a mode of representation can contain features such as complexity and change, which makes them into useful tools for the present study.

The notion of story is central within research on teaching. Narrative forms of representation have often been used to report on teachers' knowledge and practice (Rosiek & Atkinson, 2007, pp. 499-500). Carter (1993, p. 6) assigns this attractiveness of story to the way that it represents ways of thinking and

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\(^{67}\) The Swedish school system is commonly divided into three year cycles during which teachers often stay with the same class. There are several exceptions such as for instance preschool in which children from ages 1-5 can enter into, and upper secondary school where teachers give shorter courses. For an overview of the Swedish school system, see: http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/190 [Retrieved 080416].

\(^{68}\) For example, one of the informants, when asked about a hypothetical situation in which she would meet students only for a period of three weeks, replied that she, given that situation, would not work as much on relation building as she usually does.
knowing which are well suited to elucidate the issues that teachers deal with. Rosiek and Atkinson distinguish two different arguments with which narrative representations have been justified: the ontological and the pedagogical. The ontological argument holds that human experience is relational and that a wider context of events is required for explaining experience in its full complexity (Rosiek & Atkinson, 2007, pp. 503-4). Advocators of this argument are, for example, Clandinin and Connelly who claim that we understand the world narratively which makes it sensible to study it narratively (2000, p. 17).

The pedagogical argument is based on the claim that narrative representations have the ability to effectively communicate information and/or evoke responses that are emotional or have aesthetic qualities which other representations may not have (Rosiek & Atkinson, 2007, pp. 503-4). It is used by van Manen (2002, p 221), for instance, who argues that a language that is susceptible to the experiential, emotional, moral and personal dimension of teachers’ work and lives in school can be expressed through examples and anecdotes from people. Practice can contain dilemmas, unpredictability and ambiguity which stories are able to accommodate (Carter, 1993, pp. 6-7). In the scientific community, Carter (1993) states that the tradition of truth claims that ignore “context, character, contradiction and complexity” (p. 11) has to be challenged, but with a preserved self-consciousness of the issues concerning the truth claims of narratives. Stories are social constructions, and without contextualization they can also serve to reproduce certain teacher mentalities and hide bigger patterns of understanding (Goodson, 2005, p. 51).

Introduction to the empirical material

When focusing on in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, information-rich cases for study are sought so that one may learn about the issues which are important for the purpose of the study (Patton, 2002, p. 46; Stake, 1995, p. 4). The selection of persons in order to meet certain criteria has been defined as purposive (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 24). I sought people who were not beginning teachers and thus had some experience in the profession. They were to have a reputation of good contact with their students.69 I also wanted them to be reasonably articulate concerning their professional thoughts, and able to give some arguments for their actions (cf Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 24). In order to find such persons I contacted teacher

69 Overall, the concept of student is used, in which I also include children attending preschool.
educators at two different teacher education facilities and asked them for the names of persons who could fill these criteria.70

Ten different teacher educators have suggested the eleven teachers that are included. Multiple participants is a common strategy for strengthening validity (Merriam, 1998, p. 40). A diversity of voices is positive for context and comparison, and makes it possible to see teaching as more than a personal matter (Hargreaves, 1996, p. 17) From the information given to me by the teacher educators I selected striving for a good mix of individuals according to such criteria as age, gender, years of teaching experience, and the age and socio-economic backgrounds of their students. The informants came from five different municipalities of different population size and worked in schools of different size. A pilot study was conducted at an early stage, (published in Frelin, 2006a) where the mode of interviewing and structuring the data was tested. It brought attention to the importance of the researcher having some contextual knowledge, and resulted in the addition of a contextual observation in between the two interviews. In the pilot study I also tested bringing back transcripts and other data to the informant, which proved to be a valuable source for further questioning.

Contacting the teachers

A letter was sent to the informants where I briefly introduced myself, the purpose and the procedure of the study (Appendix 1). In a follow up phone call and/or before the first interview the informants were given the opportunity to ask further questions. All but two accepted to participate at once. The two that declined did so due to lack of time, but when I offered to postpone the first interview to a more suitable time they agreed. In the letter I suggested that the interviews could take place somewhere convenient for them, for instance their work place. This alternative was the one that most of them chose, and I then left it to the informants to find a suitable place for us to meet.71 The fact that the informants often chose their work place, their home ground, seemed like a decision that could add confidence and diminish the sense of hierarchy. I also saw it as positive for them to be in close proximity to everyday matters, since it was these matters that I was enquiring into. On the other hand, there was the risk that everyday matters could cause distress and draw attention from the interview situation. On a few occasions it was evident that this was indeed the case, but my experience was that the advantages of them being on home ground outweighed such instances.

70 I argued that the teacher educators had been in contact with many practicing teachers due to contacts through student teachers’ field studies conducted within teacher education, and that they had a variety of names to choose from. In addition, it seemed likely that teachers who receive student teachers into their practice have had opportunity to articulate thoughts regarding their practice.

71 Two interviews took place in a library and one in my office.
Overview of the informants and empirical material

The eleven informants, six female and five male, ranged from age 35 to 63 at the time of the interview. Their time in the profession varied from five to almost forty years, which means that they had received a wide variety of different teacher educations. One of them, who had been teaching for decades, had an incomplete teacher education as well as university credits in various subjects. Another was a recreational pedagogue72 who worked at a school in a team of teachers, with students that had newly arrived in the country.

Table 2: Overview of the material: informants, interviews and observations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alias</th>
<th>Age73</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Years in profession74</th>
<th>Worked at the time in grades</th>
<th>Int 1 min</th>
<th>Int 2 min</th>
<th>Obs min</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lena</td>
<td>50–54</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johan</td>
<td>50–54</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Preschool class75</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>55–59</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1–3</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anders</td>
<td>35–39</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1–976</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cessa</td>
<td>50–54</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3–6</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>35–39</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4–6</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sten</td>
<td>60–64</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4–6</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adrian</td>
<td>45–49</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7–9</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunilla</td>
<td>40–44</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Upper secondary77</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>60–64</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Upper secondary</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotta</td>
<td>30–34</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Upper secondary78</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, although I had the intention of interviewing people representing each stage in the school system, from preschool to upper secondary school, as I came to have more information, matters presented themselves in a less clear-cut manner. It turned out that all informants but Erik and Maria had experience of working outside the level of education they were presently in, or in other forms, such as working with disabled grown-ups. Out of these, all but Anders had been in other professions for a longer period of time. Additionally, Erik had professional experience in an area other than teaching.

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72 Recreational pedagogues are trained within the Swedish teacher education program and work within schools, after and during school hours and in cooperation with school teachers.
73 I claim that it is of relevance for the reader to know for instance whether a person is 40 or 60, but not whether a person is 40 or 42. For confidentiality reasons I decided to present the informants’ approximate age.
74 See above; the number of years in the profession is rounded to the nearest even five years.
75 School form for six year old children, located within schools. Compare to e.g. Kindergarten.
76 Anders is a recreational pedagogue who worked at a school, in a team of teachers, with students who were new arrivers into the country
77 Gunilla works in the Individual Program (IP), which is especially designed for students who are not eligible for national programs because of not meeting the requirements for passing Swedish, English and Mathematics. http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/374/a/1217 [Retrieved 071211].
78 For an overview of the Swedish school system, see the following link: http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/190 [Retrieved 080416].
The informants thus constitute a heterogeneous group which I, for the sake of brevity and simplicity, henceforth consider as teachers.

The interviews and contextual observations were conducted during 2006 and 2007. All interviews but two were recorded using an mp3-player and a back-up recording device. The total time of duration for the interviews amounted to 21 hrs 25 min. The interviews were transcribed, resulting in a total of 313 pages of interview transcripts. The observations amounted to 14 hrs and resulted in 42 pages of field notes. After interviewing and observing 11 teachers a consideration was made as to whether more material was to be collected or whether it was sufficiently saturated. The latter was considered to be the case.

The interviews and observations

The interviews, two per person, lasted from 45 to 80 minutes but most of them were about one hour, which was the time stated in advance. Charmaz (2006, p. 26) argues that a few broad, open-ended and non-judgmental questions can encourage stories to emerge. In the first interview I started with four areas that functioned as nets, laid out to capture features of and stories from their practice. That is, these areas are to be considered as points of departure for eliciting stories of practice (cf Goodson & Sikes, 2001).

- The first area concerned the informants’ background; education, family and important influences as a person.
- The second dealt with their career history.79
- The third area explored important professional influences.
- The fourth area concerned what the informants did in order to foster democratic citizens.

The last area was selected during an early stage of my study, when I had the intention of focusing on democracy in education. When this focus was phased out, the fourth area remained, as it had proven to be quite suitable for eliciting stories; the fostering of democratic citizens is a stated purpose of education in Sweden although not connected specifically to one subject (see e.g. Skolverket, 2006b).

As I was interested in the stories that the informants told from their practice I allowed for the interviews to be influenced by the issues that the informants dealt with at the time of the interviews. For instance, one of the

79 In the beginning of the first interview I suggested that we would use around 20 minutes for these two and then move on to other questions. Depending on the answers, the time spent could amount to more or less time. But through giving an approximate amount of time I made explicit how much information that I expected from them in these matters.
informants put a lot of effort into her work with the parents of her students; another found it necessary to deal with gender issues; and yet another had a student that required a lot of his time and effort at the time. Different issues arise at different times and affect practice, and being attentive to what the informants are concerned about adds, I argue, authenticity to the accounts of teachers' practice. A meta-analysis was conducted of the questions asked during two of the interviews, which showed that my follow-up questions fit within five different categories. Below, under Five kinds of follow-ups, I describe these five categories in more detail. The four areas described above were covered, but not always in that order. I let the responses that I received from the informants guide my questioning as I wanted to build from the areas of practice which could produce detailed stories for further questioning.

The ways in which the interviewer responds, questions and acts shapes the way participants give accounts and respond as it shapes their relationship (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.110). I tried to listen to both the content and the delivery of the answers. If my perception was that I moved into issues which were considered too private I moved on to other questions.80 I also used silence as a means, which Kvale (1997, p. 125) claims can give the interview person time to reflect and give significant information. On several occasions my silence gave rise to interesting and unexpected turnarounds in the interview. But, depending on the situation, silence can be experienced as uncomfortable, and I tried to stay attuned to the situation to minimize such discomfort. Research interviewing requires paying attention to when to probe, and a focus on the experience of the other (Charmaz, 2006).81 Throughout the process, and in connection to some of the interviews and contextual observations, I wrote logs noting my reactions in the situation, and memos containing reflections and preliminary analytical strands evolving in the process.

Five kinds of follow-ups

In the interviews the main part of my questions were follow-up questions or comments which had five functions; exemplification, argumentation, confirmation, clarification and interpretation.

Exemplification, as a follow-up, asks for specific instances of something in an answer, like with Anna:

A: After all, when I have met children who have been [difficult for me to handle], then I have thought like this: "Why on earth can't I manage this, why can't I understand why he acts the way he does?" [I] particularly remember

80 I followed Charmaz’ (2006) principle regarding questions of intrusion; “that participants' comfort level has higher priority than obtaining juicy data” (p. 30).

81 In the interview situation I could draw upon several years of part-time practice as a reporter in earlier years which brought experience in interviewing.
some children who brought me to the point of having to deal with things, and to study, in order to understand why they are the way they are.

AF: Can you give me an example of this type of student? Let’s call him “Kalle”.

A: In my previous class. [He] didn’t give me one single crack at getting close to him. (Anna, interview 1, lines 40-43 (1-40-43))

They are similar to Patton’s (2002, pp. 372-3) detail-oriented questions; the basic “‘who,’ ‘where,’ ‘what,’ ‘when,’ and ‘how’” (p. 373), in the sense that they ask for details, although they stay on a more general level since they ask for more details of a particular situation. The purposes of exemplification were, first, to retrieve situations from practice for analysis. Second, asking for concrete situations and actions provided me with a validation of sorts, that is, while one can easily give general statements that are politically correct such as “I treat all students equally”; giving detailed descriptions of a series of actions in concretely experienced situations elicits features of practice that are closer to all its messiness and ambiguity. These accounts, in addition, provided me with an interpretation of how the informant had understood the question or concept.

I also used simulation questions. These are questions which provide context by asking the informant to imagine her- or himself in a particular situation (Patton, 2002, pp. 368-9).

Argumentation follow-ups elicit descriptions of reasons for actions, often retrieved from the situations in the interviews. When the informants had described what they did I could ask questions such as which consequences they believed that their action would have or what made them act in this way, like Johan:

AF: But why is it necessary for them to practice understanding that they are different?

J I think that you can avoid conflicts. That’s a goal worth a lot according to me. Because I think that these differences and failures to grasp and understand are the source of an enormous number of the conflicts created in the yard, in society and in the world. (Johan, 2-283-284)

These questions were, in turn, repeated when called for, which accumulated into longer or shorter chains of arguments. Different chains of arguments could converge and diverge, resulting in Practical Argument Structures which I describe more thoroughly in the analysis section below.

A confirmation follow-up entails something beyond the regular humming, nodding and yeses that are part of keeping a conversation going. It is making a comment that conveys a common frame of reference or points to similar
experience. Confirmation is a way of building trust into the interview situation, like with Lena:

L: They are really good at hearing how things sound, and at hearing syllables. They can clap most of them even if they haven't heard the word or name before.

AF: I noticed that during the gathering. (Lena, 2-18-19)

Clarification questions were asked in order to better understand or give more detail to the informants' statements. Clarifications have the functions of providing more information or context, or a restatement of the given answer (Patton, 2002, p. 374). If something seemed ambiguous or if terms were understandable only internally I asked for clarification to make sure that I had understood the informant correctly. This could at times give the informants an opportunity to correct any misconceptions on my part, like Gunilla did:

AF: I thought about that, you said it now and the last time: Make demands in a just way. How do you know that it is just, then?

G: Well, that there is a purpose. That you understand what it leads to.

AF: That is that the student understands that… the demand has a point, or?

G: Mm.

AF: But this “making it in a just way”, […] I think of it more like making just demands.

G: No, no, no. (Gunilla, 2-148-153)

Interpretation follow-ups were used at times when I asked questions or rephrased their statements in a way which contained my tentative interpretation of the issue at hand. Kvale (1997, p. 125) includes clarification into interpretive questions, but I want to make a distinction between making clarifications, as described above, and making an interpretation, since the interpretation in these instances refers to a concept or something similar. Sometimes the interpretation was disowned, but in the following Cessa implicitly confirms my interpretation through her picking up and using this concept.

C: “Can’t we write poems today?” they might say if a class was missed. Then you have got something, when you get these kinds of questions.

AF: Then they have this drive.
C: [...] It is as you say pretty slow in the beginning, but then you find some… thing that makes it into an drive. (Cessa, 1-189-192)

During the analyses I paid attention to the responses to my clarifications and interpretations. There is a difference between answering ‘Yes, absolutely’, ‘Precisely’ or just giving a short ‘Yes’ or ‘Mm’. Such an ‘Mm’ can also mean nothing more than ‘Yes, I hear what you are saying’ and not ‘Yes, I agree’. When I was uncertain to what the ‘Yes’ meant I studied the utterance in its context, for instance, if it was given at the end of the interview and the informant seemed tired or sounded hesitant. The weight of the answers was judged in light of these circumstances.

The contextual observations
After the first interview I conducted one contextual observation in their workplace, lasting 60 to 100 minutes. Typically I was present during one or two lessons or at a morning gathering plus the following hour. The observations played a minor role and were not meant to be part of a triangulation. Their function was rather to make known the context in which the informants worked, elicit new questions for the second interview and/or provide background information which could serve to deepen the analysis process (cf Kvale, 1997). Eraut (2007), from a longitudinal study of early career professionals found that the use of observations had advantages including:

- Educating the observer/interviewer about the working context, and thus enriching subsequent data gathering.
- Enabling us to use workplace documents and activities as starting points for conversations about embedded knowledge and its acquisition that would otherwise have been impossible.
- Providing ‘clues’ to the use of knowledge that must have been previously learnt, thus making it easier to track down implicit learning.
- Allowing complexity to be appreciated, even if it was not fully explained to, nor fully understood by, the observer.
- Discouraging the painting of ‘ideal pictures’ by informants when they know reality has been observed (p. 404).

Observations enabled conversations to start in a discourse of description rather than that of justification (p. 405).

My experience has been that due to my presence the informants may in a few cases have changed the schedule in such a way that the lesson involved them interacting with the whole group instead of consisting mainly of students’ individual work. As far as I could tell from my over ten years of teaching experience, activities were not to a significant extent changed in
such a way that it would deviate from regular activities taking place in the class. During observations focus was put on the informant and her/his interactions with the students in the particular context. In connection to the observation the informant was handed a printout of the interview transcript from the first interview and a sketch of a Practical Argument Structure,\(^2\) and was asked to study these, making any changes they wanted to. This process was also meant to work as a preparation for the second interview. Having a written account to examine can be encouraging for a deeper and more considered analysis than if it were only told when recalled (Tripp, 1994). I made the same preparation as the informants, although for the purpose of finding interesting areas to ask questions about. I also studied the field notes for the same purpose. Typical questions emanating from this process would concern the informants' actions in a particular situation; the context surrounding it and how they argued in it.

Second interviews

The purpose of the second interview was to clarify, develop and complement information from the first interview. As I wanted the informants to feel free to influence and make changes in the Practical Argument Structure, the first product was drawn as a pencil sketch, not something resembling a finished product. I emphasized to the informants that the structure should reflect their interpretations. Their check is to be viewed as a validation between the tentative structuring and their experiences, so-called respondent validation (cf Woods, 2005, p. 4).

The informants commented on changes and additions to the Practical Argument Structure. I asked follow-up questions in order to pursue the arguments for actions, and asked questions derived from themes from the first interview and the contextual observation. After the second interview and following transcription I sent both transcripts along with a new, computer-drawn network to the informant, who was asked to review and check for changes to be made. Once again it was emphasized that the informant was free to remove, add or change the material. (If no answer was given in a period of time, I contacted them by e-mail). The changes made by the informants at this time were very few, for instance making a statement clearer in order to prevent misinterpretation. All but one chose to comment, and the one who did not answer later commented on a compiled story that I sent, confirming its accuracy.

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\(^2\) See First step: Constructing Practical Argument Structures under The analysis process.
Reflections on interviewing

Coming into an interview situation, there are already conditions impacting on the interview. The produced account is to be regarded as a co-creation between researcher and participant. When we speak we select and organize the resources that language offers us “to tell our stories in particular ways that fit the occasion and are appropriate for our specific intentions, audiences and contexts” (Mishler, 1999, p. xvi). Even tape recordings are already contextualized and interpretive texts since they are shaped by the particular circumstances and settings of the interview as well as the participant’s and the researcher’s interpretive processes and relationship (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 94).

Although the informants were, for the most part, older and more experienced than me, I on the other hand was a representative of the research community. Teachers’ shortcomings have been the subject of much educational research (Arfwedson, 1994, p. 119), and a suspicion among informants towards hidden agendas was understandable. I tried to remain attuned to how the informants were experiencing the situation. In order to build trust and let them know that I had insight into the complexity that teaching implies, I stated my background as a teacher from the beginning and a few times shared examples of similar experiences from my own practice. In my understanding, my questions sometimes conveyed this experience, since answers could include expressions such as “you know”, indicating a supposedly common perception of a situation. For instance, Gunilla and Erik:

G: That’s why he is here with us this year, otherwise he would have made the nine-year compulsory school. And it continues, and it affects his entire social life and everything [else] too; well, you are familiar with this. (Gunilla, 1-75, bold added)

E: A student who has given the wrong answer, students are so awfully sensitive [about giving the wrong answer, and can think]: “Now I said something, but what if they find out; I bet it was wrong, maybe it was wrong!” Like that, you know. (Erik, 2-72, bold added)

At times I asked questions out of my own curiosity, even if they were somewhat beside the purpose of the interview. My aim was to balance the advantages of attaining a positive atmosphere where the informants felt

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83 One of the participants remarked to me at the beginning of the second interview that s/he had not felt good after the first interview, that s/he had not felt able to answer my questions. But after reading the interview transcript this had changed completely. S/he had felt that what s/he said was good and that it had felt like ‘her/him’, and asked if s/he could show the transcript to her/his colleagues. This could be interpreted as an initial dissatisfaction with the performance during the interview. Reading the transcript made her/him pleased as s/he perceived that first, s/he had lived up to her/his own demands, and second, that s/he could recognize the construction of the accounts s/he had given as something that reflected her/his self-perception.
comfortable to share their thoughts with the drawbacks of spending interview time on matters irrelevant for my study (cf Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 28). According to Kvale (1997, p. 121), good interview questions contribute to the interview both thematically, by contributing to knowledge production, and dynamically, by contributing to the situation’s relational interplay.

All of the contacted informants agreed to be part of my study, and there are several possible reasons for this. It may be flattering to be selected to talk about one’s knowledge, which can imply that since they were asked as teachers who were knowledgeable this was a position that they felt obliged to take in front of me. Moreover, neither the purpose nor the content of the questions concerned retrieving examples of their failures as teachers. Goodson and Sikes (2001, p. 41) argue that the understandings that informants have of a given situation, and the image they want to project, along with their assessment of how the interviewer will respond, constitutes part of the interview situation. There were moments when I was aware of how these understandings shaped their answers, as the informants told me the stories that they chose to tell.84

I asked for stories from the informants’ daily practice and for arguments regarding how they acted in the course of events. As I inquire into purposeful practice, I must presume that arguments for actions can be, but do not have to be, knowable. Arguments for action were sought continuously during the interviews, and to that end I used several types of questions, such as what the informant thought would happen if they acted otherwise or what she or he viewed to be the good of the action in question. I cannot be sure that the arguments for their actions were not formulated at the time of the interview itself, but I can argue that the informants at least thought that the arguments they provided were plausible.85 Having to answer my questions – including the why-questions – may have resulted in making them aware of things that had been previously unconscious. The act of providing arguments for actions can be one of discovery, since actions that are normally taken for granted are given greater scrutiny. Being part of a study can positively contribute to a teacher’s professional development. Clark (1995, p. 70) argues that participation in research that calls for the articulation of one’s actions, and asking why-questions can make implicit theories explicit. On occasion, however, the informants had no arguments for their acts.

At times it turned out to be somewhat of a problem that the second interview was conducted after a period of time had passed between this and

84 One wider narrative is that of student influence in school. One of the informants’ answers deflected from my repeated questions implying that even though s/he let students decide on some matters s/he was still in charge, which could be a sign of wishing to stay within this wider narrative (cf Goodson, 1996, pp. 109-113). (For writings on student influence in steering documents, see e.g. Skolverket, 2006b). (For research on student influence see e.g Danell, 2006).

85 See further First step: Constructing Practical Argument Structures in this chapter.
the prior contextual observation. This made the questions connected to it less valuable; the informants had at times forgotten how they argued in a specific situation. The wider time frame was aimed at giving the informants enough time to read through the first transcript and study the network structure. It was often also a necessity due to their heavy work load; finding a time slot for an interview was hard. Another problem was the selection of individual teachers instead of teacher teams, or maybe a mix of individuals and teams; the image of an isolated teacher did not apply seamlessly. Many worked in teacher teams and often answered using ‘we’ or ‘us’ instead of ‘I’ and ‘me’.

Transcriptions of interviews

With certain constraints, the interviews were, for the most part, transcribed verbatim. Irrelevant parts were summarized, as was additional but significant information given before or after the recorded interview. When transcribing I took account of the fact that the transcripts were to be read by the informants. Kvale (1997, p. 156) writes that in these situations the transcriber translates the verbal style of the interview into written language in a way that harmonizes with their general way of expression. The ambition has been to make a “careful linguistic adjustment which does not change the content or allusion in the statement” (Thomsson, 2002, p 104). I have made complete sentences and have left out repetitions which have no bearing on the content – e.g., fillers, “then”, “what”, etc. (cf Woods, 2005, p. 93). Short and long pauses have been noted (Kvale, 1997, p. 156); short pauses are shown as “[…]” and long ones as “[pause]” in the quotes. Sounds and gestures (such as the snapping of fingers) that contributed to understanding have been noted in the margin of the transcript and added to the quotes. The quotes used in the finished manuscript were transcribed from the mp3-file, with careful adjustments as described above. When the quotes were translated into English, an effort was made to balance the wording so that the content and allusion were as close to the original as possible.

Ethical matters

Research involving people has an impact on the lives of the studied people. This makes it ethically charged; what does the researcher do to these people and what are the consequences? In line with the ethical guidelines of the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002) the informants were

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86 For example, having a mutual exchange about the mp3-player or deciding upon dates.
87 An example of a repetition which has bearing and which I have transcribed is shown in the section Five kinds of follow ups under Clarification. Gunilla’s repetition of the word “No” serves to underline her statement and has thus been included.
informed of the purpose of the study and were aware of that all participation was voluntary and that they were free to discontinue their participation at any time. They chose their own aliases. I have striven in the study to balance the information given about them by including information that appeared relevant to the purpose of the study, while refraining from any disclosures which could help identify the person. The first measure taken during the transcription process was to use aliases for all the persons mentioned; informants, students and other persons. The second was to replace details such as the names of places with artificial designations such as X-town or A-school.

The transcripts were next brought to the informants who were encouraged to delete information in this version that they did not want to include, something which happened only a few times and concerned only minor details. They were also encouraged to change or add whatever they wanted to, which was rarely done. Before the contextual observations I had instructed the informants to inform the students and parents of my presence in general terms. During these there were a few instances where I chose to withdraw from observing a particular event for ethical reasons. This excerpt from the observation at Lena’s preschool serves as an example:

When I arrive children are dropped off and several parents come and go. One of the children starts to cry and I [...] choose to leave the entrance hall and the partition with the clothes hangers, even though that is where Lena is right now. The parents and the children do not know me and I feel like I invade their privacy.

How Lena handled the transition situation could have been interesting to observe from a professional perspective, but I judged that my presence was not warranted; in addition, it would have significantly changed the situation.

The analysis process

The process of analysis in qualitative studies is not constrained to the time after the collection of data, but starts to take shape earlier in the process. It is a process where, as Miles and Huberman (1994) write, one is “no longer just dealing with observables, but also with unobservables, and are connecting the two with successive layers of inferential glue” (p. 261). In this section I give a description of the analysis process, starting from the practical arguments and the construction of structures within cases, moving on to organizing them into aspects of teachers’ relational practices.
First step: Constructing Practical Arguments

I began coding after the first interview, through a graphical structuring of actions and arguments, which was conducted for each informant. Charmaz (2006, p. 46) argues that coding is a way of defining what happens in the data and of grappling with what it means. Structuring the interview transcripts as actions and arguments for actions constitutes a coding of the informants' practical arguments. Rooted in Aristotelian thought, practical reasoning (or practical rationality) as opposed to theoretical reasoning which aims at bringing about knowledge, has action or an intention to act as its end (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 1993, p. 102). Fenstermacher and Richardson (1993) apply these ideas to teaching when making a distinction between practical reasoning and practical rationality:

Practical reasoning describes the more general and inclusive activities of thinking, forming intentions and acting, while practical argument is the formal elaboration of practical reasoning. Thus all of us, nearly all of the time, may be said to employ practical reasoning; that is, we reason about our actions in relation to what we want to accomplish and what we believe to be the case about who, what and where we are. If called on to explain our action, we might set out our reasons in such a way that the inquirer learns from us what we were trying to accomplish, why we chose to act the way we did, and how the action we took fitted the goal we sought to accomplish. We can refer to this explanation as a practical argument, in the sense that it lays out a series of reasons that can be viewed as premises, and connects them to a concluding action (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 1993, p. 103).

They argue that an activity as complex as classroom teaching may elicit a variety of elaborate practical arguments in which the relationship between reason and action may initially appear remote. Practical arguments are not alleged to depict what the agent thought at the time of the action, but are rather thought to provide "descriptions of practical reasoning that the agent indicates are fair and accurate accounts of why [s/he] acted as [s/he] did" (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 1993, p. 104). Although Fenstermacher and Richardson claim that practical arguments are descriptive in this sense, they can also be normative in two senses. The first is whether the practical argument is to be considered good or bad for achieving what it sets out to achieve, and the other, larger sense, is whether or not the achievement that action is supposed to bring about is judged as worthwhile (Fenstermacher &

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88 Eisenhardt (1989) argues that the overall idea of within-case analysis is to “become intimately familiar with each case as a stand-alone entity” (p. 540) which allows patterns to emerge before the cases are compared, and in addition accelerates cross-case comparison.
89 Please note that I use the theory/practice divide only pertaining to the function of an argument in a specific situation. I am not making any statements as to the matter of relationships between theory and practice.
Richardson, 1993, p. 104). Fenstermacher (1988, p. 43) argues that practical arguments can be used as analytical devices for understanding teacher thinking.

The basic function of the informants’ practical arguments in the present study is to render visible their actions and the inferences that the informants drew upon when making their choices to act in this or the other way. In the field of argumentation analysis, this kind of analysis used falls under the *descriptive purpose*, that is, the purpose is to reconstruct the argumentation rather than to determine its weight as evidence (cf Boréus & Bergström, 2005, p. 91). However, the arguments that link the acts with the intended outcomes serve both to contextualize and validate the stories (cf Fenstermacher, 1994, p. 27). Practical arguments can also include actions in hypothetical situations – i.e., how they would act if they were in such a situation. That is, the themes and subthemes represent what the informants try to accomplish, and the examples describe how they go about making this happen as well as the reasons for why they believe that it is good or important (cf Fenstermacher & Richardson, 1993, p. 103). In line with the argument in the first chapter,90 I want to underline that the content, means and purposes are to be regarded as neither singular nor causal, but often complex, emergent and interlaced.

The empirical material to which I have access consists of informant stories as well as my own contextual observations. The participating informants, with a few exceptions (which I attend to), assume that what they do is professional, as it is done for the purpose of education, intentionally and successfully.91 One can then question what the difference would be between practices and professional practices. In line with the above reasoning, because a given act of teaching may have several purposes some of which may not be strictly professional, being professional is not an “either-or” affair. The issue is difficult to discuss outside of examples of practice, but generally, if other purposes prevail, or if contextual conditions are very difficult, then practice may not be professional. My stance in relation to the accounts of the informants is, that these are examples of what could, under certain circumstances, constitute ‘being professional’. The informants’ assumptions are based on experience of and familiarity with practice, but cannot be viewed as infallible. I discuss at times conditions which would not make the act professional, however trying neither to romanticize nor to diminish or dismiss their words as experienced teachers (cf Hargreaves, 1996, p. 16). According to Carr and Skinner (2009, p. 148), such discussions – i.e., those concern the ways in which teaching is not acceptable or competent – can add to the insight into the complexity of teaching.

90 Chapter 1, *The influence of context and complexity.*
91 For the presentation of the results from the empirical study I refer to the distinction between *being professional* (behaving professionally) and *being a professional* (belonging to a profession) (cf Helsby, 1995, p. 320). See also *Teacher professionalization* in Chapter 2.
Practical Argument Structures (PAS)

I introduce the concept of Practical Argument Structure (PAS), a representation of teachers' practical arguments that build from the Networks of Strategies in Cardell's Triple Network Model (Cardell, 2003). They were developed as follows: A coding and graphical structuring of each informant's accounts was made of their actions and arguments through a close reading of interview transcripts. A structure was drawn after each interview: An initial, sketchy structure after the first interview and the completion of a developed, final structure after the second. During the interviews I asked for examples of the informants' actions from their everyday practice. Whenever an informant described an action in relation to teaching in the transcript, I wrote it down in a box. Examples range from “Ask students for feedback on working method” (Lotta, 2-97) to “read the same books as students” (Gunilla, 2-58). I also asked about arguments for these actions, which were drawn as bullets. Lotta for instance argued that she wanted the students to influence work methods (2-97-98); and Gunilla argued that the student became curious about her reactions to the books (2-62), for example if they heard her giggle while reading a particular book.

Questions concerning the informants' arguments were, in turn, repeated when called for during the interviews, which accumulated into longer or shorter chains of arguments. Gunilla, for instance, wanted to spur her students to read books so that they could be part of a reading community, and, in the long run, the community at large. This chain of arguments thus indicated the informant's view of what a present action could lead to in the future, or what led her to take an action, which distinguishes it from a causal chain where it is argued that this is what the action would lead to. Another example, from the informant Anders in the present study, shows how a chain of arguments is displayed visually.

92 Warm thanks to Caroline Liberg for naming my sketches “argument structures”.

93 Cardell claims that teachers have strategies which are put into action through initial activities, and that the strategies have purposes which he terms strategenes, purposes that are linked in chains that could coalesce into networks; when an initial activity is performed it starts different processes or causal chains. Strategies thus describe future action and consequences according to Cardell. He uses the word strategy which points to a long-term line of action, but his claims are wider, as if the strategies were there already, ready to use in future situations. My claim is restricted only to the argument; it is what the informant uses in the interview situation in order to make sense of her/his actions to me. In other words, the informants' stories of their activities are used as starting points but the arguments do not claim to structure future action.
Figure 1: Example of a chain of arguments (T stands for Teacher, S for Student). The numbers (e.g. 2-157) identify a given interview as well as the exact interview-line from which the action or argument was derived.

This chain of argument is constructed from the following excerpts in the second interview transcript:

2-157: If it is so important for him to take his turn immediately, then I feel that he might as well get to do it.

2-163: But if you don’t watch out, there is the risk that he can take up space in other, less desirable ways. For example, he’s been fighting a lot, although lately the situation has improved very much, [and he has been] considerably more calm.

2-165: I thought it was better to encourage him to take up the space he needed. I mean, I certainly prefer his speaking out in the middle of a gathering to his fist fighting with other students during breaks.

Different chains of arguments sometimes converged and diverged, branching out into more or less elaborated Practical Argument Structures. Some of the informants referred to the PAS as mind maps94 which they resembled. But while mind maps start from a theme and branch out, the PAS work in the other direction, from actions at the edges toward arguments in the middle. Not all, but many of the actions that the informants took had more than one argument which made the edges-to-middle approach suitable for the sake of clarity. This kind of coding builds to a great extent on the language used by the informants.95

94 A mind map is a graphical tool for representing thoughts and ideas around a central key word, see for instance (Buzan & Buzan, 1994).

95 Strauss and Corbin (1998) have termed such codes “in vivo codes” (p. 105). In vivo codes are, according to Charmaz (2006, p. 55), symbolic markers of how meanings are made by participants in speech. They anchor analysis in the worlds of the participants and promote congruence in interpretations of actions and their statements (p. 57).
The informants reviewed the two versions of the PAS after both interviews, the initial one after the first interview and the developed one after the second. These reviews are not viewed as a validation of the actions or purposes in themselves, but only as a validation that the PAS concurs with the informant’s reasoning. I constructed one finished PAS for each informant, thus the 22 interviews resulted in 11 developed PAS which were more or less elaborate. The structuring of practical arguments focused on the informants’ actions in specific situations. While the coding of the informants’ practice also contained descriptions of teaching social science, reading, language etc, when comparing the different PAS my attention was focused on practice directed towards relationships with and among students in school, whether it was done in the shadow of subject matter teaching or constituted the main purpose of the practice. Where different actions were aimed at the same end these were tentatively themed together and labeled, under such headings as ‘distinctness’ or ‘relationship building’. Many were terms that the informants used, some were my own. Working with PAS thus enabled me to, for example, better locate central features of the informants’ arguments and/or practice as I read through the various cases.
Second step: Constructing categories

In addition to the structuring of data within cases into PAS, the interview transcripts were coded using AtlasTi, software designed for qualitative analyses of empirical data. Coding is according to Charmaz (2006), “the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data.” (p. 46). When coding the data within the cases into PAS of individual informants, some processes and actions of the individual informant were particularly easy to discern while others stayed in the shadow. But when coding across participants, not focusing on actions specifically, other features were highlighted. Eisenhardt (1989, pp. 540-541) argues that cross-case analysis is a countermeasure to premature conclusions, or making false ones, through looking at data with structured and diverse lenses which enhances the fit of the resulting theory with data.

The first cross-case coding was open, which means that interviews were coded paying close attention to the data, employing terms used by the informants but also ones constructed in the process. In my case this meant asking the question: What are the informants talking about? In this process I tried to draw on my experience as a teacher without falling in the trap of taking for granted statements from the informants. I argue that my having spent over a decade on the classroom floor as a teacher in several compulsory schools has been mainly helpful in the process of developing the informants’ arguments into theory that is aligned with teacher experience and thinking. But I have taken measures to address my blind spots, presenting both data and early texts to research colleagues in different contexts for response. I have also tried to keep the descriptions very close to data, and to add context, so that readers may make their own judgments.

Relational practices

By comparing incidents against each other within codes and between codes new patterns were developed. The software allowed me to enter a code and call up all the statements that were connected to that code. I tested different strands of analysis in written memos, which built from readings of different combinations of code data and focused on what I had started to categorize as teachers relational practices. From there I sorted the different aspects of relational practices based on the different kinds of relationships that the relational practices were directed towards. The different aspects of relational practices that were constructed from the data are illustrated in the following.

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96 http://www.atlasti.com/ [Retrieved 080701].
97 Personal experience can, if used correctly, increase sensitivity to the meanings of the data if it serves as a comparative base against which these are measured (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 48, see also Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 252).
At this time I also came upon the notion of negotiation, which nicely captured the kinds of actions that the informants were taking.

**Negotiation**

Teachers constantly encounter situations where they have to make choices on how to act in order for a situation to proceed in a desired direction. One study showed that, on the average, teachers make one interactive decision every two minutes (Clark & Peterson, 1986, p. 274). Many teacher decisions concern how to interact with other persons who have intentional capabilities of their own. Liston, Whitcomb and Borko (2009, p. 110) highlight that practice involves a degree of human tension that must not be ignored. As a way of attending to this tension, I regard teachers’ actions aimed at dealing with differing wills and intentions in situations of uncertainty or disagreement, as *negotiations*. One definition of negotiation states that it is “an interpersonal decision-making process necessary whenever we cannot achieve our objectives single-handedly” (Thompson, 2009). I find this definition useful as it includes the interpersonal aspect.

Sociologists of education such as Woods (1983, p. 11) argue that negotiations are continuously taking place in school life, and although they may be open and peaceful they can also be conspiracies on the part of pupils or teachers in order to fulfill their intentions. In research on Classroom

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98 Please note that it is not meaning per se which is negotiated; the notion of negotiation of meaning is used within other research traditions (cf e.g. Wenger, 1998, pp. 52-55).

99 Some examples include teachers’ collaborative negotiations of dilemmas (Tornberg, 2006a) negotiations of beliefs with practice (Schultz, Jones-Walker, & Chikkatur, 2008) which treat negotiation as intra- but not interpersonal. (For works on students’ use of negotiation see for instance Corsaro, 2005; Evaldsson, 1993; Markström & Halldén, 2009; Tholander, 2007).

100 In the field of micro-politics (for an overview, see Blase, 1997), the focus lies on how groups and individuals further their own interests through different strategies and tactics. Research has mostly analyzed how teachers negotiate with other professionals in the school organization.
Management it is suggested that when there is a gap between the worldview of the teacher and the student, a distance is created that places a heavy burden on their negotiations (Carter & Doyle, 2006, p. 382).

The activity of negotiating is performed by means of communication between persons with the intent of settling issues. Communication in the sense of a (fallible) process of making something in common (cf Dewey, 1959 [1916], p. 8) also applies to negotiation; settlement will not necessarily ensue from negotiating activities. Stability of the issues that are negotiated cannot be assumed, nor are they even always known in advance. The reasons for employing the concept of negotiation are that negotiation is more specific than interaction, and serves to emphasize the relational quality of education. The concept also enables discussions regarding the educational possibilities of disagreement (see Frelin & Grannäs, in press).

Third step: Fleshing out aspects

The continued analysis was conducted within and across cases and was aimed at creating a deeper understanding of the different aspects of relational practices, and hence professionalism. Themes, which were based on the accounts of different informants, were created from the different codes. This process is illustrated through the following example.

An example of the cross-case analysis process

Two early codes were: problems between students and positive between students. They were sorted under an aspect of relational practices, but were found to be too broad. With the lens of teachers’ practical arguments, the questions I would ask when reading the above codes a second time were: How do the informants see that students influence each other? How do they act to influence the relational processes? Why do they act the way they do? What do they want to accomplish? From this I made a new sorting of the accounts. The two constructed themes, negotiations intended to build on positive relational conditions and negotiations intended to deal with problems between students, did not include situations that for instance teachers mostly view as negative but students seem to like (such as students’ mucking about), or that teachers view as good for students but they perceived that students do not necessarily like (such as appearing before peers, which they could be nervous about). A third theme that fit with these data was added: negotiations intended to deal with the ambivalence of relationships. In the process of creating subthemes, the material was sorted asking the same questions as before. I also read through codes that were related, and conducted word searches of the interviews in order to get additional data that had not been included in the codes as yet.

The weaving together of several informants’ accounts in the cross-case analysis, turns the focus to the informants’ responses to unique single events, a process which is fruitful for bringing out certain kinds of relational
practices. It could include recurring or uncommon events, and such that many or few have encountered; themes that are woven together from several informants' practice are aimed at giving a broad spectrum of practices. In that sense, it is a mapping of relational practices, however incomplete. However, this mode of presentation does not serve as well to capture relational practices which are stretched temporally, and which consist of many different actions aimed at the same end. For these kinds of relational practices I have used stories.

Stories and task perception
A number of informant stories were analyzed in order to contextualize and complement the analysis of the aspect in question. Brinkmann and Kvale (2005, p. 177) hold that through contextualizing and narrativizing examples we get a thicker representation of events which can help us understand and make judgments. Moreover, using stories from practice makes possible a more specific understanding of teachers' practical reasoning, since a practical argument is constructed in terms of responses to specific situations in which the complexity of practice can be represented to a higher degree (cf Fenstermacher & Richardson, 1993, pp. 102-103). The stories were tested for their ability to elucidate significant relational processes.

The concept of responsibility was one of the initial codes that were tested. Teachers can be held responsible in several senses; legally, morally, etc. The present study addresses the responsibilities that the informants experience as theirs to take, that is from within, rather than responsibilities as merely given from the outside and theirs to execute (cf Frelin & Edling, forthcoming). Teachers are bound by several constraints, important ones being different policy documents. But as Björnlöf (2006) writes, the “curriculum tends to abstract values to the level where the differences and dissonances in interpretations and praxis are invisible” (p. 39). An everyday example can be that the teacher judges that students are too exhausted to enter into the next planned activity, and moves to an alternative activity. This example also highlights the imperfection of educational conditions within which teachers work.

However, in the process of reading the stories, as the code responsibility proved to be too wide, the concept task perception (Kelchtermans, 1993, pp. 448-449) became very useful. When comparing data with the theoretical concept of task perception I found a more precise tool for making the analysis. The concept of task perception is used to operationalize teacher responsibility and to represent how teachers define their job. Task

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101 The stories were used as means for eliciting information on the examined social situation or to illustrate points, rather than as portrayals (Charmaz, 2006, p. 82; Suddaby, 2006, p. 635), and in service of the analyses (Charmaz, 2006, p. 174).
102 See for instance Sten’s judgment under Reasonable demands in Chapter 6 for an example of making such judgments.
perception, according to Kelchtermans (1993, pp. 448-449, 2009), comprises the normative dimension of a teacher's professional self and operates as a norm for evaluating her or his professional behavior.  

It reflects a teacher's personal answer to the question: what must I do to be a proper teacher?; what are the essential tasks I have to perform in order to have the justified feeling that I am doing well?; what do I consider as legitimate duties to perform and what do I refuse to accept as part of 'my job'? (Kelchtermans, 2009, p. 262)

The task, argues Kelchtermans, is largely formulated as classroom activities. This makes stories of practice a fruitful source for understanding task perception. In order to add to this concept, I start off with Schön's notion of a reflective conversation with the situation (1983, e.g. p. 151) for practitioners' involvement with problems of practice. Schön holds that a view of professional practice as problem solving neglects the process of problem setting, which is described as “the process by which we define the decision to be made, the ends to be achieved, the means which may be chosen” (1983, p. 40). Schön argues that, in time, a repertoire of expectations, images and techniques is developed so that the practitioner knows what to look for and how to respond to what s/he finds.

Schön has also used the concept of problem setting for the process of deciding what is treated as the “thing” of the situation, what is wrong, in what direction it needs to be changed and which factors to attend to and/or disregard (1983, p. 41). In this process of carving a case from a situation, as Schwab (1971, p. 504) puts it, I prefer using problem construction instead of problem setting in order to emphasize the active part of the teacher (see also Frelin, 2006a, pp. 182-183). That is, in the process of constructing problems and solutions, teachers' task perceptions can become visible. In the results, I show how the choices that the informant makes in the process become important for which problems are constructed, which solutions are applied, but also who is perceived as responsible for the problem. Comparing the concept of task perception to Schön's concept of theories-of-action, which include strategies, values and underlying assumptions that people hold in interaction with others (Schön, 1987, p. 255), I decided to use these three

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103 Beliefs, (addressed in Chapter 3), can, in this context, be viewed as the teachers' underlying reasons for the arguments for their actions. For example, Tornberg (2006b, p. 94) describes a teacher in her study who deliberately coaches his students with the purpose of raising their self-esteem, something which he himself has lacked. In the present study the informants' arguments for action can be found in the material, but the material does not provide does not give a full account of the reasons for those arguments.

104 Schön separates theories of action from implicit theories-in-use which may show some discrepancies from the theories of action used for explaining behavior. As an example he uses the utterance “My door is always open” as a theory of action which may be counteracted implicitly, but as I see it he has not used detailed narratives which I claim address some of the problems with the discrepancy between what teachers say and do (see Exemplification under
concepts in order to specify task perception. That is, the norm for evaluating professional actions that task perception implies consists of values and underlying assumptions and results in strategies of action. These become visible in practical arguments, which can be split into parts, such as motivational, temporal or spatial ones which are applied in the analysis (cf Frelin, 2006a, pp. 182-183). Both Kelchtermans and Schön keep the ends implicit, presumably included in the underlying assumptions, but in my analysis I connect values to the attainment of specific ends.

Introduction to the presentation of results

The analyses of the practical arguments have resulted in different categorizations or aspects of teachers' relational practices. Chapter Six represents practices involved in establishing and maintaining relationships with individual students, and Chapter Eight represents practices involved in establishing and maintaining relationships among students, for educational purposes. These two chapters are based on the accounts of the informants. The aspects are represented through a number of themes and subthemes that are woven together from the accounts of different informants, snapshot-style. That is, the purpose of these two representations of the aspect is also to outline a map of relational practices, highlighting these practices in their own right. This map is far from comprehensive, though still pointing out some important features. The purpose of this mode is also to outline the range of these practices, not connecting them to a certain individual; teachers' responses may or may not be the same from one situation to the other, due also to the complexity of practice.

The headings represent answers to the question of what, and the content under them represents answers to questions of why and how, using short examples for illustration of the informants' practical arguments. Here, I would like to clarify that, in line with the notion of ends-in-view, an attainment of an end can turn into a means for attaining another end, as illustrated previously in the section Practical Argument Structures. That is, while the headings represent what the informants want to attain in their

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*Five kinds of follow-ups in the present chapter). To present theories-in-use based on extensive observations is not within the scope of the present study; the concept of *theories-in-action* is used for analyzing the arguments for actions that teachers account for when they describe particular courses of events that are more anchored in use than in Schön's example above. (The phrase used in Schön's book is theories of action or theory-of-action, but it is listed in the Index as theories-in-action which relates better to the concept of knowing-in-action which he had developed earlier (Schön, 1983)).

105 My focus is not on teacher identity, but on teachers' practical arguments, based on responses to specific and unique teaching events. One reason for not using teacher portraits is that it builds on the idea of a stable identity and predictable responses which is not consistent with my approach.
practice, they could also be viewed as means for attaining other purposes. When writing up the results, excerpts from field notes have, on a few occasions, been used as complementary material to underline or clarify an argument. The addition of observational data and my contextual understanding of the situation could thus, in these cases, serve to render the description thicker. I also make use of stories that are analyzed in order to contribute to and deepen the representation of the two aspects. Some features of teacher work are not captured in snapshots. However, stories can give a temporal frame which highlights features that are spread temporally. The stories were selected because they were rich in description of the specific kind of relational practices. In these chapters I have tried to stay as close to the informants’ accounts as possible, using the words that they use.

The purpose of Chapter Seven and Chapter Nine is to add analytical layers to the accounts of the informants. In these two chapters I theorize about the relational practices mapped out in the previous chapter, and develop conceptions which are intended to capture and elucidate teachers’ relational practices; the Educational relationship and the Educational community. A final comment: The Swedish school system is highly inclusive – i.e., in line with national and international declarations, most students are included in regular classes and teachers are expected to deal with a variety of problems and conditions relative to students (see e.g. Svenska UNESCO-rådet & SPSM, 2008). The table below summarizes the names of the informants and the grades they teach:

Table 3: Recapitulation: the informants

| Lena | Preschool       | Sten   | 4-6 |
| Johan| Preschool class | Adrian | 7-9 |
| Anna | 1-3             | Gunilla| Upper secondary |
| Anders | 1-9             | Erik   | Upper secondary |
| Cessa| 3-6             | Lotta  | Upper secondary |
| Maria| 4-6             |        |     |

106 For six year old children, located within schools. Compare to e.g. Kindergarten.
107 In the Individual Program (IP), especially for students who are not eligible for national programs due to their not meeting the requirements for passing grades in Swedish, English and Mathematics. http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/374/a/1217 [Retrieved 071211].
108 Anders is a recreational pedagogue who worked at a school, in a team of teachers, with students who were new arrivers into the country.
6 Teacher practices involved in establishing and maintaining relationships with individual students

A student is first and foremost a human being
A teacher is also a human being
A school is a place where humans go in order to teach and learn

Without students
There wouldn't be any teachers
And without teachers no students
Without teachers and students no schools, just buildings
Without knowers no knowledge
just books and computers

Introduction to the accounts

It might seem a bit odd that I chose to begin by stating obvious matters such as that both students and teachers are human, but my point here is that the full impact of these matters is sometimes neglected or overlooked. In this chapter I focus on the first aspect of relational practice which concerns the establishment and maintenance of teacher relationships with individual students. This entails leaving other relationships in the periphery, such as those between teachers and groups of students, those between students, and other relationships that are generally part of a teacher's work. The purpose of this chapter is to map this first aspect of teachers' relational practice. It provides an understanding of the informants' professional concerns expressed
in practical arguments regarding their relationships with individual students: \(^{109}\) what they want to attain through practice, how they choose to act, and why they choose to act (i.e., the arguments for the actions they take). \(^{110}\)

The practices involved in negotiating relationships with individual students are presented in three themes, woven together from the accounts of different informants. These are as follows: 1) negotiations intended to attain trusting relationships; 2) negotiations intended to attain humane relationships; and, 3) negotiations of the student’s self-image. The headings represent answers to the question of what, and the content under them represents answers to questions of why and how, using short examples to illustrate the informants’ practical arguments. The primary arguments for this aspect of relational practice were: to attain trusting and humane relationships with students, and to enable students to have a positive self-image. \(^{111}\) These themes each contain subthemes, such as justice, benevolence and recognition. In addition, the second theme deals with two tensions that the informants describe within this practice: the tension between being personal and being professional, and that between being humane and being professional. I also make use of two longer stories that were selected because they were rich in description of this kind of relational practices.

“It’s a capital you build, day one, day two…” Theme One – negotiations intended to attain trusting relationships

The first theme concerns a relational quality that almost all of the informants addressed. Trust was a word that spontaneously recurred when they described relationships with students. Cessa for example underlines the importance of the students’ trust:

C: This has to be the precondition for learning, because how are they to learn anything if they do not believe in what I say? […] I think that it is the precondition for my whole work, that they have trust in me. 1-230

Having trusting relationships is not something that the informants seem to presuppose, but something that they work at attaining. In the presentation of

\(^{109}\) For an introduction to practical arguments see First step: Constructing practical arguments under The analysis process in the previous chapter.

\(^{110}\) As I wanted to stay close to the informants’ voices, the words used to describe relational practices stay as close as possible to the way the informants use them. See also Introduction to the presentation of results which concludes the previous chapter.

\(^{111}\) That relationships need to be negotiated and do not automatically preexist may be more evident, but the need to negotiate trust implicitly entails that the informants did not take for granted that their students trust them.
the practices involved in negotiating trusting relationships, the headings below are all to be read as relational occurrences. For instance, justice is not absolute but experienced, and a stock of trust is built between people, and does not lie only on one side of a relationship. I want to point out that building trust is a joint activity in which the student participates, even if the object of study is teachers’ activities. The fact that I have not included students among my informants may make it seem as if the building of trust is a one-directional phenomenon, which it is not; for example, a student responds to the teacher’s actions but also acts to make the teacher trust her/him. My focus here is on the actions of the informants towards relational ends. When negotiating a trusting relationship with a student the informants’ accounts include building the sense of justice, benevolence, and humor into their practice. They also work to be comprehensible, and to attain a stock of trust between themselves and their students.

A sense of justice

Practices aimed at attaining trusting relationships include actions in order to ensure that the student perceives the practice as just. Adrian considers his students’ perceptions of him as a just person to be a precondition for trust.

A: I try to build up [a sense of] confidence with them – meaning that they feel they can trust me. And... well, so that we can trust each other, or especially that they can trust me – know that this guy is just. 1-80-81

According to Sten, justice does not mean to have the same rules for everyone, but to look to the individual: he says that it is just treatment – or rather, that the student feels that s/he has been justly treated. It was also mentioned that another way of developing trust is to keep promises. For example, when Lena must stop a student from interrupting another student by promising that s/he will have her turn to speak, she is careful to keep her word by remembering to call upon that student when the time is right. According to Lena his is important for gaining trust.

L: Then, I turn around and say: Yes, what did you want? (Turns around a bit.) Because then she gains trust in me; [...] “[Lena] listens to me and I know that [I will have] my turn.” Then she can calm down, and if this has happened a few times she will know that this is going to [always] happen. She knows that I will not deceive her. 2-117-119

This quote points to the temporal aspect of building trust. Lena does not expect one action to build immediate trust; rather she knows that by consistently keeping her word she will eventually gain the trust she seeks. The number of times that she needs to prove her trustworthiness may vary, but she is nonetheless aware of the role it plays in her work. According to
Anders and Gunilla, trust can be lost through actions that the student perceives as violations, such as being condescending or unfair, but can be regained by admitting the mistake and asking for forgiveness. Adrian considers being just a prerequisite for establishing good relations with his students. He argues that if he is perceived as being just, students will want to do their best for him. Gunilla talks about the relation between justice and getting through to a student. Getting through, according to her:

G: It is when you start to make demands and you see that they think that these demands are just […], and they try to live up to the demands you make. And they come up afterwards and confirm that it was right, saying “I have done this. Was it okay? That wasn't good, but I've corrected it, so.” 2-134-35

In Gunilla’s use of the expression getting through, the student views the teachers’ demands as just and acts to show explicit acceptance of them. The student has then given the teacher consent to teach based on a perception of justice.

A sense of benevolence

Several informants describe the perception that they wish the student well as a feature of trust. For instance, Johan: “Within this trust lies this: ‘He is not up to being nasty to me, he is up to doing something good for me.” 1-261 The informants do not seem to presuppose that the student trusts them: sometimes it may be quite the opposite. A student can according to Gunilla be very disappointed with adults, especially the ones in school: “Some have no trust in adults at all. They argue that an adult is a person that is not to be trusted”. 2-138 In such situations part of the informant’s work involves conveying, in ways that the student can accept, that s/he wishes her/him well. For Erik this involves things such as helping the student to keep track of test dates and clearly writing down information on the whiteboard. Asking questions about a student’s life outside of school and of plans for the future is part of Adrian’s approach towards his students to this end. Gunilla argues that the students’ concern about what she says is connected to their experience of her concern about them.

A sense of being comprehensible

According to Gunilla, the conveying of benevolence can include taking time to listen to a student and to explain actions that the teacher assumes s/he may perceive, or have perceived, as unjust – which concurrently is making an effort to be comprehended by the student. Cessa takes time to explain the consequences for breaking rules, using, for example, relational arguments such as that the student’s parents have trusted Cessa to take care of her/him
and if s/he goes missing Cessa would have to answer to them. Making rules comprehensible by motivating them in ways that the student can accept, according to Lena decreases the probability of rule breaking. That is, a student may defy rules out of ignorance or defiance when s/he does not see the coherence. However, a student who views Lena as someone to be trusted does not always demand to understand this coherence. Her trustworthiness can thus act as an adequate guarantor for the rule. It also saves her time as she does not have to explain every rule, and gives her an increased space of action as she can adjust rules to the situation at hand. Cessa adds that when the students trust that she deals with, for instance, misbehavior, she does not have to spend time assuring students that she does.

There are instances where the informants try to prevent situations which the student could experience as negative, because such situations could decrease trust. Johan describes critical moments such as changes from one activity to another when he, stating clearly to his student what s/he is expected to do, acts to preempt unintended misbehavior on the student's part, and possible conflicts between them. He says that making expectations explicit facilitates the student's desire to live up to them. If Lena has had to use a stern voice when correcting a student, she uses a neutral voice immediately thereafter in order to convey that she is finished, i.e., she communicates a re-start. Gunilla used the expression “making demands in a just way”.

G: But what I mean is that you can [tell the student]: "You see, it has to work this way, otherwise you end up looking bad. Then this will happen", and then you have to explain the consequences [...] . The demands are not more just, it is the way you make the demands. A clear connection. 2-154-55.

It is thus making the effort to present arguments for her demand, which is an attempt to make herself comprehensible, but also to negotiate with the student. In this case, even if the demand in itself is non-negotiable, she recognizes the student's right to hear her arguments, thus entering into a negotiation regarding the basis for the demand.

A sense of humor

Because scolding a student is generally experienced as something that decreases trust, the informants have several alternative strategies for dealing with situations where they need to correct their students. Of these, humor is the most recurrent.112 For instance, in the dining hall Johan used humor in order to remind of the custom of saying “thank you” when served.

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112 An act, like joking, can have more than one purpose. However, I argue that in the accounts in this section building trust is one of them, even if it is not the single purpose.
J: You don’t do like this: “Look here. I have served you, now you say ‘thank you’, darn it.” (The last part in a dark and stern voice) You say: “Here you are, please!” And then you look a bit quizzical. “Oh yes, thank you!” they say. Because then they have remembered, that this was what we were going to practice. So it becomes a bit fun as well as a positive thing in this situation. Because we both, so to say, come out of it like winners, [...] and they were able to say thank you in a happy manner. A bit mischievous perhaps, but still. 2-241-243

The use of non-verbal means such as a look, which accompanies the comment, is an important part of the act. Johan uses humor to protect the student from being embarrassed in front of his classmates while still getting the point through: a win-win situation. Gunilla says that she uses humor all the time, as a way of improving the spirits and, indirectly, the conditions for learning. This view is shared by Lotta, who also connects the kind of humor used to the closeness of the relationships:

L: ALL acquisition of knowledge should occur in a spirit of emotional security as well as of tremendous fun. And I think that both these go together with knowing each other pretty well. If you can joke about things… with the students then I think that they, too, often relax a bit more, and if you are relaxed then I think that you learn more easily. [...] You have to know each other in order to joke with each other in a good way. And especially if the students, I think, are to have the courage to, in return, have that high spirit, I think that it is important.1-145-150

Lotta argues that she needs to know her students in order to know which kind of humor to use; conversely, the students need to know her in order to know which humor is allowed and encouraged in class. The relational interaction that builds the humorous practice is a part of the everyday practice, which can be illustrated through two excerpts from field notes. The first one concerns Lotta’s joke at the beginning of class, and the second her response to a spontaneous joke from one of the students.

L: “Romance today – what does this mean to you? I want you to think about it for a minute and then say a word, a color and an object.” L writes these on the whiteboard. An instant mumbling rises among the students. She hushes them and says: “You are to do it individually, and then I will GRADE you on how romantic you are.” The students laugh a bit.

During the first interview Lotta conveyed her worry about the students being stressed about getting the highest grade. My interpretation is that she, while clarifying the task, wants to take away some of the tension surrounding

113 The informants consistently make use of a Swedish word, "trygg", which can translate to either “secure”, “safe”, “confident” or “assured”. Depending on the context I will use the words “secure”, “safe” or “emotionally secure” in my translation.
grades by making this joke. The fact that the students do not seem surprised, but get the joke at once, suggests that it is part of her practice to make jokes. In another excerpt from the end of the lesson, two students call out suggestions of future activities:

S bursts out: “Novels too!” B says out loud: “Casanova [the movie] – can’t we WATCH it?” A general laughter bursts out. L: “Mind you, I was just waiting for B’s WONDERFUL comment.”

I interpret the honesty in Lotta’s voice, along with the students’ reaction, as her really meaning this; she was not being ironic. When Lotta allows and even encourages spontaneous comments like these, she concurrently encourages an environment where students can trust that commenting is secure.

Gunilla uses humor for making contact with students, something that she thinks also works when standing in front of 30 students. But humor carries a certain amount of ambiguity, and can result in a decrease of trust if the student perceives it as being hurtful. Below, Johan explains the manner in which he approaches such situations:

J: If I am feeling undecided as to whether this child can take the joke, then it is very important for me to see this child. That I see what is happening within. If they are insecure, I smile a bit, and then we communicate again. Then the trust is again there in our relationship and they know that this was nothing that was hurtful. 2-254-255

Both his means for finding out whether or not the joke was hurtful and his means for repair, conveying benevolence, are embodied and non-verbal. He studies the student’s facial expression, and answers with his own – a smile.

Sten says that humor can also be a power game; and Erik explains that he uses it with caution, using what he calls “a wide margin”. Students may experience teachers’ acts as violations, and from Eric’s statement it can be assumed that he is aware of this – i.e., that his experience of a situation can be different from the student’s experience. That is why he is cautious about pushing a student too hard during lessons, in front of the other students.

A stock of trust
Several accounts support the view that every encounter to some degree involves a negotiation of trust, and that the results of these negotiations gradually serve to build a practice that belongs to the educational environment. Erik says, "It is a capital you build, day one, day two, day three and so on you are building a stock of trust". 2-17 The building of trust is not a separate activity, but is intertwined with other ends. Erik describes a short interaction during a math lesson:
E: Just the simple gesture, that you show an interest in their question, saying… “Yes, that was a very interesting question, do you mean this or do you mean that?” “No, I mean this” “Well, okay, then it depends on this or that.” This builds, contributes to a stock of trust.” 2-32-33

Adrian, Lena and Erik all talk about trust in economic terms, as something gained or lost through interaction. Adrian describes how a big stock of trust between himself and a student allows space for actions that the student perceives as negative, allowing him to make mistakes without losing the entire stock of that student’s trust. Lena similarly infers that building up a good accumulation enables her to reach through to her student in a negative situation. During our interview Lena brought up the case of a child who had run over a mate with a sled, and didn’t even react. She argued that she needed to have a lot on the plus side in order to make such a large withdrawal by telling her in a stern voice: “You [have to look] out when you ride the sled! What you have done is very dangerous!” 2-336 When asked about things that could reduce trust in a relationship Erik explains that when he is in a rush or pressed for time, and many students are simultaneously demanding his attention, this many cause him to neglect giving proper regard to everyone’s questions:

E: You prioritize, and then some student may be disappointed when not getting enough time […]. The reality of school is that there are enormous numbers of students. If there are many that are asking questions and desiring help, and I think “I don’t have time to help them all”, then some are going to be disappointed; and then, as you can imagine, it becomes something negative (inaudible). 2-42-43

Organizational conditions over which he has less control, such as the size of the class or time limits, may thus work to reduce trust in a relationship. Gunilla notes that the conditions for building trustful relationships are better in the small school building that she works in than in a larger facility.

“Teachers can’t be machines.” Theme Two – negotiations intended to attain humane relationships

The second theme deals with another value that repeatedly appeared in the accounts of the informants, expressed as that of being humane. The informants used the term “human”, but the usage of human and humane differs between Swedish and English. In Swedish, the term “human” can be understood in two ways: human, in the sense of being fallible, as in “to err is human”; and, human, in the sense of being empathic, as in “be human, have a

114 In Swedish: “mänsklig” or “medmänsklig”.

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heart”. The informants make use of both when they describe their relational practices to this end. My understanding is that when they use it in the latter sense they refer to what can be viewed as being humane. The usage of the words here is as follows; the relationships I describe are humane relationships, and these involve both acting human (being fallible), and acting humane (being empathetic). Humane relationships are attained through negotiating recognition and reasonable demands, and through taking time with a student. Within this theme there also reside two tensions: the tension between being personal and being professional, and that between being humane and being professional.

A sense of recognition

The informants frequently refer to the idea of “recognizing the student” and also emphasize the need for the student to “feel recognized”. It could include casual remarks regarding their work, their outward appearance and/or their mood, Gunilla exemplifies:

G: "Good morning.” "Hi Adam. New cap today?” “Wow, you must have slept many hours, god you look alert.” “Good job today, bye, have a good [day]” – all those things. To remember: “God, how is the cat doing?” And: “Did your sister have a good time?” 1-296

Recognizing the student can thus entail conveying that the teacher has listened to and remembers what the student has said earlier. It can also entail recognizing the student as someone outside her/his role as a student. Gunilla tells the story of a former student who was rarely present in class, but who she would run into after the last class of the week when both of them were on the way home; on such occasions she would call out with a friendly comment like: “Have a nice weekend, what are you going to do?” This was something that he remembered when they met years later, at which time he said: “You were the only one who always talked to me when I came to school.” 1-305 Her story thus involved her recognition of him as someone other than a failed student – a recognition that appears to have been extremely meaningful for him. Gunilla was happy to have been remembered in this way, but notes that she was unaware of the deep impression this had made when he was a student.

Anders argues that students’ names are crucial, and makes the effort to learn how to perfectly pronounce their foreign names because he views these as part of their identity. Cessa says that when she listens to the student, she feels that she gets something in return – in for example the glimpse in someone’s eye when they have found something out. Time for one-on-one interaction seems to be important for recognition of individual students. Gunilla works with students who have failed secondary school. She says that
her students appreciate the closeness and the way in which the teachers are always present and there for them:

G: We [the teachers] can't have our days stuffed with teaching, but we are together with the students and we call it just-being time — quality time. And maybe it's not the lessons, but this in-between time, that matters the most: that you always have the time to grab someone and sit down to talk if you notice that something is the matter; you can always finish a conversation with a student. You can always do that. It's fantastic. [You] can't do that in the compulsory school when you have 30 students and it's off to the next lesson [...] [Here] you become very close to each other. It is so important. 1-284-87

She experiences that now she has time for students and for conveying recognition, which had been difficult under other circumstances in school.115

Reasonable demands

Not only teachers but students are human. During the observation, Sten jokingly said to the students that he had squeezed all the juice out of these oranges (the students) and that it was time to end. He says that he did not want to go ahead when the students were exhausted: “But it’s about noticing it as an adult then. That they actually don’t have that much more to give here, and that it will only be painful for both parties if you are to push this harder.” 2-334 Sten argued that if he would have pushed harder even after noticing that the students ran out of steam, they could think something like, “school is the worst thing ever, hate going there”. Or even worse, they could end up skipping school entirely, if they have the nerve. He thus made a connection between him making reasonable demands and the students’ attendance in and enjoyment of school. Johan says that after having built positive relationships, the temptation to try to accomplish everything has to be counteracted: asking for too much may destroy the positive results that have already been achieved.

Human relationships

The fallibility of humans is also addressed. As mentioned above some of the informants talk of apologizing to students when they have had wrongful perceptions of them, as a way of regaining trust. Many, for example Cessa, Maria, Lena, Johan, Anders and Gunilla, also bring up the willingness to admit mistakes and imperfection as a means for modeling to the students that they are all human, and humans make mistakes. Cessa argues that by showing her weaknesses to her students she emboldens them to show theirs.

115 It could be argued that this is not what teachers are there to do and that other professional groups are better suited to perform her task. Here, I will leave it as an open question.
AF: When you say that “it is good to show my weaknesses”… what is it good for?

C: I think that if you have the courage to ask… about stupid things or have the courage to say that you don’t know, then you can get an answer that allows you to move on, to learn even more. […] [When] I show that I am a human who makes mistakes, then they are able to show that they are not perfect. [This helps them] to feel secure that there’s no harm in giving the wrong answer, especially in front of their classmates. In language education this is extremely important, that they have the courage […] to say the wrong thing. 1-57-59

In this way, Cessa argues that being unafraid to display and admit fallibility promotes student learning. Maria, on the other hand, connects this teacher approach to freedom of thought. When asked why she supposes it to be all right for the teacher to make a mistake or voice a foolish thought she says: "I don’t want the children who have been in my class to step out as twenty quiet, square students; [rather, I want them to] have been in an environment where it is okay to be [themselves] and to develop [themselves].”1-70

According to Johan, daring to make mistakes is connected to creativity and the breaking of such patterns as those related to gender. He argues that, hopefully, the students will see that it is not such a dangerous thing. Adrian uses fallibility as a deliberate strategy:

A: I often play the buffoon during lessons. […] I do that a bit consciously in order to make them feel that it isn’t so damned bad, to put a foot in it and be a bit silly. You can be like that if you are secure in yourself. 2-90-91

Being fallible, in the sense of being vulnerable, is also illustrated by Cessa: she was provoked by her students to the edge of saying something that she would regret, so she left the room; when she returned a while later the class was quiet. She made a re-start and the day ended well. This is also a way of showing humanity – i.e., showing that there is a limit to the provocations one is capable of tolerating. Leaving the room could be viewed as showing vulnerability, but also as demonstrating that she was unable to handle the situation, and thus had to walk out. It could also be viewed as an attempt to defuse a conflict in a way that would not harm the ones involved.

**Humane relationships (empathic)**

Acting humanely entails showing a willingness to bend the rules a bit on behalf of the student – i.e., to place concern for the student over and above the enforcing of rules. Gunilla makes it a habit of telling students, who may be absent due to various personal problems, that they are always welcome to
come to school. If a student says that s/he feels downhearted s/he is allowed to sit privately and quietly away from the others. But it is a move that can make the teacher vulnerable to exploitation. Erik explains that once, after being soft with a student who was not working he sensed that the student had sneered at him; for Erik, this incident resulted in his becoming more strict and tough. Making oneself vulnerable thus requires the teacher to trust in the benevolence of the students. Although the relationship is mutual in several respects, the informants seem to presume that their modeling of vulnerability demonstrates to the students that it is safe for them to appear vulnerable as well, which can sometimes be a precondition for learning. Gunilla's perceives her students to be generally disappointed with both school and the adult world; thus her main objective at the beginning of a new school year is to convey to her students that adults, and especially teachers, are also human.

Personal and/or professional?

In their practice, informants vary in terms of the extent to which they draw on their experiences outside of school. The aim of doing so seems to be to establish closeness by drawing attention to such common experiences as of having seen a particular movie or having visited a particular place. Eric mentions the idea of being personal without being private. There is an often mentioned notion of a private self and a professional self, but the borders become blurred and the informants struggle in their descriptions, like Erik: “The relationships with students, you’re to be natural but you’re not to be a friend. You can’t be, you can’t use that word. But [you should] have a good relationship in another way.” Maria has a similar notion of not being a friend while still having a close relationship, explaining that “it’s about being a human.” Cessa intentionally switches from her outsider-role as teacher to join as one of the gang in various student games and activities. One of her aims is to make her students feel comfortable.

C: When we were reading riddles […], then I’m there, raising my hand, “I know, I know!” When I act like them they forget that I am an adult and somehow they dare to show… the way they are […] Sometimes I am an authoritative leader because I need to be, but sometimes… I can be, on their level – be like a child and play with them. 2-252-254

Her view is that her students are able to intuitively differentiate between when she is acting on their level, and when not. It is something that neither

\[116\] It should be noted that she teaches upper secondary school students, and that upper secondary school is not part of the compulsory school system. Because of this there is always the risk that students will choose to drop out. Her course of action can, thus, be interpreted as a way of keeping them in school; staying at home can turn into dropping out.
she nor her students consciously think about. During the interview, when giving an example of a line she would use when switching back from play to work, the shift in the tone of voice was very distinct. The fact that neither she nor her students have a problem handling the switch could indicate the existence of a silent, and perhaps unconscious, agreement regarding how it works.

**Humane and professional – a contradiction in terms?**

Being humane was sometimes contrasted with being a teacher. It was a surprise that some of the informants actually resisted being “teacher-like”. It was as if the word teacher had connotations that they preferred not to identify themselves with. The first of two examples comes from Gunilla:

G: It has to do with whether they perceive you as genuine, authentic, or whether you just come in and give a lecture, are a teacher [...] a lecturer, then it’s just one way communication. [...] And to be sensitive to a situation, a teacher doesn’t do that” 2-96-98 (bold added)

In this example, Gunilla connects the word teacher to the absence of two-way communication. The teacher lectures without giving heed to the students. She also says that in the small school she now works in, her students view her as an ordinary adult rather than a teacher. The next example comes from Adrian. He had once run into the parent of his former student, and the parent recalled that the daughter had made the commented that “Adrian, he isn’t [like] a teacher.” 2-188 (bold added) Adrian took this as somewhat of a compliment. He also used the word “knowledge-vomiter” to indicate the type of teacher he did not want to be. Maria explains: “There are some who I feel come here and put on the teacher coat, and then it becomes a role. That role has been a bit difficult for me to assume.” 1-42 There seems to be an ambiguity residing in their conception of teacher professionalism which is strikingly illuminated by Anders:

A: As I lower my guard, they lower their guard; I guess that goes for relationships on the whole – that you somehow meet each other halfway.

AF: Mm. And if you were to not give anything but just sort of...

A: Be “professional.” (Makes quotation marks with his fingers.) 2-30-32

Here Anders words connect the notion of being a professional teacher with the notion of keeping one’s distance, of not meeting students halfway, while his gesture resists that image. Cessa seems to connect the word “teacher” with perfection: “[I think it’s important that they see that I’m] not just a teacher, that I am a human too, that I have faults and flaws, that I sort of become real
to them in a way." 1-264 In this quotation, the concept of teacher is narrower and placed in tension with being humane. These examples indicate that there is a tension between the negative conception of the teacher and what the informants perceive to be their task.

“Still have some ‘I can’ left.” Theme Three – negotiations of the student’s self-image

The third theme is somewhat different from the others, since it deals with the student’s self-image – i.e., her/his relationship with her-/himself. Specifically, it concerns the student's perception of her-/himself, which, in keeping with the relational approach, is viewed as being affected by participation in school practices.117 The work that the informants direct towards improving this relationship is recurring and runs through many of the stories. While one could argue that this relationship is separate from the teacher-student relationship, both teacher and student participate in school practices, and this influences the student's sense of self. In this and other ways, teachers are an important part of the educational process. Teachers work with what I term the student’s self image – or, as the informants put it, with her or his self-esteem and self-confidence. Johan perceives of it as a major task: “You try in every moment [that you are] close to a child to… how can I put it?: to lift them; to get them to trust in their own ability.” 1-215 This practice can be an end in itself, but can also become a means for the attainment of other ends. The results show that ends may be general, such as student wellbeing and human flourishing, but also specific, in order to facilitate or render possible certain forms of learning. They also indicate that working with a student’s self-confidence and self-esteem takes place in conjunction with many other school activities; at the same time, there is an awareness on the part of the informants that experiences which diminish self-confidence and self-esteem can also be a regular part of a student’s everyday school life.

Reasonable expectations of accomplishment

Earlier in this chapter, reasonable demands were described as contributing to the teacher-student relationship. At that point, the informants were attempting to attain a sense within their students that the demands placed upon them were reasonable, arguing that the relationship improves when this is achieved. Here the focus turns to the student’s view of her-/himself, and what s/he believes s/he can accomplish. Cessa argues:

117 See for instance, Chapter 4, sections under The educational environment for more on the influence of practice on the self.
C: If I set the goals too high or have things that are too difficult for them to work on, then they become insecure and feel like: "This is impossible, I will never be able to make it." 1-163

In other words, a teacher’s asking too much of a student may also have a negative impact on that student’s view of her/his own competence. A practice in which the teacher asks too much thus carries the potential of rendering the student emotionally insecure. Cessa views this as detrimental for learning. She makes an interesting distinction between knowledge and goals within the range of 1) “something that they actually know [and 2)] that at least I know they are able to do”. 1-162 In other words, there may be a discrepancy between the student’s and the teacher’s view of what s/he can accomplish, and implicitly between the student’s belief about what s/he can accomplish and her/his factual capacity. Low self-esteem and self-confidence thus entails the possibility that the student does not believe in her-/himself enough to accomplish what s/he is factually capable of accomplishing. Indeed it may be this very tendency that Cessa is attempting to counteract.

But the issue is even more complex, because there is always the question, “reasonable according to whom”? Johan wants his students to be satisfied by doing their best, with the meaning of “best” being established via negotiation between him and them. Beyond this, however, there is the non-negotiable requirement that levels of success (and failure) be expressed through the receipt of a grade. 118 In other words, what is reasonable in the classroom context may still not be enough according to grading criteria.

A will to try

Previously, the informants described being human, in terms of being fallible. Here the focus will be on the informants efforts to bolster their students’ will to try, despite their fallibility. For Lena and Maria, a learning environment in which it is permissible for students’ to make mistakes serves to heightens their will to try. This will to try can influence not only the performance of certain class-related tasks, but the entirety of the school experience. As noted by Adrian, low self-esteem and self-confidence can undermine a student’s general ability to enjoy going to school and learning about things. Lena puts it like this: “If you [feel like you] always have to be right, you become afraid to try too.” 2-208 That is, in the course of teaching something new, teachers may ask their students to do things that the students themselves think they

118 In the compulsory school assessment is done continuously through personal progress reviews (IUP), and after year eight the grade notations used are: Pass (G), Pass with distinction (VG) and Pass with special distinction (MVG). For grades (VG) and (MVG) there are national criteria. No grade is awarded if the pupil fails to achieve the objectives in the subject. See: http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/2665/a/15012 [Retrieved 091114]. However, in everyday discussions the word Fail (IG) is often used.
are incapable of doing; this is why having a will to try despite the risk of failure is so important. 

If students view tasks as being impossible, they may refuse to attempt them. In this regard, Cessa describes her attempt to encourage a student unwilling to draw pictures; after much hard work and some signs of progress, another adult made a derogatory remark about one of his drawings, to the effect that it looked like the output of a much younger child; after this incident, the student refused to try at all. In other words, the damage to his self-confidence and will to try resulting from the negative remark not only closed the way to his immediate attempt to try, but also closed the way to his making further progress. If it is indeed true that a will to try is a pre-condition for learning, this may explain why the informants’ strive in different ways to develop and sustain it. Cessa spends time adapting her material to her students, trying to find something for everyone – i.e., something they believe to be worthwhile. This is one thing, she argues, that makes them willing to try.

**A stock of self-confidence**

There seems to be a notion that both success and failure spills over into other areas of a student’s life. Lena, who works with the youngest group of children, explains why she consistently works to make her students feel that they know things:

L: Because if you feel that you know things, you feel that you know more things, and then you [build] good self-confidence, and then you feel good about yourself, and then you're nice to others and it generates a kind of… synergy. 2-58

This, argues Lena, is the reason she avoids telling students they are wrong. In addition, if a student is having a problem in some area, she works to build upon that student’s strengths, so that s/he experiences the feeling of knowing things. Her point is that the ideas that students carry about themselves greatly influence the outcomes of their lives and work. This is why she stresses those practices that help to strengthen her students. As with their earlier depiction of a stock of trust, there is among some of the informants the notion of a stock of self-confidence, which is increased through the experiences of success and decreased through experiences of failure. A good supply of self-confidence enables the student to better weather occasional failures, making them less detrimental. In this regard, Johan explains how he thinks that this works for a student:

J: “If I have the sense of ‘I can do it’, then I dare to make occasional mistakes. If I don’t have that sense, then every mistake becomes a confirmation […] that: ‘I
can't do it’. But if I sense that I can, and make mistakes then I still have some ‘I
can’ left.” 1-233-234

This stock of “I can” is something the informants want to help the student
build, so that s/he is better able to handle the bumpy road of life. For
instance, during the first year of upper secondary school, Lotta designed
exercises primarily intended to provide the student with that experience of:
“I am good enough! I can! I have something that the others want to listen to.” 2-
21 She also views courage and self-confidence as a precondition for the
performance of many other tasks.

Compensation for negative aspects of school practice

Some of the informants mentioned wanting to stress the strengths and
downplay the weaknesses of their students. This was most apparent with
Gunilla, whose students had failed to qualify for upper secondary school. She
says that “the only thing that they are really good at, […] the only thing they
know that they can do, it is to fail. That, they’re terribly good at.” 1-256-57

During my observation, Gunilla went over an English test with each of her
students. In doing so, she consistently praised them for correct answers and
downplayed those that were wrong. In two separate cases, for example,
Gunilla sympathized with her student’s inability to provide correct answers
by attributing this to the fact that the student had not had a chance to absorb
the material because s/he had been absent when it was covered in class. To a
third student, Gunilla explained that the questions he had failed to answer
were especially tricky, and to a fourth that she could understand how s/he
had reasoned even if the answer was incorrect and so forth.

Gunilla argues that many of the students that come to her school arrive
with the experience of having been ignored, neglected and abandoned by
everyone in the adult world: even their parents often line up with the
teachers and headmasters. She argues that after having experienced this level
of abandonment, a secure environment in which they feel fairly treated is an
absolute precondition for these students to even try to attend school and to
learn.

G: I don’t think you can learn anything […] [if you don’t] understand that you
are worth something. Then suddenly, I think, the things you learn at school
[…] automatically has an application [in your future, and you think]: “This is
for me, this I can use.” 1-261-262

For Gunilla, in other words, self-esteem necessarily precedes learning, which
may explain her actions in relation to the test. Gunilla notes that the students
in her school have expressed appreciation for the fact that teachers are
always at hand and that they strive to establish close, respectful and accepting
relationships with their students. When all these factors are in place, she argues, this sets off a positive spiral that is conducive to education.

A sense of acceptance

Earlier in this chapter, recognition was discussed in the context of establishing a relationship with students. Here, I discuss the function of recognition for students’ self-image. When discussing this matter, several informants mention wanting their students to feel that they are “good enough as they are”, and explain the means whereby they attempt to instill this sense within them. One such means concerns the manner in which they talk to students. Maria and Lena explain that they speak to their students in the same way that they speak to adults. Maria argues that this contributes to the student’s sense that “I am good enough just the way I am”. Implicit in this statement is the acknowledgement that the opposite can occur as well – i.e., that when a teacher speaks to students in a condescending way, this can lower self-esteem and leave them feeling that they are not good enough the way they are. Several informants highlight the value of listening; for instance, Erik:

E: After a couple of years I realized that, [listening to] students is an extremely important task [for] a teacher. […] When the student notices that the teacher is listening to [her/him], it becomes a tremendously strong force [that] strengthens the student’s self-esteem. 1-176-178

As with the previous example, the notion that listening strengthens self-esteem carries the implication that not listening weakens it. Johan talks about the strain that school may place on students, and his role in counteracting it. The strains include lack of encouragement, neglect, bullying and competition for getting the highest grade. He also sees that students can make poor choices at earlier stages of school which may reduce their possibilities in later stages. These various internal and external factors can impede a student’s ability to do her/his best. Johan considers it a primary task to do all that he can to counteract these impediments.

“T’ll sit out here.” Example One – corridor negotiations of authority

In this section I present an elaborate example of one informant’s relational practices. The purpose is to bring out features of negotiation which better lend themselves to a single narration through the provision of additional context and other information. The informant is ‘Adrian’; his background is here presented in a short vignette: Adrian is approaching 50 years of age and
works as a math/science teacher in a secondary school. He declares that if anyone had told him when he was in secondary school that he would one day become a teacher, he would have laughed: “What, me? Not on your life! And yet now I’m a teacher.” 1-46 He did not attend upper secondary school, but completed municipal adult education at around age thirty, after which he got a job as a supply teacher. Eventually he went into teacher education, and has now been working as a teacher for almost ten years. When I inquired about the influences that have been important to his work, he especially mentioned those children that have had a hard time in school. “Because they suffer, the ones that hang about in the corridor and don’t get anything done; that are called brats or devils. Even if they’re not that at all. There are no such kids, I think.” 1-76-77 When asked about a concrete example of what he would do to influence and help one of these students, and about what kinds of indications he got of any results, Adrian started telling the story of a secondary school student that he, at first, mostly met outside the classroom.

Adrian and his student Lisa

From the very beginning Adrian could understand that Lisa was a troubled, sad – and perhaps even a depressed – girl. During his math lessons, she would simply sit in the corridor, not wanting to attend:

A: “Me. I’ll sit out here,” she would say. “No, but I would appreciate it if-,” “I’ll sit out here.” And then she left. If I said anything else she went crazy. [I chose not to pursue this further at that time and left her outside. Instead] I have to try slowly and steadily, to build a stock of trust. That’s how I feel all the time. […] They have to be able to trust that I’m benevolent. 1-123-126

Here Adrian indicates that rather than forcing the issue of Lisa attending class, he would sometimes join her as she sat in the corridor, after judging that the timing was right. During these encounters he would avoid talking about math, and instead would listen, casually converse, have a laugh or two and then leave. Sometimes the parting words would be of the kind that made Lisa think: “Well, he is… human” 1-158

Beyond the intention of casually slipping into talks with Lisa and getting a feel for the situation, Adrian had no master plan regarding how their conversation should go. He was trying to find out what works in making contact while not pushing too hard. His corridor talks were part of an overall strategy of involvement in positive, informal interaction with Lisa, disconnected from the subject matter, but aimed at building a closer, more trusting relationship. Adrian connects the establishment of this kind of relationship not only to Lisa’s passing the math course, but also to wider, extracurricular, ends such as her growing as a person and developing into a good human being. As he sees it, if Lisa can come to the point of regarding
him as a good person who wishes her well, this will motivate and inspire her to do well before him. After their corridor talks had continued for some time, Lisa one day entered the doorway of Adrian’s classroom – an event that he was careful not to mark with a great deal of fanfare.\footnote{When asked about his views on what may have caused Lisa to come to class, Adrian answered by saying that he thought she had made some sort of decision that she needed a passing grade, because she then saw some kind of future for herself.}

A: If I walk up to her and exclaim, “How nice of you to come, that’s great!”, then […] she’ll just turn around and walk out, […] [thinking] “I don’t want everyone to notice me, watching me come in.” It probably takes a huge effort […] to come into the classroom and sit down. I can sense a student thinking: “Do Not Talk To Me. Say Nothing to me. (Underlines the first words with the edge of his hand against the table.) Leave me alone. I promise to sit here and try to do something.”

Even after Lisa began attending Adrian’s math lessons, he continued to maintain their corridor talks and to build upon the positive trustful relationship that had developed between them. According to Adrian, if he had changed the dynamic at that point by attempting to scold or demean Lisa, this would have resulted in her once again avoiding his class:

A: Because if I have a real stock of trust then I can make a fool of myself occasionally, too. Then I can be a bit nutty and abrupt, and say stupid things. I know that there’s a store of “trust tokens” that are sometimes consumed, but I still have some left.

As Adrian sees it, maintaining a positive relationship with a student allows for occasional mistakes without risking damage to the relationship. During lessons, Adrian also made sure that the tasks that he gave Lisa were reasonable and varied. She continued to attend Adrian’s class, and began asking questions; gradually her mood improved and she was eventually able to pass math. Recently, Lisa brought Adrian an old practice test containing the circles she had drawn around the problems she had solved, but had found difficult. On the test she had written a request for more such practice problems, which he interpreted as an expression of Lisa’s will to learn and succeed. Looking back and remembering how, at the start, Lisa used to swear at him on sight, this development made Adrian feel good. This story can be viewed, in its own right, as an example of how a teacher establishes and maintains a positive relationship with a student. In the following chapter, it will be revisited with the aim further analytical development.
“He’s always in here, in my head.” Example Two – embodied negotiations

This second example, provided by the informant ‘Johan’, is presented in order to highlight the role of the body in teachers' relational practices with individual students. The following story by Johan richly describes embodied relational practices. Johan is over 50 years old, and has been a preschool teacher for 25 years. He currently works with six-year old children in a preschool class located within a primary school. His decision to enter preschool teacher education came after a period of working with female patients in a mental hospital. Johan explains: “One day it sort of hit me: if you want to do something to improve the lot of human beings, you have start when their still at a young age.”1-27 His strongest driving force is the desire to reach out to children who have problems, and he is convinced that he has had, and will continue to have, a positive influence on the lives of at least some of these children because of the kind of person he is. When I asked him about what he normally does to establish a positive relationship when meeting with a new group of students, he provided numerous examples of practice, one of which concerned building trust into the relationship. Johan also mentioned that they dealt with students that had been diagnosed with various conditions,120 and that the personal relationships these children develop with their teachers is of great significance to them. When I asked Johan if he would mind providing an example of such a relationship, he responded by recounting the story of Kalle.

Johan and his student Kalle

Johan and his fellow preschool teachers always meet with their future students some months before the beginning of preschool class. During this preliminary meeting, Johan immediately sensed that Kalle was taking special, almost exclusive, notice of him, even to the point of being oblivious to other students that were also involved in the event. In response, Johan decided from the start to keep Kalle physically close, grant him special leeway, and choose his words and intonations with great care and awareness:

J: [If I’m trying to moderate an action:] I can start off acting firmly but not sternly – not with a sharp toned voice, as if I were annoyed. I might say, for instance: “Hey, sit down now”. (In a low but stern voice). 2-94-95

Gradually, Johan will become more insistent, without pushing Kalle's limit to the point of breakdown. He explains his approach as trying to maintain control of the situation while simultaneously being responsive to its

120 Such as ADD, autism and so forth.
spontaneous unfolding. Even before his first encounter with Kalle, Johan had in place a broad outline of how to proceed with such children. This he had derived partly from previous experience, partly from reflection, and partly from having read related literature. Back at school, Johan began to outline a plan for their next encounter; this plan ranged from spending extra time with Kalle to making sure that he would be the first to arrive at such daily events as the handing out of fruit. Johan argues that this sort of “one step ahead” approach helps to forestall conflicts that could eventually harm their relationship.

During school gatherings, Johan would arrange to sit next to Kalle and occasionally place a reassuring hand upon his shoulder – something that he has found to be calming for most students. He also evinced a greater degree of tolerance towards Kalle, arguing that he sometimes required a bit more latitude in order to unwind. During transitions, such as those between gatherings and other activities, he provided Kalle with special support by clearly indicating what was expected of him. According to Johan, this made it easier for Kalle to conduct himself appropriately, thus reducing the potential for negative contacts. During outings, Johan encouraged Kalle to remain close by, so that if things started to unravel he would be at hand to offer support. Johan believes that this type of extra regard – which at times consisted only of a touch, a whisper or a closer presence – afforded Kalle a more positive experience and a greater opportunity to succeed. Johan describes himself as having “the eye” – i.e., the ability to grasp the relevant aspects of a situation, which comes after many years of teaching.

J: I don’t consciously think about keeping a closer eye on Kalle, but I have Kalle in here. (Points to his head). He is somewhere close to the surface – in the eye, in the ear, in my consciousness. It sounds a bit corny, but I think there is a subtle form of communication that still can’t be talked about scientifically. But it’s there. […] I know Kalle is there, and he also knows that I am there – somewhere he senses that I am there. 1-320-323

Johan explains that he and Kalle have gradually developed an apparent physical connection, something that I noticed during the following observation (made at the start of a daily morning gathering). Kalle was leaning against Johan as they sat in a circle with the other students:

Johan says good morning to each of the children, using their names […] while looking at them in the eyes. Each then gives him a good morning back. After this he tells them that they are going to sing a song about a willow. He flips through the pages of his binder, finds the song, and then begins to sing

121 The issue of bodily contact between teachers and students may be controversial in various contexts. In the context where Johan works this did not seem to be the case, although he mentioned that debates about pedophiles have made being male in preschool somewhat difficult at times.

122 A very well-known song in Swedish: “Sov du lilla videung”
together with the children. Kalle, however, [...] remains silent. Halfway through the song, Johan throws a quick glance at Kalle, but does nothing else. Kalle begins to sing.

In the second interview, I recounted this moment, which Johan recognized. He noted that such encounters are a result of having established a relationship by being firm, yet adaptable, to each individual. During the process of establishing this relationship, which he says occurs rather quickly, he draws upon his knowledge of Kalle, as well as his previous experience with similar students. In the beginning Johan initiated most of the encounters, but gradually Kalle started to come to him. He also says that he uses their already established connection when they work on such things as concentration, perception, coordination and listening.

Johan is also very aware of where he places himself physically. Putting his hand on Kalle’s shoulder is Johan’s way of saying that he is there for him, which according to Johan builds trust and confidence.

J: In a way I think that there is something [subtle] where we mediate this through presence or physical contact. It is not a tight muscle one leans against, but a relaxed muscle. You can feel when shaking hands, so much more is happening than just saying good day. Through my manner, and my way of acting very consciously, this trust between us can develop. 2-76-78

Johan argues that timing – e.g., knowing that a break is needed and when it needs to end – comes mainly from experience. He furthermore notes that while the relationship with children such as Kalle is largely built upon trust, it also contains a certain element of authority. Although the story stands on its own as an example of relational practice, it will be further analyzed in the following chapter.

Summary

Teachers’ relational practices of establishing and maintaining relationships with individual students for educational purposes, as represented in this chapter, have included practices of negotiating relationships in which individual students trust their teachers and perceive them as humane. It has also included work directed towards improving students’ relationships with themselves – their self-image, or self-confidence and self-esteem. The trust of the student is singled out as a vital precondition for being able to teach. The gist of the informants’ argument is that students tend to trust them when they are perceived as just, benevolent and comprehensible, and that too much reprimand or harsh criticism tends to reduce the level of this trust. In order to correct students without depriving them of their dignity, the informants often resort to humor. Trust is sometimes viewed as an asset to
be gained or lost in relation to individual students, and the accumulation of a
great stock of such trust is often seen to be the result of numerous positive
interactions. According to many informants, when a teacher’s cumulative
stock of trust is high s/he is better able to reach through to students, even
though s/he may sometimes make mistakes.

Humane relationships are also perceived as being developed over time. Moreover, informants consider it relationally important to show that they are
human, both in the sense that they make mistakes and in the sense that they
can listen to their students and empathize with their struggles in school. They
also indicate that it is important to help students feel recognized, and to
make sure that their demands are reasonable. Several of the informants
resisted being viewed as the kind of person that gets carried away with
her/his position, considering it vital that they be authentic, multifaceted,
flesh-and-blood persons that are unafraid to display the full range of their
humanity in response to the needs and requirements of their students. In this
connection, they tend to regard certain usages of the terms “teacher” and
“professional” as distortions that obscure important features of teaching. Thus
they are inclined to distance themselves from these sorts of terminologies.

The informants also show concern for, and work to improve, each
student’s self-image. A good self-image is viewed as a precondition for being
able to tackle the different demands made in school. Here, there are
interesting discrepancies on several levels. That is, the teacher and the
student may disagree about what constitutes a reasonable demand, something
that can also remain unknown until the attempt is actually made. Students
that are burdened with a bad self-image may refuse to attempt a task that
they are factually capable of executing, and it is this very tendency that the
informants are endeavoring to counteract. Moreover, the refusal to execute
tasks closes the road to further learning. That is why a will to try in the face
of uncertain success is considered important, and also why the informants
desire students to develop a good self-image and a trustful attitude towards
teachers. They are intent on encouraging their students to be satisfied with
doing their best. The cultivation of this attitude, however, sometimes
conflicts – or does not fit – in terms of the grade requirements of the NAfE,
and thus can become a complicating factor in this practice.

In the extended examples presented in this chapter, both Adrian and
Johan were seen to be working hard and purposefully towards attaining
positive relationships with their students. In the first of these, Adrian could
be seen dealing with Lisa, a secondary school student who refused to attend
his math classes. His approach was to establish a casual connection with her
outside the context of the classroom lesson. Occasionally sitting with Lisa in
the corridor, he would talk about anything and everything except for the
subject of math. In this way he hoped to gradually build a relationship in
which he was seen as a just, humane, empathic and trustworthy human
being. After many such causal encounters over a long period of time, Lisa
began attending class and executing her math assignments. Eventually she
was able to pass the subject. While Adrian’s relational practices were
obviously connected to this specific end, they carried wider implications relative to Lisa’s overall wellbeing, both in the present and in the future.

In the second example, Johan identified Kalle, a preschool class student, as being in need of his special attention, and thereafter decided to use various embodied means to keep Kalle close and establish a meaningful connection that would help him manage everyday life in the preschool class. To achieve this, Johan relied upon relational practices involving such features as physical touch and proximity, tone of voice, sense of timing, and the development of “an eye” for Kalle, addressing the unique needs of the situation through the forging of a productive teacher-student relationship.

The themes and examples that have been presented in this chapter all serve to represent relational practices that the informants experience as important and purposeful aspects of their teaching. In representing the practices by which informants’ establish and maintain meaningful relationships with individual students my aim has been to stay as close as possible to the actual voices of the informants, relying as far as possible upon their own words. In the following chapter I intend to compliment these voices with my own, as well as with those coming from theory. The intention is to deepen our understanding and sense of these practices.
7 Adding analytical layers to the accounts

In this chapter I add analytical layers that deepen our understanding of the first aspect of teachers’ relational practices: the establishment and maintenance of relationships with individual students. Towards this end, the two more extensive stories that were presented in Chapter Six are here further analyzed so as to obtain a heightened comprehension of the informants’ task perception.\(^{123}\) A theoretical concept is applied in a second analysis of each story, chosen for its ability to explain and elucidate significant relational processes in that story. The first concept is authority,\(^ {124}\) which is used to analyze Adrian’s story, and the second is embodiment,\(^ {125}\) which is applied to Johan’s story.

Building from these analyses, and from the themes in the previous chapter, I introduce and elaborate on the conception of an educational relationship: a negotiated and dynamic relationship that is conceived as a precondition for the fulfillment of the task of teaching. Different features of the practices intended to establish and maintain the educational relationship are addressed, such as the negotiation of authority relationships and being open to the student’s own meaning-making and self-image. I touch upon various conditions for establishing and maintaining educational relationships, and conclude with a discussion on how to conceive of teachers’ personal and professional selves. On the basis of this discussion, I suggest replacing this dichotomist conception of teacher professionality with one that incorporates the teacher’s relationally created responses to situations in practice.

Adrian’s practice and task perception

Adrian’s relational practices, featured in the above referenced story, are motivated by a specific task perception. The practices by which Adrian seeks to improve the quality of student-teacher relationships are intended by him to promote several ends at once. They range from more narrow goals (such as subject matter learning or making passing grades) to those that are broader (such as fostering democratic citizens or furthering human progress

\(^{123}\) See Chapter 5, section The analysis process under Stories and task perception.

\(^{124}\) See Chapter 4, section Authority.

\(^{125}\) See Chapter 3, section Embodied aspects of teachers’ knowledge.
general). Although these ends apply to all of his students, those students that are having a particularly hard time in school are of special concern to him. Adrian constructs the problem that some students find it difficult to cope with school, and has taken as his task the challenge of helping them to succeed – to “make it”, both as persons and as students. His perception is guided by a value judgment that provides him with a strong incentive for helping.126 His underlying assumptions, which frame the problem as being relational rather than individual, inform his task perception, resulting in the following practice:

Seeking positive relationships, praise is something that Adrian generously employs, assuming that it helps students to grow. On the other hand, he attempts to keep scolding to a minimum, believing its consequences to be largely negative. In order to help his students, he attempts to find the time to have personal talks with them, preferably one-on-one. Adrian views these talks as means of building trust into the relationship, so that the student considers Adrian to be a just person who wishes her/him well. Even if he says that his actions depend on the situation and the student, Adrian’s general attempt is to find a place where he and the student can talk in peace and quiet. He asks the student about how s/he views her/his life now and in the future. He also asks about the obstacles faced by the student in terms of learning course content. His attempt is to analyze the situation together with the student, to involve her/him in finding ways that matters can be improved – e.g., by concentrating more during class. Starting with those things that work for the student, he collaborates to discover concrete solutions.

The talks involve listening to the student, and taking seriously whatever s/he has to say. Lesson time is generally quite busy, and thus most of these personal talks take place at other times. Adrian says that he mostly ‘steals’ from the time he would otherwise spend on lesson planning. (Slowly raising his arms he shows how the piles on his desk keep growing). But on the other hand he deliberately prioritizes spending time in the corridors, assuming that it is valuable, and that the students value it too. This can be interpreted as an example of how a teacher’s task perception directs practice by assigning different values to different tasks at different times. That is, if the situation had been different, his priorities might also have changed accordingly.

The practice of interacting informally outside of the classroom situation, through personal talks, listening, and using praise, are all means by which Adrian establishes and maintains certain kinds of relationships with individual students. Apart from being ends in themselves, these relationships can also be conceived as means to several other ends – from math learning to students’ personal growth. From a temporal vantage point, Adrian seems

126 In the specific case of Lisa, the problem that Adrian constructed can be inferred from the transcripts: a) she was not feeling well (she was depressed); b) she saw no future for herself; and, c) the relationships that she had were not supportive of learning – neither her relationship with him, nor (possibly) with the other students, nor with the subject matter in question (i.e., math).
prepared to invest a great amount of time and effort to establish relationships with students that are having a hard time in school, as he assumes that such relationships have a long-term positive influence. The practice of establishing relationships takes time in two senses. The first is a literal sense, understood in terms of the factual amount of minutes spent talking – minutes that Adrian finds difficult to spare during lesson time, when one-on-one attention must take a back seat to other priorities and ends. However, because he is nonetheless convinced that these talks are of great value, he earmarks other times – such as recess and/or planning times – to devote to this task. The second, or longitudinal, sense concerns the fact that relationships are not established over night, but rather built up gradually over time and through repeated interaction. Recognizing this fact, Adrian has no expectation of fast results.

Spatially, while Adrian’s interaction with students mostly takes place within the classroom, meeting students in spaces that are outside this context – such as corridors – provides opportunities for informal interaction that can contribute to a positive relationship. Adrian’s task perception thus transforms the corridor into an important alternate work space. His belief in the validity of his theories-in-action, which also serves to motivate him, is based on the perception that his students continuously work during lessons, and that they willingly come to him with their questions. Since he notices that students also attain the will to try, one can say that motivation works reciprocally. Watching positive development in students that were once down and out constitutes a personal motivation for him. His assumption is that when the student perceives and appreciates that he is concerned about how s/he is doing, s/he will reciprocate by doing well in front of him. According to Adrian, this is to say that the improved relationship serves to motivate a student. His assumption is that students in general do not always perceive teachers as people who are concerned about students. Moreover, teacher actions can contribute to students’ perceptions of lack of concern on the teachers’ part. Adrian mentions actions such as offending students, or presuming that they are lazy and unwilling to do their best.

Adrian returns to words like delicate and careful, which is interpreted as a perception that it is his task to be respectful of students, to include the quality of relationships with his students into his concern, and to recognize the consequences that the practice of schooling (which they are obliged to take part in) may have for them. He is mindful of his actions, and in addition he is aware of the fact that all situations can be perceived in differing ways by him and the student, perceptions that have an impact on their relationship. Neglecting to reflect on students’ perceptions would entail running ones own course and running over the students. However, as he connects his own well-being and development as a teacher to students’ development and their trusting relationships with him, this is not a viable option.
Authority in Adrian’s practice

In order to deepen the analysis, I return to Adrian’s story again, using the relational approach to authority as outlined earlier.\(^\text{127}\) I argue that from a relational perspective, negotiation can be used in the sense of teacher’s relational practices of negotiating relationships of authority with individual students. Here I draw mainly on Pace and Hemming’s as well as Burbules’ work on authority, since these provide tools for analyzing such negotiations. Earlier, I addressed the distinction drawn by these authors between traditional, legal-rational/bureaucratic, charismatic, dialogical and professional bases of legitimacy for authority.\(^\text{128}\) In her study, Pace (2003) discussed the problem of hybridized authority relations, where teachers’ directives and underpinnings are unclear. In these authority relations, teachers draw on a combination of orientations, creating ambiguous messages which undercut the significance of the subject matter. She holds that in the studied classes, “[i]nvesting in education is framed as an individual choice with individual consequences. Negotiations revolve around grades – in the higher track class raised by students and in the lower track class by the teacher – which implies weak professional legitimacy and weak intrinsic value of learning” (p. 1572).

Building from her argument, I suggest that hybridized authority relations may be indications of a mismatch between the bases of legitimacy claimed by the teacher and the students. In other words, the use of bureaucratic authority in relation to a student, such as threatening her/him with a bad grade if work is not done, is problematic when the student resists this kind of authority but responds to charismatic authority instead. The following analysis of Adrian’s story is framed as a negotiation of an authority relationship, where different bases of legitimacy are in play. I begin by pointing out that most negotiations of authority relationships between students and teachers are very subtle and require very little attention. Lisa does not act like the typical student, and the practice that Adrian describes is very demanding.

In the situation where Lisa refused to participate in his math class, Adrian made the judgment that confrontation or coercion, although it may have result in nonconsensual obedience, was not an appropriate means of inducing her to participate, and thus not an effective means of fulfilling the educational end he sought.\(^\text{129}\) Lisa’s refusal to participate could be indicating that she chose to make it clear that she did not consider his claims to authority, based on his position as a teacher, legitimate. In other words, a traditional authority relationship could not be established. Since neither

\(^{127}\) See Chapter 4, section on Authority.

\(^{128}\) Using violence in order to enforce something is not considered as using authority, since authority relations depend on consent. This is not to say that there is no inequality in power relations.

\(^{129}\) Giving up on her totally would not be considered professional, as would lowering demands in exchange for cooperation. Such exchanges could be described as the teacher authorizing as legitimate student claims of lowering their effort (provided that the demands were reasonable in the first place) which would not be in the best interest of the student.
getting a grade nor the intrinsic motivation of learning seemed important to her, bureaucratic or professional bases of legitimacy (cf Pace & Hemmings, 2006a), based on Adrian’s subject matter knowledge, could not be claimed by him. In order to help Lisa, Adrian was committed to establishing some kind of relationship with her, which he judged could be accomplished through interacting with her in the only place she agreed to – i.e., the corridor. It was also a place where negotiations could be privately conducted one-on-one, and not before the rest of the class.

By departing from the position of teacher, which Lisa refused in terms of both space and manner, Adrian’s actions can be interpreted as the initiation of a negotiation of authority. He conveyed to Lisa that he was not claiming any of the bases of legitimacy that she resisted, but wanted to enter into a relation of dialogue with her. Adrian claims that he did not enter with any fixed strategies or agendas: he resisted my interpretation that the talks in the corridor were directly aimed at getting Lisa to come to his lessons. His attitude indicates that his primary end was to establish the relationship in itself, which entails that their relationship was not dependent on math learning, but a state of being in dialogue that in itself constituted the enactment of an end, but which indirectly could result in achieving other ends as well. According to Nucci (2006, p. 713), teacher practices by which students experience “goodwill” during their time in school are important for students’ moral and social growth. One of Adrian’s ends was to establish trust, and he saw Lisa’s trust – her growing perception of him as a benevolent and just person – as something that would continue to develop over time.

As students sometimes experience teachers’ actions as violations, trust can also be built on the absence of violation. Adrian describes Lisa’s first entrance into the classroom as a vulnerable situation that called upon him to be very aware of his reactions, not expressing the joy he felt inside. If he had made a public display of his emotions, this would have drawn attention to Lisa’s situation in front of the class, which might have caused Lisa to feel as if her trust had been violated. Students can also experience teachers’ wrongful or distrustful perceptions of them, or lack of benevolence, as violations that cause damage to trustful relations. Lisa’s entering into the classroom can be interpreted as an act of negotiation, giving up her resistance by extending the already established relationship with Adrian to the classroom, and the practice of learning math. This would make her relationship with the teacher connected to her relation with the content he offers, as suggested by Bingham (2004). Assuming that her trust in Adrian was built from interaction,

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130 On the other hand, if the corridor talks had no other ends than to establish a relationship, they would not be considered professional.
131 Private dialogues with teachers could serve as vehicles for asking for help in a safe way, not risking public embarrassment (Raider-Roth, 2005b, p. 44).
132 The material cannot account for the source of influences; from Adrian or other sources, for instance Lisa’s own decision that she wanted to have a passing grade in this situation.
and depended to some degree on the fact that he listened to, recognized and showed concern for her, it constituted a *dialogical* basis of legitimacy for authority in their relationship (cf. Burbules, 1993).

Drawing on Pace and Hemmings (2006b, pp. 1-2), I view teacher authority as negotiated, dynamic and subject to various influences. Treating student trust as a basis for professional authority relationships means that loss of trust entails loss of authority. It also means that the dynamics of relationships renders them constantly open to renegotiation. However, the negotiations begin at some point. After this opening encounter, because the process of interaction continuously shapes the relationship, the previous practice constitutes the starting point for the next negotiation (cf. Delamont, 1990, pp. 108-109). This could be one reason for the informants' intention of building a stock of trust into practice: it constitutes a relational basis from which their actions are interpreted by students in new situations. In negotiations, different bases of legitimacy are claimed – claims which may or may not match. Based on the above analysis of Adrian's story, I contend that negotiating a relationship in which it is possible to rely upon dialogical legitimacy as a basis for authority can, in some situations and with particular students, be a *precondition* for being able to negotiate other bases for authority such as the professional – e.g., expert knowledge in math.

**Johan’s practice and task perception**

I return to the story of Johan and his student Kalle, which is analyzed as follows. Johan constructed the problem in individual terms: because of Kalle's personal problems, he was in need of special attention. The means that Johan chose to employ, on the other hand, were relational: he would establish a relationship with Kalle so as to help him overcome some of these problems and manage better in school. Johan is aware that those of his students that struggle in school often function poorly in his absence. The establishment of a relationship that has special functions makes the student dependent on the presence of a particular person. In this situation, Johan also makes the conscious decision to place the needs of the individual before the process of building the group, which he feels that he and the other teachers sometimes fail to do.133

Johan makes a distinction between knowing and sensing a student.134 According to him, knowing indicates the information that he receives, and the images that he creates – i.e., more of a “dry” type of knowledge. Sensing,

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133 In the end it is also a question of resources, but the teacher team has discussed it and their assumption is that this priority holds because if Kalle has a better situation it is better for the group too.

134 In Swedish: "Ha kunskap om" and "känna in".
on the other hand, involves the capacity to perceive when to touch and when to let go, or to see in the eye or expression of a child what is happening within, or to be aware of whether or not a given demand will make or break her/him. From a temporal perspective, the ability to sense in relation to a student develops over time, but is never definitive, because relationships are dynamic, and more or less under constant change. Johan views knowing and sensing as connected: how one knows the student is, in a way, one of the conditions for sensing what happens within the student. But he argues that his work is very much about sensing.

J: I guess it has to do with experience too… I perceive myself as very sensitive to what’s happening on the other side, for example, by seeing a facial expression. If I tell [a student to work a bit more], and then look [into her face], is it failure I see? Or is it [an expression conveying], “Okay. I’ll work a bit more”, and then, “god, sometimes you can be so trying”. [Johan’s tone of voice conveys lighthearted exasperation.] 1-257-258

The judgment that Johan makes is based on his previous knowledge about the student, but in addition to this, on the communication that takes place in that moment between them. This fact points to the embodied aspect of judgment in relation to an individual student. Johan explains that there is a fine line

J: between demands, expectations and support: all of these words that are so close to each other. Am I supporting this child? Am I demanding from this child? Is it not good enough? Or is it that I know you can do a bit more? If I fail to balance this fine line, then the effect is completely different. 1-253-54

That is, a wrongful judgment can damage the student’s self-confidence as well as her/his will to make further attempts. According to Johan, having a sense of what is happening inside the student is positive for establishing a good relationship.

Embodiment in Johan’s practice

Johan describes making use of his body in negotiations his relationship with his student. He argues that he was immediately aware that there was something about Kalle, and mentions Kalle’s obliviousness of the other students and of the situation as a whole. Johan’s awareness can, in Dreyfus and Dreyfus’ (1986) terms, be understood as his detection of a pattern in the situation – i.e., Kalle’s obliviousness. Johan could also draw upon extensive experience, which possibly made it easier for him to detect patterns, as his cognitive load was lower. That is, as long as things were moving along, he did not have to waste time thinking about other things, and thus had time to make this observation.
Reconnecting to Johan’s distinction between knowing and sensing, I will use the term *knowing* for all knowledge brought to the moment: theoretical, practical and embodied knowledge learned in the past. I will use the term *sensing* for the communicative interaction he is involved in within the moment: the unique embodied sensory encounter that involves mainly sight, but also hearing, touch and other senses. Knowing, I suggest, is also something that can be appropriated from outside of educational practice – e.g., from the practice of reading research literature. However, Johan’s accounts of his embeddedness in the relationship with Kalle, and his descriptions of the use of his body in this relation, challenges the sufficiency of this concept. That is, it connects better to the notion of an embodied practice in which the sensory powers shape and utilize his conceptual system (cf O’Loughlin, 2006, pp. 10-11). It requires embodied experience from within practice.

Knowing concerns what is not unique about the student; it is what one knows only through association. Sensing, on the other hand focuses on the unique encounter and what emerges within it. Without previous experience to draw upon, Johan would not have been able to help Kalle. Nor would he have been able to help him without drawing upon the embodied situational connection that he had at that particular moment. In this regard, Johan explains that in order to correctly read whether or not the demands he makes are reasonable, he must first have a close relationship with a student. The judgment is thus made at the moment that he encounters the student’s face (sensing), where he senses the student’s embodied facial and emotional expressions. But it is also made in close connection with previous experience (knowing). In other words, both knowing and sensing inform his judgment.

Physical closeness, and the role of touch, was also addressed by Johan. His awareness of the embodied dimension of what works with Kalle, whether it is a hand on the shoulder or a whisper in his ear, guides his action. In the end, however, so does Kalle’s response to that action. The experience of many similar situations, involving Kalle as well as other students, gives Johan the confidence to try. When he says that he tries to maintain control yet simultaneously be responsive to the situation, I interpret this as actions that are anticipative (Beckett & Hager, 2002, pp. 34-35): the sensing of what happens when he tries to put a hand on Kalle’s shoulder informs his further actions, and he can change his plans if it does not have the desired result. Anticipative action, according to Beckett and Hager, includes both understanding of and confidence in how to proceed. It can be compared to an artist sketching on a motive, with an idea of what it will look like but without having determined it entirely, remaining open for opportunities emerging within the situation.

The question can be asked: to what extent does awareness play a part in professional practice? Researchers such as Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986, p. 30) connect expertise to the absence of awareness, stating that experts are no
more aware of their skill than of their own body. Johan says that he does not consciously think about keeping an extra eye on Kalle. He uses the expression “close to the surface”, which I interpret as close to the surface of awareness. Johan extends this image to Kalle as well – that Johan is close to Kalle’s surface of awareness (and he struggles to find the words to describe this connection). O’Loughlin (2006) similarly talks about “the margins of consciousness” (p. 61). My interpretation is that from a temporal point of view, while Johan’s awareness may not extend to every particular act, he is nonetheless aware of the overall direction of his actions. That is, Johan has a firm grasp of the consequences of his actions at large, and this grasp affects his every act, but in ways that he is not always aware of. Similar accounts came from other informants.

It has been argued that without a profound understanding of the implications of the profession – including its moral implications – one can hardly speak of assuming a professional responsibility (Solbrekke, 2008, p. 497). And while there are many teachers whose understanding of the relational dimension of teaching is insufficient,¹³⁵ my findings suggest that it is likely premature to dismiss all reactive and unconscious actions of teachers as unprofessional. Being located at the margins of consciousness, they could well be part of a larger, if tacit, framework that directs certain actions that might factually be professional. In sum, looking at Johan’s and Adrian’s practices, they both work to manage demanding and complex relationships with students that are in special need. In terms of research, their challenges reside in the intersection between general and special education. This area is amongst the concerns of many teachers, and is thought to be in need of significant research attention especially in terms of identifying how teachers handle these challenges successfully (Brophy, 2006, p. 39).

The conception of an educational relationship

The above accounts and analyses indicate that the teacher practices considered herein involve negotiations of relationships with individual students in which task perception shapes action, causing problems, and their solutions, to be framed relationally. I argue that these can be understood as negotiations of what I choose to call an educational relationship. An educational relationship is defined as a relationship in which education is possible. Säfström (2003) views teaching as an act of responsibility that involves the recurring question: “Have I the right to teach?” (p. 19). From a relational perspective, an educational relationship is established when the student

¹³⁵ As indicated by e.g. Klaassen (2002), who terms this absence “pedagogical impotence” (p. 153).
tacitly answers, “yes”, to this question: “Yes, you have the right to teach me”.136 In the following, I elaborate on how relational practices are connected to this understanding of an educational relationship, and on some of the conditions which may facilitate or impede it.

Grossman et al. (2007, p. 120) suggest that a theoretical framework and common language for addressing relational practices, such as building relationships or dealing with student resistance, could help novices to make these aspects of practice visible. Relational features, such as trust, have been highlighted above. As an example from Erik illustrated, the extension of trust to a student makes the teacher vulnerable to student misuse (cf Kelchtermans, 1996, 2009). However, there is reason to point to the risk involved in withholding this trust (cf Jackson, et al., 1993, p. 17). The risk is there in either case, indicating the need for judgment. The findings contain examples wherein the issue of trust is included in the judgments that the informants make. A teacher cannot avoid affecting the student: s/he does so, in some way or another, through her/his mere presence (or absence). The findings also indicate that the informants’ professional relationships are largely characterized by humaneness. Anders’s comment that a person who works with other persons cannot be a machine, gives rise to the concept of the mechanical teacher, which captures my understanding of the kind of teacher that the informants refuse being associated with.137 Drawing on the findings, the mechanical teacher thus becomes someone who does not respond to students in a manner that takes account of them as persons, or who is deaf to the responses of students or to situational factors. It is someone who enacts a role, who is not authentic. Woods (1990, p. 89) has shown that students quickly detected the labored attempts of teachers to incorporate their world into the teaching. If this is to work, it is necessary that the teacher be sincere. Moreover, the mechanical teacher places the student in a position of playing a role.138

When teachers disclose themselves to their students, they also take the risk that any given student might refuse them the right to teach. Acting like a mechanical teacher might thus be a response to the vulnerability that teaching implies, a coping strategy (see Day, et al., 2007, pp. 76-81). Irisdotter Aldenmyr (2007, p. 63) has found that in order to cope, some teachers draw boundaries for their engagement and become authoritarian and efficiency

136 Although the purposes differ, the concept of educational relationship may be compared to the concept of “therapeutic alliance”, which psychology has shown to be critical for the success of therapy. (see Grossman & McDonald, 2008, p. 187). However, in this context, relationship appears to be a more adequate concept than alliance. In Sweden, where the empirical material has been collected, the concept alliance is mainly used to describe the alliance of right wing political parties.

137 Many thanks to Jan Grannäs for coining the expression “maskinlärare”.

138 Fibaek Laursen (2004, p. 62) refers to a Danish expression which alludes to “there seems to be a jinx on it”; “there seems to be a teacher in it” which means that someone plays a role and is not being authentic.
oriented – disconnected from reflection, ethical responsibility and sensibility for individual students. This response was in line with a market oriented attitude. Another response to vulnerability, termed by Irisdotter Aldenmyr (2007) as a “strife for a clearly formulated professionalism” (p. 63), indicates an approach where the needs of both students and oneself are considered. The latter response more closely parallels how the informants in the present study describe their responses. I interpret their responses as a striving to preserve their engagement, live up to their task perceptions, and negotiate demands and relationships with their students, while working in sometimes difficult conditions.

In the same regard, I suggest the notion of a humane teacher in contrast to that of the mechanical teacher, although I am aware that the concept is vague and not particularly ideal. However, my conscious attempt here is to question whether the notion of the professional teacher as rational, neutral and distanced is adequate, since this notion tends to narrow the image of teachers’ practice and foreclose the discussion of vital relational aspects (see also Frelin, 2008). Being humane includes disclosing oneself as a flesh-and-blood, multi-faceted human being, with feelings and a life outside of school. Anders and Cessa use the expression “bjuda på sig själv”,139 which is difficult to translate into English, but includes the idea of “sharing oneself” – of sharing personal traits and information. I interpret this approach as being intended to create a middle ground (cf Woods, 1990) which reduces the distance and asymmetry that often stands in the way of an educational relationship. In sum, to act humanly/professionally is to be capable of creating the middle ground that is necessary for an educational relationship, and to act mechanically/unprofessionally is to be incapable of achieving this end.

The establishment of an educational relationship is neither a speedy process, nor does it require particularly remarkable acts. Johnson (2008), in his study of ‘at risk’ students’ views of their teachers, argues that teachers are able to ‘make a difference’ to the lives of their students in quite profound and socially significant ways by actively focusing on ‘the little things’ within their sphere of influence […] [through small and repeated actions to connect with and relate to students by teachers at the micro-level (p. 396).]

The little things that also serve to promote student resilience, according to the students’ views in Johnson’s study, include the capacity of teachers to “listen to their students, engage them as fellow human beings, recognize and understand their perspectives and world views, and to attend to their relational needs” (p. 396). These results, although from the viewpoint of students, concur with the ones of the informants in the present study.

139 (Compare also to Lindqvist & Nordänger, 2007, p. 185).
Teachers’ professional authority

Based on the analysis of Adrian’s story, I suggest that part of the educational relationship involves authority, and that teachers’ relational practices include negotiating authority relationships with their students. However, this process is not infallible: the dynamic in relationships between humans, who are equipped with intentional capabilities, makes the process more or less contingent. In light of the results, I also suggest that the separation of the notion of professional authority from the notion of charismatic authority, in Pace and Hemmings’ (2006b) categorization, becomes problematic as it facilitates the notion of the professional teacher as distanced and neutral – a notion that several of the informants in the present study seem to have difficulty relating to. One could argue that a combination of professional and charismatic authority would solve the problem, since charismatic authority involves evoking students’ emotional attachment and commitment. However, one problem within this formulation is that charisma appears to be more of an individual characteristic that lacks a relational dimension: charisma is usually referred to as something one has (or gives off), rather than something that is created within a relationship.

An alternative, and widened, notion of professional authority, I suggest, would, in addition to teachers’ expert knowledge as described earlier, encompass the displays of, for example, respect, trust and concern; relational features that are part of teacher professionality. In Burbules (cf 1993) terms, these displays can serve to constitute a dialogical basis of legitimacy for authority in relation to students. A widened notion of professional authority in teaching would, in line with this argument, include the use of this basis for negotiating educational relationships with students. However, one remark is in place. Burbules (1993, pp. 33-34) argues that the aim of authority should be, to some degree, to change and to undermine itself. Being in a relation of authority constitutes a source of motivation for teachers, but contains the risk that students may remain dependent on this authority for their learning.

We cannot know from Adrian’s story whether Lisa would be able to stay with her math work if there were to be a change of teacher, or if Adrian worked to make her learning independent of the authority relation. Generally, if the teacher maintains the authority relationship for purposes mainly other than educational ones, one could question the professionality of her/his actions. Assuming that authority may be necessary for educational endeavors, teachers’ professionality, in my view, incorporates awareness of the needs to negotiate authority relationships with students, in a way that promotes student learning while still operating within a framework of democratic values. Which kinds of authority are then 1) educationally

140 Keeping in mind two things; that students have abilities to make choices too, and that the context has significance for the spaces of negotiation that can emerge (see Frelin & Grannäs, in press).
defensible – promotes student growth and 2) morally defensible – answers to the question: “Have I the right to teach?” (Säfström, 2003, p. 19). These are not questions that have answers before the situation, but have to be continually asked during the process of teaching. These two questions of educational and moral relevance in addition are to be subject to public discussion, not to be answered exclusively by professionals.

Sensing – openness for the student’s meaning making

I draw here on Johan’s concepts of knowing and sensing, and the distinction between them, in order to deepen the understanding of the informants’ negotiations of educational relationships. Teaching, within the framework of an educational relationship, is by no means to be viewed as unidirectional – it includes the teacher’s openness for learning from the student, in other words, that the teacher gives the student possibility to teach her or him. Uljens (1997, p. 77) argues that the teacher remains a learner in teaching, intentionally and unintentionally, when students educate through their way of studying, or when expressing needs. Building further on this argument, I argue that here, the addition of sensing to knowing is important, as it can contribute to understanding the encounter. In other words, if knowing is what is brought to the moment, then sensing is in the moment: it is a willingness to doubt what one knows, or rather an invitation to the other to change oneself through their act upon one’s senses. Ruling out sensing, I argue, precludes this openness for the other. The informants, in numerous accounts, expressed their awareness of that the students can perceive situations in ways which the teachers can neither predict nor control. Both knowing and sensing, used in the encounters with a student, can guide – although not determine – action, through their significance for teachers’ forming of professional judgments.

In Biesta’s (2004, p. 21) terms, education happens in an ambivalent and transformative process of meaning making that involves a space of enunciation. The uncontrollability of this space does not entail that the teachers have no clues to what students think or plan, it just means that they leave open the possibility of misunderstanding to guide their actions. For instance, Adrian’s and Erik’s use of words like delicate and careful in their descriptions of approaching students, I argue, indicate this awareness of a symmetry in the relation regarding the production of meaning. The awareness of this ambivalence highlights the practice of sensing. That is, the function of sensing is attempting to understand what happens in the space of enunciation – through embodied verbal, or non-verbal, means. Sensing – which happens in the moment – is not separate from knowing that consists of previous experience. It can also be argued that sensing is a break in the instrumental relationship, a break which gives a space for the student to appear in her/his uniqueness. What is highlighted is the responsibility of the part of the teacher, not just for the student’s learning, but also for her/his unique
presence in that moment (cf Biesta, 2006). It is also in this manner, according to Säfström (2003), that teaching becomes ethically significant; taking the risk of opening up when taking responsibility for the other. Drawing on Lévinas' distinction between the said and saying Säfström writes:

This risk, contrary to being on the safe side of knowledge, is a necessary condition for an ethical relation to the other, it makes the welcoming of the other possible. Ethical moments in teaching occur when the teacher's self is fully present as unique and chosen through the dialogue with the student. The teacher responds through an orientation of openness to the student as a saying (p. 26).

Openness to the student, the willingness to step out of the safety of knowledge in the moment of the encounter, can in this regard be connected to negotiating an educational relationship.

Negotiating demands – openness for the student’s self-image

The process of negotiating an educational relationship also contains expressions of the informants’ responsibility for the students’ self-image, and for what school practice does to that image. My interpretation is, that if there is such a thing as a reasonable expectation of achievement, then there are also unreasonable expectations (cf Delamont, 1990, p. 67): a teacher can expect too little or too much from the student, but so can the student of her/himself. In addition, the teacher and the student can have differing expectations of the same situation. The teacher may also challenge the student’s trust in what s/he knows (Raider-Roth, 2005b, pp. 21, 67). Ideally, neither the teacher nor the student would ask too much or too little of her/him(-self), but it is common knowledge that this is not always the case. Moreover, it is not always possible to know what one can expect beforehand, as people have the ability to surprise not only others but themselves. This includes learning things that one did not want to learn about oneself (cf Biesta, 2006, p. 25).

Academic tasks can be associated with higher or lower degrees of ambiguity, referring to the nature of the criteria for evaluation, and of risk, that is, the likelihood that the criteria are possible for the student to meet (Doyle & Carter, 1984, p. 131). Doyle and Carter argue that both teachers and students act in order to manage such ambiguity and risk, and that the nature of the academic work is affected by these acts. In their study, students were faced with a task that they perceived as quite difficult and ambiguous, which increased their efforts to reduce the risk, thus threatening the order in the classroom. The tension between challenging the students with a higher-order task, and the students’ concern for predictability, as they were being evaluated, made it difficult: the teacher could not preserve order and the
task, and changed the task in order to reduce the risk (p. 146). In terms of negotiation, this can be viewed as a negotiation of demands between the teacher and the students, in which not only order, but relationships, were threatened.

The responsibility for students’ self-image that the informants address in their relational practices is, in my interpretation, one of improving the conditions for learning through raising the student’s self-esteem, self-confidence and thus will to try. Students’ previous failures can make this work more difficult, which can spur the practices of compensation on the part of the teacher through the design of tasks where the student can succeed etc. Given the student’s self-image, the student’s will to try is connected to the willingness to risk doing such things that could damage this self-image. Thus, if the teacher thinks that the student can succeed whereas the student does not, the student’s trusts in the teacher’s judgment becomes a precondition. And if the student does not trust the teacher, s/he may refuse to try something that s/he in fact would be able to do: students may protect their self-image in ways which stand in the way of teaching. Taking responsibility for the student’s self-image can also serve to widen the teacher’s space for action. For instance, Davidson (1999) argued that teachers who expressed confidence in the students’ capacities even when they performed poorly, were allowed for a more broad range of behaviors by their students (p. 352, 365). This can be compared to Gunilla’s practice of explaining away students’ mistakes on their English tests. Benjaminson (2008, e.g. p. 135) pointed to the significance of schools as places for support for youth with experiences of neglect or abuse at home, but also indicated that lack of such support can increase the pressure on students in schools. Gunilla may have tried to provide such support to her students.

In sum, the relational practices of negotiating demands with students, in ways that make education possible, require taking into account several issues, of which the student’s self-image is one. The informants’ work to make students overcome fear included the fear of failure. If learning is viewed as a demand to change, or a disturbance from the outside, too much disturbance can eventually be unbearable for the student, which may be one reason for the informants’ hard work with the preconditions in connection with students’ self-images. The work is, in this sense, a creation of places of peace and rest that make students able to ‘take’ the disturbances of education.

There is, adding to the complexity, another side to the demands. While teachers can negotiate demands with their students, they still work within a system of societal demands which neither teacher nor student is able to negotiate. These are expressed through the curricula and syllabi, and in the
latter there are National grading criteria, at least for two of the grade levels.\textsuperscript{141} So, doing one's relational best, negotiated on the basis of the situation at hand, is one matter, but may still not measure up to the absolute best that the grading system represents. And similarly, the relational good enough may still, compared to the absolute good enough that is required for a passing grade, not be good enough. In the end, it is still these criteria that determine the future of the students, and these are non-negotiable. I interpret the informants' work as coming from their perceived responsibility for the student placed within the tension between these two demands, the relational and the absolute; working to strengthen the students' self-confidence when the practice they subject students to at times may do the opposite.

Relational conditions for educational relationships

Through highlighting the relational practices of the informants, their educational purposes and the possible consequences for education are visualized. This is the approach that according to Vanderstraeten & Biesta (2006, p. 164) examines education as a social phenomenon, the "reality of the educational relationship itself" (p. 164) which appeals for "a careful reflection on the conditions of the possibility of education" (p. 167). The negotiations of educational relationships that contribute to this process can sometimes be a demanding task, and occasions of success, despite difficult circumstances, constitute a source of contentment for the informants. It also spurs them to continue performing it, thereby not claiming that their negotiations cannot and do not fail, or that the conditions for the negotiations are ideal.

The relational conditions that the informants addressed in the present study are similar to the enabling conditions which Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen (1993, pp. 17-28) described in their representation of the moral complexity of the educational environment. These were truthfulness, worthwhileness and social justice, and can be compared to results in the present study: relational practices directed towards students' perception of their justice, benevolence and comprehensibility (cf also Hugo, 2007). The condition of justice was represented in both studies. The worthwhileness of school implied that the student had faith in the good intentions of the institution (Jackson, et al., 1993, p. 25). I understand these to be synonymous to benevolence, though as represented by the teacher. The condition of comprehensibility is, I argue, to be considered as an enabling condition for education, one which takes into account the symmetry of meaning making.\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{141} http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/2665/a/15012 [Retrieved 091114]. (For examples of studies concerning grades and their consequences for teachers' work in the Swedish context, see Selghed, 2004; Tholin, 2006; Wedin, 2007).

\textsuperscript{142} Thornberg (2007, pp. 413-414), in contrast to Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen argues that inconsistency in rules and unarticulated rules that are implicit, create rule diffusion and interpretation difficulties, that in turn create a prediction loss for students. They become more
Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen's (1993) addressed expressive morality within the classroom, as that which they refer to as teacher style; “the teacher’s typical ways of handling the demands of the job” (p. 37). What is implied in this condition is the temporal condition of the practices that teachers and students participate in. The things that are typical about a teacher, or a student for that matter, is not to be known at once, and this temporality is another feature of the complexity of the educational environment.

Humor can, according to Woods (1990, pp. 81-86) modify the sting of disciplining, save the face and dignity of students, or meld the informal with the formal in school practice. It has a bridging quality which contributes to the middle ground between teachers and students; a resource for softening dispute and division, defusing incidents and aiding discipline. As Davidson (1999, pp. 344, 349-350) argues, humor is extra important for students who face social borders in school. These results concur with the ones in the present study. The informant Johan, a preschool teacher who meets with Kalle all through the day, says that establishing this relationship is rather quick whereas Adrian, who works as a math teacher in secondary school, does not have the same opportunity, but intently works to change the conditions through using his recess time. In order to be able to do this he cuts down on other tasks. The informants who prioritize this task value it and work to improve conditions by, for instance, making corridors their work spaces (cf Frelin & Grannäs, in press).

For teachers who are aware only to a limited degree of the educational environment, and of the consequences of their actions within it, a particular line of action may remain sufficient as long as conditions stay the same. However, I argue that when teachers fail to take account of important features of the relational environment, such as interpersonal trust, it is questionable if their actions can be regarded as professional. As the conditions described influence the educational environment, I argue that it is part of teachers' professionality to, to the extent that it is within their power, be aware of and attend to them.

Teachers' personal professionality

There is a notion of teachers' professional and private selves that some of the informants struggle with. These reject the notion that there would be two persons within one body; that they would be carried away with her/his position or put on a “teacher coat” when they work. A separation of the professional and private is present in other studies, for example, Thornberg dependent on teacher power and vulnerable to correction; a negotiation loss as they cannot negotiate rules that they are unaware of.

143 Depending on the organization of schools and level taught, teachers meet their students more or less often and thus have different conditions for forming relationships. See also Brophy's (1996) distinction between teachers as instructors and socializers.
(2008), indicating that “values that teachers intend to teach or mediate to students by their practice of values education are personal rather than professional” (p. 1794). The lack of explicit references to theories or research, according to his study, indicated a lack of professional knowledge at least in the strict sense. Granström (2006, p. 1156) holds that a professional role can help teachers deal with attacks from students, as they can view these attacks as directed towards the role rather than the private self.

Taking an alternative approach to analyzing my informants’ struggle with the separation between the professional and the personal, I turn to Korthagen’s (2004) distinction between the professional and personal self. He focuses on “the difference between a summary dealing with the entire body of information on one’s personal functioning, and a summary of the information dealing with one’s professional functioning” (p. 83). Korthagen argues that these overlap, as I interpret it; that they are tied to activities that may be similar, as well as differing, in the two areas of experience. As an illustration, novice nurses find time, space and touch significant for shaping their use of intuition in practice, as indicated by Ruth-Sahd and Tisdell (2007, p. 134). However, this intuition had been developed in other practices in their life, and included reading nonverbal cues in people and in situations.¹⁴⁴ In comparison, Johan may have practiced sensing during his work in the mental hospital, something that he could draw on also in his teaching practice. In other words, experience from other practices may influence professional action in teaching.

From the perspective of activity as point of departure for experience, in a interpersonal profession such as teaching (cf Endres, 2007), private and professional experience may overlap, and the notions of separate private and professional selves become questionable. In the present study, the different sources of experience that the informants draw upon can be interpreted as relationally derived in the situation, where one significant factor consists of the responses they get from the students. In other words, the sources of experience that the informants draw upon can ideally be viewed as the ones that are needed in order to create an educational relationship.

This is not to infer that a teacher can act anyway s/he wants. A teacher who acts in ways that the student does not perceive as proper, considering the educational situation, may threaten the educational relationship. Erik and Maria for instance distance themselves from the notion of being friends, which from their point of view could be unfavorable for the educational relationship. Woods (1990, p. 182) accordingly argues that teachers that are considered to be “too human” run the risk of being considered less than a

¹⁴⁴ See also (Hager & Hodkinson, 2009). In line with Beckett and Hager (2002, p. 39) I do not make use of the concept of intuition, which they claim draws attention to significant human experiences, however, does not de-mystify them. That is, practical knowing when described as intuition remains inexplicable and as such difficult or even impossible to teach or learn.
proper teacher, however, he also holds that “one can be over-teacherly as well as over-friendly, and thus miss crucial links with the pupils that actually promote learning or some other positive function” (p. 73). I argue that the boundary is not absolute but relational, that is, a professional teacher would adapt to the demands of the situation; neither giving out nor withholding information in an inappropriate manner. This does not mean that the teacher has to be a chameleon; it only suggests that s/he is open to negotiating these matters with the students, constantly keeping educational purposes in mind. In conclusion: in their practice, teachers draw on different sources of experience. The professional sources consist of their experience in professional activity, and the private come from private ones. Which experience they draw upon, from different practices, is not always conscious, or perhaps even important; it is what this activity achieves that matters.

Labaree’s concept of teacher persona suggests that the personal and professional is conflated within the profession: “persona is both natural, in that it draws on characteristics and strengths of the teacher as a person, and constructed, in that it is put together to serve the ends of promoting learning in the classroom” (Labaree, 2000, p 230). His distinction between natural and constructed is problematic, as if one acted purposefully only within the profession. However, a concept which contains the overlaps in activities makes the drawing on experiences from different practices, within one person, unproblematic, something that I argue would be more consistent with teachers’ experience. Another concept is that of teacher style, which according to Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen (1993, p. 37) differs from personality in that it is task-specific and as such tied to activity.

I suggest that the interesting circumstance; that some of the informants refrained from identifying themselves with either of the concepts of teacher and professional, constitute signs of a perceived disconnection on their part, and that these are signs of a need for further conceptualizations of teacher professionality. It has been argued that teachers lack a professional language for communicating their knowledge (see e.g. Colnerud & Granström, 2002, p. 57). Teachers’ stories of practice and professionality seem to be one place for further exploration. However, in addition to trying to find language in order to create a professional distance, perhaps it is also a question of finding language in order to describe professional closeness (cf Frelin, 2008).

Summary

In Chapter Seven, the two examples were analyzed in terms of negotiations of authority, and of using embodied means for negotiating a relationship with students. They were also analyzed in order to understand the task perception that guided the informants’ actions, including temporal, spatial and motivational features. I argued that the conception of an educational
relationship serves to highlight how teacher professionalism includes negotiating authority relationships with students in order to make education possible. The notion of a **humane teacher**, a person of flesh and blood who uses one’s senses when responding to the students as persons, was put in opposition to the **mechanical teacher**, who does not respond to students in a manner that takes account of them as persons or is deaf to the responses from students in other ways. The issue of **trust**, as something that could be gained and lost in relationships, was included in the judgments that the informants made, and viewed as important for establishing and maintaining educational relationships.

I also picked up on the distinction from one of the informants between **knowing** and **sensing**, where I discussed knowing in terms of what is brought to the encounter, and sensing in terms of openness to what happens between the teacher and the student in the encounter. I claimed that the concept of sensing is important for understanding teacher professionalism, and that knowing and sensing serve to complement each other. Moreover, this openness for the student’s meaning making, that can not be predicted, is important to consider. I suggested that there needs to be more attention to embodied and partly unconscious expressions of teacher professionalism. I described the negotiations of the students’ self-image that the informants were involved in. There was awareness among the informants of what school practices did to this self-image, and they worked to counteract negative tendencies. Reasonable demands and students’ will to try as a precondition for education was negotiated between teachers and students, still in a larger context of demands from the outside of school. I claimed that as learning means a demand to change, teachers sometimes had to work to create spaces of peace and rest for students, spaces that enabled them to be able to endure these demands to change.

At the end of Chapter Seven I addressed the distinction between personal and professional that the informants struggled to understand, including the resistance some of them expressed against being defined as either teacher or professional, which I saw as signs of a disconnection between the meaning of the concepts, and what they saw as their task in their everyday work, especially the relational dimension of it. I argued that in light of this resistance perhaps there is a need for further conceptualizations of both, for example starting to address issues like **professional closeness** in addition to professional distance.
8 Teacher practices involved in establishing and maintaining relationships among students

Students teach students
Students strengthen students
Students oppress students
Students listen to students
Students fight students
Students delight students
Students oppress students
Students help students
Students affect students
Students respect students
Students challenge students
Students question students
Students silence students
Students raise students
Students praise students

Introduction to the accounts

Students, when they come together, are parts of each others' everyday experience in school. This chapter focuses on the informants' work with relationships between individual, and groups of, students. Consequently, other relationships remain in the periphery, such as the one between the teacher and the class as a whole. The fact that students come in plural, and influence each other, charges teachers with responsibility for what happens in those relationships. Instead of trying to define the limits of this responsibility, I have chosen to approach the question through the informants' practical arguments, meaning that I describe the responsibilities that they argue are

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145 The above examples of what students do to students all come from the informants' accounts in the interviews.
146 See Teachers' relational work in the classroom in Chapter 3.
147 For an introduction to these see First step: Constructing Practical Arguments under The analysis process in Chapter 5.
theirs to take. This is not to suggest that they necessarily act professionally, nor that others, such as the students, are free from responsibility; it is merely to point out that the position of teacher comes with certain professional responsibilities that they must somehow handle.148

When I defined teachers’ relational practices as “actions with the (sometimes single) purpose of establishing, maintaining and/or enhancing relationships that are beneficial for education, or aimed at preventing the opposite”,149 I did not specifically address the relationships between students. In this chapter, however, these relationships will be my main focus. This means that the practice of establishing and maintaining relationships among students is not aimed at just any relationships, but only at those that are in line with educational purposes, or at least do not counteract them.150

The accounts presented herein contain examples of the various ways that informants’ attempt to elicit information about the relational activities of their students, ranging from being unaware of an event, to acting only on events that they are aware of, to trying to make themselves aware by obtaining feedback directly from students (or even designing activities that bring this information out). This is not to say that each approach is significant for one and the same informant.151 Based on these approaches, teachers can respond in differing ways to relationships among students. The consequences of students having relationships and influencing each other can, for instance, be neglected, endured or attended to, but also used creatively by the teacher depending on the perceived influence of students’ relationships on the possibilities for education. How teachers help to negotiate students’ peer relationships depends in part on such general contextual factors as students’ age and the amount of time the teacher spends with them. However, even if teachers are responsible for what goes on between students, they are never able to fully grasp all the ways in which students influence each other. And even if teachers can work to make these influences visible, in order to counteract bullying, for example, students are able to act in order to display as well as to conceal what goes on from their teacher. I return to this later on. Regarding informants’ perceptions of the significance of student relationships, Cessa notes that the management of these relationships is a major aspect of her work, and Johan explains that he always takes relationships into account:

148 Teachers are, for instance, obliged to act against bullying or other oppressive relationships, but also to work towards establishing equal relationships marked by solidarity: “The school has the important task of imparting, instilling and forming in pupils those fundamental values on which our society is based. The inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, the equal value of all people, equality between women and men and solidarity with the weak and vulnerable are all values that the school should represent and impart” (Skolverket, 2006b, p. 3). This task extends to the entire educational system, including preschool and upper secondary school (Skolverket, 2006c, 2006d).

149 See Purpose and questions in the Introduction.

150 For a more detailed discussion on how I use the concept, see Purpose and questions.

151 See Introduction to the presentation of results at the end of Chapter 5.
J: … because you say that you paint. It is insanely much more than painting. It is about who sit together, which kind of paper, which brushes, what type of colors, what different colors to use, where you are, when you do it, do you stand, do you sit, do you have easels or tables? 2-154 (bold added)

In other words, managing student relationships can be incorporated as one of several parallel ends of an activity, in this case painting a picture.

The purpose of the representation of the themes in this chapter is to map the second aspect of teachers’ relational practices. It provides an understanding of the informants’ professional concerns expressed in practical arguments: what they want to attain through practice, how they choose to act and their arguments for these actions (that is why they choose to act). The practices involved in negotiating students’ peer relationships are presented in the following three themes, each of which is woven together from the accounts of different informants. The themes regard practices that are directed towards three different ends: 1) negotiations intended to build on positive relational conditions; 2) negotiations intended to address ambivalent relationships; and, 3) negotiations intended to deal with problems between students. In addition, the second of these themes explores what informants address in terms of a tension between being classmates and being friends. The headings represent answers to the question of what, and the content under them represents answers to questions of why and how, using short examples to illustrate the informants’ practical arguments.152

However, in the second theme, it is not quite that simple. Whether something is good or not depends on which viewpoint you take, the teacher’s or the student’s. For example, the subtheme A common space of equal participation describes something that the informants strive for and hope to achieve. For students, on the other hand, taking up space can be a more or less risky affair – something that can invoke not positive, but rather ambivalent feelings. In the last theme, the headings are not expressed in terms of ends to be achieved, but rather in terms of outcomes to be avoided. This requires that the headings be differently formulated – i.e., not as ‘what’ to accomplish but as ‘what’ to counteract. To add to the complexity of this theme, even if the subthemes Offense and Conflicts are not viewed as educational ends, their occurrence can, in the long run, lead to achieving such ends: for example, involvement in conflicts may result in knowledge of how to solve conflicts in non-violent ways. At the end of this chapter, I also make use of one story that is analyzed in order to add depth to the representation of this aspect. The story was selected because it was rich in description of these kinds of relational practices.

152 See also Introduction to the presentation of results which concludes Chapter 5.
“A fantastic power source.” Theme One – negotiations intended to build on positive relational conditions

Schools are places where students can meet and make friends. Many students would likely answer, “my friends!”, when asked about the best thing in school; and being alone when everyone else has friends, would likely be considered the worst. The informants describe the positive features of teaching a group of students who influence each other. The constructive force of a group of students working together is described by Cessa as something special yet elusive; her metaphors remind one of electricity: “you can feel it vibrating” 1-180, “you can feel the life in the classroom. You must open the window when the lesson is over because wow, there is such energy in there” 2-85. In the following, I account for the informants’ understanding of, and practices in response to, positive relational conditions among students.

Positive common experience

Several of the informants mention deliberately creating situations in which the class has the opportunity of doing enjoyable things together. It could be anything from a particular routine that the students find gratifying to a fun filled and festive-like occasion. Gunilla had a breakfast routine at her school. When I asked her about the expression ‘to get a group together’ she explained: “It’s this: When the breakfast comes, things are in full swing, some play cards, some make toast and there is talk and chatter. That we are a class. You notice that they talk with each other and such.” 2-312 She points to situations that are within the confines of school, but that are outside the lessons, highlighting their significance as a common experience. Johan agrees: at the beginning of every fall term, he and the other teachers begin recess with the activity of long-rope jumping. To begin, the teachers simply spin the rope, and those that want to jump in, do so. From there, the teachers take it upon themselves to encourage all jumpers, regardless of their level of proficiency.

J: [From this] we can very quickly get the children to begin encouraging each other. And I have seldom heard a six year old [tease a fellow student by] saying: “Can’t you jump more than three times?” or “Can’t you jump?” This is because we teachers are acting as role models; believing in them, having fun together, encouraging the effort. Again we return to this about winning, and many times, the boys may then be the outsiders, I’m generalizing a bit, but it

153 This relational dynamic between students is something that not only students thrive on; so can the teachers. Erik views it as vital: “The psychological climate gives me energy, psychical energy for me to function as a teacher. If one could not get it I do not think that you could go on. At this high age.” 1-109 This conclusion is paralleled in research findings (e.g. Day, et al., 2007).

154 Serving breakfast at schools is a rare occurrence, at least for older students. Younger students may have breakfast as part of their child care for school children. See e.g. http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/2652/a/14990 [Retrieved 090818].
is more common for boys to stay away from [activities they don’t do well]. Because they are afraid, they don’t choose to do things they can’t do well; they choose what they can do. […] We don’t have to love each other, but we can meet and have a lot of fun together. 2-288-293

Johan argues that in this example the teachers were able to create a common experience in which everyone was a winner, and where differences in such areas as gender and ability no longer mattered. Through their encouragement of effort they want even the ones who are not good at jumping to dare to try. They also want everyone to join in the encouragement practice. Although this is a very temporary recess activity, as has been noted by Johan, it can have a positive influence on other activities as well. Adrian’s students had a very good time and laughed a lot when they were dramatizing the digestive system together. When students have fun together they become a closer group and the atmosphere improves, he argues. According to Johan and Sten, both humor and the laughter that accompanies it are important for smoothing over situations that might otherwise become humiliating.155

Both Anna and Cessa arranged for evening activities at school that provided their students with positive common experiences. The informants connected these evening activities to the attainment of positive relational conditions among school students. The evening activity that Anna arranged began as a response to a classroom problem. Her students were in the habit of bringing different kinds of games to school – e.g., “Gameboy” – and these were intruding on their school work. Rather than just banning the games, Anna decided to counteract this problem by arranging for a big “Game Night” at school. The event, which was intended for the students and their families, was primarily aimed at improving general relational conditions by engaging adults and children from different families in playing board games, having coffee and lemonade and just being together. Cessa tells about a class dress up party that had been initiated and planned by her students. At first she felt a bit hesitant about helping out at the party, being uncertain as to how it might work out. However, her initial apprehension turned into delight when she saw that the students had arranged an excellent two hour program:

C: All I really had to say was, “Let’s sit in a ring”. Then one of the girls in the class […] explained the program, and they went through it: they were to perform and then dance. It flowed perfectly – as clever as ever. Then I felt, Yesss! And everyone participated, everyone dressed up (all 27), including even the Romani children, who sometimes stand a bit to the side. I sensed that everyone had a place, and I could be the outside observer, sitting on a bench, watching. I was amazed at their good job. 2-182-186

155 Some make a distinction between laughing with someone and laughing at someone (Cessa, Sten, Adrian, Anders and Gunilla); however, according to them, it not always easy to distinguish between the two. Sten argues that it depends on how the person takes it, and Johan uses sensing in order to find this out.
Cessa received a great deal of satisfaction from the fact that her students were able to independently collaborate without her having to intervene, viewing it as a result of public dealings with different issues in the class.\textsuperscript{156} This event also provides an example of how positive common experiences are created not only by the teacher, but also by the students themselves, either on their own or in cooperation with their teacher.

According to Erik, having students who like each other and enjoy spending time together is a fantastic source of power: “When this is the case, it is a lot easier to teach the subject, and it is better for the teachers too. […] Then, even if a teacher is a bit crazy, things can still work out pretty well.” 2-228-232 Good student relationships can in his view make problems with learning and/or teachers in school less of a challenge. Lotta argues that, in time, students who know each other well will constitute a secure base for each other; and according to Adrian, feeling emotionally secure together with one’s classmates is an important precondition for learning, taking risks and being creative.

Encounters with others who are different

The fact that students who have not exactly chosen one another are obliged to coexist and collaborate in school is addressed in positive terms by many of the informants. According to Maria, although functioning in a group is a learning process, “this doesn’t mean that they have to be alike just because they’re in a group.” 1-168 Informant arguments involve preparing for and holding a positive attitude towards the meeting of new people who may be different from oneself. They want a student to face outwards towards the others rather than facing inwards towards him-/herself.

In her upper secondary school, Lotta teaches long-term work groups that were deliberately intended to achieve a certain dynamic by being comprised of students with diverse personalities. She argues that students bring different qualities to the group, and that learning to collaborate with people that the student has not chosen is an important preparation for higher education and future life. To be confronted with other ways of going about learning makes the students reflect upon their own learning, according to Lotta, who wants her students to ask themselves:

\begin{quote}
L: “How do I do this and why do I do it this way? And why does it feel good for me to talk to you about this problem that I have? Are you helping me just by being there, or through asking questions? Making me think things through a bit more, making me know myself better, making me reach further, questioning my own sources and so on.” 1-121-123
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{156} For further discussion in this matter, see the next section and also \textit{Conflicts}, in the present chapter.
In Lotta’s view, interaction with other students can thus support students in making their learning experience more rich and effective. By drawing different threads into the discussion in class, students can enrich each other’s learning experience. Lotta wants a group in which both questions and answers depart from the expected. The students then get to practice communication with others who are not similar to themselves, something that will improve both their communication skills and their competence as citizens. Lotta also connects this ability to their general wellbeing as members of social networks.

Adrian tries to get his students to experience things concretely together instead of each student reading individually from a book. It can range from valuation exercises to dramatizing the digestive system. His argument is that through the push and pull of their relationships they gain an understanding that although they are different, everyone has something to contribute to the other. Maria works in a community that is highly homogeneous, and while she thinks that this is likely to have spared her school many of the social problems that can come with greater heterogeneity, she also believes that it tends to cause overreactions to those that are different. Last fall, a girl who was different from the others came to her class:

M: A colleague of mine came to me and said: “Hey, she is… a bit odd.” And I said to her: “I think she is bloody awesome!” [The reason I said that is] because… she contributes something that doesn’t exist here. She contributes […] with a way of viewing things that the children here are not used to.

AF: What is it that you think they derive from her presence?

M: [pause] [The understanding] that everything is not just one way – that it’s okay to be 11 years old and a vegetarian because you feel compassion for animals, [okay to be] an 11 year old that has taken a political stand. Certainly, [her stands are] based on values she has picked up at home, but these may not correspond to the ones that 99 percent of the parents in the area hold. And then I think it is so terrifically good that this mixture exists.

Maria and her colleague had two different approaches to encountering the difference in opinion and appearance that the girl brought: while Maria appreciated it her colleagues were apprehensive about it.

The possibility for students to gain the experience of interacting with persons other than their immediate families and friends is one of Cessa’s arguments for publicly broaching many issues in her the classroom. This, she believes, will enrich their present and future lives.

C: Maybe you will have the courage to initiate a contact, or respond when someone contacts you, [or to feel] that it’s okay to sit [next to a stranger] on the bus. [I want them to have the sense] that you can get much from other people, because this has happened to them in our gatherings. […] They have
done a lot together in class, spent time sitting together. [I want them to] have the courage to be [true to] themselves in other contexts, and in the future too, and to have the courage to be receptive and sensitive to other people. 2-345-349

Cessa argues that because students in her school come from different cultures and different family constellations, encountering each other will make them more broad-minded and less judgmental as teenagers and adults; they may learn, for example, that “there’s nothing wrong with Pelle just because he has a dad who is in prison”. Johan also notes that acceptance of difference is not a given among students, but needs to be specifically addressed. He argues that there is a standard norm and that some people become aggressive because they cannot handle the norm being passed.

J: I think that it’s here, somewhere, that my motives lie. We don’t have to like differences, but, somewhere, we have to learn to handle them. There can be differences in sexual orientation, religion, culture, physical appearance, or a thousand other things. Still, there’s a lot to be gained by understanding that ‘different doesn’t mean dangerous’. 2-279-280

As a consequence, Johan tries to show through his actions that, as a person, one is allowed to do and like many different things, and in a non-stereotypical way. The norm “doesn’t have to be this very, very black and white, so that it becomes dangerous on the other side.” 2-307 In his heterogeneous school, differences are part of everyday life. Johan explains that “one has to be very different in order to be considered different at our place”. 2-317 One of his students had experienced a severe incident in another country that had left her with noticeable injuries. Johan decided to meet things head on by openly discussing the matter of her appearance with his class. Johan’s argument is that through encounters with, and discussions about, difference and acceptance, students are better equipped to handle difference. Occasionally, encounters with difference can appear unexpectedly in situations and prompt teacher action. For example, as Sten recounts:

S: During a time when we had many refugees from [Middle Eastern city,] […] a police helicopter once flew over the school, and I saw a reaction the likes of which I newer saw before: these students threw themselves on the floor, and took cover under tables as if an earthquake was going on. This was likely some sort of learned response. [Makes helicopter sound.] Whoop, four or five of them just disappeared. 2-180-182

The others looked bewildered, and the teachers felt the need to explain to them why these students acted the way they did. For the rest of the class helicopters were considered to be non-threatening, which made the reactions, and possibly also the students, seemingly strange to them. That is, the rest of the class might learn – or mis-learn rather – that they were
strange. The teachers’ explanation was intended to render their way of acting comprehensible, a counter-measure to the (mis-)learning that could have taken place among the others.

Cessa also views students’ experiences from other countries as important to bring up for public discussion. However, she argues that it can be difficult and has to be done with care, because some may be ashamed of their background. This is one reason that she sometimes shows news programs made for children, with documentaries of children from other countries, in order to get material for discussion: “There, they often show a boy in Kurdistan or a girl who is given away in marriage. This grips many of our children because it is the reality that half of them actually, live in… [during the summer holiday] or come from”. 2-34 Bringing her students closer to the issue by showing the news programs is Cessa’s way of introducing material regarding difference, which would otherwise have been difficult to discuss.

Facilitation of the teacher’s work

Relationships between students may also serve to help a teacher. Students can exercise influence on each other in ways that are positive for educational purposes. Cessa says that in her class there are students who act as role models and who help her in attaining good relational conditions in the classroom, and also during recess. Lotta’s students are given the assignment to teach each other on bits of the Swedish grammar, partly as a way of learning meta-cognition, meaning how others learn and how content can be presented in order for the best learning to occur. Lotta argues that her work becomes easier when students take it for granted that they are supposed to help each other within their group. Anders, whose class constantly consists of newcomers as well as students who have been in the class for months, has great help from the “oldies”. Through their hand raising and answers to questions the newcomers are encouraged to participate in the lesson. They also mentor and translate to the newcomers, if they speak the same language. In Anders’ age heterogeneous class, the older students help the younger ones – e.g., by protecting them if someone else is mean, breaking up their fights or walking with them to the bus.

“An environment where it is okay to be.” Theme Two – negotiating ambivalent relationships

Moving away from this bright picture of students relationships, sometimes students’ enjoyment of each other does not contribute to educational purposes. Sometimes they may, in fact, interfere with those purposes, as many teachers are well aware. I initially illustrate this condition using two
very short examples of how students, through their co-existence in the same place, enable and constrain each others’ actions, and how the informants view these conditions: First, Anna had a student who was so focused on his friends and on having fun with them that it was impossible for her to get through to him, no matter how she tried. Second, Cessa described a student who was unable to get much work done when he was seated next to a particular classmate, but got more work done the following week when he was seated next to another. When asked about how this could be, he was aware that the person he was sitting next to significantly influenced the extent of his achievement. That relationships can be viewed differently by teachers and students is a common experience, and in the following I present the ambiguity of relationships in different subthemes.

A common space of equal participation

The simple fact that students constitute a group makes it possible for students to practice talking and acting in front of an audience, something that the informants believe they must learn to do. They encourage students to act in front of their classmates, but also to listen to and respect their classmates when they are part of the audience. The informants also worry about students that do not want or dare to speak, participate or in other ways take up space. Lena and Johan who have the youngest students (preschool), argue that within the class the students can practice things such as respecting and listening to the other, allowing the other to finish before talking, waiting to take one’s turn and so forth. Here, it is a matter of tempering those who are, perhaps, over enthusiastic to take up space. For some students, however, having to stand up and speak or act before others is one of the most difficult things they have to do in school – the most difficult, according to Johan.

Anders’ students, who often do not know the Swedish language when they come to the class, start out by listening to the others. Then they are encouraged to say just one word in class, and after that, practice speaking before a small group as a preparation for doing it in front of the whole class. Cessa also experiments with occasions and constellations that encourage her students to dare being open and, as she puts it, treating the others to what they know. Lena encourages participation in class and wants the quiet students, those who never say “Me, me!” to take up space in front of others too. It is, she says, a matter of pushing just enough; she uses the term sensing the student. Lena initially assisted one of her students:

L: Most times she doesn’t want to count, for example. Everyone thinks that it is tremendously funny to count. But now she and I have the habit of counting together. And after I have started, ‘one, two...’; then I stop and she continues. I only needed to give her a little nudge to get her going. Now she thinks it’s terrific fun. 2-64-66
While Lena describes her support in terms of time, Johan makes a similar description of support in spatial terms—i.e., where to place himself in relation to a student. During physical education, students perform mirroring exercises, and these are sometimes led by a student who has been encouraged to direct the entire group. At such times, Johan explains, “I know how near or far apart to stand.” Lena views her task of managing the common space in terms of democracy:

L: I have to make sure that all are included in a composition that is just right. [...] I view it in democratic terms ... that there are several ways of going about things. And everyone has equal amount of... [space]. 2-304-307

She views it as her task to balance the space between the shy and the talkative, through encouraging some and tempering others. Anders says that it is every teacher’s dilemma: balancing the common space between those who invade it and those who withdraw from it.

There seems to be a notion of equal participation that the informants strive towards. However, rather than being absolute, this ideal is weighed against the perceived needs of individual students. A few informants describe sometimes consciously providing more space to particular students. Anders, for example, tells of a student who was accustomed to taking a large amount of space amongst friends in his home country. However, after coming to Sweden, a new country with a language he could not speak, he was no longer able to occupy the same quantity of space. Anders believes that this is why he got into so many fights at school, and in order to improve the situation for this student, Anders let him speak his mind:

A: I thought it was better to encourage him to take up the space he needed. I mean, I certainly prefer his speaking out in the middle of a gathering to his fist fighting with other students during breaks. 2-165

Anders’ perception was that he fought less when he was allowed to speak his mind in the class. Johan says that there are no templates in this regard, and that different strategies have to be tested. If one of his students is unusually quiet or unusually talkative during a period in which s/he is having certain difficulties at home, perhaps s/he needs to be given more space.

According to Cessa, when students coming from other countries feel emotionally secure, they become bolder about publicly describing their experiences (see above). In other words, in order for students to take the risk of being exposed by taking up space before others, there are certain relational conditions that need to be met—conditions that informants work to enhance. Lotta says that she and her students have developed “this climate [...] in which you are pretty much allowed to express any thoughts you like”.

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She explains that the relations among herself and her students are such that they conduce to their taking up space in front of each other. Erik uses another sort approach to encourage his math students to overcome the fear of giving the wrong answer – an approach that partially reflects the character of the subject he teaches: “Math is so decisive because you are either right or wrong, with no in between.” In response to this, Erik tries to avoid making his questions sound like an interrogation, and to avoid embarrassing his students: “‘How big is this angle, Kalle?’ ‘I don’t know…’ ‘That’s okay. You are here with us, and we will solve this problem together.’ [This is what I do,] instead of just saying, ‘Nope,’ and turning to another student.” In order to make things less dramatic for his students he says things like: “‘You are among friends’, something that implies: ‘be cool, be calm; we’ll help each other here.’” That is, if the student is hesitant or unable to answer the question Erik tries to point out to the students that the responsibility is not individual but collective, and that they are part of a community doing math together.

During the gatherings in Anders’ class, a student-initiative has resulted in a practice where the students who want to come up and lead the singing can do so. They perform movement songs and show flash cards, and Anders argues that it is valuable that everyone sees that the others are allowed to stand up there in front of the others, and that they enjoy doing so. He says that it may make those who did not dare to stand in front of an audience try it. However, different audiences give different conditions for taking up space. Anders has experienced how students can change dramatically when the relational conditions change:

A: Let’s say, for example, you have a group of children from a particular country, and among them you have a small, quiet nine year old who doesn’t say a lot. When all the older children [move to another class], and there’s only this nine year old left, and then a new person comes to the class from the same country, this nine year old can […] become very talkative and very go-ahead and capable. Because she is now the oldest, and can thus be a bit of a mentor to the new ones. You notice that really often, that they can grow when the constellation in the class changes. […] It is rather awesome to watch. 2-172-174

The existence of an audience where students’ accomplishments can be witnessed by others can be perceived as positive. One of Cessa’s students, who suddenly made big improvements one week, was publicly acknowledged in front of the class. But such acknowledgements are not viewed as being positive merely by default: Erik is careful to consider when and when not to make excellent results public, as this can sometimes have negative consequences for the student.

157 These relational conditions are described in the previous chapter (see A sense of humor).
Independent thinking

Sten has had several occasions in his class where he felt the need to emphasize the importance of independent thinking, since the girls tended to blindly follow their leader. That is, he acted in order to lessen relational influences that infringed on the students’ capacity to form and express their own opinions. Since it was not without consequences for the girls to break with the opinion of the leader, Sten tried to support them in the process in various ways. According to Sten, the girls have become more aware of how peer pressure works, but they still have some work to do. Johan says that creativity, as in thinking in new ways, involves having the courage to counter peer pressure. Being over-dependent on others is viewed as something to be overcome. Lena also has a student who always wants to be close to someone else. In response, Lena deliberately put this student in situations where she must be the first one to act. In this way “she gets the chance to perform the activity first […] instead of imitating someone else that does it before her”. 2-145-146 According to Lena, the student is thus given the chance to practice independence from others

Conflicting purposes in relationships

Students’ relationships can sometimes be perceived positively by the students, but negatively by the teacher, as I touched upon at the beginning of the theme. For many of Gunilla’s students it is very important to be part of a group instead of just staying at home, even if attending her program is considered to be the second alternative. Within the class she tries to talk to the ones who choose to stay outside of the interaction, but she will not force them to participate. Often her students are not in the habit of reading or discussing books with their friends; Gunilla says that books are not things that carry status among their peers, and that there is a resistance against reading. Working to counteract this resistance, she makes sure that the class spends a lot of time reading books together, and Gunilla never requires book reports, but instead talks to them about the book. She also wants the students to become interested in books that the others have read – to participate in a reading community.

Other relationships that students enjoyed, but teachers viewed as negative, were those that encouraged students to skip class. Adrian gives an example:

A: One can have a certain ‘corridor status’ as well – being cocky and all. And if you drop this, you are labeled a nerd who goes to classes. [...] Or there may be a gang of eighth and ninth graders [that are seen to skip class]. But when the ninth graders graduate, and the pressure is off, the eight graders often begin coming to class again.

AF: Oh, I see!
A: They get caught in [the pressure of the group]; they can't cope with going to class in front of the ninth graders because it would lower their status in the group. 2-172-176

That is, in order to keep their status in these peer groups the students cut classes. Sten similarly argues that students may feel the need to show the image of tough guys because the real image is not perceived as good enough.

Classmates and/or friend?

Friendships that are established outside of school continue inside of school as well; and while students also establish friendships within school, being friends and being classmates is not the same thing according to the informants, who make it a point to address this distinction. The practice of being a classmate can be viewed as one step away from family and friends, and perhaps also as preparation for future work. Lena says that she models such conduct to her students, as when she shows respect and trust in her treatment of students, which indicates that this is how her students should treat each other. And Maria tells students whose chemistries do not match that she is not asking them to become best friends, but only to respect and show consideration for one another. In the following example, Cessa has deliberately seated students next to one another who would not have chosen to do so on their own:

C: Well, if I don't choose it for them, they will never approach one another. But if I choose it for them, they will probably discover that this wasn't so awful – that it was even rather fun to work together. 2-165

In school, students are required to learn how to work together with classmates, although Sten and Maria admit that such a requirement even challenging for adults.

Lotta says that when the long term groups that they put together are established, sometimes these students happen to become friends and hang out for three years. That is, teachers’ interventions in grouping students can result in their moving from being classmates to being friends. Friendships can be viewed as positive for the purpose of education although maintaining a friendship can also interfere with school purposes. Sten has had problems with a group of girls where one of them was extremely popular. Before seating two of the other girls together, he had a talk with one of them, in order to emphasize proper classmate conduct. He asked the girl to respond neutrally when being told to work with the other girl, and to neither make faces nor use body language in order to show disapproval, both for her and for the other student's sake. That is, to show disapproval when told to work together with a classmate was not acceptable classmate-conduct as it was offensive to one of the other students. Sten also had an issue with the girl
conducting herself as superior to the other student, which implies that classmates, according to him, should treat each other equally. In Anders’ class, which is age heterogeneous, the expectations are somewhat different because the older classmates are expected to protect the younger ones; nonetheless, he also mentions the importance of classmates respecting and caring for one another.

Often, students are part of a group of peers that they spend their recess time with in school. Some of the informants addressed actions that they took when this was not the case. Adrian and Erik describe how they have made a habit of chatting with students in the corridor. These chats, they argue, are especially important for lonely students. Adrian says:

A: I am in the habit of talking to them and seeing how things are going – that is, if it’s the right time to sit down for a while. [I can show them something, or maybe ask for help. Some become very happy to help if I ask: “Can you help me, because I’m on my way to copy something?” or “Can you hold this?” […] They take the bait immediately. 2-259-260

Erik argues that for students who are not academically successful in school, and who lack social contacts, he may perform an important function: that of making them feel recognized.

“Hey, did you hear her talking to you?” Theme Three – negotiations intended to deal with problems between students

This theme addresses the relational practices of teachers in response to different kinds of problems between students. For secondary and upper secondary teachers, who may only meet their classes for a couple of lessons every week, it is more difficult to have an overview of the relationships in the class. Erik, for instance, says that there may be groups of students that he does not have access to as a teacher. He argues that the students’ home-room teachers have more insight into their relationships. Gunilla, on the other hand, tried to find out about students’ relationships when she talked to them in the larger secondary school she previously worked in. Some of the informants describe paying constant attention to relationships among the students, with the aim of discovering acts such as violations, bullying, conflicts, oppression and other relational problems. This attention is prompted by the possibility of violations, and the ever-changing dynamics of such relationships. It is also due to the informants’ perceived the lack of information. Gunilla extended this need for information beyond the relationships of her own students, describing that she deliberately spent time in the corridor among the general student population:
G: And that’s where you can make contact with those of your students’ classmates that you don’t have in class. Otherwise, when are you to meet them? You can never make any contact with all the other students in the school unless you are out in the corridor.

AF: And check out who they-

G: Oh, yes. Because they are incredibly important to our students, we teachers also need to check them out – to check out the relationships between them. 2-284-287

The practices that the informants employ in response to problems among students are here illustrated with examples from a range of different and complex situations. There seems to be a certain awareness among informants as to the vulnerability of students relative to the actions of others.

On the border of what can be tolerated

Differences between students, such as differing opinions or differing ways of going about things, can be viewed as positive conditions for educative opportunities. However, the informants also brought up several situations in which differences among students were more difficult to handle, and in which the border of tolerance was in need of attention. This can involve conduct that neither the students nor the teachers consider to be acceptable, but that requires negotiation because of the complexity of the situation. Adrian, for instance, made the judgment that a student (who I have named ‘Sam’), be allowed to keep his hat on:

A: …I try to be just, but sometimes treating them differently is the fair thing to do, and I think the other students need to discover this. […] In the case of Sam, I allowed him to keep his cap on because, for me, it is more important that he maintains a good mood and participates in class. The others seem to have accepted this, and I’m not going to waste my energy bothering with it.

AF: What do the others say? How do you notice that they discover this?

A: Well, they take their caps off, but don’t seem to care that he is allowed to wear his. They don’t start yelling: “But he’s wearing his cap, then I’ll wear mine too!” – they don’t do that. After they become closer to each other, they accept the differences. They know: “He’s having a bit of a rough time there.” In a way their humanness kicks in, and they are able to accept others for what they are. 2-56-63

In this particular instance, Adrian judged that it was more important for Sam to come to class and feel good, than for him to comply with the ‘no-cap’ rule. Thus he bent the rule for Sam, but not for the other students. Gunilla has also made exceptions for her students when she judged that it was necessary
– e.g., when they call her up in the morning, or want to leave school early, because they don’t feel well: “Then you say: ‘Come here, you can sit here when you feel bad; you can have the little room all to yourself. Then, since you’re already here anyway, you can get some work done.’”

Both Adrian’s and Gunilla’s judgments seem to be based on the assumption that the students were actually not able to live up to the present demands, and also that if they could do so they would. This inability on the part of the student thus makes the informants relieve the students from responsibility for their misconduct in the situation at hand.158 A teacher’s occasional bending of a rule for one student does not have to be difficult for the other students to tolerate. There are, however, events that become more difficult to tolerate. Adrian had a student, ‘Joel’, whom the others perceived as very trying, and no one wanted to work with him. Joel had difficulties understanding social signals, and Adrian acknowledged the other students’ right to feel uncomfortable when he stood too close or constantly commented on them. But even if those were things that he did not ask the class to tolerate, he did not leave it at that. Adrian tried to adapt his teaching in order to increase tolerance among the students. Again, his judgment seems to be based on the assumption that if the student, Joel in this case, could act differently he would, but he was not able to.

Adrian judged that he could not demand from his student what the situation usually required, and this condition made other students suffer in one way or the other. He then used different means for negotiating the border of tolerance between students. For instance, Adrian worked with short term groups as he argued that it was easier for the students to accept working with Joel for shorter periods of time. In that way, students may discover that “He’s pretty all right at this anyway.” 1-267 Other activities that have worked well for all were, for instance, group work with drama, like when dramatizing the digestive system. Adrian has also appealed to students for their understanding, and explained that Joel did not have bad intentions for conducting himself the way he did.

Unwarranted attention can also be diverted away from the individual student as was noticeable during the observation in Johan’s class. I noticed that during the gathering Kalle got stuck on a topic, and that Johan told him in a low voice that they would talk about it later. Johan said in the second interview that Kalle often got stuck in the initial phase of something and came back to it over and over. He argues that in this situation, there was no reason to give too much attention to Kalle at the possible expense of the others. In addition to negotiating the needs of different students, he seems to attempt to find ways in which the needs of all can be met, such as finding

158 The reverse can also apply, as indicated by the accounts; Erik, for instance, has locked the door against late arrivals, basing his decision on their perceived ability to be on time; he argued that they could, but would not, take responsibility for being on time.
ways in which Kalle can fulfill his need to ‘unwind’ from time to time without disturbing the other students, who need to work in peace and quiet. Johan thus attempts to negotiate students’ different needs in a way that is not stigmatizing for any of the students, and that gives all students good working conditions. The inability to meet demands need not always be treated as a permanent condition. Johan, for example, made use of collaboration exercises that he says were beneficial for everyone, but especially for Kalle, who needed to practice in order to get away from being excessively focused on one person or thing. But Kalle also needed more support than the others during this exercise, which Johan and the other teachers provided. In his view, spending time with Kalle served two ends: helping Kalle and helping the class.

Offense

The different ways in which the informants acted in response to perceived cases of offense between students, and their arguments for these, are represented in the following, using one or several examples to illustrate the type of response that the informants used.

Act on emerging cases of offense: The students’ lives outside of school may influence school practices in different ways. A case of offense surfaced after a school holiday when Cessa found out that one of her students had been teased in school. It was the parents of the student who called and asked her for help, since the girl was upset and did not want to go to physical education. Although the girl was unwilling to reveal the specifics of the offense to her parents, she confided to Cessa that she had been teased because of certain personal bodily characteristics. Cessa then worked to rectify the situation: she made the teasing girls understand that the girl took deep offense, and they apologized to her. After the teasing was exposed and dealt with, Cessa followed up on the situation every week by checking with the girls that were involved.

Vigilant observation of interaction: Both Johan and Cessa expressed concern that students were being mistreated without their knowing about it. Lena and Adrian described keeping a constant eye on students’ interaction to make sure that one student is no more exposed than another. For Adrian, this was especially the case with Joel. Adrian tried to avoid situations in which the other students might get tired of Joel, which could lead to their mistreating him. From time to time he reminded Joel that he could not comment on the other students in the way he did. Erik also worried that interactions which appeared like friendly banter might be experienced as offensive by a student who masked her/his feelings. When faced with what seems like joking with a student, he is cautious to join in, since it could be sensitive.
**Be present as a safeguard:** When a student takes up space in front of the group, perhaps presenting a drawing, Johan stands close by as a support. He argues that a comment from the audience can appear either interested or offensive just by a change in tone:

J: They are welcome to ask about what's to the right in the picture, but they’re not allowed to ask: “What's that to the right in the picture?” (In a demeaning voice, stressing the word ‘right.’) It's not the same thing. It really isn’t. 1-228-230

There is a difference between “asking a question”, and “to question”, argues Johan; and he says that he can sense the difference in an expression. He also tries to sense how it is received by the student. Another example of being present as a safeguard is provided by Cessa, who accompanied her teased student to physical education for a couple of weeks after the incident was disclosed.

**Prevent offense from occurring:** If one of Johan’s students constantly questions others, he takes this student to the side and talks about it. Johan says that this student needs to learn empathy and to discern whether someone is hurt or not; he further argues that a student who is emotionally secure does not have the same need to pick on others. Anna thinks that strengthening students helps them to refrain from violence, and here she talks about the relationships between boys and girls. She takes issue with the fact that often, in society, it is the girls that are described as being in need of change. Instead she argues that if the boys are strengthened, they find alternatives to having quarrels and making trouble.

**Set a boundary:** Lena watched a student run over one of the other students with a little sled, and the offender showed absolutely no reaction of remorse. During the interview Lena was still upset that the student did not seem to care about what she had done, and after the incident Lena had emphasized to this student that she had hurt the other student, and that she had to be careful. Her intent was thus to make the student conscious of the consequences of the physical offense that the student seemed to be unaware of. Adrian also gives an example of setting a boundary:

A: Yes, they are nasty, they are rotten to each other; they do things, maybe repeatedly, to each other. I see something and then I say something about it, tell them off, and despite this it still continues. And then I see that someone becomes hurt. Then I get really furious. But I want to be able to talk about it afterwards too. However, sometimes I [leave it at this, thereby conveying] That’s it. Nothing to talk about. 2-287-290

According to Adrian, his anger and refusal to talk about it, can serve to underline the boundary that he set. Anders set a boundary regarding food
when one of his students tried to stop another student from eating pork. He said:

A: "And you’ll just have to accept that, because neither you nor anyone else can make decisions as to what he or she can eat. Even if you think that it’s wrong to eat pork because your religion says so, that doesn’t mean that you can decide for her what she can eat. If she or her parents decide that she can eat this, that or anything else […] then she can! […] No one else can decide for her." 1-209-210

In cases like these, when acts are unacceptable for some of the students but acceptable for others matters become more complex.159

Create spaces where hidden offenses can become visible: In order to find out more about the relationships between students, Cessa has conducted “boy-talks” and “girl-talks”. The girls had a box where they could put questions and letters with topics to bring up, anonymously if they wanted to. At one point, she had weekly girl-talks in order to reduce whispering among girls. The teacher Maria also created a space for making hidden offenses visible. Her story is described in some detail at the end of this chapter.

Treat offenses as occasions for learning: While being subjected to offense is generally treated as something negative, it can also be viewed as an opportunity to practice standing up for oneself against the offenses of others. Lena’s view is that the student is responsible for telling others what they are allowed and not allowed to do relative to her or his person. She argues that when she helps her students to stand up against their offenders, they will gradually gain self respect, become aware of their own boundaries, and turn away from the role of a victim.

Conflicts

Conflicts between students can, but need not necessarily, involve offense, bullying or other forms of oppression. Many conflicts are handled as an everyday part of the teaching experience. The kinds of conflicts that the informants have to deal with, and how often they occur, vary.160 In addition, conflicts may be either visible or invisible to the informant, and may also move from visibility to invisibility and visa versa. Sten, for instance, describes

159 Religious freedom is stated by law and also in the National curriculum of Sweden: “No-one should be subjective to discrimination at school based on gender, ethnic belonging, religion or other belief, sexual orientation or disability, or subjected to other degrading treatment.” (Skolverket, 2006b, p. 3), see also (Skolverket, 2006c, 2006d). For a comprehensive discussion about different aspects of teaching in multi-religious classrooms see e.g. Roos & Berglund (2009).

160 Perceived individual causes of conflicts will not be specifically dealt with here, even if some were mentioned by the informants in general terms. (For instance, Johan talked about lack of emotional security, competition, and previous traumatic experiences. Cessa added having a complex about something and jealousy.)
his surprise at being confronted with a flare up between groups of girls during a theater rehearsal: “then an old conflict flared up between [them] – just sort of, “boom”, and it suddenly flared up; harsh words were spoken and all.” 2-18

The means for handling conflicts are multiple, and depend upon the situation at hand. For example, although Cessa prefers publicly dealing with conflicts, she nonetheless maintains that some conflicts are too sensitive to handle in this way (e.g., the girl who was teased because of personal bodily characteristics). She also holds that it is easier to solve conflicts that are out in the open. The different ways in which informants respond to conflicts, and their arguments for the actions they take, are exemplified throughout this section.

Ignore conflicts: One can imagine that any attempt to forbid conflicts from occurring would be futile for teachers, but they may still ignore or be impassive in the face of them. Sten argues that ignoring conflicts entails the risk that they may deepen and escalate, threatening to interfere with or even preclude education. Teachers who ignore conflicts may generally be regarded as unprofessional, although in some instances it may actually be called for. According to Lena, she used this approach when she wanted a young girl, Moa, to become more independent and try to solve the conflicts herself instead of running to the teachers and tattling.

Lena thus made a judgment for each instance. If she judged that Moa was able to handle the situation on her own, but instead relied on adults to do it for her, she would not have provided the help. However, support is not an on-off matter; different degrees of support can be involved. These are addressed next.

Support students in solving conflicts: I want to point out that although the informants did not address the conflicts that the students solved on their own, many such conflicts most likely have occurred as well. One reason for their absence in the interviews was probably that most such conflicts were not brought to the informant’s attention. But in the instances where conflicts are not solved independently by the students, the informants were able to support their students in various ways. Lena wants her very young students to be able to defend themselves verbally rather than resorting to physical violence or becoming defenseless victims: “This is where the boundary runs: you are not doing this to me.” 2-260 She argues that if the student expresses it her-/himself, the spoken word strengthens the student’s self-image, because then s/he becomes not a victim who has to be defended, but someone who sets the boundary for him/herself. If the student tells Lena:
L: “But he won’t listen to me.” [Then I say], “I’ll be in the background when you say it, and then I’ll see whether he listens to you.” Then, if I notice that the child still ignores the other child, I say: “Hey, did you hear her talking to you?”

AF: [pause] So they should demand to be listened to?

L: Yes, exactly. 2-265-269

Through her comment to the ignoring student, Lena supports the ignored student’s claim to be listened to and taken seriously. One could argue that Lena concurrently underlines the student’s inability to deal with conflicts on her own, although compared to letting the adult do all the work, it can be viewed as one step towards solving her/his own conflicts.

Observe the pattern of occurring conflicts: Students may get into destructive patterns of conflicts that they are unable to break out of on their own. Lena talks of these patterns as being a victim, being naughty, or being a scapegoat. She describes how one of her youngest students became a scapegoat:

L: We have a small boy now who is just lovely, but very lively, and who the older children used to be a bit afraid of. Then I have noticed that it is these older ones who get him going, and once they have, then they can’t bare this, and then they come to us saying that he is nasty or he does this and that. […] He is young and has not yet learned many words, and he can pick something up and either throw it at them or poke them with it. It is a way for him to get contact and he notices that things start to get lively, and they enjoy this liveliness. But when this becomes too much for them, then [they complain that] he is nasty. 2-279-286

Her means for breaking this pattern was to get the bigger students out of his way. During a period of time she told them not to hang around him at all.

Prevent conflicts from occurring: One way to prevent conflicts from occurring is to be present as a teacher in different situations. Gunilla used to sit in the corridor correcting tests and so forth when she worked at a different school. She argued that her presence could prevent quarrels from turning violent. Johan sees as his goal the prevention of conflicts that arise from lack of understanding and tries to teach his students various ways of handling difference.

Solve conflicts in order to go on: There are conflicts between students that may be judged as trivial or uncalled for, or that the informants, for other reasons, wanted to solve quickly. During an observation, I saw Lena noticing that two students started to pull at the same paper. Lena swiftly pulled out another paper and gave it to one of them. In the second interview she argued that the alternative would have been to intervene in the conflict, become stern and decide which one was wrong to pull at the paper. She judged that handing out a second paper was a neat way to solve the conflict. When
conflicts interfere with school work, the informants often try to solve the conflicts together with the students. However, Lotta, whose students work in small, long term groups, has solved a few of the conflicts by moving students to a different group. She says that this is done with some caution, partly because it interferes with one of the aims of the groups: that the students practice working with those that they have not chosen.

*Investigate conflicts:* Sten says that when faced with a conflict he collects the different versions of what happened, sometimes questioning parts of what he hears. Then he talks to the students about how to go on from there. He wants the students to understand the reasons behind his actions. It is also important, according to him, that each party gets the chance to tell his or her side of the story and be listened to. He argues that when the involved parties get the opportunity to listen to their own recounting of what happened, this constitutes an important ground for reflection. Otherwise, Sten argues, if conclusions are drawn without the students having their say, they feel unjustly treated, hatred grows and they may use their own, violent means for getting revenge.

*Ask students to solve conflicts:* There are instances where students are asked to solve their own conflicts, mostly older students. Gunilla gives an example where two girls quarreled about something that happened during their leisure time. When she got fed up with their quarreling she asked them to stop it and sit down in a room and confront each other, which they did. They were able to sort out the conflict on their own.

*Ask people from the outside for help when solving conflicts:* Bringing in other people such as a student welfare team is done as a last resort, when the informant has reached the end of her/his means, or has concluded that representatives of other professions are better suited to solve the problem. Anders has students who may not yet be able to use Swedish for solving conflicts. For this reason, he seeks help for solving their conflicts from teachers at his school who speak their mother tongue. Then the students can describe what happened in their own language and the teachers who speak that language can translate. Anders builds his argument on the assumption that emotional language is important, and that trying to express oneself in a new language when one is upset is almost impossible.

*Draw on conflicts as occasions for learning:* Conflicts can be viewed as occasions for students to learn how to handle conflicts in constructive instead of destructive ways. Anders’ students commonly have conflicts over equipment during recess – i.e., who gets the ball, etc. He uses these instances for instilling standards such as the majority rules, cooperatively playing together and taking turns. When there has been a quarrel, Cessa describes how she has occasionally used student conflicts for educational purposes – e.g., the involved students (or sometimes the teachers themselves) attempt to reenact a particular conflict, and then their classmates are asked to suggest or enact alternate endings. In this regard, Cessa argues that the distance created
by such suggestions or dramatizations allows the involved students to see how they might have acted differently in the situation. In addition, this approach provides an opportunity for those that were not involved to learn different ways of handling incidents of conflict. It can be viewed as an example of peer teaching, or, alternatively, as a display of bad examples for others to learn from. According to Cessa, this way of openly dealing with things in front of the class is a regular practice that has done no harm to individual students.

“IQ – Maria’s MENSA club.” An example – peer power negotiations

In this example, the story of an informant’s work with relationships among the students in her class is described at some length. The reason for this narrative mode of presentation is to bring out features that require more temporal and other contextual elements in order to stand out. ‘Maria’ is around 35 years of age, and has taught classes 1 through 7 for over ten years; she works in a primary school on the intermediate level. After completing her secondary school education, Maria was employed as a part-time teacher’s assistant, but long before this had decided that she wanted to dedicate herself to fulltime teaching.

M: From the time I was ten years old, I had always wanted to be either a teacher or an archeologist, and people used to think that I was really good at school. But I wasn’t; I was rather average. I felt that school was too conventional, and that it didn’t give me what I wanted. It was back then that I think I somehow found my calling. I wanted to take part in improving school.1-18-20

I asked Marie what she did to foster democratic citizens, and this prompted her to describe recent developments in her fifth grade class – developments that caused her to examine her own thinking about an issue that she had previously found little need to consider. However, the events that occurred changed this, making her feel the need to “sharpen” herself a bit. Maria cannot claim to know how her students experienced the process described in her story, nor what part she may have played relative to the way events transpired. The aim is rather to visualize and discuss the relational dimensions of teachers’ work through an understanding of the practical argument that Maria sets within her story.
Maria and the students in her class

Although at the time Maria was unaware of it, the plot really started to unfold when she was forced to intervene in a recurring conflict among a group of female students – and especially between the girls Clara and Hanna. At the end of the term, Maria resolved that if the situation remained the same during the next term, she would then seek help from an outside party. In an attempt to improve the classroom situation, she began holding “girl-talks”, and requested a male colleague to hold similar talks with the boys. She had expected that the main topic among the girls would be their own internal conflicts, but found instead that they were far more interested in discussing the numerous derogatory comments they received from the boys – especially Hugo and Arvid. Evidently, the boys had begun making condescending remarks, many of which had been directly aimed at the girls themselves. The boys mocked the girls’ hobbies. They argued that it was pointless to listen to what the girls had done in their leisure time, however, but still demanded that everyone listened to their stories about soccer matches and so forth. Their derogatory remarks extended to the girls’ schoolwork as well, with the most common slight being directed towards their level of intelligence, using the initials “IQ”. The boys were also seen to laugh when one of the girls erred while reading out loud or answering a question. During these various incidents, the girls would simply bow their heads and avoid answering the boys back.

Maria decided to work on strengthening the girls. She told them not to return comments in the same manner as the boys, but gave them another strategy. Maria manufactured and laminated membership cards for “Maria’s MENSA-club” and gave to the girls. They were instructed to carry them during school, and to reply as follows the next time a boy disparaged their IQ: “If you’re so smart, where is your MENSA membership card?” During the next such incident, the girls responded as advised, and the boys asked, “Why, do you have one?” In answer, they showed them their cards. The boys were dumbfounded, and Maria noticed that following this incident the boys’ slights against the girls’ intelligence waned away. She speculates that the boys may have already known about MENSA, or googled it at home and discovered that it actually exists.

The girls bonded as a group, perhaps because of their common cause, but sometimes their conversations turned into gossip. The conflicts diminished in the group of girls. On one occasion, Maria felt great satisfaction when she overheard Clara loudly telling Hugo to stop picking on Hanna after he had made another condescending remark. Clara had defended her former rival, and the class had fallen dead silent in response. And from that point on, Hugo stopped bothering Hanna, according to Maria. This story should not be taken to mean that only girls are subject to nasty comments. The male

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colleague that Maria asked to hold “boy-talks” had become troubled because during these sessions, everyone denied the occurrence of condescending remarks and thus he had made no progress in terms of surfacing the problems. Maria then discussed the meaning of “condescending remark” with the entire class. In this regard, the students collaboratively developed a distinction: that between being nasty, where one unintentionally allows a negative comment to slip out, and being mean, where one intentionally sets out to do harm. Examples of both were anonymously presented in written notes and on the blackboard. Maria then gave these to her male colleague for further discussion with the boys.

Maria has put a lot of effort into improving the relationships among her students; during the term in which the interviews were conducted, she more or less considered this to be her main purpose. From her perspective, the two dominant boys controlled the thinking of the others in the class. Part of her work has consisted of strengthening the others, as she did with the group of girls. She also made it a habit to ask for everyone’s opinion (sometimes allowing students to abstain, but not repeatedly). The class had numerous valuation exercises in which the students were required to share and give reasons for their opinions. In addition, she worked with Hugo and Arvid individually. She describes them as high achievers, with leadership qualities. Separately, they were able to function as positive leaders, but together they mostly achieved negative ends. Although Maria had different strategies for the two boys, she wanted both to develop positive expressions of leadership, while phasing out the negative ones. I will return to Maria’s story in the next chapter.

Summary

The accounts illustrating the practices involved in establishing and maintaining relationships among students indicate that these practices constituted a pervasive component of their work. In other words, they were not just something in the background to be infrequently considered. The informants drew upon existing positive relationships among students, and tried to create positive common experiences that served a number of purposes. These positive experiences also influenced other experiences in a positive way. Many of the informants viewed school as a place where students are provided with the opportunity to encounter students that are different from themselves. These encounters were viewed as contributing to such things as the richness of the learning experience, the cultivation of a broad-minded and less-judgmental attitude and the ability to work cooperatively with others in the future.

The informants’ relational practices also included negotiating ambivalent relationships among students. One of the ambivalences concerned the
classroom as an (un-)equal space of participation, and involved the informants' attempts to balance this common space between students who wanted to invade it and those who wanted to withdraw from it instead. For some students, standing before their classmates was connected to anxiety, while for others, it was seen as an importunity to express dominance. In the accounts, a tension was apparent between the notions of friend and classmate, where being a classmate and being a friend were sometimes seen as one and the same thing, and sometimes as different, or even contradictory, roles. Relationships between students were viewed as dynamic and subject to re-negotiation, and, in some cases, as standing in the way of educational purposes. Relationships that interfered with students' independent thinking were counteracted.

When a student was perceived as being unable, for various reasons, to live up to the demands of school practice, and this inability affected classmates in a negative way, negotiations involved the matter of tolerance among students. The informants used different means for negotiating relationships in a way that would not be stigmatizing or excluding for those students. The possibility of occurrences of offense between students spurred several practices on the part of the informants: acting on emergent cases of offense; vigilantly observing interactions; being present as a safeguard; preventing offenses from occurring; setting boundaries; creating spaces that enabled hidden offense to become more visible; and, treating offenses as occasions for learning. Conflicts that occurred between students were often handled as everyday parts of teaching. However, not all of them were visible to the informant, at least not initially. The different ways in which the informants handled conflicts included: ignoring the conflict; providing support to students; asking them to solve their own conflicts; observing conflict patterns; solving conflicts; investigating conflicts; asking outside people for help; and, treating conflicts as occasions for learning.

In the story presented above, Maria discovered that some of her students were being harassed by others, and took action against this practice. In doing this, she worked mainly with the girls, providing them with a means whereby they were able to change their relationships with the boys, and with one another. The themes and examples presented herein indicate that informants intentionally devote time and effort to establishment and maintenance of certain kinds of relationships among students. In this chapter, I have tried to stay as close as possible to the voices and words of the informants. In the next chapter, my intention is to add other voices from theory, with the aim of deepening our understanding of their practices.
9 Adding analytical layers to the accounts

In the following I add analytical layers that deepen our understanding of the aspect of teachers' relational practices that has been described in Chapter Eight: the establishment and maintenance of relationships among students. I begin by returning to Maria's story, using the theoretical concepts of task perception and oppression. Drawing together these analyses and the findings from Chapter Eight, I make an argument for the conception of an educational community as a negotiated and dynamic end of teachers' relational practices, viewed as influential for the fulfillment of teachers' professional purposes.

Maria's task perception

Initially, I focus on the informant Maria's story, and the task perception that is connected to her relational work among the students. This entails that I leave in the periphery such matters as the work Maria performed in relation to individual students, even though that work might have had a bearing on the course of events. The kinds of relationships that she sought to attain in the class were aimed at maintaining student self-confidence and independence.

M: They must be in an environment where it is okay to be and to develop. Children should be allowed to have opinions – and to think. There shouldn’t be some sort of template for what is considered “the right way to think”. 1-70-71

Faced with the situation displayed before her, Maria concludes that student relationships in her class are unequal and takes as her task the endeavor to redress the imbalance: a relational as opposed to an individual construction of the problem. Because she strongly values the right of the student to his or her own opinion, and to be accepted for what she or he is, she considers the creation of this type of community to be one of the prime aims of her teaching. Initially, Maria was unable to perceive the problematic situation in her classroom: the demeaning observations of the boys, and the passive reactions of those on the other end of their remarks, particularly the girls, passed by unnoticed, and were only made visible through the creation of a space and a time – i.e., the “girl-talks” in which the girls felt comfortable and confident to share their problems with her. Maria's initial reason for creating this space concerned conflicts that were occurring between the girls, and thus the revelation of this other problem area made this a case of serendipity. In
the end, however, the original problem was addressed as well: conflicts among the girls naturally diminished after they had established a sense of community. Apart from this positive development, the sense of community that had developed among the girls also led to other less desirable consequences – e.g., an increase of gossiping.

Only after becoming aware of the unequal relationships in her classroom was Maria able to take steps to redress the problem – one of which was to “sharpen” herself. This can be interpreted as a change in task perception initiated by new awareness: the underlying assumption that she was able to handle these issues turned out to be invalid. This awareness also led to the conclusion that her task now involved her own learning of new means. It is instructive to observe how Maria becomes motivated to learn, and to change her practice, as a consequence of perceiving new needs. She judges that due to the events that have come to the surface, the aim of achieving student relationships characterized by equality should be a priority; she is strongly motivated by the value judgment that current circumstances are not right. This judgment is accompanied by the assumption that it is her task to rectify these circumstances, partially through strategies that makes up as she goes along.

Counteracting oppression in Maria’s practice

In order to deepen the analysis, I draw upon Young’s (2000) theory on the five faces of oppression: cultural imperialism, violence, exploitation, marginalization and powerlessness. Relying primarily on the first two of these faces, I employ them as lenses through which the events in Maria’s story are interpreted. Although Young largely developed these concepts mainly for discussing broader societal phenomena, they have been here applied to local occurrences within the classroom community. As Young (2000, p. 85) argues, the mechanisms of oppression operate in everyday social interaction. According to Young, cultural imperialism means that dominant groups tend to position themselves (and their experiences) as universal, primarily by identifying other groups as stereotypical, the other and/or deficient (p. 79). These generally marginalized and/or less powerful groups are affected by the stereotypical and condescending conceptions that the oppressors hold, as they must always be prepared to encounter comments and questions from them. However, they can, through communication and recognition from others in the same group, still embrace a positive image (pp. 80-81). Cultural imperialism can indirectly cause violence, when the presence of the oppressed challenges the universality of the dominant (p. 84).

Young defines violence as including non-physical expressions such as threats, bullying and insults, with the purpose of stigmatizing, depreciating and/or degrading members of a group (p. 82). The constant threat of violence is, inherently, part of the violence, as it infringes on people’s freedom and drains them of energy. According to Young, violence is often a
social act, the everyday character of which contributes to the legitimization of harassments and violence (p. 83). She argues that the desire to degrade and oppress others is a drive that is to some degree unconscious (p. 84). Acts against oppression should be largely directed towards changing patterns and cultural conceptions between oppressed and dominant groups (p. 85). These include right to self-definition and a positive view of difference. A pre-condition for these is the presence of a political space in order to emerge (p. 81).

In the analysis of Maria’s story, while I do acknowledge that the ones oppressed within the group were both boys and girls, I initially attend to the relationships between the boys and the girls. In this regard, the boys’ attempted to restrict the girls’ speaking space in a number of ways. One concerned the attempt to devalue the girls’ hobbies, while holding their own in high esteem. This tactic can be interpreted as a type of cultural imperialism, as can the tactics of demeaning the girls’ intelligence by referring to their low “IQs” and laughing at the mistakes they made during class. All these acts were intended to degrade others and maintain dominance, making them instances of violence that were built into a practice via repetition. The girls were in a situation in which every public act involved the risk of denigration, and this infringement was something that they initially did nothing about. As such, they were in a powerless state.

When Maria created a space in which there was no room for the oppressors, the girls were able to find the power to protest against the boys’ practices. Moreover, through membership in her MENSA club (to which the boys had no entrance), she provided them with means by which to redefine themselves as intelligent persons. The result was the diminution of the boys’ disparaging IQ comments, indicating that they had responded to Maria’s MENSA card gambit as intended. (A possible alternative response could have been that the boys mocked the cards as well.) Their view of the cards as carrying a measure of significance can be interpreted as a sign of Maria’s authority relationship with the primary oppressors. They gave her indirect drawing of a boundary serious regard, and probably also understood the implicit message of her ploy: she was aware of what they were doing and would not accept it. Through the creation of a community, the group of girls developed the courage to defend each other, thus making the boys’ oppression more difficult to maintain. But the community had one negative side effect: an increase of gossiping. The fact that the girls asked for Maria’s help in handling the conflicts indicates their dependence upon her in this regard.

The girls were not the only ones who were oppressed in the class, and thus the gender-oriented means of fighting the oppression excluded oppressed boys from the intervention. Furthermore, the male colleague that Maria had engaged in holding “boy-talks” was unable to get the boys to open up about the slanting remarks, even though some of them also had been victims of this ill treatment. Raider-Roth (2005b, p. 6) notes that students often tend to guard thoughts and ideas that might be viewed as offensive,
cause conflict or jeopardize how others see them. They will only share information that the perceived audience can accept, and that will not lead to public embarrassment. What to share is thus based on the perception of the entailed consequences, which supports the interpretation that the silence during the boy-talks was due to the presence of the two main oppressors. Also, it is impossible to know how confident the boys were in terms of sharing this type of information with someone that they might not have established an educational relationship with.

Maria also used anonymity as means of bringing the oppression in her class to light, as when she had students write and hand in unsigned notes while working with the issue. In addition to working with those that had been oppressed, she also worked with the oppressors, arguing that they both had resources that could be better engaged. Maria’s story concerns an ongoing oppressive practice among her students that had negative consequences for some. Although her motive for intervening in the pattern of their relationships was not directly connected to the learning of a particular subject matter, it can be argued that the existence of student-to-student oppression has a negative impact on the learning process. Most importantly, the practice of oppression threatened the very core of Maria’s task perception, a primary goal of which was to contribute to students’ sense of self-sufficiency and freedom of thought.

The conception of an educational community

In this section, I extend the discussion on the establishment and maintenance of relationships among students, suggesting that this practice is aimed at the creation of what can be termed an “educational community”, which appears to be a significant feature of the educational environment. Peer relationships in school are exceedingly important; indeed, it has been argued that their importance is equal that of the teacher-student relationship (Elias & Schwab, 2006, p. 325). By interacting with their peers in school, students are able to satisfy their need for support, confirmation, nearness and so forth (Granström, 2006, p. 1143; see also Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2005). The centrality of a sense of community for well-functioning classrooms and student accomplishment is represented in numerous studies (see Watson &

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162 The community metaphor has been criticized for underestimating the complexity of classrooms and for marginalizing the conflictual elements; these are treated as a malfunction of the community (Winkelmann, 1991, pp. 2-4). In contrast, the notion of educational community brought forward here contains, and sometimes even welcomes, conflict as an educational opportunity. I argue that even if demands and constraints limit possible action, there is still some room within this notion for the inclusion of the complexity of educational practice. As Greene writes: “Shared experiences, shared social practices, and shared ways of speaking connect various interpretations and provide a promise of something in common, even while allowing for differing vantage points” (Greene, 2001, p. 88).
Battistich, 2006, p. 253 for examples). The description of the power of positive classroom relationships offered by some of this study’s informants is paralleled in other studies, that conceptualize it in terms of flow, momentum or energy that works to enable students to fulfill their educational potential (see Carter & Doyle, 2006, p. 399). Erik and Lotta’s practical arguments concerning good relationships as working to counteract negative aspects of school also align with studies which state that students’ shared processes have the ability to relieve tension, anger and anxiety (e.g. Granström, 2006, p. 1145). Communities are generally comprised of members that know and care about each other, share goals and purposes, and feel committed to the others; specifically within schools, they are said to be associated with such positive features as improved motivation, attachment, achievement and interpersonal concern (Solomon, Watson, Battistich, Schaps, & Delucchi, 1996, pp. 720-721).

Conceptions of community in schools are often connected with specific theories, as well as with related attributes such as being just, morally responsible, democratic and caring (cf Watson & Battistich, 2006). In relation to the conception of an educational community, he attribute “educational” does not come with a pre-formulated idea of what it should contain or connect to. Moreover, as my findings indicate, relationships and purposes can to some extent be viewed as being continuously in renegotiation. Thus my contention is that an educational community is not something to be achieved once and for all, and does not follow a developmental progress trajectory (cf Edling, 2009, pp. 195-198); rather it has to be enacted over and over again.

I work, alternatively, from Biesta and Cowell’s (2009) notion of communities as existing “in and through a complex combination of subjective, inter-subjective and objective elements, experiential, temporal and spatial dimensions, and the ways in which such elements and dimensions are experienced and enacted” (p. 1). They suggest a focus on how community is “done”, on community-as-enacted. Using this notion of community, the relational practices described in the previous chapter can be understood as attempts to enact educational communities, under complex (and sometimes very difficult) conditions. Indeed, relational conditions for education can be better or worse, and thus the educational community can be viewed as an educational good that teachers can only work to (temporarily) enact, within the existing conditions. Through their actions, students can either contribute to or obstruct the work of enacting an educational community. An educational community is both an end-in-itself and an end-in-view, indicating that it can be a means to other ends. The desire of teachers to enact an educational community can thus be viewed as an aspiration to improve educational conditions, or perhaps to make education possible.

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163 For example, “caring community” connects to the ethics of care (Noddings, 1984)
164 See further footnote 7 in the Introduction and Chapter 5, Methodological viewpoints.
Relationships in the classroom are created and sustained through intersubjective processes. This includes the relationships between the teacher and the student as well as those between the students themselves. All these forms of relationships are expressed at a certain moment, in a certain relational environment, and can thus be viewed as being dynamic and subject to change. The conception of an enacted educational community can contain these dynamics, and has more of a relational flavor than the notion of classroom climate, which has been used to describe relational practices aimed at improving relationships among students (see e.g. Brophy, 2006; Carter & Doyle, 2006). My choice of the concept of community, rather than climate, is based on a desire to emphasize the qualities of the relationships, which the metaphor of climate is less capable of doing. The notion of community is also more consistent with my informants’ description and sense-making of their practice. When the educational community is enacted, relationships between students are educational – i.e., students can teach each other as well as contribute to one another’s education in various less direct ways. This community is affected by memories of earlier practices, and colors the anticipation of future practices as well (I return to this below).

In line with the notion of “communities-as-enacted” (Biesta & Cowell, 2009, p. 1), I suggest that positive common experience can work as temporary enactments of educative communities, both directly and indirectly. Continuing this line of argument, students’ experiences in temporal and spatial dimensions play a part in how communities can be enacted. That is, an educational community of math-problem solvers can be negotiated with the students directly during lessons, but an appreciated class party may affect students’ desire to participate in the community, now turned into an enacted community of math-problem solvers, the following day. Such experience would, in these instances, compensate for less positive features of school. However, negative common experience can contribute to mis-educative communities. Furthermore, when the joint activity ends something still endures: the memory of it. In addition, different activities have different potentials for contributing to enactments of an educational community.

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165 Climate is a weather word, and as the saying goes: “Everyone talks about the weather but no one can do anything about it”. (Exempting of course cloud seeding such as the ones China allegedly performed before the Olympics in 2008. For more information on cloud seeding see for instance: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cloud_seeding [Retrieved 100208]).

166 Two clarifying remarks: Teachers are, of course, an integral part of any educational community, as are students, who can be described as having educational relationships with each other. This notwithstanding, the present study focuses on teachers as enactors of educational communities. It also focuses on the notion that educational relationships are built between teachers and students – conceived as equal makers of meaning, despite the fact that they come to the process with obviously different responsibilities. See further arguments made in the latter part of Chapter 4, and in Chapter 5, Third step: Fleshing out aspects.
Equal relationships

The first feature of the educational community concerns *equal relational conditions*. The informants grouped students for shorter or longer periods, in order to achieve various purposes. For instance, Adrian constructed short term groups in order to increase tolerance, and Lotta taught long term groups in order to improve students’ communicative skills, and to simulate future working conditions. In her case, the groups were occasionally altered if they interfered with the students’ learning of the subject matter. One possible interpretation is that present learning of the subject matter counted more than learning to communicate in an indefinite future. Many of the informants brought forth the notion of emotional security as an important precondition. They also attended to relationships between students, and took action in order to help students attain emotional security in these relationships.

While several informants view equal relationships among students as having intrinsic value, they also view them as being important relative to other ends, such as that of having the opportunity to grasp or learn a given subject matter. In their teaching practice, informants seem to hold an implicit notion of *communities of equal participation* that they strive to enact; this can be most vividly seen in the examples provided by Cessa and Maria. Cessa, for instance, describes the joy and relief she felt at seeing that everyone in her class had a place, and no one was left out, at a class party that her students had organized. Only after seeing this could she herself sit down and relax. As I see it, this type of reaction is indicative of the fact that she had voluntarily assumed personal responsibility for the establishment and maintenance of this community (cf Woods, 1990, p. 66). With respect to Maria, as already noted above, she had chosen to make it her personal aim to work towards equality by actively counteracting expressions of oppression. And like Cessa, she also felt great satisfaction when noticing that one of her “MENSA” girls demanded equality on her own – i.e., without the aid of her teacher – by standing up for a classmate against the oppressors. Of course, one can question whether equal participation is something that the students factually desire, or whether the informants are (maybe mistakenly) equating equal participation with equality. Along these lines, equal participation can be viewed as a norm that is passed on to students regarding how they are supposed to think and act.167

Students can contribute to shaping the environment in either direction – i.e., they can serve to encourage their classmates, as did Johan’s jump rope prompters, or discourage them instead, as did Maria’s IQ disparagers. Bansel, Davies, Laws and Linnell (2009, p. 66) describe this type of student participation or involvement as the (un-)official regulation of the relational

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167 As discussed in studies using a Foucaultian perspective, e.g. (Permer, Permer, & Tullgren, 2008; Öhman, 2008).
environment. Students strive for stable and close relationships with their peers (cf Bliding, 2004, p. 171). However, the possibility that the terms of these relationships can change in a heartbeat calls upon the teacher to be ever vigilant to counteract social problems and to maintain and build upon positive relational conditions. In Classroom Management research, the term withitness has been used describe the teacher’s constant scanning of the classroom so as to be aware of what is going on (Brophy, 2006, p. 28). Applying this notion here, the practice described by my informants can be characterized as a form of relational withitness.

The relational ideal of students participating on equal terms in their education is constantly being influenced by the students themselves, sometimes to the point where it appears to counteract teacher intentions. In an ethnographic study by Löfdahl and Hägglund (2007, p. 332), the tension that can exist between interest of the teacher and the interest of the students is highlighted by the following example: In an attempt to create a sense of togetherness and community among her preschool students, one of their informants arranged a “choosing game” in which a first student was allowed to choose any among his or her classmates that s/he wanted to, and then the selected student was also allowed to do the same, and so forth – the idea being that eventually everyone would be chosen by a classmate. Her attempt, however, seemed to have the exclusive effect of confirming group position and social status when the game began with an older girl, who chose her best girl friend, who then continued along the same lines, which ultimately left all the boys out of the equation. During the last turn, however, the informant managed to bring the activity more in line with her intention by repeatedly insisting that all the children be allowed to join in. Löfdahl and Hägglund (2007) view the game as offering “a good picture of how social structures and social positions may be produced and reproduced within peer-cultures” (p. 335). In this example, the students turned an exercise designed to promote inclusiveness into an exclusive practice.

It is not a given that relationships in a class will always work well. This prompts teachers to work towards the establishment of an educational community in the public space of the classroom, which is regulated in negotiation with their students. Many of the informants argue that they influence relational conditions in the classroom through their own conduct. As noted above, conduct over time can be referred to as teacher style (Jackson, et al., 1993, p. 37). Both Lotta and Gunilla encouraged a rather informal conversational format, in which students were often allowed to speak up without permission about a broad range of topics that could, at times, widely deviate from the subject matter at hand. This type of practice was seen by both of them as a means by which to achieve other educational ends and pre-conditions: Gunilla mainly saw it as creating the sort of practice that her students would want to be part of to begin with, while Lotta saw it as enriching the curriculum with threads brought in by the students themselves.
The ways in which the teacher organizes and manages instruction affect the opportunities for, and the modes of, student participation (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006, p. 8). Attaining the kinds of informal conditions that Gunilla and Lotta encouraged can serve several aims, however, being the moderator of such classroom conversations requires making many delicate judgments. First of all, achieving the end of an educative conversational practice that is inclusive of all can be a difficult and challenging task: if it ends up that only a few students come to dominate the conversation, the practice cannot be considered equally inclusive of all, and may even serve to reinforce stereotypical injustices. Secondly, walking the fine line between improving educational conditions and promoting mere chatter requires constant involvement in a complex process of discrimination. And all this is made in negotiation with the students, some of whom may see widening the topic as a waste of time, and others of whom may see it as a vital incentive for participation. And when the opposite is tried – i.e., when interaction on the part of students is restricted – the outcome can be either the elimination of disturbances that counteract education or, less positively, the inhibition of students’ learning from one another (cf Frelin & Grannäss, in press).

To add to the complexity, different activities and subjects may have different preferred conversational conditions, and students’ relationships may have an unexpected bearing on the educational process. Lampert (1990) has demonstrated the relational influence that students can have on one another while being taught a certain subject matter. She describes attempting to create a social situation in which students were expected to bring ideas to the table and discussions centered upon performing mathematics the disciplinary way. Students were expected to have the courage to make conjectures, and then subject those conjectures to revision by the other students. Over time, some of the obstacles that Lampert had to overcome involved student interrelations that were not supportive of learning. Apart from obvious ones such as keeping silent, these concerned the exertion of power over peers. While in larger-group discussions, the teacher was able to quash these kinds of actions, they persisted in small-group activities nonetheless. Students that were often right could “rely on less secure students to vote for their answers” (p. 57). Dynamics such as these are examples of the relational complexity that teachers must deal with.

Classmate relationships

In connection to the second feature of an educational community, I address a tension that became apparent in the material. Beginning with the example given by Löfdahl and Hägglund above, where there was an observable tension between students’ selection standards (“choose your friends”) and the teacher aim (“allow everyone to join in”). This appears to be similar to the tension observed by some of my informants between the notion of friendship and that of classmate relationship, which sometimes coincides and sometimes
collides. That is, while classmates can be friends and vice versa, friendships and classmate relationships are not necessarily the same. I explored my informants’ accounts in order to develop the notion of classmate and build from it, pointing out the similarities and differences between friendships and classmate relationships in order to conceptualize what educational relationships between students in an educational community could entail.

In my interpretation, based on the accounts of the informants, the following characteristics are common to both friendships and classmate relationships: established on equal terms, energizing, fun-filled, encouraging, forgiving of mistakes, and respectful. In addition, both friends and classmates listen and wait for each other, and share their knowledge and experiences. In contrast, the characteristics that separate classmates from friends are that classmates: let everyone join in, collaborate with everyone, have independent opinions, are open to differences, accept misconduct, and understand how the other learns. Thus, in comparison with friendships, classmate relationships are marked by increased demands for independence, tolerance and responsibility in relationships among students. Based on the accounts, I suggest that the notion of classmate relationships represents relationships in which the position that individual students’ have in relation to others would not significantly be affected by making mistakes. Classmate relationships are marked by openness and equality rather than silence and hierarchy, since the latter are conditions that the informants regard as restrictive of learning. In an educational community the relationships among students are basically classmate relationships.

Because lessons are structured by things such as curricula, syllabi and the teachers’ initiative, recess times are of interest due to its more unstructured and student initiated activities (cf Frelin & Grannäs, in press). For example, two informants reported that when they perceived a student to be friendless and alone, they would attempt to help by stepping outside the role of teacher and into the student’s social world, and there, acting more like a friend. While they chose to perceive this as their task, one can legitimately raise the question of whether or not it was; or rather, if not their task, then whose? This is a tricky question to answer. The informants seem to act on the task perception that having social relations is every student’s right, and that if no one else is providing them, it falls upon the teacher to do so. They also act upon the task perception that chatting informally with the student can have positive educational consequences for her or him.

Among the various approaches employed by informants to resolve conflicts during recess, Johan and Anders sometimes took it as an occasion for introducing democratic elements such as “the majority rules”, the taking of turns and the equality of everyone’s opinion. Resolving conflicts peacefully can be viewed as a democratic practice, and recess time provided alternative – and in some ways even better – conditions for this practice. With respect to those of his students that were newly arrived in Sweden, Anders argued
that in conflict situations, where children are naturally upset, it was difficult for these students to express themselves in a language they had not yet mastered. In such circumstances, his solution was to involve a teacher who spoke the given student’s mother tongue. One way of viewing this is an attempt to make things more equal for the concerned parties by leveling out the language barrier.

Border work

The third feature of the educational community involves teachers’ border work. Students are members of several groups both inside and outside of school, and while some of these align with or contribute to educational purposes, others may not. In this regard, Adrian mentioned sub-groups in which countercultural peer-pressure made it difficult for the involved students’ to participate in lessons, since participation could cost them their status within the group (cf Erickson, 1987). Educational activities performed during class, requiring active participation by individual students, may at times, and by some students, be viewed as a threshold for participation. Put differently, the teacher’s instructional project may be in conflict with the student’s identity project concerning, for example, group values and belongingness (Granström, 2006, p. 1143). Impediments to participation experienced by students could be due to such competing interests, but also to the perceived difficulty of the activity.

For example, Erik’s math students chatted with each other instead of solving the math problem, and Erik attempted to “bring them in” by lowering the threshold, neither demanding that they solve the problem on their own, nor letting them stay outside the problem solving community. Gunilla also temporarily lowered the threshold for participation when she told the student who wanted to stay home from school that s/he could be exempted from the demand to sit in the big classroom, and instead sit alone in the adjoining room. Another means was to draw the students in to the activity of the group, through corridor chats such as those that Adrian had with Lisa, or the giggling that Gunilla let out while reading her book, which she perceived may spur curiosity and draw her students into the group of readers. Neither claiming that it constituted their conscious intention, nor the single aim of their actions, informants worked to counteract influences that rendered students’ participation in educational activities more difficult. That is, if the borders of the community are made more porous by the teacher, in order to help students but also promote educational purposes, it requires delicate

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168 For example, Rindstedt (2004) gives a detailed description of how two students co-construct a community of practice around Harry Potter, drawing on shared knowledge of this theme, both during recess and lessons. Being able to do so requires being familiar with the books and movies. Rindstedt also discusses how the students draw upon the books and movies as resources for expanding their world-making while reading, writing, drawing and discussing.
judgment on her/his part, since it could risk relationships with other students. However, studies indicate that students do not generally oppose a teacher's differential treatment unless it contains elements of favoritism, sexism, racism and so forth (Woolfolk Hoy & Weinstein, 2006, p. 209).

Another type of border work is represented by the relational practice of Adrian when negotiating tolerance between Joel and the rest of the class. School is not an isolated island; it is a part of (and in this way reflects) the greater society. One can imagine that Adrian's teenage students come to class already holding norms that often concur with those that prevail in society at large, and because of this it might be that they viewed Joel's actions as having deviated from those norms. In my interpretation, this discourse is one that Adrian participates in as well as resists. More specifically, if Adrian had ignored or refused to acknowledge the other students' right to feel uncomfortable around Joel, Adrian's relationship with the rest of the class might have been jeopardized. Put differently, if he had failed to negotiate these limits with the other students, and instead had asked what they perceived to be too much – i.e., if his demands had been seen as unreasonable – it could have jeopardized his educational relationship with them. It is thus a delicate matter of negotiating the amount of responsibility each party takes, and is willing to take.169

From another angle, it can be argued that because Adrian had established educational relationships with the students in this class – i.e., because they perceived him as humane, just, and benevolent human being – he had been granted more leeway in terms of asking them to take on this kind of responsibility. In addition, through his choice of activities, Adrian's attempt to create less offensive interpretations and countervailing experiences may spread to and influence their experiences of difference outside of school. In this sense, the activity in itself is not neutral, but can serve to increase or inhibit tolerance, something that Adrian tries to balance and draw upon in his teaching. Viewed in terms of constant re-negotiations, it could mean that a history of positive common experiences may make it easier for the students to forgive future misconduct. In choices of activities, it is also a question of negotiating other educational purposes, meaning that while Adrian’s inclusive activity can contribute to the creation of a space of inclusion it may – or may not – be less fruitful for the learning of certain content.

169 In an earlier work (Frelin, 2006a), I made use of an empirical example in which the teacher negotiates such responsibility with her class. She makes her class aware of their part in excluding a student through making him a scapegoat. The teacher also demands from the class that they take responsibility for helping rather than hindering this student.
Encounters with difference

The fourth feature of the educational community concerns the examples that informants gave of directing their work towards students’ encounters with difference, viewing it as an educational good. There is reason to consider how difference is produced in relation to a norm and to normality, and the issue is highly problematic since it may result in the repression of certain groups. One thing that I have not pursued in this study is the tendency to think in terms of the sometimes taken for granted notion of the “good school” and/or the “good Swedish society”. The informants wanted to expose their students to encounters that were educational, egalitarian and socially non-offensive. Their challenge was to make sure that the circumstances under which encounters with difference took place would be educational for all their students, without the possibility being offensive to some. There are various examples of practices that ended up running contrary to their intended purpose. One such example concerns a curricular practice that was aimed at enabling students to develop their own arguments and connection to the curriculum, but that also inadvertently resulted in the exclusion of some of the students from the classroom discussions (Wortham, 2006, p. 274). Wortham emphasizes the interlacing of social identification and academic learning, showing how identities can be developed in response to curricular activities.

Which encounters serve to counteract prejudice, and which encounters serve to build it up? This study’s findings show that encountering difference is sometimes present in the informants’ deliberations as one of several educational ends that are weighed against each other. When Johan’s student presented his drawing to an audience of classmates, the reaction was such that he felt the need to step in so as to prevent the encounter from becoming offensive. He argues that someone may need to be taught to show respect for another’s work by refraining from expressing an offensive opinion out loud, and that someone else may need to be taught that trying to score cheap points by joking about Kalle’s drawing will result in the teacher’s reproach. As such, his act is aimed at upholding non-violence in this practice.

Among the informants there are several examples in which the relationships between students change due to the presence of a teacher. Through their normalizing presence, teachers can limit what is possible to do, upholding the school discourse And while their presence runs the risk of inhibiting student openness to positive relational exchanges by enforcing

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170 (For discussions on the ideology production in hegemonic images of Sweden as a secular welfare state in teaching materials for the school subject Swedish as a Second Language, see Mattlar, 2008).
171 With the somewhat ambiguous exception that some offensive encounters may be educative if they strengthen the student’s ability to stand up against future offense, as in the case of Lena.
172 For more examples on the complexity of difference see, e.g., (Davidson, 1999; Davies, 1990; Elbaz, 1992; Erickson, 1987; Gordon, et al., 1999)
certain norms, it also serves to uphold important principles such as equality, justice and respect for others (cf Young, 2006, pp. 98-99). The norms that my informants claim to uphold are viewed as being of such a character; however, while upholding these, other norms can be in play as well (such as what constitutes a “good” drawing), and this can complicate the picture. In my interpretation, the means that informants employed to enable their students to deal with difference can be summarized as:

*Experience of difference* – this would include positive common experiences that allow students to become accustomed to difference through repeated encounters.

*Teacher acceptance* – this would involve the understanding that how s/he responds to difference contributes to the shaping of the encounter.

*Common activities* – these are often deliberately designed so that difference is not turned into a problem (like the jump rope example)\(^{173}\)

These activities can be viewed as an attempt to improve conditions for educational encounters with difference – and, more broadly, to enact an educational community.

**Counteracting social violence**

The fifth feature of the educational community involved teachers’ relational practices was directed towards counteracting social violence occurring among students. The common space is ambiguous since it always holds the possibility of being subjected to offense (cf Bansel, et al., 2009, p. 66). Demanding that students participate in school practice involves asking them to take risks: not only the risk of failing to learn or of learning something unwanted (cf Biesta, 2006, p. 25), but also the risk of occupying space with others and exposing themselves to the possibility of being offended – of becoming embroiled in some form of social violence. This condition was addressed by the informants in various ways. They drew upon different means, one being their presence: Johan’s physical presence during student presentations was meant to scaffold the presentation but also prevent offense, which can also be described as *nipping potential problems in the bud* (see Brophy, 2006, p. 30). In the event that someone offended the presenting student, he made sure that the offense was not left unchallenged; by demarcating the boundary of acceptable conduct, he was thus demonstrating that such offenses would not be tolerated. Johan argues that some students must learn via repeated experience and practice that their words carry the potential of hurting their classmate’s feelings.\(^{174}\) When students practice being

\(^{173}\) Within special education different perspectives put different emphasis on individual versus context (for an overview, see e.g. Nilholm, 2005). From a relational perspective, the perceived difficulties of the student would depend more or less on the environment.

\(^{174}\) (For an example of students who are unconscious of their role in a conflict, see Frelin, 2006a).
thoughtful, this also contributes to secure relational conditions in which students do not unintentionally hurt each others. Of course, understanding that one's comments can offend others does not necessarily guarantee that students will stop committing offenses; after all, they can offend each other both consciously and unconsciously (see e.g. Edling, 2009). Consider, for example, the distinction made by Maria’s students between being nasty and being mean, with the former requiring that the offensive remark just happened to slip out, and the latter requiring that it be consciously made.

Although relational conditions are taken seriously by all the informants, each varies in terms of the amount of attention given to the relational dynamics within her/his realm of responsibility: Erik, for instance, only made sure that relational conditions did not interfere with his teaching. One can also suppose that had there been no occurrence of oppression in Maria’s class, she might have put her priorities elsewhere. It was also observed that the informants who taught older students tended to speak less about this kind of work, a phenomenon that could have a number of causes. Erik and Maria, for example, work under different contextual conditions: whereas Maria meets her students every day, Erik meets his only a few times per week. Because of this, he considers their homeroom teacher, who meets with them on a regular basis, to have more insight into the matter of student relations than does he. Whether or not teachers see it as their task to personally address such matters, I argue that when relational conditions in school become such that they are offensive and/or counterproductive to educational purposes, it is part of a teacher’s professional responsibility to use all available means to counteract and to change them. However, this is a shared responsibility that cannot be discussed independent of the conditions available for attending to them.

The informants touch upon the delicate task of deciding whether an act is offensive or not. A study of offensive actions in school from the perspective of students (Bliding, Holm, & Hägglund, 2002) has shown that:

In several situations we have […] shown that actions do not become offensive by containing certain words or gestures. Neither does it have to do with the place or time. Offense is experienced when the one, or ones, who act do so in a way which entails that the one whom the actions are directed at experiences some form of exclusion and/or discomfort. It could involve making (concealed) faces, ignoring, shutting in, expose to jokes and violence. The offensive gesture appears to be a matter of exclusion from social community (p. 38).

This implies that in order to determine whether or not an act is to be considered offensive, the teacher may require some sort of contextual knowledge. The study also indicates that while younger students constantly rely upon the teachers’ help, older students tend to think of them as being more of an interference than a help, and consider their actions to be neither meaningful nor effective (Bliding, et al., 2002, p. 40). There could be several
explanations for such attitudes, one being that older students are more capable of dealing with relational issues, and another being that teachers lack sensitivity towards relational conditions between students. It could also be that the organizational conditions in secondary and upper secondary schools do not provide teachers with the knowledge necessary for making contextual judgments on these matters. Schools can be places where practices of inequality are established and maintained. On the other hand, Maria did intervene in order to break the oppression in her class, and Sten did react against a student's domineering conduct. Both their actions were aimed at making relationships among their students more equal – an aim that, in my view, is a vital feature of classmate relationships and educational communities, which in my interpretation is one of the characteristics connected to classmate relationships and educational communities.

In some cases, teachers’ authority relationships with students constitute a precondition for conflict resolution. Cessa, for example, was able to draw upon already established relationships in her attempt to uncover and resolve the conflict over bullying during physical education. According to Raider-Roth (2005b, p. 6), student vulnerability makes trust a key factor relative to the amount and type of information they are willing to share with a given teacher. At the least, students need to feel that a given situation will be handled such that it will not be made worse. Cessa’s student chose to trust her, and their relationship was thus a precondition for her being able to step in and resolve the conflict.

The informants in the present study viewed many school conflicts as ordinary everyday occurrences. This finding has been confirmed by Bansel, Davies, Laws and Linnell (2009, p. 59) Lena had a student, a boy who was physically violent towards other students. She constructed the problem in terms of both individual and relational considerations. Individual considerations included the fact that the boy had learned a pattern of violent behavior towards others, and relational considerations included the fact that he had learned that he could draw his fellow students’ attention by throwing things at them. Through his repeated actions he had become a scapegoat and needed to unlearn this pattern. Instead of automatically making the others the victims and him the bully, Lena addressed the relation between them, and her solution to the problem was directed towards the others, not towards the boy. The problem construction included situations, relations and practices that made it possible to target someone as a scapegoat; that is, a relational construction illustrates how acts of violence are embedded in a wider context (cf Bansel, et al., 2009, pp. 62, 66). Different theoretical perspectives could provide lenses for attaining a wider view of problems relating to peer offense: in terms of a social psychological perspective, the teachers need to have sufficient control, and be willing to protect and defend students who risk discrimination or degradation (see e.g. Allodi, in press); and in terms of a political perspective, teachers can support students in their claim
for equal rights by attempting to break unjust and/or oppressive relational patterns that cast them as either the victim or the bully (cf Young, 2000).

Teachers' professional awareness and task perception

Finally, I argue on the basis of my findings that having an awareness of relational conditions among students in the class is part of a teacher’s relational professionality. Intervening in student relationships requires a certain understanding of the relational interplay, otherwise the intervention can have unintended undesirable consequences. A lack of this understanding might explain, for example, why Erik refrained from publicly announcing excellent results to his class: he was uncertain as to whether or not the announcement would be taken badly by some. Cessa, on the other hand, because she has this understanding in place, trusts that it is safe to openly acknowledge a student’s improvement before her class. I cannot say that either did the right thing, or that there is something like a foolproof action. Nonetheless, exercising professional judgment must include analyzing and considering the relational consequences of one’s actions upon students, especially since children and youths are compelled by law to go to school. Changes in awareness can lead to changes in task perception, as in the case of Maria: only after she became aware of the oppressive conduct of certain students was she able to take appropriate measures to alter the situation. Several informants described the various means by which they attempt to elicit information about the relations among their students. They also described the responsibility they felt for their students – a responsibility that seemed to primarily revolve around their students’ wellbeing in general rather than their learning in particular. There appears to be good reason to discuss the scope of responsibility that teachers factually take relative to the one that they are officially given (see Frelin & Edling, forthcoming).

In the classroom, an environment that has proven safe for spontaneous comments, and in which there is room to deviate from the topic at hand, will affect the student’s desire to participate. Consequently, the relational conditions under which students are willing to speak and give opinions are not to be taken for granted, but need attention and maintenance, since they are to some extent under constant re-negotiation. These re-negotiations occur between teacher and students, but also among the students themselves. Through the comments that are given, and the comments that are allowed and encouraged by teacher and students, practices are formed over time that can either enhance or disrupt educational purposes. Students consider the audience before which they must appear, and act accordingly (Raider-Roth, 2005b, p. 6). Teachers thus need to incorporate into their judgment the conversational conditions, and the educative potentials those conditions can support or inhibit. Moreover, the exercise of professional judgment consists of additional considerations than merely an individual assessment of a problem.
such as social violence – i.e., one that by default places the blame squarely
on the apparently violent child; it must also include a relational assessment
that looks more broadly at the possible involvement of other students in
the situation.

The relational practices aimed at building on and improving relational
conditions in negotiations with students, counteracting social violence and
encountering difference, are all, I suggest, part of trying to enact educational
communities. In an Australian research project (see Lingard, et al., 2003),
two dimensions of productive pedagogies were described: 1) engagement with
and valuing of difference; and, 2) supportive classroom environment. As
these pedagogies showed significant positive correlations with the
performance of students, both academically and socially, parallels can be
drawn to the present study. That is, it may have been the case that the
informants also improved the academic and social development of their
students when engaging in these relational practices. The notion of an
educational community also connects directly to the Swedish National
Curricula and Syllabi (Skolverket, 2001, 2006b, 2006c, 2006d), which state
that teachers are responsible for both for promoting learning in the different
subjects and for fostering of democratic citizens. I argue that although both of
these goals are interrelated, several of the informant practices that have been
described in this chapter were in keeping with the latter (cf Frelin &
Grannäs, in press).

Summary

In Chapter Nine the relational practices of the informants were discussed in
terms of enactments of an educational community through various means of
negotiating relationships between students. This conception is based on a
notion of communities-as-enacted (Biesta & Cowell, 2009) – i.e., ways in
which community is “done”. An educational community is not something to
be achieved once and for all, but rather an educational good that the
informants strive towards and attempt to enact in temporary and spatially
bound activities. An educational community is characterized by closeness
between students, but not at the expense of eliminating students' independent thinking. Sometimes this entails drawing on already existing
relationships in the class, or creating common positive experience, in order to
create closeness and synergy in the class. It has been observed that there is an
interesting tension between the notion of friend and that of classmate.
According to the informants, while these two notions share a number of
characteristics, there are significant differences between them as well.
Compared to friendships, classmate relationships are marked by increased
demands of independence, tolerance and responsibility, and also by an
emphasis on openness and equality rather than silence and hierarchy. In an
educational community, the relationships among students are classmate relationships.

At other times relational practice requires negotiating ambivalent relationships, trying to make participation equal among students, or as the informant Anders put it: balancing the common space between those who invade it and those who withdraw from it. Equal participation seems to constitute an end in itself in their view, but also a means of fulfilling the individual's educational possibilities. To this end, teachers do border work when conditions for participation are difficult. They work to include students by negotiating the boundaries with those that may not want to participate, such as trying to draw them in or lowering the threshold of expectations. Sometimes the conduct of individual students can become a challenge for the rest of the class, and the teacher's negotiations in order to balance the demands of the situation become a tight-rope walk. Encounters with difference can be challenging for the students; in general, however, the informants' consider such encounters to hold educational possibilities. The informants described employing various means in an attempt to counteract rather than instill prejudicial attitudes. These included the creation of positive common experiences that accustomed students to difference through repeated encounters, the modeling of positive attitudes towards difference by the teacher, and the intentional designing of enjoyable activities in which difference was automatically accepted or not considered at all.

The informants also described many different ways of dealing with acts of social violence between students, which they describe as requiring constant vigilance with regard to relationships between students. In various ways, and to various degrees, the informants' relational practices involved trying to make relationships non-violent and educational. In Maria's story, her task perception changed as a result of her discovery of practices of oppression in her class, and her practice became directed towards making relationships more equal. Using Young's theory of oppression, the practices of some of the students were framed in terms of cultural imperialism and violence, and Maria's practices were aimed at redefining the oppressed in a positive way, and at creating a community which made the oppression more difficult to uphold. Towards the end of the chapter, I argue that because the relational conditions and processes in school have such significant consequences for students' education, it is part of teachers' professionality to be aware of these conditions, and also to initiate practices directed towards the enactment of educational communities.
10 Teachers’ relational practices and professionality

Contributions of the present study

This study has attempted to highlight and examine teachers’ relational practices in and of themselves, and as an important, if underestimated, dimension of teacher professionality. Apart from providing a descriptive mapping that indicates the circumstances under which educational relationships are made the objects of teacher practice, the means by which such relationships are established, and the extent to which they are maintained and pursued, the findings that have been presented herein offer a number of practical arguments that serve as the basis for teachers’ involvement in these practices. The numerous examples of relational practices and practical arguments presented by the informants of this study empirically underline the pervasive relational character of a teachers’ work. Indeed, if educational relationships (and communities) had already been in place, the informants would hardly have required so much time and energy to establish and maintain such relationships with and among their students.

The findings of this study strongly suggest that there are times in which relationships in schools are in need of conscious attention and rigorous work on the part of teachers in order to be (or become) educational. In other words, the presence of educational relationships and communities is not to be presupposed: the process of education is underpinned by an array of subtle relational conditions. Moreover, the attempt of the teacher to deal with these conditions requires specific professional practices. I suggest that by studying the practical arguments given for such practices in accordance with a particular methodological scheme, this work has been able to highlight their significance to education.

In mainstream research, relational practice has been largely conceived in terms of knowledge of students, pedagogical knowledge or principles of Classroom Management. It is my contention that because they shine a

175 The accounts were presented in Chapters Six and Eight. This descriptive outline (or mapping) does not pretend to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject at hand; however, it does provide various examples that draw attention to different areas of teachers’ relational practices. Also, while I have not attended to other dimensions of teacher professionality, I do consider these to be important as well. Dimensions are interlaced in practice, and it is conceivable that they, to some degree, serve to compensate for each other.
distinctive light on previously obscured features of the relational dimension, the representations of relational practice provided by the informants of this study contribute to and extend current understandings of a teacher's work. The relational dimension of teaching has oftentimes been treated as something mystical and inaccessible that depends upon personal traits such as charisma or intuition – thus catering to the myth that teachers are born, not made. Indeed it is likely this lack of conceptual clarity and specificity that has lead to the marginalization of the relational dimension on the administrative and policy levels of education. I return to this matter in the next section.

Professional knowledge versus judgment based on task perception

Teaching is not unique in the sense that all interpersonal professions involve practices designed to establish relationships with others for the attainment of particular ends (see Endres, 2007, p. 172). Teaching is unique, however, when it comes to the particular purposes for which teachers work, and the particular contexts within which they must function. Put differently, decisions that are of the Didaktik kind are unique to the profession of a teacher. In general, relational qualities in teaching have been described in universal terms like engagement, authenticity and understanding, such as good teachers being characterized by Evertson and Weinstein (2006) as “warm demanders” (p. 11). This study, on the other hand, contributes a more specific approach to and understanding of these practices, framed within an educational vocabulary.

From a relational perspective, teachers can never have control over what students learn, because they create their own meaning, thus the relationship is structurally symmetrical (see Biesta, 1994, pp. 314-316). In addition, that which educates is not just the teacher, it is also the situation – located within the context of a social practice (Vanderstraeten & Biesta, 2006, p. 167). Recognition of these two qualifying conditions shifts the emphasis from the teacher's knowledge of the student to her/his situated judgment, and to the relationships that are involved in every given situation. Moreover, the practical arguments that have been presented in this study, as given by its informants, have highlighted the role of task perception in the work of teaching.

This study's findings indicate that the choices made by informants in the course of their work influence how a given situation is problematized, which solution is applied and which party is found to be responsible.176 For example, had Adrian framed the problem with Lisa differently, he might have restricted his attention to her bad mood, and perhaps interpreted it as a case of clinical depression. This specific framing would have then suggested a solution that involved psychotherapy, or perhaps even medication, thus

176 Compare to Chapter 5, Third step: fleshing out aspects.
taking the matter beyond his professional jurisdiction and ability to act, and possibly leaving Lisa without a way into the learning of math. Task perception, I argue, is dynamic and constructed in relation to the situation at hand. New perceived needs may change the teacher's task perception in unexpected ways, especially when unique or particularly complicated problems have been brought to their attention. For the teacher, the solution may entail having to use several means, find new tools or spend a longer period of time working to improve the situation, such as in the case of Maria. This example also highlights that task perception is political.

My point is also that no amount of knowledge and awareness will suffice if the teacher's task perception does not take into account the significant relational conditions that are involved in a given situation. This statement may appear to place a great deal of responsibility on the teacher's shoulders; and, of course, the responsibility for relational conditions in schools may indeed be great. However, as discussed earlier, in this study I have intentionally refrained from defining professional responsibility apart from the situation at hand. An important discussion concerns the extent to which spatial, temporal and organizational conditions in schools either support or impede teaching practices related to different educational purposes. The notion of professional responsibility has to be viewed in the light of professional conditions, meaning that it is neither reasonable nor justifiable to hold teachers accountable for conditions that are beyond their jurisdiction and/or control. In this regard, findings indicated that informants used their planning and break times in order to pursue relational work with their students, and that they viewed this work as something important, despite the fact that it was not organizationally recognized (cf Aili, 2008; Frelin & Grannäs, forthcoming; Lindqvist & Nordänger, 2006).

Although this study has not attempted to focus on professional conditions for the practice of teaching, it can to some extent be viewed as an implicit statement about them. Those conditions of increased intensity and complexity that force teachers to act in certain ways, including having to "multitask", affect the quality of teachers work and contribute to teacher fatigue (see also Aili, 2008; Brante, 2009, p. 435). Studies on "teacher burnout" have found that this diagnosis is associated with insufficient job resources in relation to job demands (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006), and that increasing work complexity also puts teachers at risk of exploitation and burnout (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996, p. 19). Moreover, the variety of educational changes that teachers must confront often challenge their beliefs about (and belief in) themselves and their work (Kelchtermans, 2009):

177 See Chapter 5, Third step: Fleshing out aspects. I am not advocating a view where teachers take over the responsibility of other professional groups, however, neither the opposite; see Chapter 2, Tendencies of (de-)professionalization in Sweden.
Evaluation systems, new regulations, calls for educational change that differ from or contradict teachers’ task perception will deeply affect their self-esteem, their job satisfaction, etc. The emotional impact is very strong because teachers feel that their moral integrity as a person and a professional are called into question (Kelchtermans, 2009, p. 262).

This view is similar to the one expressed by Irisdotter Aldenmyr (2007, p. 63) when she noted that teachers became disengaged from ethical responsibility in order to cope with the current climate, and ended up drawing boundaries for their engagement. The findings presented herein strongly suggest that teachers are significantly involved in the establishment and maintenance of relationships with and among their students, and that this involvement, which requires time, energy and professionality, has an important bearing on the student’s education and ability to learn. As such, these relational practices should be allowed for within the working conditions of teachers.

Challenges from the language of learning

Steering documents influence teachers’ practice, and in Sweden they consist of two parts: 1) the national curriculum, which contains directives regarding the promotion of foundational democratic values; and, 2) the syllabi, which contain the content or matter of different school subjects:

Both the curriculum and the syllabuses should serve as the foundation for planning teaching. Fundamental values such as people’s inviolability, the freedom and integrity of the individual, the equal value of all people, equality between women and men, and solidarity with the weak and vulnerable, should not only permeate all teaching in each subject, but should also influence the organization and co-ordination of teaching in different subjects, as well as the choice of working methods. The goals in the curriculum lay down the orientation of the teaching and the guidelines set out the principles on how the work is to be carried out (Skolverket, 2001, p. 6)

As can be seen from the above quotation, teachers are given the double responsibility of implementing both the curriculum and the syllabi. However, because of their greater degree of concretion and measurability, the syllabi tend to direct the course of schools more than do the less concrete democratic aims of the national curriculum (Zackari, Stalfelt, Modigh, & Ohlson Wallin, 2000, p 84). Although the values of the curriculum are theoretically supposed to trickle down, and in this way permeate school activities, Carlsson’s (2006) analysis of Swedish policy documents indicates

a shift in values in policy documents on its journey from curriculum via programme-specific aims, syllabuses, down to grading criteria. Somewhere along the way, the superordinate idea of the curriculum is lost and other ideas come to the fore: market, efficiency and utilitarian thinking (p. 163).
This indicates that teachers are subject to complex, often contradictory influences that require them to use their judgment to solve problems that have been created by those very influences. In their experience, however, the possibility exerting this judgment has been limited, leading to the contention that today’s teachers risk de-professionalization from outside the profession. These types of findings highlight the fact that conditions pertaining to the teacher-student relationship, the teachers’ work at improving them, and their significance for education, become very difficult to address through the present management rhetoric – i.e., the language of learning, which according to Biesta (2005, pp. 19-20) operates under the assumption that learning is easy, rational and conscious and facilitates a conception of education as some kind of economic transaction between consumer and provider.¹⁷⁸

As I understand it, the language of learning treats as insignificant, or as a given, the existence of an educational relationship between teacher and student. The findings of this study, on the other hand, indicate that such relationships must often be negotiated, and that these negotiations can range from being so subtle that they remain unnoticed to being so challenging that they may seem impossible. Moreover, education framed as an economical transaction presupposes that ends are given; as such, the negotiation of ends, which is inherent in the educational process, is also made insignificant. In addition, because this framing is focused on the individual, curricular ends such as solidarity and responsibility are played down.

An additional consequence of too narrowly shining the light on either learning or teaching is that the relational dimension of education remains out of focus and largely neglected (see e.g. Kansanen, 2002, pp. 428-429; Vanderstraeten & Biesta, 2006, p. 164). In my view, however, both learning and teaching invariably involve negotiations concerning educational relationships. Moreover, acknowledging the existence of negotiated educational relationships accomplishes a number of important things: 1), it would constitute a recognition that the relational dimension is an influential feature of the educational environment and an important part of teacher practice; 2), it would constitute a recognition of the participating student as an active meaning-maker in an interactive educational environment (the structural symmetry of the teacher-student relationship spoken about by Biesta (see Biesta, 1994, pp. 314-316)); and, 3) it would constitute a recognition of the existence, and complexity, of such practices, and the professionalism required to carry them out.

Certainly, when a teacher’s ideas and experiences are complemented with a student’s ideas and experiences, and these are, in turn, are confronted by another student’s ideas and experiences, one possible outcome is the obstruction in the educational processes. On the other hand, such a confrontation can also give birth to educational opportunities of disagreement.

¹⁷⁸ For further discussion, see Chapter 2.
a feature of the educational process made possible by the notion of negotiating educational relationships (see Frelin & Grannäs, in press). In this regard we hold that when outcomes become too rigid and/or predetermined, this reduces the possibility for teachers and students to negotiate educational issues, including those that pertain to content. Moreover, when disagreement is regarded as nothing more than noise within the system, the system becomes incapable of handling disagreement in a constructive way. This implies that when education collapses due to a lack of negotiation, the failure is generally ascribed to either the students or the teachers, and almost never to the system itself.

Here the question can be raised as to whether or not teachers’ relational practices ultimately constitute just another way of increasing efficiency in education – i.e., just another means to an end. Fielding (2006) describes such practices within what he terms “high performance learning organizations”, where relationships are used as means to the end of efficiency. In my view, the relational practices that have been described by the informants of this study are considerably different from these practices, in which the personal is marginalized by the functional in teacher-student relationships. I can see a few traces of this kind of managerial rhetoric in some of the accounts, however, dominating them is rather recurring attempts to create what Fielding would characterize as person-centered learning communities – i.e., communities that break with the idea of an instrumental relationships in which students are seen as means to the external end of high performance rather than as ends in and of themselves.

Teachers’ professional concern for the student

In her work on the four different curriculum positions, Campbell (2009, pp. 373-374) showed how they entailed different views of the educated person and thus also of the teacher’s responsibilities. They also entailed different answers to the Didaktik questions what, how and why. In this study’s findings, many of the informants were quite explicit about the positive influence that they want to have on their students – an influence which extended to the whole person, and not just the learning of a given subject. When comparing Campbell’s positions to the accounts of the informants, the latter extend their responsibilities beyond these dimensions to include a moral responsibility for the good of the student, which often remains unarticulated in policy. I mean that teachers’ moral responsibility, or concern for the student as a subject, is something that should be included in discussions concerning their Didaktik decisions. In research, teachers’ concern for the students have

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179 See Chapter 1, From policy to practice.
180 Several informants also mentioned that students had a major influence on them. In this sense, influence is reciprocal.
been described in terms of a “curriculum of concern” (Jamieson, 1990, p. 156) or a “moral curriculum” (Ryan, 1988, p. 18). In the following, I draw on Biesta in order to frame the direction of this concern.

Using Biesta’s (2009b, pp. 39-40) notion of the different functions of education – qualification, socialization and subjectification, I parallel teachers’ concern for subject matter (syllabi) with concern for qualification, and to some extent socialization functions; concern for curriculum can be roughly paralleled with concern for socialization and (general) qualification functions. My contention is that the informants’ expressions of concern for the whole student can be considered professional when they are made from a position of insecurity and openness that allows the student to emerge as a moral subject (cf Säfström, 2005b, p. 73). In Biesta’s view of educational functions, such expressions can be understood in one of two ways: as either socialization or subjectification. Subjectification means that students are allowed to emerge as unique beings, and are not just being socialized and qualified into particular beings. As I have understood Biesta, the difference between socialization and subjectification is the being that is allowed to emerge.

Based upon the findings of this study, my conclusion is that in some cases, the subjectification function becomes a precondition for the other two. That is, in order for qualification and socialization to be possible, the teacher needs to have initially attended to the subjectification function. In my view, this way of conceiving and applying the different functions of education could enable teachers and researchers to discuss teaching practice in a manner that better connects with their concerns. It might also be useful in terms of placing the focus squarely on practice and highlighting the role in the educational process of functions other than qualification. The notion of the subjectification function of education invites the student to negotiate this idea, and suggests that the relationally professional act includes recognizing and being open to this function.

This openness, I hold, connects to the notion of a humane teacher, as opposed to a mechanical teacher. That is, the mechanical teacher would be deaf to, or view as unimportant, such dimensions while the humane teacher would take account of them. Here the notion of separating the professional from the personal sphere sometimes obscures what the task of teaching can entail (cf Endres, 2007). Because the findings indicate a perceived disconnection with and/or distancing from the concepts of “teacher” and

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181 Bergmark (2009, pp. 56-57) also addresses these questions in terms of raising awareness of ethical issues and incorporating these aspects into the curriculum.

182 See Chapter 1, The influence of context and complexity.

183 For instance, even if a teacher has a clear intention of helping the student to become a caring person, but imposes upon the process a preformed idea (frame) of what this means, such an endeavor runs the risk of excluding other possible ways being a caring person that does not fit into this idea of a caring person, which can make the result socialization rather than subjectification (Personal conversation, 090916).
“professional”, there is reason to inquire further into the human aspect of being a teacher, and the possibilities for humane action. Sometimes teachers have to act in order to make things work, which may be in tension with their sense of what is humane. Can teaching always be “for the best of the student”? The question also concerns students’ possibilities for being human. The findings indicate that the informants sometimes created places of peace and rest in school. I mean that as education is a demand to change – or a disturbance from outside – such places may be important in order for students to be able to manage the demands of education.

Teacher professionality in relation to a Didaktik approach

Teacher practices directed towards relational purposes, as interlaced in practices directed towards other purposes, have been exemplified in the findings, even if these other purposes have remained in the periphery. In other words, the plurality of content, means and purposes is empirically underlined through the examples, which, I argue, carry implications for how Didaktik reasoning can be understood. Attending to the relational complexity of teaching brings into focus a dimension of teacher professionality in relation to students that deals with this complexity.

Moreover, in light of the present findings, there is reason to especially highlight the long term character of some of the informants’ intentions and practices, including those directed towards the overarching goals of education. This temporal character has not received sufficient attention, and I suggest that extending the study of curriculum practice over longer periods of time might serve to deepen our understandings and improve our descriptions of educational ends that are difficult to measure – such as those pertaining to social justice.

McCowan (2008), who draws on the concept of didactic transposition, addresses educational complexity by way of a framework that sets out to explain changes in content from intentions to results. Using the concept of curricular transposition, he refers to “the materialization or concretization of aspirations or ideals into educational programmes, approaches and activities” (p. 156). Starting from a purpose (ideal ends, stage 1), means are applied in the form of curricula (ideal means, stage 2), which are then interpreted and implemented by the teacher (real means, stage 3) and finally have outcomes.

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184 On the continent, French-speaking theorists who are concerned with the relation between teachers’ actions and the specific knowledge taught (Caillot, 2007, pp. 128-129) developed concepts such as didactic transposition (Chevallard, 2007, p. 132) which describes the way in which knowledge changes as it moves from the scientific community to curricula to lesson content.

185 The division between the ideal and the real is similar to Lindensjö and Lundgren’s (2000, pp. 171ff.) arenas of formulation and realization.
McCowan contends that insufficient attention has been given to the links between these stages (p. 154). The movements, or *leaps*, from ends to means (or the visa versa), or from the ideal to the real, involve difficulties that must be acknowledged if one is to understand the disjunctures that exist between policy and practice (p. 157). However, the role of the educator would, according to this model, only be meaningful to discuss in the third stage, and in the leaps to and from it.

Drawing on this model, I hold that even if teachers’ work is performed within a societal discourse of schooling, within that discourse they still, for better or worse, make choices based on their own ideals, predicaments and resources. This is indicated in the findings, for example, in the analyses of teachers’ *task perception*. The influence of the teacher’s ideal ends and means also serve to influence practice, while still being located within a societal discourse of ideal ends and means to which s/he must attend. That is, teachers’ ideals play a part in practice – ideals which I suggest should be included in discussions of teachers’ work, which cannot be reduced to delivering a curriculum.

In light of my findings I also want to make mention of students’ intentionality. Students cannot be relegated to the position of being only *receivers* and/or *resistors of curriculum*, with only the possibility of saying “yes” or “no” to that which has been offered by the teacher: from the stories of the informants it can be inferred that students are *active participants in the construction of curriculum*. They participate in negotiations and practices in which they are involved along with their teachers as intentionally capable and creative subjects, albeit participating on partly different terms and with different responsibilities in the educational process. Students bring their own ideas and experiences, and have the opportunity to accept and challenge, but also to enrich the curriculum. As noted above, there may be educational possibilities inherent in disagreement (cf Frelin & Grannäs, in press). This assumption seems to be present in the practical arguments regarding relational practices. In other words, what happens in curriculum transpositions on the levels where students and teachers participate can be characterized as negotiations. This is not to say that teachers necessarily should go along with

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186 Compare the above to Goodlad, Klein and Tye’s ((1979), in Akker, Kuiper, & Hameyer, 2003, p. 121) curriculum representations: ideoloical, formal, perceived, operational and experiential. Uljens (1997), on the other hand, divides activity into four levels; the collective, the individual teacher, the interactional and the student level (p. 63).

187 Since ends are continuously modified and recreated, due to new insights or problems, there might be a fourth leap back from real to ideal ends. In addition, because the process of education is continuous it could be misleading to call them stages (McCowan, 2008, p. 169). In the first and second leap disjunctures could stem from a lack of connection between ends and means, in the second and third from a lack of ownership of the involved parties, or of their ability to recast the message, resulting in unintended effects.
whatever students suggest. The openness that the informants expressed to incoming ideas from the students is something that they are unable to have if they already have a predetermined (and sometimes also externally determined) idea of what the student should be educated towards.

What the notion of “functions of education” (Biesta, 2009b, pp. 39-40) achieves is to separate the outcomes of education from the intentional processes of the teacher, which serves to make space for negotiation. But while the functions address the outcomes, they cannot account for how they come about, and how the teacher reasons in relation to them, which I argue is a contribution of the present study. Biesta’s educational functions can be viewed in relation to the Didaktik notion of Bildung, described by Klafki as “self-determination–co-determination–solidarity” (p. 313). (Hopmann (2007, p. 115), on the other hand, prefers to keep this notion vague). Thus from a Didaktik perspective, Bildung can be described as the function of education. However, what is not clear within Didaktik is the question of who is allowed to decide what constitutes Bildung — i.e., whether the student is to be included in the decision-making process or whether this is to remain the exclusive province of the teacher.

The perceived imperfection of students, and also of society, is the incentive for education in the first place. However, even if perceived imperfection motivates education, I want to refrain from attaching to education any aspiring regarding the attainment of human perfection. An important point in Todd’s (2009) rethinking of cosmopolitanism is to refrain from excluding violence and conflict as inhuman, but to resist “the assumption that education ought to overcome these imperfections, [instead centering] on the idea that the real, and perhaps formidable, task of education is to face humanity, in all its imperfection” (p. 153). In line with this argument, my point is that attending to the humanness, complexity and difficulties of education better represents the relational dimension of the task that teachers are faced with, and the professionality that they practice. Teachers’ relational practices and professionality deserve more attention in policy, teacher education and research, as well as in schools.

Suggestions for further research

Didaktik involves the conditions and processes of education, and the selection and management of educational content. The findings presented in the present study have implications not only for teaching, but for teacher education as well. Two areas that have not specifically been addressed are those concerning professional development and professional learning. A growing consensus considers a central feature for successful professional development to be the requirement that such programs “be situated in practice, focused on student learning, embedded in professional communities,
sustainable and scalable, and both supported and accompanied by carefully designed research" (Whitcomb, Borko, & Liston, 2009, p. 208). Regarding pre-service education for teachers, Grossman and McDonald (2008) have argued that it should “move away from a curriculum focused on what teachers need to know to a curriculum focused on core practices” (p. 189). I interpret this as a shift from knowledge and competency standards to a focus on professional teaching practice – i.e., what teachers do and why they do it. The present study can contribute to a theoretical framework to be used in teacher education, especially if the teachers are to be able to educate all students:

Any framework of teaching practice should encompass these relational aspects of practice and identify the components of building and maintaining productive relationships with students. Such an understanding might be particularly useful in preparing teachers who can work effectively with students who differ from them in terms of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and language. (Grossman & McDonald, 2008, p. 188)

However, this poses a Didaktik problem: how can the relational dimension of teaching be taught? That is, how can teachers’ professional practice be turned into educational content within teacher education?

The present study also raises important concerns about trust. As has been argued elsewhere (see e.g. Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002), trust in professional educational practice is an important issue. A possible topic to single out and subject to further exploration concerns the ways in which trust is and becomes significant: how and where it builds and is consumed relative to different levels in the educational system. It could well be that the “air in the system” that the management rhetoric perceives to be waste, is in fact not waste at all, but an important breeding ground for trustful relationships? It has been argued that

particularly in a time of rapid change and powerful market forces, prospective professionals should be trained – in education as well as in ongoing professional learning – to evaluate continuously and negotiate the core values of their professions and the implications of the unwritten contract with society (Solbrekke, 2008, p. 497).

How can such practices be carried out and what significance do they have? The concepts developed, such as different features of task perception and the making of Practical Argument Structures, can be put to the test in such practices. Teachers’ task perceptions, changes in those perceptions, as well as the context, arguments and events that are related to such changes might very well be a fertile area for further exploration. One might further explore, for example, the tension between the responsibility that teachers are given and the responsibility that they take. The disconnection that was apparent
between the concepts of teacher and professional, and what informants perceived to be their task, deserves further exploration as well. In what ways do teachers cope with being less than their ideals? Since the informants, at times, gave their answers not as individuals, but as representatives of teacher teams, thus challenging the focus on the individual that my study implied, it would also be interesting to investigate the role of teacher teams for professionalism and professional action. It would also be interesting to further investigate and refine the features of what goes on in the relational dimension on different levels of schools, and in connection with other actors, such as the parents of students.
Sammanfattning: Den relationella dimensionen av lärarens arbete och professionalitet


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188 Andra relationer som lärare har att hantera, som till exempel med föräldrar och kollegor, ligger utanför ramarna för denna studie.
samma handling kan ha flera olika syften: ibland utförs handlingar endast i relationssyfte, men många gånger finns samtidigt andra syften som har att göra med andra dimensioner av lärararbetet.

Studien har också till syfte att utveckla ett praxisnära teoretiskt språk som bidrar till förståelsen av, och diskussioner kring, lärares arbete och då specifikt den relationella dimensionen. Ytterligare ett syfte är att bidra till att utveckla metodverktyg för att studera lärares arbete, på sätt som kan lyfta fram de komplexa relationella villkor under vilket detta arbete genomförs. Målgruppen är forskare, lärare, lärarutbildare och lärarstudenter, men också andra, såsom tjänstemän och politiker som är intresserade av att förstå utbildningens villkor. Det empiriska materialet består av intervjuer och observationer, i första hand lärares berättelser om sitt arbete, i kombination med deras praktiska argument; det vill säga de syften de har med sina handlingar. Frågeställningarna växte fram under undersökningens gång och rör lärares arbete i utbildningssyfte.

- Hur återger och reflekterar lärare över sitt arbete i syfte att etablera och upprätthålla relationer till enskilda elever?
- Hur återger och reflekterar lärare över sitt arbete i syfte att etablera och upprätthålla relationer mellan elever?
- Hur kan lärares relationsarbete studeras i syfte att belysa de komplexa relationella villkoren som arbetet utförs under?

Innehållet i svaren på dessa frågor ovan används sedan för att besvara en fjärde, mer generell fråga:

- Hur kan undersökningar av lärares relationsarbete bidra till teoretiska begrepp samt fördjupa förståelsen av lärares professionalitet?

I det första kapitlet diskuterar jag studien i relation till didaktikfältet. Lärares arbete och professionalitet knyts till didaktik, som handlar om undervisningens villkor, urval och processer. Lärares val, och möjliga konsekvenser av dessa val, har behandlats inom den läroplansteoretiska traditionen i Sverige. Inom den traditionen har man har behandlat politiska konsekvenser av olika val på olika nivåer, och konflikter mellan olika sociala krafter. Det vill säga, skolans innehåll är inte något på förhand givet utan beroende av sammanhanget och föremål för olika former av påverkan. I det internationella fältet har liknande frågor behandlats i till exempel den tyska didaktiken och den anglosaxiska curriculum studies.

Inom den tyska didaktiken har man länge talat om de didaktiska frågorna vad, hur och varför; vad läraren ska undervisa om, hur det ska göras och varför just detta ska ingå i undervisningen. En utgångspunkt inom denna tradition är att det innehåll som läraren lär ut och det eleven lär sig inte går
att likställa med varandra. Det finns således inte någon möjlighet att i förväg 
bestämma utfallet, även om man kan tänka sig att undervisning av en viss 
lärare med en viss grupp elever under vissa omständigheter kan leda till att 
ett visst meningsskapande kommer att ske hos eleverna. Som didaktikern 
Hopmann skriver: "Didaktik är det med nödvändighet återhållna försöket att 
möjliggöra vissa meningsskapanden, med vetskapen om att det alltid kan visa 
sig bli ett helt annat utfall än det tänkta" (2007, s. 117). Det här kan vi kalla 
för innehållskomplexitet, vilket är något som gör undervisning komplex. I 
denna studie kommer komplexiteten att stå i förgrunden.

Det finns också en medelskomplexitet: vilka medel som är bäst för läraren 
att tillämpa i en situation är beroende av många olika samverkande faktorer.

Dessutom kan läraren bli ställd inför dilemma där någon elev kommer att 
vara illa oavsett vilket val läraren gör. Lärare arbetar utifrån sina tolkningar av 
styrdokument som är producerade på olika nivåer i skolsystemet. Det finns 
ibland motsättningar såväl inom som mellan olika styrdokument, motsättningar 
vilka läraren har att hantera. Ibland har just den här komplexiteten, 
syfteskomplexitet, angetts som en förklaring till varför det kan uppstå klyftor 
mellan teori och praktik inom området. Enligt Biesta kan man tala om 
undervisningens (åtminstone) tre funktioner vilka ibland samverkar och ibland 
kolliderar: 1) att kvalificera eleverna för olika slags uppgifter, i nuet och i 
framtiden, 2) att socialisera eleverna till att bli delaktiga i samhället på olika 
sätt, men även 3) att subjektifiera eleverna, det vill säga att göra dem 
självständiga i tänkande och handling som unika individer. Olika perspektiv på 
vad undervisning ska syfta till innebär olika perspektiv på vad eleven ska 
uttillsås, och även olika syn på vad som är lärarens ansvar. I diskussioner 
såsom dessa behövs begrepp för att synliggöra läraryrkets komplexitet.

I det andra kapitlet diskuterar jag vad begreppet professionalitet innebär. 
Olika perspektiv på vad lärares arbete består i, vilket berördes i det förra 
kapitlet, innebär också olika sätt att se på den professionalitet som behövs för 
att utföra detta arbete. Ordet professionell kan i vardaglig användning betyda 
både att man gör något särskilt bra, men också att man tillhör en profession.

Inom professionsforskning finns fem kriterier som brukar anges för att ett yrke 
ska betraktas som en profession: 1) att det uppfyller en viktig samhällsfunktion, 
2) att det har en teoretiskt och praktiskt grundad kunskapsbas, 3) att det finns 
en yrkesetik, 4) att det finns organisation och reglering för vem som får utöva 
yrket samt 5) att yrket är relativt självständigt i förhållande till andra, såsom till 
exempel staten. Sett utifrån dessa kriterier har det hävdats att det är tveksamt 
om läraryrket är en profession. Eftersom det är ett föränderligt och omtvistat 
begrepp, så går det emellertid inte att fastställa något sådant en gång för alla. 
Huruvida ett yrke har status av att vara en profession eller inte är en fråga om 
hur yrket ses i andras ögon, och det pågår professionalseringssträvanden, dvs. 
strävanden bland yrkesutövare för att betraktas som en profession.
I denna avhandling fokuseras istället frågan om att vara professionell i handling, det vill säga att vara en skicklig yrkesutövare. När medlemmar av en yrkeskår utför sitt yrke på ett professionellt sätt betraktas det som professionalism, och när den enskilda utövaren, som representant för yrket, handlar i enlighet med denna professionalism betraktas det som professionalitet. Läraryrket har under olika tidsperioder varit föremål för såväl professionaliseringssträvanden som utsatta för de-professionalisering. Idag påverkas olika länder skolsystem av internationella organ som OECD. Många länder försöker även reformera sina utbildningssystem så att de mer liknar den privata sektorn. Men om denna utveckling innebär ökad styrning av lärare innebär det i praktiken en de-professionalisering av dem. Lärares brist på en gemensam kunskapsbas och ett gemensamt yrkesspråk har angetts som skäl till att läraryrket inte kan betraktas som en profession.

I många länder har utbildningsreformer lett till en ökad tonvikt på kunskapstester och mätningar av olika slag, vilket har lett till en insnävning av utbildningens innehåll. Förändringarna har fått stor betydelse för lärares arbets situation. Forskare har framfört kritik mot att uppgiften att övervaka och dokumentera elevernas arbete tar tid från samarbete med kollegor och interaktion med eleverna. Det har också rest frågetecken kring hur professionaliseringssträvanden kan leda till en mer teknisk utövning av läraryrket där de moraliska dimensionerna får stå tillbaka. Kritiker hävdar också att det är kontraproduktivt att försöka renodla utbildning på det här viset, eftersom det kan bidra till att skada den relationella basen som möjliggör att uppnå de höga målen man eftersträvar. En angelägen uppgift är av dessa anledningar att fördjupa förståelsen för denna relationella dimension och på så sätt bidra till utvecklingen av lärares yrkesspråk.

Det tredje kapitlet behandlar forskning om lärares arbete och yrkeskunnande tillsammans med forskning gällande lärares arbete med relationer i klassrummet, valda med tanke på relevansen för denna avhandlings område. I denna ingår till exempel Teacher thinking, som undersöker lärares tänkande och tänkandets inflytande för lärares handlingar, samt forskning kring lärares praktiska yrkeskunnande, där man har undersökt hur det kommer till uttryck i olika kontexter och hur denna spelar in i praktiken. Donald Schöns verk Den reflekterande praktikern gav upphov till en stor mängd studier angående reflektion i praktiken, vilket också har fått betydelse för förståelsen av yrkesutövande och yrkeskunnande. Senare forskning har synliggjort känslornas centrala roll för vårt beslutfattande, och den känslomässiga dimensionen av lärares arbete. I så kallade interpersonella yrken förväntas utövaren ibland etablera nära relationer till klienterna för att lyckas med sitt uppdrag. Samtidigt ska hon/han vara en representant för en institution och ska utföra ett uppdrag. En annan aspekt som har fått uppmärksamhet på sistone är de förkroppsligade uttryckten för kunskap. Den tidigare tonvikten på medvetenhet och tänkande utmanas av forskning som visar att mycket av vårt
tänkande är omedvetet, och att kroppen utgör den huvudsakliga källan för vårt begreppssystem.


våldshandlingar. En relationell förståelse av denna omgivning kan vara fruktbar för att hantera de risker som finns inneboende i skolan.

En ytterligare dimension av lärarens ansvar i mötet med eleverna tillför Säfström (2003), som ser undervisning som en akt av ansvar för eleven. Det är ett ansvar som inte kan förutses och därför med nödvändighet försätter läraren i en situation av osäkerhet. Han menar att en fråga som läraren återkommande bör ställa sig är ”Med vilken rätt undervisar jag?” (s. 19). Denna inställning sätter relationer och komplexitet i centrum. Tanken om *omtanke om eleven* som utgångspunkt för undervisning har visat sig vara fruktbar för att överskrida tanken om undervisning och fostran som två olika aktiviteter.


att samla in berättelser från informanternas egen praktik. Under observationen fokuserades informantens interaktion med eleverna. Den andra intervjun utgick från den första intervjun, struktureringen av argumenten som framkommit i den första intervjun samt observationen. Syftet med denna intervju var att klargöra, utveckla och komplettera informationen från den första intervjun, samt att få svar på frågor som väckts efter den andra intervjun och i samband med observationen.

Analysen av intervjuerna inleddes i samband med materialinsamlingen, och skedde i tre steg. Första steget innefattade varje enskild informant och handlade om att strukturera deras praktiska argument. Praktiska argument konstrueras när man blir ombedd att förklara sina handlingar, en serie skäl kopplas till en handling. De praktiska argumenten har grafiskt strukturerats till så kallade Praktiska Argumentations-Strukturer (PAS) (se figur s. 84), vilka visualiserar hur handlingarna och argumenten för handlingarna hänger ihop, och består av argumentationskedjor som ibland löper samman utifrån olika handlingar. Nästa analysstege utgjorde en kodning av allas utsagor. I detta steg började begreppet relationsarbete ta form och bli centrat. Det relationsarbete som informanterna talade om kunde vidare delas in i olika aspekter, beroende på vilka relationer arbetet riktades mot (se figur s. 86). Begreppet förhandling passade väl för att beskriva hur detta arbete gick till. De tre aspekterna av lärares relationsarbete var: 1) etablera och upprätthålla relationer till enskilda elever, 2) etablera och upprätthålla relationer mellan elever, och 3) etablera och upprätthålla relationer till föräldrar. Den sista aspekten ligger dock bortom denna avhandlings syfte.


Resultatdelen är strukturerad på följande vis. Kapitlen sex och åtta redovisas, genom tre teman och två exempel, informanternas utsagor angående sitt arbete med att etablera och

I kapitel sex, det första resultatkapitlet, redovisas, genom tre teman och två exempel, informanternas utsagor angående sitt arbete med att etablera och
underhålla relationer till enskilda elever i syfte att främja och möjiggöra undervisning. Dettaarbete innebär bland annat att förhandla med elever om förtroendefulla relationer, och att etablera relationer där läraren upplevs som medmänsklig. Arbetet är också inriktat mot att förbättra elevens relation till sig själv, elevens självbild eller självkänsla och självförtroende.

Det första temat handlar om att ha förtroende i relationen till eleven, vilket upplevs som centralt för möjligheten att kunna undervisa överhuvudtaget. Informanternas praktiska argument kan sammanfattas i termer av att eleverna får förtroende för läraren om hon/han upplevs som rättvis, välvillig och begriplig. Å andra sidan, om eleverna får mycket skäll och kritik så bidrar detta till att minska förtroendet i relationen. Men eftersom informanterna ändå har behov av att tillrättavisar sina elever, så använder de ofta humor för att kunna göra detta på ett sätt som inte får eleverna att förlora sin världighet. Förtroende beskrivs av en del av informanterna i rent ekonomiska termer, som ett kapital som kan vinnas eller gå förlorad i relation till en enskild elev. Att samla på sig förtroende kapital i relation till en elev menar de att man gör över tid, genom många positiva möten, och det gör att man kan nå fram till eleven.


Det tredje temat handlar om arbetet med att ha omtanke om elevers självbild, och att arbeta för att förbättra denna självbild. Informanterna ser en god självbild hos eleverna som en viktig förutsättning för att kunna tackla kraven i skolan. I detta arbete återfinns åtskilliga spännings på flera olika nivåer. Vilka krav som är rimliga att ställa på en elev är något som är föremål för förhandling mellan en lärare och en elev, eftersom de kan ha olika uppfattningar. Elever som har en dålig självbild, menar flera av informanterna, kan av rädsla för att misslyckas vägra att göra en uppgift, även om de
egentligen skulle kunna klara av den. Angrepp på elevens självbild kan således stänga inte bara vägen till lärande i nuet, men även till vidare utveckling eftersom det negativt påverkar viljan till framtidstillväxt. Informanterna försöker åstadkomma en vilja att försöka trots en osäker utgång hos eleven, vilket de anser vara betydelsefull. Men även om eleven kan vara nöjd med att göra sitt bästa så finns en spänning mellan det relationella kravet, det som förhandlas mellan lärare och elev, och det absoluta kravet, som står uttryckt till exempel betygskriterier och läroplaner, vilket eleven kanske ändå inte når upp till.


När en elev uppfattades som oförmögen att leva upp till skolans krav, och denna oförmåga drabbade klasskamraterna, innefattade relationsarbetet att förhandla tolerans mellan elever. Informanterna tog upp flera olika sätt som de använde för att förhandla relationerna så att det inte skulle bli exkluderande eller stigmatiserande för den enskilda eleven. En medvetenhet om risken för kränkningar mellan elever gav upphov till ett antal olika praktiker: allt från att hantera kränkningar som kommer till ens kännedom, ständigt övervaka interaktion, vara närvarande i en beskyddande funktion, förhindra att kränkningar sker, markera gränser när kränkningar sker, skapa tillfällen där dolda kränkningar kan komma upp till ytan till att diskutera kränkningar som en del av undervisningen. Konflikter mellan elever hanterades ofta som en del
av vardagen, och de sätt som informanterna hanterade konflikter berodde till stor del på vilken sorts konflikt det var. En del av konflikterna hanterade eleverna på egen hand. För att hantera konflikter kunde informanterna till exempel ignorera dem, stötta elevernas konfliktlösning, be dem lösa konflikter själva, observera mönster för konflikter, lösa konflikter, undersöka konflikter, be om hjälp utifrån samt använda konflikter som tillfällen för lärande.

I berättelsen i detta kapitel upptäckte informanten Maria av en tillfällighet att vissa av hennes elever i hennes klass systematiskt utsatte de andra eleverna för nedsättande kommentarer, bland annat om deras intelligens, som inte försvarede sig mot. Hennes relationsarbete innebar då att stärka framför allt flickorna, genom att till exempel ge dem medlemskort i hennes MENSA-klubb. Relationerna i klassen förändrades bland annat genom att flickorna tillsammans kunde uppbringe mod att försvara sig.


När det gällde olika former av socialt våld så fanns en vaksamhet bland informanternas beträffande relationerna mellan eleverna, för att motverka detta och för att främja relationer som bidrog till utbildningssyften.


krav på effektivitet bidra till att uppdragsperceptionen snävas in hos lärare på ett sätt som gör att de riskerar att förlopa kontakten med viktiga delar av sitt uppdrag, och således även med möjligheten för att lyckas uppfylla målen.

Lärare är ansvariga för att följa såväl läproplaner som kursplaner, men i ökande mån tenderar lärarens arbete att styras av de senare, och av kravet att uppfylla mätbara kriterier. I den diskurs där utbildning omtalas som ett ekonomiskt utbyte mellan lärare och elev, där läraren förser eleven med kunskap och eleven konsumerar denna, är det lätt att ta för givet att en undervisningsrelation alltid existerar. När så inte är fallet skyllet man antingen på eleven eller på läraren, inte på villkoren. Något som glöms bort då är, att ibland mäste relationen förhandlas, och även om förhandlingarna ibland kan vara väldigt lätta och subtila så är de ibland svåra, kanske till och med snudd på omöjliga, att genomföra. Dessutom, om undervisningsinnehållet redan ses som givet så osynliggörs också förhandlingarna av detta innehåll, förhandlingar som ibland kan utgöra förutsättningar för att kunna undervisa. Detta innebär ett osynliggörande av eleven som en intentionell varelse som har möjlighet att påverka, och bidra till, undervisningsprocessen och undervisningsinnehållet, och eleven ses enbart som någon som någon som antingen har att acceptera eller avvisa ett på förhand bestämt innehåll, aldrig bidra till att skapa det.

Oenighet och förhandling är inte bara att betrakta som en störning utan har även utbildningspotential (jfr Frelin och Grannäs (in press)).

Enligt Biesta kan man tala om utbildningens (åtminstone) tre funktioner: kvalificera, socialisera samt subjektifiera eleverna. Det som framkommer i resultaten är att i vissa fall kan subjektifiering vara en förutsättning för att de andra två ska kunna genomföras. Ett möte går då inte att få till stånd genom att läraren, spelande rollen ”lärare” närmar sig eleve som i en roll ”eleven”, där syftet enbart är att kvalificera och socialisera eleven. Först när eleven erkänns som en självständigt tänkande, kännande och handlande varelse av läraren öppnas möjligheten för en undervisningsrelation. Detta kan en medmänsklig lärare göra, men inte en maskinlärare, som inte tar hänsyn till sina och elevens behov och till den situationen kräver. Detta är en av de många källor till komplexitet som präglar läraryrket, och jag menar att denna studie har lyft fram den lärarprofessionalitet som krävs för att hantera den relationella komplexitet som utbildning, i lägre eller högre grad, alltid för med sig.


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Appendix 1: Example of letter to informant

1(1)

Uppsala 200x-xx-xx

NN
Xgymnasiet
XXX XX STAD

Medverkan i undersökning

Hej,

Jag heter Anneli Frelin och är doktorand i didaktik vid Uppsala Universitet. Efter mer än tio år i lärarvetet är jag intresserad av att beskriva lärarens yrkeskunnande i min avhandling, särskilt sådant som har att göra med kontakten med eleverna. Ditt namn har jag fått av mina kolleger på lärarutbildningen. Jag tror att du sitter inne med viktig kunskap för min undersökning och skulle vilja göra två intervjuer med dig, kompletterade av en observation på din arbetsplats för att få ökad förståelse för det sammanhang du arbetar i.


Med vänlig hälsning