



# Basic Teacher Skills

Handbook of Internship (in Teacher Education)

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# Introduction

## Studying internship in the Teacher Education

by Niels Bjerre Tange

In many ways internship is a special subject in the teacher education. It does not take place at the college of education but at school, you are not being taught, but you have to teach yourself, and the teachers of the subject are not actually teachers, but practice teachers or supervisors. Therefore, the following questions are quite natural when, as a student teacher, you are facing internship: What does internship look like? How is internship related to the rest of the educational programme, and how is it evaluated? The many relevant questions can be summed up in one overall question: How to study internship?

In this chapter, I will try to provide a brief and introductory answer to the question in the form of an overview of the most important areas of the internship, supplemented by concrete suggestions on what student teachers can do to study the course internally in an appropriate and meaningful manner. Most of the content in this chapter is the same in this and the other two books in the *Internship in Teacher Education* series, but with a final clarification of the particular relevance for the individual competences in internship that each of the three books deals with: Pedagogical Competence, Classroom Management and Relational Competence.

The objective of the internship and the placement in the education The internship, like the academic subjects and the bachelor degree project, aims at linking theory and practice for the student teacher to acquire theoretically based practical skills in preparing, carrying out and evaluating teaching processes.

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Acts on the bachelor degree programme as primary school teacher, no. 231 of 08/03/2013, § 11)

### The objective of the internship

In the above section, the theory-practice relationship is placed centrally in the internship. This relationship can be understood in several ways. A widespread perception is expressed in the saying "One thing is theory, another practice". This is a dichotomous view i.e. an understanding of theory and practice as incompatible concepts. Such an opinion can give students the impression that the theoretical content of the teacher education and everyday life at the internship school have nothing to do with each other. However, this view falls short when section 11 points out that theory and practice should be linked. It calls for another understanding, which sees the two positions as expressions of different forms of knowledge or different perspectives that can complement each other. The theory can qualify - but not dictate - the concrete and experience-based practice, which in turn can support the development of theory. In this sense theory and practice are not assigned to either position. Both in school and in the educational programme theoretical and practical knowledge, actions and reflections, are at stake and in interaction with each other.

In this understanding, the link between theory and practice is an important prerequisite for the student teacher to develop the theoretically based practical skills mentioned in Section 11.

How can the link between theory and practice be established and support the student teacher's learning process in the internship? The three books in the *Internship in Teacher Education* series prepare the ground for practice teachers and student teachers to cooperate on counselling to link theory and practice by studying and articulating relationships between reflection and action, between pedagogical theory and teaching practice and between research and empirical experiences. With this in mind, it will be advisable that student teachers collect their reflections on teaching practice in an internship portfolio or logbook.

### The placement of the internship in the teacher education

The theory-practice connection is pivotal in the internship. However, it is also apparent from section 11 of the Acts that the connection is part of the objectives of the various academic subjects of the teaching programme. Therefore, the task should be lifted not only by the internships but by all the subjects in interaction.

How this interaction between the internships and the other subjects is to be realized is stated in section 12 of the Acts: The internship must be prepared, implemented and completed in collaboration with the academic subjects and the basic pedagogical skills. (Ibid., § 12, paragraph 2)

For example, if you study the academic subject 'Danish' and the module 'The pupil's learning and development' within the subject area 'basic pedagogical competences', these subjects must be studied in direct cooperation with the internship. This can be done by working with the planning of a specific lesson plan in 'Danish' and in this connection studying acquisition theories and learning processes in 'the pupil's learning and development'. In this way, the subjects collaborate with the internship. As the internship is the focal point of this collaboration, it is that particular subject that makes the various subjects of the teacher education cohere. A student teacher must be aware that internship is to be studied across the subjects, both in and out of internships throughout the entire study programme.

### The school as a place of education

The internship school prepares an education plan for the internship in accordance with the competence objectives for the relevant internship. The university college must approve the education plan. (*Executive Order on the education of bachelors in primary school teaching, no. 231 of 08/03/2013, § 13*)

In order to receive students in an internship, the school must prepare an education plan explaining how the internship is organized so that the student teachers get the opportunity to acquire the

competence objectives for the internship. The fact that it is the internship school and not the teacher education which compiles the education plan emphasizes the importance of the internship school in the practice period. It is not just a place of practice which the teacher education uses as a medium in the education of the students. The school formalizes the practice education and makes decisions about content and organisation. Therefore, the school is not only the frame of an internship but part of the education. The introduction of the education plan signifies approval of the competence of the school and its central position in the teacher education.

The fact that the school is an educational institution means heavy demands on cooperation between school and teacher student: *First of all*, the school must assume the role of educator in the design of the education plan so that it is obvious and well-founded how the various key parts such as counselling, competence objectives, teaching, other teacher tasks, expectations of the student and the like are included in the internship.

*Secondly*, the student teacher must acknowledge the school as an educational institution by openly accepting the way the school has chosen to organize the internship. Moreover, as a student teacher you must immediately enter into a dialogue with the school if you find that relationships in teaching practice seem problematic. *Thirdly*, there should always be a dialogue between student teachers and the school prior to the internship, during which the education plan can be discussed and the understanding and expectations adjusted.

#### Assessment of the internship

In connection with each internship, the student will be assessed in accordance with a module evaluation and a test.

#### Module evaluation

The module evaluation is carried out by the internship school and can be either qualitative or quantitative, according to the demands of the relevant UC. A qualitative assessment means that the student receives a pass/fail assessment based on an evaluation of whether the student has achieved the competence objectives for the relevant practice level or not. A quantitative assessment is an *acceptance* of the student's participation in the various elements of the module. As a rule of thumb, you may say that a qualitative assessment deals with how well you perform when you participate, whereas the quantitative assessment merely states that the student has participated. A positive module evaluation is a prerequisite for the student to attend the following internship exam.

#### Internship examination

The internship exam is oral. In preparation for the exam, the student writes a synopsis, which is to be included in the exam performance and assessment. There are two examiners, a practice teacher and a teacher from the teacher education. The exam lasts approx. 30 minutes, and the student is given a grade from the 7-point scale. Out of the three internship exams that must be

passed one is internal and two external i.e. they have one external examiner.

Of course, it is relevant for the student to know what it takes to do well for the exams. What criteria are there for the assessment? According to the Acts, the students must be assessed based on *their level of reflection in relation to the competence objectives*:

In assessing the extent to which the student has achieved the competence objectives, the student must be able to

- 1) explain acquired knowledge, skills and basic processes
- 2) create contexts and analyse known situations and problems using acquired knowledge and skills and act accordingly in pedagogical practice
- 3) reflect on and assess new situations and issues that require independent analysis and alternative ways of acting in pedagogical practice.

(Acts on the education of the bachelor degree as a primary school teacher, no. 231 of 08/03/2013, § 21, paragraph 2)

If the students can describe, analyse and assess a situation relying on their knowledge of e.g. classroom management (competence 2), they demonstrate the relevant knowledge, and in applying it at all three taxonomic levels, they meet the criteria of the Acts.

But how to support the theory-practice link by means of a test that may seem distanced from the relevant teaching practice at the internship school? This can be done, for example, by incorporating artifacts from the internship school. The Agreement of the curriculum (Teacher Education - Agreement of the curriculum, valid from 1.8.2014, section on Level I, II and III exams on the internship, page 36. A part of the local curriculum for all teacher educations) requires that during the internship students collect products and artifacts in the form of learner texts, class rules or the like and bring them to the exam. The aim is to make the practical explanation and interpretation of the artifacts the object of analysis at the exam.

In summary, in the preparation and completion of the exam, examiners as well as students must be aware of the reflection level and the theory-practice link when assessing the extent to which the student has achieved the objectives set for the internship. We will now take a closer look at these objectives.

#### Competence objectives

All subjects in the teacher education are described by means of competence objectives. A competence may be defined as a combination of insight (knowledge of what) and skill (knowledge of how) for the completion and development of teacher-related tasks within a defined context. In the *Teacher Education 2013* the concept of competence was defined as follows: Competences are abilities for handling specific requirements. Abilities are seen in the three dimensions of competence: knowledge, skills, and reflection. These three dimensions show what

the students are able to do in terms of knowledge and skills, and their readiness to independently reflect on knowledge and skills. In other words, competences are to be understood as the ability to successfully handle complex demands and tasks and to act in a certain context through mobilisation of the resources acquired: knowledge, skills, and reflection. Competences always relate knowledge to action requirements in pedagogical practice. (Rasch-Christensen & Rasmussen 2012: 2)

There are three competence requirements in the internship:

1. Pedagogical Competence.
2. Classroom Management.
3. Relational Competence.

For the student teacher it may be appropriate to achieve the competence, knowledge, and skills objectives by studying internship based on individual learning objectives. These are not identical to the overall objectives of the subject but are determined individually by the student based on the competence objectives and personal practice experiences including the proximal zone of development of the individual student teacher. It is an advantage if the student teacher involves internship teachers, teachers from the university college and fellow students in the work with learning objectives, so that the personal learning objectives may become the focal point of counselling during the internship.

Enjoy the internship!

### Suggestions on further reading

Fischer, H. (2009). *En lærer bliver til – mødet med praksis*. København: Hans Reitzels Forlag.

Hansen, J.W. (2007). *Praktik i læreruddannelsen – en brugsbog for lærerstuderende*. København: Gyldendals Lærebibliotek.

Kristensen, H.J. & P.F. Laursen (red.) (2011). *Gyldendals pædagogikhåndbog*. København: Gyldendals Lærebibliotek.

Nielsen, T.K. (2014). *Teori og praksis i professionsbacheloruddannelserne – et systematisk review*. Ph.d.-afhandling fra Institut for Uddannelse og Pædagogik.

Unge Pædagoger (2014). *Praktikken i den nye læreruddannelse*. *Unge pædagoger*, 2, 2014.

# Chapter 1

## Lesson planning in the internship

by Elsebeth Jensen

Peter, Anja, and Fatima are facing their first internship at a major school in a provincial city. They take English and Danish as academic subjects and Physical Education, too. They are going to teach primarily English, Danish and PE in a fifth grade and will also participate in the daily 45-minute movement class. The practice period is six weeks following the autumn holiday, and already from the beginning of the term the student teachers, teachers and pupils of the school have been in contact. Peter, Anja, and Fatima have had the opportunity to observe the teachers teach the subjects as well as the opportunity to talk with the internship teachers, to see what the pupils have previously worked with and to talk to the pupils. They prepare to make plans for the teaching sequences they will be responsible for during the internship.

### Teaching and didactics

Teaching is about reducing randomness and arbitrariness in human learning processes, and in Thyge Vinther-Jensen's words teaching is driven by "an intention to induce learning" (1989: 12). Didactics is a professional concept that comprises *what* will be relevant when teaching others, *why* and *how*. Didactics is about objectives and the subject matter of the teaching (what), about the reasons (why) for the choice of precisely those objectives and that content, and how teaching and learning processes are to be organized (how) so that the probability that the teaching and learning objectives will be achieved is as high as possible. Didactics therefore also deals with *who* and *when*. The planning of teaching and learning processes is central to didactics (see, for example, Hermansen et al. 2005; Jank & Meyer 2006).

This chapter regards the planning of teaching: the context in which it takes place, the considerations that are part of good planning, and, not least, why it is important to be diligent when planning.

### The context of planning

Society and, in Denmark, the parties of the Danish Parliament, have established a primary and lower secondary school, of which the overall purpose, the subjects and the specific academic objectives are described<sup>1</sup>. The recent law of primary school clarifies what all pupils are expected to learn during their schooling. The reasons for the parties' choices are contained in the comments to the law and in the debate that always relates to amendments in the Folkeskole Act. At a general level, pedagogical choices have been made in relation to the content and the teaching objectives (the curriculum). The actual work of formulating the new objectives is carried out by working groups consisting of professional pedagogues. In the latest amendment of the Folkeskole Act (LBK No. 665 of 20.06.14), which became effective in August 2014, focus has shifted from the main areas of knowledge and skills to the student's competences, that is to say what the learner should be able to know and do at certain steps. The school reform also clarifies

the so-called Common Objectives, which set objectives for what the pupils should learn in the different academic subjects<sup>2</sup>. At the same time the number of objectives has been reduced and simplified.

Therefore, the effect of teaching on the pupils is brought into focus more than before. The Folkeskole Act and the related executive orders and circulars constitute the legal basis for the teaching and other tasks regarding the pupils' schooling. The Danish primary and lower secondary schools are governed by municipalities, which means that, for example, the economic basis for the teachers' work is defined locally. This entails variations and different conditions in the schools across the country. The curriculum must be worked out at the individual schools stating how the competence objectives are met, and these curricula must be approved by the municipal council (Act No. 406 of 28.04.14, §9). However, the municipalities often choose to follow the guiding curriculum which has been formulated centrally. Also, focus areas will often be defined by the municipality (e.g. in terms of formulating objectives and giving feedback), and further pedagogic decisions may be made at a municipal level. Besides, each school, school board and management may have defined focus areas, which in turn means that certain pedagogical decisions (such as the development of pupil plans with special content and form) are made at school level. Although didactics is a concept derived from the world of pedagogy, political pedagogical decisions are made by politicians, and these decisions are based on a mixture of ideological, political and academic ideas. There may be a dispute between the various considerations, and it may not be that the academic and research-based convictions are better than the more ideological principles.

Nevertheless, in a democracy this is a precondition and part of the educational framework within which a teacher subsequently has to plan and organize teaching. However, the teacher still has a great deal of latitude and must make many pedagogical decisions, both alone and in cooperation with other teachers and pupils in the specific planning of teaching. Thus, the teacher has a certain freedom when for instance interpreting and transforming competence, knowledge and skills into learning objectives, as well as when choosing the content and methodology, i.e. in the actual preparation of lesson plans.

### Didactics and plans

Professor emeritus in didactics, Karsten Schnack, has defined didactics as "educational reflection in which the planning dimension is central". (Schnack 2001: 67). Pedagogical reflections must be put into practice in lesson plans, and the quality of these is crucial for the pupils' learning. A research review from Clearinghouse (2008) shows that the teacher's teaching techniques are crucial for the pupils' achievements, and that these techniques are based on pedagogical competence:

<sup>1</sup> See all relevant laws and regulations at: <http://uvm.dk/Den-nye-folkeskole/Lovgrundlag>.

<sup>2</sup> The new simplified Common Objectives are available at EMU.dk and became effective from the school year 2015/16. For the new subjects, including arts and crafts and design, the new Common Objectives became effective from the school year 2014/15.

Such competence requires a high academic level that leads to increased pupil uptake through the teacher's actions when teaching. [...] It will have a positive impact on pupils' learning if the teacher can establish clear teaching objectives for the individual lessons as well as the overall course, implement detailed lesson planning and organize the activities to spend more time teaching and less time administrating disciplinary routines. (Ibid.:66).

The teacher's detailed planning and formulation of clear objectives therefore reduces inefficient time. At the same time, research shows that if pupils are involved in, for example, "structuring and selecting activities in the classroom and taking responsibility", the pupils' learning increases (Nordenbo et al., 2008: 47).

This is also supported by school researcher John Hattie, who points out that the most important thing in teaching is that the pupils are aware of the teacher's plan, and that they are able to follow it. The most important thing for the teacher, however, is that the pupils' learning process is visible (Hattie 2013: 45).

In practice, this means that the *what* of the subject matter (material), the *why* (objectives/goals) and the *how* (methodology) should be clear and visible to the pupils, and this can only be realised through detailed and thorough planning.

#### The central pedagogical categories of the lesson plan

A high-quality lesson plan relates to a range of categories (see figure 1.1) and to the following questions.

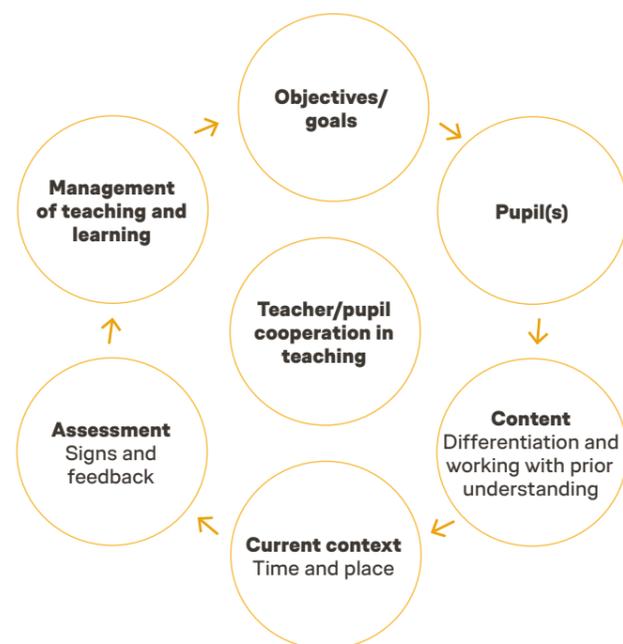


Figure 1.1. Teacher-pupil cooperation in teaching

<sup>3</sup> This development is described in detail in the academic magazine 'The pupil's general development,' which has three main purposes: 1. The pupil's desire to learn more. 2. The pupil's ability to learn in different ways. 3. The pupil's ability to learn with others.

#### The objectives of teaching: what and why?

What are the pupils supposed to learn and why? What objectives should be formulated for the teaching and the individual pupil? When answering these questions, the teacher must first examine what is stated in the overall goals for the Danish school. These are the more general objectives, which describe, for instance, the pupil's democratic education, the pupil's development towards self-determination and the pupil's general development<sup>3</sup>. Thus, there are social, personal and academic objectives for the individual pupil in the school. Secondly, the teacher must look at the objectives for the individual subjects. The Danish Folkeskole Act states competence, skills and knowledge objectives for each subject.

The teacher must transform these objectives into learning objectives that will ultimately become the specific objectives of the teaching. The Ministry of Education describes this objectives hierarchy in the model in Figure 1.2



Figure 1.2. Breakdown and operationalization of Common Objectives into learning objectives in lessons plans (from the website of the Ministry of Education)

Working with the objectives the teacher must also consider the 'why' of the teaching - the teaching should enable the pupils to make sense of what is going on, and in this process the teacher's answers are crucial. Man is basically a creature constantly searching for meaning, and philosopher John Dewey stated that "learning in its original sense is not learning things but learning the meaning of things." (Dewey 1910/1997: 176, my translation). Teaching, therefore, takes place when pupils and teachers (and support teachers, to the extent that they participate in the teaching) create meaning in action and dialogue, and in that process the teacher's lesson plan forms the framework and the supportive scaffold. In addition, Hattie states that "Teachers must be aware of the knowledge and ability of each pupil and be able to construct meaning and meaningful experiences on this basis" (Hattie 2013: 47).

Before the objectives can be formulated, it is also necessary to take a closer look at the learners: the pupils. The pupils: the teaching of *who*?

The *who* of the teaching is about the pupils - who are they?

The question can be answered both generally and specifically. Generally, e.g. through studies of sociological theories and research in child and youth psychology or research in children's development, learning, well-being, and general education (see, for example, Nielsen 2009). Specifically, for instance through observations, dialogues and interviews with the pupils involved. It is often a big challenge for newly qualified teachers and student teachers to get a feel of the pupils' world, their interests, and academic levels: What interests and preoccupies the pupils? What will they be able to understand?

What will they find easy or difficult? And what characterises this specific group of pupils - as individuals and as the group community a class also is?

For a student teacher, part of the preparation for making a lesson plan may be to carry out systematic observations of the pupils during lessons and breaks and to do interviews with some of the them. Student teachers may, for example, attend one or more lessons where either practice teachers or fellow students teach, and afterwards, the student teacher may ask pupils to describe what has just happened, what they found interesting, difficult/easy, etc. It may also be relevant to make an academic test or a mind map of the pupils' current knowledge and skills in relation to an upcoming lesson plan (Hattie 2013: 73 ff). Many years ago, John Dewey stated that "in the learning process, the pupil's abilities are the beginning, and the teacher's objectives make up the distant boundary" (Dewey 1916/2005: 145). The pupil's starting point must therefore be identified and then seen in relation to the objectives. When the questions concerning the objectives of the specific lesson plan have been examined, the questions about *what* and *how* can be asked and answered as well.

#### Content and methodology: the *what* and *how* of teaching

The *what* and *how* of teaching are about the specific subject matter/theme/topic in question, and how the pupils will work with it to achieve the objectives - together it is called the content of teaching. The teacher's pedagogical reflections should focus on what content would be most suitable for achieving the objectives, and how the content can provide opportunities for the necessary differentiation in the pupils' process of achieving the objectives. On a general level, assistance can be found in general pedagogical (e.g., Imsen 2004, Lund & Rasmussen 2006, Kristensen & Laursen 2011) and academic (e.g., Nielsen 2004, Steffensen 2003) theory and research as well as in theory and research in learning processes (Qvortrup & Wiberg 2013). Throughout the precise planning process, an extensive repertoire of both content and working methods is beneficial. Experiences help to build up this extensive repertoire, but knowledge sharing with colleagues may prove to be a beneficial shortcut.

Moreover, it will be necessary to investigate with what and how the pupils have previously worked. Further questions about the objectives and content may concern new areas or minor additions to already known material, how accessible the area is etc. The teacher should also consider the rhythm of the learning process: What variations are needed and how often? This is determined both by the level of the content, its complexity and the pupils' age and academic basis.

#### Current context: time and place

Before the concrete lesson plan is to be made, it will be necessary to know the physical and practical framework for the teaching such as the physical facilities as well as the time span of the lessons. Events during breaks and out- of- school hours have an impact on the pupils' attention during lessons. For example, the first lessons after a weekend may differ from lessons in the course of the week, just like the lesson just before the lunch break may be different from the one immediately after. Although these are factors that are beyond the control of the teacher, they may be important to consider when planning lessons.

#### Management of teaching and learning

The teacher is in charge of the teaching but is also required to work with the individual pupil on learning objectives and with the entire group of pupils when choosing the methodology and the specific content. This is stated in section 18 (3) of the Danish Folkeskole Act. 4: At each grade and in every subject, teachers and support teachers (cf. section 29a), cooperate continuously with the individual pupil in setting attainable goals. The work of the pupil is organized taking these goals into account. Approaches, methods and choice of materials must, as far as possible, take place in cooperation between teachers and support teachers (cf. section 29a) and pupils.

It is crucial that the framework for teaching and learning is clear and adapted to the pupils' qualifications (e.g. age and academic, social and personal skills) for the pupils to participate actively and autonomously.

#### Assessment, signs and feedback

The plan of the teacher must also contain considerations and concrete instructions on how the pupils' learning processes are to be assessed continuously: What are possible signs of the pupils being on the right track? Is there a need for adjustments? And how should feedback be given to the pupils for them to get an understanding of whether they are on the way to achieving the objectives and what to do differently if they are not (see, for example, Hattie, 2013).

### Cooperating with the pupils about the teaching

The teacher must cooperate with parents and pupils to achieve the objectives as formulated in the Danish Folkeskole Act. As a professional, the teacher is responsible for this collaboration and obliged to plan, implement and evaluate the teaching.

A lesson plan is a valuable tool and forms the specific draft of how pupils can work to achieve the objectives of the teaching. It is a plan that will almost always be adjusted when put into practice. The possibilities for making changes and necessary adjustments are increased through thorough and reflected planning. One of the main reasons why student teachers do not teach as many lessons as a qualified teacher is the time needed for planning and reflecting before, during and after lessons in order to gain appropriate planning skills. John Hattie writes the following about the difference between expert teachers and less experienced teachers: Expert teachers possess a knowledge that is more integrated in the way that they combine the introduction of new academic content with the pupils' existing knowledge. They can relate the content of the current lesson to other subjects and topics in the lesson plan, and they uniquely make the lessons their own by altering, combining and expanding them according to the pupils' needs and their own learning objectives. (Hattie 2013: 55)

Expert teachers manage to create a good learning environment. They evaluate pupils' learning and provide ongoing feedback believing that all pupils can meet the criteria for fulfilling the objectives. Ultimately, they affect both the pupils' in- depth and surface learning (Hattie 2013: 57 ff.). Overall, Hattie describes teachers as skilled pedagogues.

The teacher's lesson plan is an expression of how he/she establishes coherence and meaning when teaching. The lesson plan is a framework or scaffold, but also a message to the school's management and the parents about what is going on in the teaching and learning process.

### Lesson planning in the internship

During the first internship, the student teacher is responsible for planning teaching sequences within the overall plan laid down by the practice teacher. During the second internship, the student teacher must be able to organize a prolonged course of teaching demonstrating a variety of methods, Differentiated teaching and the use of IT. In the third internship, the student teacher should furthermore be able to plan in accordance with the annual calendar and the student calendar in collaboration with other resource people at the school.

The progress of the student teacher's work thus proceeds from the planning of simple and limited teaching sequences with limited responsibility together with a possibility of independence to planning which considers the full complexity of teaching in the context of the entire school, while gradually offering the student teacher more responsibility and greater opportunity of independence.

As said before, Peter, Anja, and Fatima are in their first internship, and they are preparing a plan for the teaching sequences for which they are responsible. They must plan within the framework of the practice teacher's plan, so, among other things, their preparation consists of acquainting themselves with this plan. What shall the pupils learn in the current course? How is it related to the previous course (what do the pupils already know?), and what comes next? At the same time, students must look at their resources: What do they know about the subject they are going to teach? Their qualifications are slightly different: Peter has been working full-time at a minor school, while Anja has been a swim trainer for many years and is used to working with children. Fatima comes directly from high school and has no experience in teaching children.

In the first internship, Peter, Anja, and Fatima must make a plan for one or more lessons. In the second internship, they must draw up a plan for a prolonged course, and in the third practice period they should be able to connect their plans with the year-long planning and to cooperate with the whole staff of the school. The more they approach the individual lesson, the more detailed the planning must be. When planning, Peter, Anja, and Fatima must consider the following categories and examples of questions:

#### Teaching objectives and evaluation

- What is our intention with the teaching sequence?
- What are the pupils supposed to learn?
- Why should they learn just that?
- What are the learning objectives?
- What are possible signs of the pupils heading towards achieving the objectives?
- What feedback do the pupils need during the course?
- How can the pupils' achievements be assessed?

#### Content and methodology

- What shall the pupils work with? Why?
- What possibilities are there for differentiation?
- How shall the pupils work (working methods)? What shall the pupils do in order to learn?
- What materials will be used? By the teacher? By the pupils?
- What variations will there be in content and methods? What will the rhythm of the course be like?
- How long should (can) the pupils work with a given activity? Is there a need for changes in the course?

#### Management and structuring, cooperation with the pupils

- What are our considerations on the pedagogical framework of the work?
- Where and how are the pupils actively involved?
- What are our considerations on process management during the lesson? Where and how are pupils regularly involved?
- How do we want to begin the lesson?
- How will we round off the lesson?

When Peter, Anja, and Fatima have made a detailed plan, it will be appropriate with counselling sessions with their practice teacher to qualify their skills in planning and carrying out teaching. In particular, their skills in reflecting on and justifying their pedagogical choices will be in focus.

When, in the following internships, the students must make prolonged course plans, it will once more be relevant to consider the above questions. When the plans are made and unfolded in details, it will be useful to share a version of the plan with pupils and parents so that, through knowledge of the plans, they can be more involved and likely to support the intentions of the teacher. These plans must contain the objectives, content, evaluation, and practical information about time, location, materials, preparations, etc.

### Lesson plans and development of teaching

Lesson plans serve several purposes: their categorisations and concepts ensure academic and pedagogical discussions between teachers and student teachers. Subsequently, the plan is a message to pupils and parents about the teaching and learning objectives and processes. However, the plan can also be used for the development of teaching skills if subject to systematic reflections and pedagogical discussions.

### Suggestions on further reading

Hermansen, M., m.fl. (2005). *Didaktikken og individet – når senmoderne elever skal lære*. København: Alinea.

Helmke, A. (2013). *Undervisningskvalitet og lærerprofessionalitet*. Frederikshavn: Dafolo.

Jank, W. & Meyer, H. (2006). *Didaktiske modeller*. København: Gyldendal.

Kristensen, H.J. & P.F. Laursen (2012). *Gyldendals metodehåndbog*. København: Gyldendal.

Qvortrup, A. & M. Wiberg (red.) (2013). *Læringsteori og didaktik*. København: Hans Reitzels Forlag.

# Chapter 2

## Differentiated Teaching

By Else Skibsted and Helle Bundgaard Svendsen

*A student teacher recounted an internship experience she had had some years ago. She was observing a Danish year 9 class, and when the lesson began, the teacher handed out a text for the pupils to read. When the pupils started the reading task, she could see that one of the boys, Peter, did not read but sat staring vacantly with the handout in front of him. When the student teacher asked the practice teacher why Peter did not start reading, the practice teacher replied, "Well, he is dyslexic. He cannot read..."*

### Diversity challenges – embracing differences

Differentiated teaching is a central pedagogical concept that addresses one of the significant challenges that teachers often face, a great diversity in the ways the pupils learn. Pupils have a different basis for attaining the objectives of the subjects. Some have solid experience from life outside school, which enables them to relate to the subjects and expand their knowledge, while others have a fragile basis and must struggle to acquire the content of the subjects. If the dyslexic boy should be able to participate in classroom activities on an equal footing with his classmates, he would need assisted access to the text in the form of reading and writing technology<sup>4</sup>.

It is important to make sure that differences in learning conditions do not become correlated with how skilled pupils can become in the subjects. Teaching must be based on the pupils' different qualifications and allow everybody to participate and learn as well and as much as possible. The diversity of the pupils requires that the teacher attends to the individual learner while at the same time it allows for the teacher to create and maintain a learning community in the class.

Therefore, the teacher must balance the consideration of the community and the individual. In this chapter, we want to describe this duality and provide some suggestions on how teachers can understand and put the pedagogical principle of Differentiated teaching into practice.

### Differentiated teaching – what does it mean?

We understand and define the concept of Differentiated teaching as a significant pedagogical principle and as part of the teacher's overall pedagogical competence. The core of the teacher's work is to create a good learning environment in the class, which means that conscious and systematic attempts are made to establish opportunities for all pupils through a clear and transparent link between teaching activities and pupils' learning processes (Tetler et al., 2014). Differentiated teaching is basically about organizing teaching that meets the pupils' different qualifications in such a way that all pupils are challenged optimally in all subjects (EVA 2011). The teacher's cooperation with pupils on both com-

mon and individual objectives is central to Differentiated teaching. The objectives are the common concern of the class, and it is an important task for the teacher to establish a clear connection between common and individual learning objectives when teaching.

Differentiation was already a demand in the Danish Folkeskole Act with the introduction of the comprehensive, unstreamed school in 1993. In the past, attempts were made to meet the pupils' diversity and ensure challenges for everybody through the organisational principle of pupil differentiation. Pupil differentiation was based on streaming (i.e. in elementary and advanced courses), according to the pupils' academic levels. Otherwise, the individual pupil might be followed as closely as possible through an individualised teaching programme. The principle of Differentiated teaching replaces this organisational principle and instead focuses on the class community and the teacher's pedagogical skills to plan, implement and evaluate teaching considering different learning outcomes. In summary, we may say that Differentiated teaching cannot be understood as a particular method or organisation of teaching, but rather as a basic condition, culture or way of being together in the classroom (Tomlinson 2001).

Hence, it is nothing new that the concept of Differentiated teaching occurs in the pedagogical debate. In fact, since the 1970s Denmark has conducted several studies and developmental work with the purpose of clarifying and operationalising the concept in theory and practice (Harrit, Jansen & Kristensen 1993, Hansen, Rabøl et al. 1998, Jespersen, Krogh, et al. 1998, Tetler et al., 2014). At research level, there is a relatively high degree of consensus about the content and pedagogical possibilities of the concept.

However, the same clarity is not present in evaluations of school practices, which still show considerable uncertainty in the understanding as well as the implementation of the pedagogical principle, and teachers call for tools to realise it (EVA 2004, 2011). The need to transform the differentiation concept into successful practice in schools has become even more relevant to the amendment of the Special Needs Education Regulation in 2012, the so-called 'Inclusion Act' (LBK No. 379 of 28.04.2012). In short, pupils in complicated learning situations, previously being referred to special education and other types of special education assistance, must now be included in the general education assuming that their learning needs can be met through, for example, Differentiated teaching. The purpose of the school reform objectives of enhanced learning and well-being for all pupils in the Danish school also focuses on the teacher's skills to carry out Differentiated teaching, which gives all pupils the opportunity of participation (LBK No. 665 of 20.06.2014).

<sup>4</sup> The programmes typically contain text-to-speech and word prediction tools. In Denmark, typically the CDord or AppWriter package is used.

**Differentiated teaching – from understanding to action**

As emphasized above, Differentiated teaching is not a method, but a pedagogical principle i.e. an essential idea of what constitutes good teaching, which may be used by the teacher and team when organising the teaching. For implementation, the principle must be operationalised and described more concretely. In Figure 3.1 we show some selected pedagogical categories that teachers must relate to and make decisions about when organising Differentiated teaching.

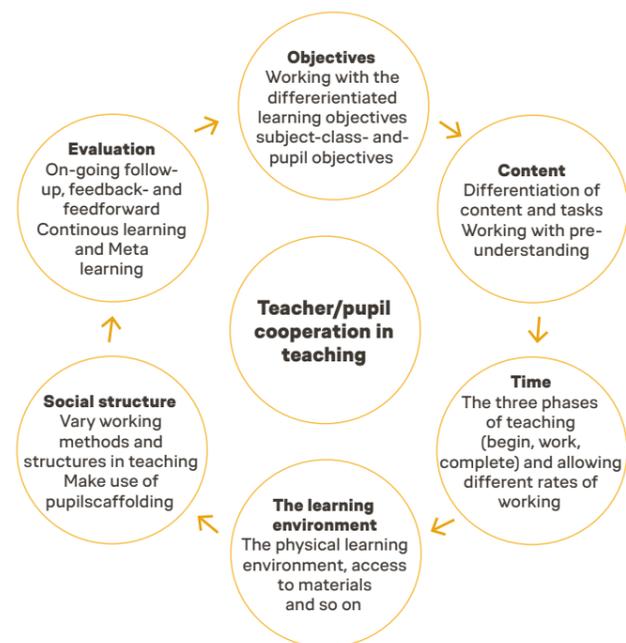


Figure 3.1. Pedagogical categories in Differentiated teaching.

It is not possible for us to elaborate on the categories in Figure 3, but as it appears from the centre of the figure, the point of departure for planning, carrying out and completion of teaching is the pupils' learning processes within the framework of a class community. The teacher can differentiate in relation to *what* the pupil shall learn (the content), *how* the pupil learns (the social structures and processes) and the possible *outcome* (what the pupil expresses to have learned).

If the pupils are to participate actively and actually learn, teaching should be meaningful. The teacher can scaffold the pupils' learning processes and contribute to their motivation by paying attention to the process of teaching and learning through three phases: In the *objectives phase*, where the teacher collaborates with the pupils on setting common objectives for the class, including differentiation at different levels (skills, competence- and reflection objectives), focus is on the new content that has to be acquired with clear links to the pupils' qualifications and pre-understandings.

Pupils learn more if they are aware of the objectives of the teaching (Hattie 2013). During the *work phase*, the pupils work on the basis of common but not identical objectives. This means that the pupils' study of the content aims at the common objectives but is adapted to the qualifications of the individual pupil. It is important that you have not decided in advance who can achieve what level, but through relevant activities, all pupils are given the opportunity to learn as much as possible. It is also important that the pupils understand each activity in a broader context, and the teacher must therefore be careful to clarify the connection between the common objectives and the individual pupils' intermediate goals. In the *final phase* the teacher allows pupils to comment on how they have worked with the learning objectives and on their possible achievements.

Evaluation is basically about orienting oneself towards something new while looking back at the previous content. The teacher's ongoing evaluation is an essential factor in Differentiated teaching and cannot be limited to a final evaluation phase but must take place continuously and be integrated in the teaching and learning process along the way.

As shown in Figure 3, pupils' learning processes are at the centre, which indicates the cooperative dimension in teaching and learning. The teacher's framework and management of the phases and activities are of course of great importance, but the pupils' scaffolding of each other is a central factor as well, which the teacher must consider in the organisation of teaching. The relationship between pupils in symmetrical pupil-pupil relationships is characterised by ongoing negotiations, comparisons and tests, and therefore, naturally creates more experimental and supportive cooperation that is appropriate for learning purposes.

It is therefore not enough to think in *planning pedagogy* i.e. being clear and consistent in choosing objectives, content and methodology when you want to differentiate. It is as crucial to think of *process pedagogy* i.e. relating to the cooperation dimension and keeping in mind how to explicitly establish participation opportunities for all pupils by means of scaffolding and the pupils' mutual cooperation.

**Differentiated teaching in practice**

How do we get from Differentiated teaching as a pedagogical principle and categories such as objectives, content and evaluation to the integration of differentiation in the daily procedures? In the following, we will give some examples of how it can be done. The examples will take their point of departure in the subject of Danish, and here we have paid particular attention to how pupils with dyslexia get the opportunity to be equal participants in the class community.

The focal point will be our initial case of Peter, who is in the 9th grade and dyslexic. We look at the opportunities Peter's Danish teacher has to establish a differentiated learning environment in the class, where Peter may get the chance to utilise his learning

potential and thereby develop academically. Hopefully, the examples may also inspire teachers of other subjects as they are not meant to be subject specific. If Differentiated teaching is to be realised, it must necessarily be contextualised by a subject. Let us start by imagining that the text in front of Peter is the short story "The Three Friends" by Jesper Wung-Sung, and let us decide that the teacher has chosen the following objectives from the new Common Objectives for Danish in the 7th-9th grades. The new Common Objectives of Danish as the focal point of the lesson is shown in table 3.1.

competence	competence objective	study	
Inter-pretation	The pupil can relate to culture, identity and language through systematic study and discussion of literature and other aesthetic texts	Skill objective: The pupil can complete a targeted analysis of a text	Knowledge objective: The pupil has knowledge of analytical methods and comprehension strategies

Table 3.1 Overview of a competence

When we meet Peter, his possibilities of working with the learning objectives are not really present. As he does not gain access to the text, he cannot obtain skills in carrying out a targeted analysis of a text. Through the work in class, he may well acquire knowledge of methods of analysis and comprehension strategies, but he does not gain the competence needed to apply them independently to his reading. First step must be that Peter gains access to the content of the text and in that way also to the content of the teaching. He can get this in several ways. Either the teacher or a classmate may read the text out loud to him, or he may have the text in digital form so that he can read it by means of a reading programme on a PC or tablet.

It may feel exclusionary to ask for the text to be read by others, while the use of reading and writing technology can give the learners a sense of taking care of their own learning process (Föhrer & Magnusson 2003). It is demanding on the learning environment of the classroom. Peter must have access to digital materials, and he must have either a PC or tablet available during lessons. It may also affect the time settings, as Peter will not be able to read the text as fast as many of his classmates.

As part of the Differentiated teaching, the teacher has to consider how Peter can get extra time without being excluded from the working community. For teachers, it is important to make sure that all pupils have read and can remember the text. It makes sense

sometimes to read the text in parts, stop, and work with each part separately along the way. In this way all the pupils will be given the same starting point for participation in work with the text.

Based on these reflections, let us take a closer look at the teacher's opportunity to differentiate through the organization of the teaching in the three phases: the objectives, the procedure and the completion phase. The overall objectives of the teaching are those mentioned above from the new Common Objectives, but the objectives of each lesson require that the teacher moves one step further. See Table 3.2.

Overall objective: Interpretative competence Objective phase	Work phase	Completion phase
The objective is to become better at reading between the lines (inference - draw conclusions)	Pupil activity that allows you to practice reading between the lines (inference)	Did we become better at reading between the lines? How should we work with it further on?

Table 3.2. Overview of the three phases of the organization of teaching

When the overall objectives are applied, they must be broken down into learning objectives in the target phase.

The work phase offers an opportunity for the consideration of social structures. How should the pupils work and with whom should they work? In studies of pupils with dyslexia, they have been found to use social, personal, and technological resources consciously and purposefully (Bråten et al. 2013). It is an important point to consider concerning Peter. Here, the methodology and structures must support all the pupils, who are supposed to learn to "make a targeted analysis of a text" and to draw on each other's resources in collaboration.

From this point of view, it would make sense to let the pupils work orally with the text and scaffold each other in the way they work. One way to ensure this is to let pupils work with shifting roles in a group. All the pupils try the same roles, but they also get the opportunity to see many different ways of handling these roles. An example of a pupil activity that draws on these elements could have the beginning of the short story as a starting point: "It went down like a calving iceberg, but subsequently little chocolate pieces started floating on the surface as flotsam.

She brushed discreetly while covering with her back as best she could: then she flushed. The water became so clear that she was reflected in it. For a long time she looked in the mirror, jumped

twenty times up and down, unlocked, and went into the living room again.” (Jesper Wung-Sung from the anthology *Og havet klapper* (2000))

**The task could look like this:**

Make a movie of the scene in the text on your mobile camera or iPad. You must switch roles being the protagonist, cameraman and instructor.

The pupils know the specific learning objectives of the activity from the objectives phase, and therefore they are aware of the purpose of the activity and the connection between pupil activity and learning objectives. The purpose of the pupil activity is to strengthen their ability to read between the lines, as the task cannot be carried out if they do not first discuss the setting in which the scene takes place. To do that, they must deduce that the only room where we flush, use a brush and have a mirror is the bathroom. In the same way they need to make it clear what “It” is at the beginning of the story. It contains chocolate pieces, and it can “go down like a calving iceberg.” In this way, the pupils make an inner film (here realised in a real film) of the text.

It is important that they switch roles so that they also have the opportunity to see and experience how the others handle the task. In this way, different approaches are available to them, whereby they scaffold each other’s learning.

In the assessment phase, it is essential that the pupils get clear and explicit feedback on their work concerning both process and product. How did they use each other’s strengths when collaborating on the film? Have they become better at inferring while working with the film? How does the teacher view the connection between the film and the text? Does it show that the pupils have understood and collaborated with the text, or did they not manage to process the text? The teacher can use the assessment together with the class and the films in his assessment of the lesson. If the films point in all directions and thereby show that the pupils have not yet acquired the competence to infer, it must be important for the future organization of the teaching. Perhaps the films show that some groups have developed the competence while others have not, and the teacher must then consider what importance this will have for future lessons.

**Perspectives**

Although the examples in the above paragraph are based on the subject of Danish and a pupil with dyslexia, we hope to have clarified that Differentiated teaching is not a method or a specific subject approach but a pedagogical principle which is essential for our pedagogical way of thinking. The developmental potential lies in the fact that we think more about objectives than about activities. If the objective of a given lesson is that “Pupils can explain why in some historical periods development was characterised by continuity and in others by disruption.” As stated in the new Common Objectives for the subject of History in the 9th grade, it is important to set more detailed objectives for each lesson in the context of objectives, procedure and assessment.

Differentiated teaching places pupils’ learning processes at the core of things and aims at making every pupil gain as much knowledge as possible. In this way, Differentiated teaching is a central dimension of the teacher’s overall pedagogical competence.

**Suggestions on further reading**

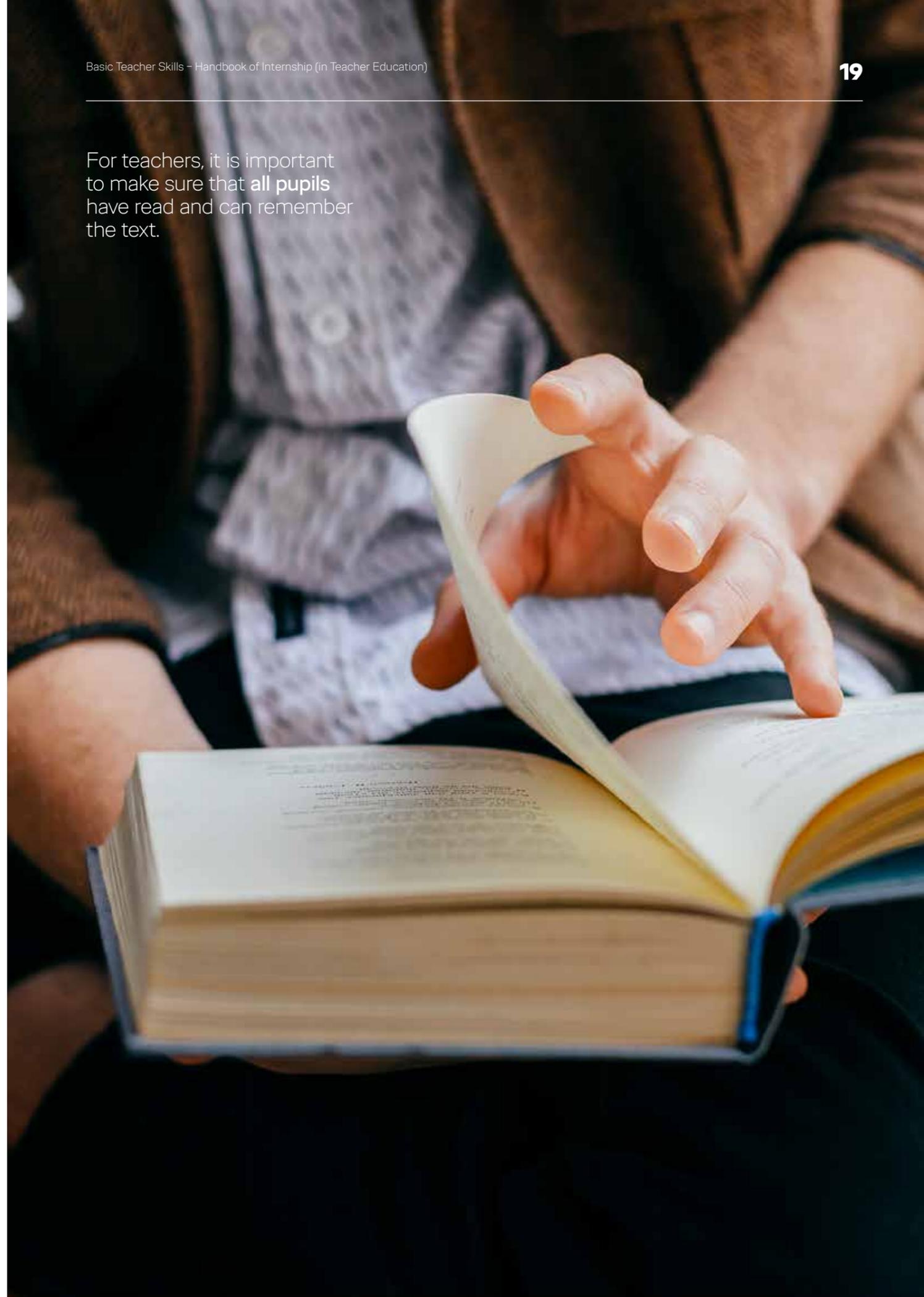
Nielsen, B. (2013). *Læringsmål og læringsmåder. Undervisningsdifferentiering i praksis*. København: Gyldendals Lærebibliotek.

Nordahl, T. (red.) (2012). *Bedre læring for alle elever*. Århus: Forlaget Klim.

Samuelsson, S. (red.) (2013). *Dysleksi og andre vanskeligheder med skriftsproget*. København: Dansk Psykologisk Forlag.

Skibsted, E., H.B. Svendsen, K. Østergaard & S. Langager (red.) (2015) (In Press). *Undervisningsdifferentiering. Et princip møder praksis*. København: Akademisk Forlag.

For teachers, it is important to make sure that **all pupils** have read and can remember the text.



# Chapter 3

## Observation, collection of data and development of teaching

By Birgitte Lund Nielsen

In this chapter, by means of a case, I would like to point out how important it is that a teacher does not jump to conclusions but carry out observation from several perspectives.

The case is about gaining insight:

*During her last practice period Jane teaches geography in her 9th grade. The topic is globalisation with China as an example. The learning objectives are that the pupils can discuss China's development and provide examples of both regional geographic conditions and some general global processes and patterns. Her teaching will be video-recorded, and Jane has agreed to analyse and discuss the experience in a video group with three other student teachers after the practice period. The analysis in the video group is facilitated by a teacher from the teacher education. The student teachers have chosen to participate with the purpose of using videos as empirical data in their bachelor projects and with a curiosity of how video recordings can be used to understand and develop their future practice as teachers. Jane is working on a project question that deals with pupils' awareness through discussion of global issues. Jane makes an overview of what happened throughout the lesson and, after watching the video, selects some video clips for analysis and discussion in the group. It is not easy because she left the class with the experience that the pupils were completely unable to carry out a discussion. When watching the video, she realises that she spends too much time talking herself. Everyone in the video group makes a reasoned choice of video clips for shared analysis. In the group, they are supported in carrying out observations and analysing the selected clips. They spend a lot of time sharing and discussing observations trying to realise what happened during the lessons from several perspectives. Regarding this, some video clips are repeated many times. They analyse the video clips using a number of concepts and models, which include different communicative approaches (more below). Jane and her fellow students in the video group first notice some unruly and unmotivated pupils. By looking at the clips, they gradually become aware of some aspects of the interaction between the teacher (Jane) and the pupils. For example, they realise that some types of teacher questions are better to make the pupils participate in a discussion than others.*

*Jane eventually sums up the joint observations. She has shared clips of situations where she felt most vulnerable in her teaching role, but with the group's help and mediation she experiences that she has come closer to an understanding of interaction and various options. She has seen more and something different from what she immediately saw: learning through joint interpretation, reorganisation and reconstruction of experience.*

*Afterwards, Jane looks back at the experience. She emphasises that the video group's structured work with observations and analysis of practice episodes have been crucial to the way in which she approached the question of her Bachelor project. The practice was of great importance and determined the theory she used and how. She has subsequently used the experience of initiating and structuring pupil discussions in her first job as a teacher.*

This is just one example of how to collect and analyse observations from the practice period. In this chapter, with the present case in mind, I would like to point out how important it is that a teacher does not jump to conclusions but through careful and thorough analysis interprets observations from several perspectives. The model of different communicative approaches mentioned in the case is one of the theoretical models that student teachers can use in the analysis of observations, which I will describe more thoroughly. Subsequently, I want to widen the perspective and point out different ways of making focused observations for data collection and studying practice more generally. Initially, I will briefly describe observation as a tool for professional development.

### **Focused awareness**

A student teacher can practice reflective observation using different tools such as observation forms and different methods of structured dialogue with colleagues/fellow students based on observations. Learning to use observation as a professional development tool, however, is about more than using one tool or one particular method (instrumentally). Selection/design of observation forms and analytical models depend on the focus and what you want to investigate, but apart from this, an important perspective is to practice focused awareness. Figure 6.1 illustrates the development of focused awareness in a reflective cycle inspired by Dewey's view on reflection (Dewey 2008/1938), in which reflective thinking and intelligent action – as opposed to routine action – are connected. In her use of the model Carol Rodgers (2002) emphasises the challenge of not jumping too quickly to a conclusion but staying in observation and considering different perspectives on pupils' learning in the specific situation. The arrow around the model illustrates observation/study of practice as an iterative process where the different phases support each other from observation to analysis, new testing in practice with observation, etc. The arrow pointing out of the model and the use of one-way arrows illustrate the teacher's professional learning process over time. Using the model in practice you may want to jump back and forth for example between description and analysis. Rodgers (2002) describes it as a gradual process from being aware only of immediate signs, for example that the pupils appear to be on task, towards a genuine and thorough study of data, which will show what the pupils are learning and how they learn.



Figure 6.1. The Reflective Cycle (Rodgers 2002)

**Observation in Practice**

Research has shown that guided observation helps to establish focus (for example Jenkins, Garn & Jenkins 2005). However, you should be aware that the tools by means of which you “observe” - the observation and analysis models used - will be crucial to what you notice. Models and tools refer to certain theoretical premises, and you cannot observe without some kind of theories/premises. If you do not use observation tools of any kind, it will

be the unconscious pre-understandings that determine what you notice. Observation tools give everything else equal and intensified attention and can make the difference between just looking and really observing. However, it is important to challenge your own understanding of what you see - the blind spots - no matter the tools. Observation tools may have different degrees of structure from formal to more narrative memos with text and images. Observation forms can be used both *qualitatively*, for example to realize if something specific happens, and what pupils and teachers say and do in certain situations, and *quantitatively* to note e.g. the temporal extent of certain activities. As mentioned above, what tool you use and how it is designed and used depends on the specific focus, so the examples below cannot be seen as anything but examples. It is not possible to elaborate on the many different existing observation approaches and tools in this text. Bjørndal (2003) provides some examples of various observation forms and ways to create logbook records.

The student teachers in the case had each a different focus in their bachelor assignments and worked in relation to different academic subjects, but they all used video-recordings to study the pupils’ learning and/or motivation. Some of the categories that governed their video analysis are shown in Figure 6.2.

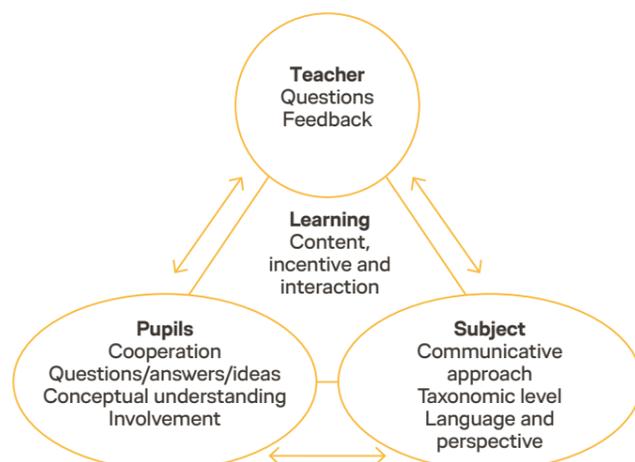
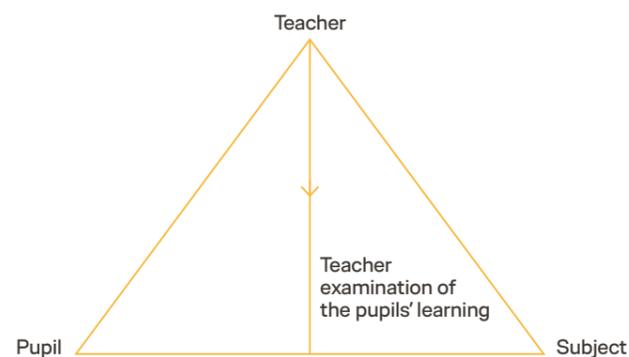


Figure 6.2. The pedagogical triangle to the left illustrates the focus on how the teacher can study the pupils’ learning of a given academic content. In the triangle to the right there are examples of observation categories in such a study.

A focus on pupils’ interaction and communication working with the academic content can be used to identify important factors of their learning and motivation. We can so to say become wiser on the three sides of the pedagogical triangle in figure 6.2 through systematic observation of the three corners of the triangle. Respectively, relationship between teacher and pupil, pupils’ work and understanding of academic content and contexts and the teacher’s conscious or unconscious approach to the subject. Observation of the corners of the triangle is for example about:

- whether *the pupils* ask questions and generate ideas, what academic concepts they use and how they use each other
- whether *the teacher* asks questions or just answers, and whether questions are challenging and open
- whether, in the approach to *the subject*, everyday language or academic terminology is used, at which taxonomic level (e.g., description, application or discussion) and in what communicative form.

The model with four different communicative approaches, which Jane and her fellow students used in their analysis of the case, are shown in Figure 6.3.

	Interactive	Non-interactive
Dialogic	<b>Interactive/dialogic:</b> Teacher and pupils engaged in exploring and sharing ideas. There is opportunity for pupils to build on different viewpoints.	<b>Non-interactive/dialogic:</b> The teacher (or someone else talking) considers different ideas and point of views and examines different perspectives.
Authoritative	<b>Interactive/authoritative:</b> Pupils discuss and share ideas through a sequence of questions and answers, mainly controlled by the teacher to reach a given point of view (triadic dialogue).	<b>Non-interactive/authoritative:</b> The teacher (or someone else talking) presents a given point of view.

Figure 6.3. Four communicative approaches (Mortimer & Scott 2003. See also Mercer & Littleton 2007).

The model was developed by two pedagogical researchers, Eduardo Mortimer and Phill Scott, based on analysis of videos from a wide range of classrooms. The two horizontal categories deal with interaction - whether there is one or several speakers. The vertical categories are about approaches to the subject matter. There may be interaction i.e. several speakers without a dialogic approach to the material, and the teacher can in principle speak without interruption but approach the material in a dialogic way. Put together, the model lines out the four types of communicative approaches can be justified as long as we are aware of using the approach consciously in relation to the relevant learning objectives.

An interactive/dialogic approach is appropriate if the objective is to get the pupils’ ideas and views in play. An interactive/authoritative approach will typically make the pupils come up with short answers that refer directly to a possible textbook. Such an approach may be justified when the teacher wants to ensure that the pupils have caught a particular point. Research however has shown that triadic dialogue, in which the teacher guides the pupils through a sequence of questions and answers, is widely used and often used unconsciously (Mercer 1995). One of the things the video group discussed in the above case was that Jane used triadic dialogue in situations where she actually wanted to start a class discussion. The joint analysis and discussion in the group meant that Jane realised other strategies to get the pupils to discuss issues which did not have one correct answer.

Observation based on the three corners of Figure 6.2 can also be used to study the pupils’ use of academic terms in their argumentation.

Even in questions without specific answers, where the objective is that the pupils can argue for their cause, some types of argumentation are obviously better than others. Observation of pupil discussions, for example with the use of videos, can also provide insight in the discussion form e.g. whether they are having an exploratory dialogue in which different ideas and perspectives come into play.

Read more about dialogic teaching, pupils’ exploratory talk and analysis of dialogue in teaching situations in Mercer & Hodgkinson (2008) and Mercer & Littleton (2007).

**Systematic study of practice and collection of data**

The purpose of the internship in the teacher education is for the student teachers to develop pedagogical competence, competence in classroom management and competence in relational work. This is described as a progression throughout the various internships. In the introductory case, Jane is “developing own and others’ practices on an empirical basis based on observation, data collection and documentation methods,” which is a skills objective under the headline Didactics for the internship in the Final

Practice Period of the Fourth Year of Study. Knowledge of appreciative dialogue and skills in supporting pupils' active participation, as I have discussed in this case, is part of the relational work.

Achieving these competences requires a targeted progression from the first internship. Research shows that observation over a longer period of time is necessary to develop focused awareness of learning processes (Jenkins et al. 2005).

Skills objectives of the first internship among other things include analyses of teaching sequences and identification of signs of learning in relation to specific learning objectives. This could be about observing a group of pupils and collecting the products they produce. Furthermore, these data can be discussed with the practice teacher and the teacher from the teacher education concerning the learning objectives set by the practice teacher or the student teacher. Besides, the work on learning objectives can be inspired by the examples from the Ministry of Education's Knowledge Portal (Ministry of Education 2014).

During the second internship, one skills objective is that the student teacher can observe own practice and the individual pupil's learning in relation to the development of teaching. This skills objective requires circular thinking as shown in Figure 1, in which the student teacher can redesign the teaching as the result of the analysis of observations, which should then ideally be tested in a new cycle.

Structured design, analysis and redesign of teaching can be framed in a variety of ways. In the above case, the framework was a collaborative video analysis, which in research literature for example is described as "video clubs" (Sherin & Han 2004, Sherin & van Es 2009).

*Lesson study* is another example where the benefits are well documented in research. Here, the teachers work systematically with description of objectives, collaborative planning, teaching procedures, collaborative analysis, revision and new testing. In the journal *Matematik* from 2013 and 2014, there are several examples of *lesson studies* that have been tested and described by Danish student teachers.

#### **The usage of products from practice to document observations**

In the competence goals for teacher education, observation and data collection are closely linked with documentation from the internship. The link is analysis. Various products from the practice period can be collected and subsequently analysed and used as documentation for example in a portfolio of the internship.

Products from practice may be different types of pupil assignments and pupil products, such as observation logs (Bjørndal 2003) or videos (Alrø & Dirckinck-Holmfeld 1997, Janik & Seidel 2009, Nielsen & Sillasen 2014).

"Doing an analysis always means focusing on something - and neglecting something else. We can never analyse everything in a situation" (Bjørndal 2003: 128). Therefore, it is important to explain how and what approaches have been used throughout the analysis. The analysis of artifacts from school practice can, in principle, be thought of in a linear understanding, where the collected data are analysed in relation to the learning goals: the analysis may reveal areas where the learning goals have been achieved and others where there are challenges. Professional analysis and reflection can however preferably be understood as an iterative process, as exemplified in Figure 6.1. This means that the analysis may lead to (re)testing and redesigning teaching in practice. Such action-learning can also be documented in the student teacher's portfolio of the internship.

Concerning linear versus iterative analysis, a video has advantage over an observation log in that the same situation may be 'observed' several times (Janik & Seidel 2009: 108). Research in the use of videos regarding teacher reflection, for example during the internship, has shown that subsequent reflection and analysis using videos sharpens the awareness compared to reflection based only on memory (Rosaen et al. 2008). Through the video analysis there will be focused awareness also of events and interactions that the observer did not remember or interpreted differently, and over time, focus will typically shift from the (student) teacher to the pupils' learning process, their interactions and dialogues (Rosa m. fl. 2008). Jane's case is a good example of such a development.

In connection with internships, products from teaching practice can be process oriented and focus on counselling between student teacher and practice teacher. Analyses of pupils' products and observation logs may be discussed, and examples from selected practice situations can be used illustratively in the discussion of general pedagogical issues. (Løw 2009).

Using videos in counselling sessions may add depth to the reflection, as it is possible to step back and reflect in a situation where you do not have to react immediately. It may even take on the character of a so-called "stimulated recall," where student teachers and practice teachers together watch some video clips and recall and analyse what happened in a given situation. It may start with a full recording of the entire teaching situation (camera in one corner of the classroom), after which the student teacher and practice teacher select certain sequences, which they jointly reflect upon. The practice teacher and the student teacher may also in advance have agreed on specific circumstances and focus areas that the counselling sessions should deal with and then pick out and video record relevant situations.

#### **Perspectives**

Working with observation and collection and analysis of data in the teacher education points directly to practice because, on the one hand, practice situations form the basis of theoretically informed reflection during the education, on the other, student teachers gain experience from using systematic approaches, which can be used successfully in the ensuing development as a qualified teacher after the education.

Newly qualified as well as experienced teachers need to see how colleagues teach and to get feedback on their own teaching from colleagues in return. Also, joint analyses of products from practice can be a way to work in teams with the study and development of practice and, in particular, a way to put pupils' learning at the centre of the teamwork.

#### **Suggestions on further reading**

Bjørndal, C.R.P. (2003). *Det vurderende øje – observation, vurdering og udvikling i undervisning og vejledning*. Aarhus: Forlaget Klim.

Dewey, J. (2008/1938). *Erfaring og opdragelse* (Experience and education). København: Hans Reitzels Forlag.

Mercer, N. & S. Hodgkinson (red.) (2008). *Exploring talk in schools*. London: SAGE.

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# Chapter 4

## Classroom management

By Ole Løw

*Tobias often finds himself in complicated situations compared to the other pupils in the class. He jabs at them or calls them names in various transition situations during lessons.*

Classroom management has been high on the pedagogical agenda for several years. Therefore, classroom management has been included in the last two Teacher Education Acts. The current Act (2013) includes classroom management, among other things, as an independent competence area in the subject of teaching practice. In other words, the student teacher must acquire knowledge and skills in classroom management, which may initially be said to be about framing and facilitating classroom interaction and learning processes.

### Classroom management competences

The increased focus on classroom management during the last 10-12 years is partly due to a change of paradigm concerning ideals of interaction and upbringing together with new expectations of how teachers should teach and organize learning activities in the classroom (see, for example, Krejsler & Moss 2008; Plauborg et al. 2010). The increased interest in classroom management is also connected with recent research in the field. Several studies concordantly indicate that certain factors seem to have crucial significance for the pupils' social and academic learning<sup>5</sup>. A number of these factors are associated with the teacher's management of teaching and facilitating of learning.

The most comprehensive study of what influences pupils' learning was made by the pedagogical researcher John Hattie from New Zealand. He has summarized research (Hattie 2013) on the effect of around 140 different variables of pupils' learning. The most influential variable turned out to be the teacher, which was emphasized by the effect some factors or teacher skills had on the pupils' achievements. Here only the five most important areas or teachers' competences are mentioned:

- Competence in establishing and maintaining a positive and supportive relationship with the pupils
- Competence in managing classes and creating transparent and structured teaching
- Competence in dealing with disturbance and noise in the class
- Competence in giving constructive feedback to the pupils
- Competence in dialogue, explanations, processing, and consolidation.

In addition to the already mentioned competences in classroom management, I would like to mention one additional competence, namely analytical competence (Løw 2009, 2014; Christensen & Ulleberg 2013). This competence deals with the teacher's ability to take an analytical approach to his relations with pupils, groups and classes in order to observe and analyse the communication and

interaction between pupils - and between them and the teacher. Classroom management as a professional practice is therefore a natural part of the skills a teacher needs today. Classroom management and teaching can be seen as integrated concepts.

### The concept of classroom management

Management is basically a relational concept since it does not really make sense to imagine a manager without somebody to be managed. The concept of classroom management is composed of the words classroom and management. In other words, it is the management that takes place in the organisational unit called a classroom. Thus, classroom management is management in the reciprocal relationship between teacher and pupil in a particular context - the classroom at school. I regard the classroom as a complex social system which requires management like all other social systems (Løw 2009).

The many definitions of classroom management focus on different aspects of the concept but seem to agree on emphasizing both academic and social learning. In this chapter, I will try to define classroom management as *the teacher's competence to create a cooperative learning environment with opportunities for everybody to participate and with a clear and productive framework for learning and well-being* (Løw 2014).

Classroom management is characterized by three interrelated areas: relational management, process management and framework management (ibid.).

- *Relational management* is about the teacher being responsible for the quality of the relationships in the classroom. Relational management in pedagogical contexts is also about creating and maintaining supportive relations in learning and development.
- *Process management* indicates how the teacher handles the interaction with the pupils in different classroom situations. The challenge is to master the different situations as they arise in the teaching and learning process. This aspect of classroom management is also called situational management to emphasize that the teacher's management is highly dependent on the situation. Process management is one of the important factors of teaching, which will be described later in this chapter in connection with framework management.
- *Framework management* is about the planning, preparation and structuring of various aspects of teaching. Based on the above-mentioned research, I will focus on the structures, routines, and rules of teaching.

### The coordinates of classroom management

In other words, classroom management is a multidimensional concept. Management takes place in the relationship between teacher and pupil(s) and what they share: the common third aspect, the

<sup>5</sup> For example *Lærerkompetanser og elevers læring i barnehage og skole* (Nordenbo, Søgaard Larsen, Tiftkci and others 2008) og *Dansk skolekultur – Skolens gode og onde cirkler* (Mads Hermansen, version. 2006).

content, the subject matter. This trinity consisting of a teacher, pupils and the content is what I call the 'classroom coordinates'. I define teaching as a unique form of communication, the intention of which is to enable pupils to acquire skills and gain knowledge (Løw 2014). In other words, as a starting point it is the content (subject matter, theme, topic) that the teacher and pupils share – the content is the shared hub. Teaching is therefore a relational concept. The teacher does not teach Danish - he teaches Danish to a particular group of pupils. I use the term 'relations' interpersonally in this article i.e. as soon as two people are in the same room, there is a relation. 'Class management' has come to be called 'classroom management' to emphasize the spatial aspect with its three dimensions - the material, the social and the cultural aspects.

In other words, a multidimensional concept consists of, firstly, the mutual relation between teacher and pupil. Secondly, the relationship between teacher and content, and thirdly, the relationship between pupil(s) and content (Løw 2014).

#### The relation between teacher and pupil(s)

The relation between teacher and pupil is asymmetrical i.e. determined by the differences in power, responsibility, and competence. This kind of relationship is based on complementary interaction, in which the teacher instructs the pupil and not vice versa. One can say that the position of the teacher does not make sense without the position of the pupil(s) - they require each other mutually. This *reciprocal connection* is crucial for understanding the interaction between teacher and pupil (Løw 2002, 2009, 2012/1997). The teacher has a responsibility for the quality of the pupil-teacher relationship, which seems to be of great importance to the pupils' well-being and view on the school and themselves (Nordhal 2012, 2013). The teacher's crucial influence on the pupils' social and academic learning processes is well documented, as stated above. To a large extent, the management of social relationships is characterized by the establishment and upkeep of good relationships with and among the pupils.

#### The relation between teacher and content

As earlier mentioned, teaching and classroom management are coherent concepts. The teacher's understanding of the content - the common third aspect - will inevitably affect his planning of the teaching. What does the teacher choose to emphasize, how will he let the pupils meet the selected content, and what opportunities to participate does it allow? In addition to knowing about the subject area, the teacher should be able to convey knowledge and facilitate pupils' learning processes, which in turn requires a look at "how the pupils make sense of the content" (Duckworth 2008). The teacher's teaching and management skills are no good if the pupils do not understand the meaning of what they are supposed to learn!

#### The relation between pupil and content

In each individual class, pupils will have different experiences, perceptions, skills, knowledge and experience of the content they are supposed to study. Consequently, they will understand the content differently. To some pupils the content and expectations they face at school will form a productive starting point for the acquisition of knowledge and self-esteem. For other pupils, it is hard to understand or master the requirements, which may not really make sense to them. The content shared in class - the common third aspect - may not be common, after all. In other words, the teacher's pedagogical objectives and the pupils' perception of the purpose of different activities may not always coincide. Pupils who have a different understanding or definition of what is the teacher's intention and what they should learn may easily adopt a pattern of behavior in which they more or less consistently misinterpret the situation.

The teacher can promote a common understanding of the content by means of a dialogic approach to teaching. The American professor of psychology Jerome Bruner talks about a *reciprocal pedagogy* (Bruner 1999), in which mutual understanding is enhanced through dialogue and cooperation. According to Bruner, it is the teacher's task to seek understanding of what the pupils think and how they form their opinions (ibid.).<sup>6</sup>

#### Framework management – structure, routines and rules

As already stated, framework management deals with the planning and preparation of all the aspects of teaching. In this context, a fundamental pedagogical dilemma is the delicate balance between freedom and control and between structure and process (Nordahl 2012; Ogden 2012). There are no general abstract answers concerning how to establish this balance. Among other things, this will vary with the pupils' preconditions for learning, the teacher's relation to the pupils and the progression of the teaching.

Structured teaching is a crucial part of framework management. Here, 'structure' refers to the beginning, the procedure and the end of the lesson (Hattie 2013). Teachers who practice framework management based on their knowledge of the pupils, a general knowledge from research and their own experience will be able to establish a structure which promotes the pupils' participation and learning outcomes. Let us briefly go through them one by one: beginning-procedure-ending.

#### The beginning of the lesson

It is essential to begin the lesson by making contact with the pupils - it can be done in many ways, such as eye contact, a smile, a handshake or by listening curiously.

Once the contact is established, it must be clear what the teacher and pupils are going to do together. Pupils must be aware of what they are going to learn and how. In other words, the teacher must clarify the goals and make clear to the pupils what they can do to achieve the goals. The framework of the lesson may be listed on the board in bullets. One may say that the teacher must be context-providing, i.e. must create clarity of the framework, rules, and tasks. In this connection, so-called 'context markers' can be of great help.

It is crucial to establish a teaching and learning environment characterised by mutual respect and concern, in which errors are considered an inevitable part of the acquisition process. The American psychologist and philosopher William James put errors into perspective when he said, "*Our mistakes are certainly not extremely serious. In a world where we are sure to commit them in spite of all our prudence, carelessness seems to be healthier than this excessive nervousness.*" (From *The Will to Believe*, Hattie 2013: 196).

#### Lesson procedure

A lesson well started is a lesson half completed. We might elaborate on this and say that a lesson well prepared and well started is a lesson almost completed. To a great extent, the preparation and beginning will influence the whole procedure of a lesson crucially. If the pupils are aware of and have been involved in discussing what is going to happen during the lesson, it will promote clarity, predictability and a productive working atmosphere. There are of course many factors that affect the procedure of the lessons. Three factors should be highlighted: 1. How the teacher interacts with the pupils and asks questions; 2. How the teacher gives feedback; 3. How the teacher varies the lesson.

1. It has significant impact on the participation and learning of the pupils how the teacher utilises the pupils' contributions - how the teacher communicates and what kinds of questions he asks. This was the main conclusion in a Norwegian study (Grøterud & Nilsen 1998), in which researchers observed two comparable classes during math lessons. However, the teacher in one class made use of many closed questions, which required clear, correct answers (right/wrong), whereas the teacher in the other class used many open questions, which elicited various possible answers together with attempts to argue for these answers. The pupils in the latter class showed significantly better learning results during the 2-year period they were observed. Research in classroom communication unanimously emphasises the teacher's use of input from the pupils (for example, Aukrust 2003).

2. The teacher's feedback is crucial for the motivation and learning of pupils. Recent research has given enhanced attention to feedback that promotes learning. According to Hattie, the primary pur-

pose of feedback is to reduce the gap between the pupil's current level and the desired level – i.e. to reduce the distance between the current ability and the desired goal (Hattie 2013). According to Hattie, feedback in learning contexts has greater impact on learning when provided in relation to the learning process and to the pupil's self-regulation. Feedback concerning the learning process focuses on applied and possible strategies in problem solving. Feedback regarding the pupil's self-regulation - metacognition - focuses on the knowledge and understanding which is necessary for the pupil to gain insight in his own learning strategies.

3. Finally, it is well-documented that *variation in teaching promotes learning* (Hattie 2013; Helmke 2013). It is about varying the methodology as well as the classroom activities. However, concerning classroom management, the transition between various types of activities present obvious challenges during a lesson, clearly illustrated in the introductory description of Tobias. Such challenges are best counteracted, first of all, by not making more changes during a lesson than the teacher can manage. Secondly, it must be clear to the pupils both when there is to be a change of activity and what they must do. Thirdly, efforts must be made to initiate the new activity as quickly as possible, so that the shift is not perceived as a break - unless this is intended and communicated clearly to the pupils.

#### The end of the lesson

It is important that the teacher allocates ample time to end the lesson. As at the beginning of the lesson, there must be an opportunity to talk about the lesson. At first, the teacher made an outline – what are we going to do? And now the lesson ends with reflection - what have we done today? This allows for a brief summary of the content of the lesson, a repetition of important insights and points as well as communication with the pupils about what they have understood and learned. Finally, the teacher can put the lesson into perspective, i.e. line out what is going to happen next time.

#### Rules and routines

In all social contexts, there are more or less explicit and implicit rules for how to interact with each other. The rules and practices that exist vary from context to context - for example in class, at home, and in the sports club. When children start attending school, they must learn not only concrete skills such as literacy and numeracy. They must also learn the implicit rules of the school context - *they must learn how to attend school!* Among other things, it involves understanding the actual pedagogical situation - learning about themselves and their own roles as pupils, what is expected of them in relation to the teacher and their fellow pupils. In other words, pupils must learn the school discourse i.e. the social and communicative skills required to attend school (Hundeide 2004).

<sup>6</sup> Bruner is connecting the reciprocal perspective on teaching and learning with recent research on intersubjectivity, intentionality, metacognition and collaborative learning.

There will always be unwritten rules, but working with rules is about establishing a teaching and learning environment with the greatest possible transparency concerning existing rules and practices. In communication with the pupils, the teacher should develop an understanding of mutual expectations regarding positions and responsibilities and preferred ways of speaking in class. In this context rules can help to establish transparency and predictability, and they can be an important element in the work with social competences.

The purpose of this kind of rules management is to secure the development of learning communities rather than just a regulation of the individual pupil's behavior. Learning communities is something that teachers and pupils create together - the social unity of a class is therefore not just a community. *The players of the community - teachers and pupils - constitute each other's conditions, which is why as individuals they co-create each other's possibilities.* In other words, they can both expand and limit each other's options of participation and action.

The endeavour to establish a learning community should not be confused with the desire to create a so-called powerless learning environment. Rather, it is a deliberate attempt to clarify the framework and rules for being together in order to handle the power relations we inevitably participate in, whether we want it or not (Løw 2009, 2011).

#### Classroom management in defining and analytic school cultures

In the introduction the importance of the teacher's analytical competence was emphasized. The teacher must base his management on pedagogical analyses of the teaching and learning environment. This also entails being investigative concerning the discourses that help to shape the way in which the individual teacher thinks and acts and, so to speak, performs classroom management. Finally, this will be illustrated through two basic school discourses<sup>7</sup> or perspectives, namely the categorical and the relational perspective.

*The categorical perspective* (Nordahl 2013) or the categorical discourse is also called the individual-oriented approach and, in addition, has many similarities to a *defining school culture* (Løw 2009, 2011). The categorical perspective is individual-centered and linked to the difficulties the pupil is reported to have or the problems the pupil causes. In this perspective, diagnostics is widely used to define problems, as is terminology that focuses on dysfunctions and deviations (Nordahl 2013).

In other words, the emphasis is primarily aimed at the individual pupil and, to a much lesser extent, at relationships in the class or at the pedagogical practice. In this perspective, classes are seen as a group of individuals to be managed and regulated individually. Concerning the situation with Tobias in the beginning of this chapter, the teacher's efforts will be directed solely or primarily towards Tobias, which makes sense in relation to an individual-oriented approach.

*The relational perspective* or the relational approach considers multiple variables when individual difficulties must be understood and handled. The relational approach may consider school difficulties in the context of social relationships in the class, the school structure and the pedagogical practice in the school (Nordahl 2013). The relational perspective has many similarities to *the analytical school culture* (Løw 2009, 2011). Table 1.1.<sup>8</sup> summarizes the two basic perspectives or school cultures.

As the table indicates, classes in the relational perspective are seen as complex social systems, and consequently, the management of classes becomes a relational and communicative matter. Concerning the situation with Tobias, initially, the teacher's remedy could focus on clarifying when a change of activity takes place, and what the pupils must do in these situations. Secondly, the teacher could aim the attention on interaction and communication patterns between the pupils. Classroom management based on this approach requires knowledge of contexts, social relations, intersubjectivity and the power of language (Løw 2006, 2009; Nordahl 2012).

<sup>7</sup> School discourses can be determined as the characteristic ways of speaking and thinking that have evolved within a specific and social context of a school. Løw 2011, page 210ff.

<sup>8</sup> It is a further development of the schematic summary that I set out in "Lærerens fortællinger om elever, pædagogisk analyse og ledelse af skoleklasser". Løw 2009, page 5051.

The categorical (defining) perspective	The relational (analytic) perspective
Observation as dependent of the observer	Observation as independent of the observer
'categories of being' (totalizing)	'categories of doing' (and intentionality)
Medical and personality-psychological understanding models (diagnoses) - Outline explanations	Contextual and social- psychological understanding models - relations and contextual explanations
Monocausal explanations - the pupil (and the home) as variables	Multicausal explanations - the conditions in the teaching and learning environment as variables
Language of deficiency - dysfunctions and deviations	Language of possibilities - resources and strengths
'Shallow' descriptions - categorizing (voice of the expert)	'Comprehensive' descriptions, narratives - rich (voice of the pupil)
The class is viewed as a group of individuals, where management is an individual matter - aimed at the individual pupil	The class is viewed as a complex social system with many relations, in which management is a relational and communicative matter

Table 1.1. The categorical and relational views on school

#### Suggestions on further reading

Hattie, J. (2013). *Synlig læring* – for lærere. Fredericia, Frederikshavn & København: Forlaget Dafolo.

Løw, O. (2009). Lærerens fortællinger om elever, pædagogisk analyse og ledelse af skoleklasser. I: E. Jensen & O. Løw (red.) (2009). *Klasseledelse. Nye forståelser og handlemuligheder*. København: Akademisk Forlag.

Løw, O. (2014). *Klasseledelse* – ramme-, proces- og relationsledelse. I: O. Løw & E. Skibsted. *Elevens læring og udvikling – også i komplicerede læringssituationer*. København: Akademisk Forlag.

Nordahl, T. (2012). *Eleven som aktør. Fokus på elevens læring og handlinger i skolen*. 2. udg. København: Hans Reitzels Forlag.

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# Chapter 5

## Good development and learning environments – something we create together

By Jørn Nielsen

### Cooperation and interaction

What are the most important competences for children to learn in school and day care? This question is relevant, especially when we consider how many hours a day the children spend in day care and school. Many answers can be given to the question, but one of them must be emphasised: cooperation. Why? Because all development and learning take place in interaction with others. Being able to enter into a community where everyone contributes, where children experience, receive, give, produce and acquire new knowledge and skills is the foundation and basis of all other learning and development.

Children participate actively in the development and construction of their worlds. Experience is based on interaction with others, and therefore it is crucial for children that they feel part of a community, that they belong. Children's identity is not an individual matter, but a phenomenon developed through interaction with others. The term "identity" may well be supplemented with the term "we-identity." Being physically together with others, being able to interact with others and this interaction being experienced as mutually rewarding is central to human communities and to the pedagogical agenda which deals with inclusion (Nielsen 2011). At a time when children's academic development is strongly emphasised, there is a risk that both professionals and parents will see skills and competences as essential characteristics of the individual child. It is understood as something that one can possess to a greater or lesser extent - whereby the characteristics are considered abstract and detached from their context. However, any appearance must be seen in the light of the context it appears in. A child does not possess many or few competences. The child will act more or less competently in relation to something or someone in certain contexts. Therefore, the professionals and parents must focus on the processes in the child's interaction with others which create opportunities for development, learning, and well-being. The overall shared task of all participators is to create developmental environments that provide children with the opportunity to participate actively in life - both now and later (Hertz & Nielsen 2011). The quality and content of the community in which children are involved is crucial - and goes far beyond the question of, for example, the physical placement of children in either general or special school environments. If the quality of the context a child has been or currently is located in is experienced as being stressful, it can be directly inhibitory for the child's development. This calls for special attention to the content and the emotional quality of the pedagogical context. Bruner (1999) goes as far as to claim that the most important subject in school, culturally speaking, is the school itself. The school is part of children's socialisation and is therefore an important context for children's development. Attending school and being together with others is in itself crucial for children's development. On the one hand, the school and the experiences at school form a life in its own right, and, on the other hand, function

as practice for the children's future life. Perhaps the school is one of the last places in a fragmented world where diversity and complexity may meet and give both adults and children experiences and opportunities to develop on the basis of differences? This gives the school a unique opportunity to contribute to the development of human and democratic skills.

The establishment of a development and learning environment immediately appears as a pedagogical issue. But what happens in the classroom and in other educational contexts is part of something bigger and must always be seen in the light of this. The individual pedagogical practice is embedded in an overall cultural, social and economic context. It is created in cooperation between the current child policy, the administrative decisions, the local community, the current discourse of the school, the participation of the parents and the joint effort of management, colleagues and various groups of children. Pedagogical practice is therefore always created together with others, it is situational, contextual and relational (Nielsen 2014).

On the basis of that and in continuation of the initial question: *what are the most important competences children should learn in school and day care? We might ask: what is most important for the adult community, the professionals and the parents to learn?* Once again, the answer would be: cooperation. Why? Because, when it comes to creating a good development and learning environment for the children, the cooperative competence of the adult community is crucial as the foundation for the children's opportunities for development, well-being, and learning. Cooperation within adult communities, the use of each other and the shared ownership of creative learning environments is crucial for the pedagogical practice.

The development of a child can only be understood in the context in which it lives, the social context in which it grows up. If we want to understand the development of a child, we must analyse not the individual child but always the individual child *in its context*. Research shows that the well-being of a child depends on the interaction between the individual, the family and other contexts (especially school and day care), but also that the competences of the surroundings are dependent on their own conditions. Special attention must therefore be paid to the quality of the interaction and well-being of adult communities to ensure the well-being of children (Hansen, Andersen, Højholt et al. 2014; Larsen 2014; Nielsen 2014). The Ministry of Education has formed a working group, which has produced a report on research and knowledge about the cooperation with parents, teamwork and the use of resource people. The report shows that the importance of cooperation may well be obvious, but on the other hand, cooperation as such is still a big task and offers a challenge that leaves much to be desired (Hansen, Andersen, Højholt et al., 2014; Larsen 2014).

**What promotes development?**

What makes people evolve? This great question can be answered in many ways, but in this context, we may emphasise that people develop through interaction with others in contexts that make sense and present opportunities for new experiences. Children's experience of being linked to a community and being able to contribute, receive and participate actively, promotes self-esteem, social competence and cultural capital. Development takes place primarily through everyday events and experiences. Therefore, the question of what to do with the child/children is rarely useful compared to the question of what events and experiences we should establish and in which context in order for development to take place. Not all events necessarily promote development. Events based on commitment and meaning along with affirmative emotional quality are developing. Experience must be based on a whole range of mental and physical processes that provide opportunities of in-depth work, exchange, and usefulness. Experience must include a challenge that ensures the perception of success. In addition, putting experiences into words, which may lead to comprehension, reflection and recognition, is crucial for experiences to result in self-understanding and socialisation. Experiences based on passivity, lack of meaning, irrelevance and inadequate organisation may inhibit development.

Developing events take place in practice communities, pedagogical practice being one among several practices. The events and opportunities for recognition are based on the child's previous experiences and the absorption of these. They take place in concrete, relational interactions characterised by safe relationships, relevant activities that match the current and the proximal zones of development, repetitions of patterns and rhythms, satisfying and stimulating feedback and an environment characterised by respect towards each other and towards the communities the child is part of. The adults are important role models for the children, who at the same time constitute the context for each other's learning and development.

**Development and learning environments as practice communities**

Children today face a number of increasing demands and functional expectations, such as e.g. being able to manage the relationship between independence and adaptation, to switch from one arena to another, and to be reflective. They must be able to acquire traditional literacy skills while at the same time they face an emphasis on flexibility and metacognitive skills: curricula and professionals and parents who expect children to be able to change classrooms, teachers, classmates and activities. They must be able to function independently, take initiatives and (self)manage their activities and learning. They should be able to get an overview of situations without a given structure and meaning, and they must be able to develop and apply social skills in group work, to plan

and to live up to implicit expectations and knowledge. Finally, they must be able to choose, decide and perform their actions independently. Such expectations entail requirements. The organisation of the pedagogical practice will help children to avoid personal failure if they are not able to fulfil such requirements. The everyday pedagogical practice must be organised to make way for a possible context in which pupils can function and navigate within the many demands, expectations, and challenges. The context for success is to be created in common. A developing and inclusive environment must present meaningful opportunities for the children to act and must provide learning activities and flexible working methods taking their point of departure in the community and in the individual child's relationship with the community. Studies show that in their everyday lives in school and other educational environments children emphasise involvement, well-organized teaching and leadership of the pedagogical processes (Nordenbo, Sogaard Larsen, Tifticki et al. 2008). The pedagogical practice community must be characterised by clear values, transparent expectations and rules, use of praise and encouragement, confirmation and appropriate challenges, strategies for the development of social competence, control of seriously aggressive behaviour and bullying. Such organisation requires collaboration in the team, collaboration with the management and with the school's supportive resources as well as extensive cooperation with the parents.

**Diversity and developing learning environments**

A group of children is characterized by a high degree of diversity. Meeting and managing diversity is both rewarding and a condition for learning and development. Should diversity evolve, an understanding must be established that every child can contribute, and that everyone can learn from the differences represented in the group. The fear that differences and diversity in the group may hamper both the pedagogical and the social environment may prove exclusive and inhibitory for the creative use of each other. However, there is research evidence to suggest that diversity in the group may be conducive to both professional and social development - for all the pupils if the right conditions are present (Dyssegaard, Larsen & Trifticki 2013).

A good learning environment is based on an understanding of both inclusive and exclusive processes, aiming at a development-oriented academic approach to be linked to an organisational approach and a collaboration in which all participators consider themselves part of something bigger and want to contribute to the common cause.

Some children with difficulties appear uncertain about their own opportunities and positions, and, in this context, they are incapable of currently and generally joining the decisive communities. When all development takes place in common, this situation calls for someone to reach out to them, so that their invitations and

wishes are met adequately, and they can join new relationships and events. The term "reaching out" is based on the fact that all children and young people - regardless of preconditions - have the intentions to succeed and to belong, to be connected. If there are equal conditions for this, the invitations are accepted, and opportunities are given for new experiences and narratives about themselves and others. An understanding of the difficulties enables us to go beyond current contexts and form new contexts, so that new processes can occur. The big challenge is to make connections and events that go beyond what has already been established. What is extremely serious calls for great changes. This compels everyone to engage in developing processes. Problem behaviour can be seen as invitations that cannot be rejected. The invitation concerns the establishment of contexts that enable new experiences, new absorptions and new narratives about the individual in interaction with others. Contexts are not only something that the participators need to uncover to understand. They must be created in common to enable movement and development.

Differences are an enrichment and a learning condition. This is promoted if the concrete pedagogical practice is understood as a variable, which constantly invites everyone - children and adults - to learn from the experiences that are being made. The experiences demand a common focus on learning from the processes and on the fact that what has not been seen yet in a joint effort may be developed.

Therefore, any practice may be an invitation to look at 'what is', but also at 'what is going to be'. Developing learning environments is not about being able to withstand any difficulty and impact on the environment but together being able to create conditions that make possible what is currently absent but desirable and valuable.

A report from The Ministry of Education, *Uncovering research and knowledge about special needs pedagogy* (Nielsen, Langager, Hedegaard-Sorensen et al. 2014), highlights a number of pedagogical conditions and actions that can promote the development of all children; both children from the so-called ordinary area and children with special needs:

*The connection between general education and special education* can, especially for the so-called general area, lead to a strengthening of necessary relational competences, a structured and predictable everyday life and a sensible approach to everyday challenges. Traditionally, the special needs area has developed knowledge and methods to address specific issues. In the general area specific issues cannot be met with traditional pedagogical and social forms, but the area may learn and get inspired by special needs knowledge and pedagogy. At the same time, it is central that special education and general education cooperate in order to leave the opinion that special needs require compensation and instead adopt the opinion that what is special requires a specific

view to the development of what has so far been unknown. Various pedagogical models and interactions may facilitate the necessary *Differentiated teaching* with the aim that every pupil is met and challenged in developing ways.

Management of the pedagogical processes includes class management i.e. the teacher's management of social communities and learning environments. The teacher's way of organising lessons to actively involve all the pupils both academically and socially requires specific models and principles for managing the class as a group rather than interacting with individual pupils. Classroom management is based on a movement away from reactive discipline towards proactive establishment of good procedures, regular routines balanced with a flexible structure together with good habits and interaction forms in which the pupils learn cooperation, self-regulation and social responsibility towards each other. Classroom management thus reaches beyond simple behavioural regulation balancing the reduction of inappropriate behaviour and the enhancement of appropriate behaviour. Classroom management is a matter of preferred values in social and academic interaction. Among other things, classroom management is based on observation and introspection, dialogue and reflection as well as the development of experience in learning and social interaction. A good learning environment is pedagogically well-organised, academically stimulating and predictable as well as clear and consistent in its structure and procedures. It is based on a clear structure, efficient use of time and a transparent connection between goals, content and method. Practice and training of learned skills is part of an acknowledging and involving learning environment. Thus, the pupils' well-being and academic knowledge are each other's prerequisites.

To a great extent, children will socialise, and the deliberate development of *child communities* seems to be a very effective dimension of a developing learning environment for everybody. Children's inclusive and meaningful contact with each other forms a clear counterbalance to the risk of developing low academic and social self-esteem. On the other hand, the experience of not belonging and the absence of good contact with peers constitute serious risk factors. Therefore, actively building social relationships and friendships in the class - also between ordinary pupils and pupils with special needs - will benefit everyone. Mutual feedback, common attention, collaboration, group processes - including individual tasks, turn taking etc. are all examples of activities that can enhance the sense of belonging. The development of a group identity and the work on mutual respect and tolerance contribute to the development of interpersonal skills, and the pupils learn that everyone can be resources in the common learning process.

Traditionally, difficulties in Danish pedagogical practice have been solved primarily between child and adults (Larsen 2011). Only to a

limited extent do we have a tradition for and experience in involving children and child communities as responsible actors in each other's development. Such involvement might allow children to experience themselves as meaningful and might contribute to developing their sense of social responsibility. This applies both to classroom situations and, for example, to groups and activities during breaks.

If a child shows difficulties, pedagogical staff and others often ask the question: What is wrong with him? This individual- and pathology oriented professionalism is strong, but it is not absolute and not neutral. The question is likely to individualise the problem and thereby separate it from its social and developmental contexts. More useful questions are: How can the difficulty be understood? How does it make sense? What does it mean to us? What aspects of context contributes to the difficulties? In what new ways can we understand the problem, and what new measures should be taken in order for development and change to be possible? Such questions imply the establishment of developing child communities as an obvious opportunity to create developing learning environments (Larsen 2011).

Teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards every child are crucial. Positive quality in *the relationships between teachers and pupils* has a significant effect on pupils' learning and on their social development, whereas poor quality is a risk factor. Among other things, this puts heavy demands on the teachers' mental attitude, change of perspectives and emotional regulation.

Among other things, the relationships are based on interaction, involvement and expectations of academic achievements as well as involvement of the pupils in planning and evaluation. Schools in which behavioural problems are seen contextually, and where the interaction is supportive and relationship oriented turn out to have a better development and learning environment than schools where this is not the case.

It is imperative for teachers to have clear expectations of and to control pupil performances, to use comprehensible language in the classroom and regularly to provide feedback to the pupils. This is best done in *teamwork* based on clear values and goals, on models of mutual use of each other and on evaluation models together with a high degree of collaboration with *school managers and parents*.

Good development and learning environments are best established if the different arenas and levels support each other. The participators in the contexts that influence life in the child communities might learn from the children's best intentions of wanting to be with each other, wanting to learn from one another and wanting to contribute to each other's development.

### Suggestions on further reading

Dyssegaard, C., M.S. Larsen & N. Tiftkci (2013). *Effekt og pædagogisk indsats ved inklusion af børn med særlige behov i grundskolen. Systematisk Review*. København: Dansk Clearinghouse for Uddannelsesforskning, Aarhus Universitet.

Hansen, J.H. m.fl. (2014). *Afdækning af forskning og viden i relation til ressourcepersoner og teamsamarbejde*. Vidensarbejdsgruppe nedsat af Undervisningsministeriet. [www.uvm.dk](http://www.uvm.dk).

Hertz, S. & J. Nielsen (2011). Fra recovery til discovery – børns og unges udvikling som et fælles anliggende. *Tidsskrift for psykisk helsearbejd*, 4:334-344.

Larsen, M.R. (2011). *Samarbejde og strid om børn i vanskeligheder – organisering af specialindsatser i skolen*. Ph.d.-afhandling fra Institut for Psykologi og Uddannelsesforskning. Roskilde Universitet.

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Nielsen, J. m.fl. (2014). *Afdækning af viden og forskning om særlige undervisningsmæssige behov*. Vidensarbejdsgruppe nedsat af Undervisningsministeriet. [www.uvm.dk](http://www.uvm.dk).



The adults are important **role models** for the children, who at the same time constitute the context for each other's learning and development.

# Chapter 6

## Inclusive teaching strategies

By Mette Molbæk

*Before the parents of the pupils in the two pre-school classes get to know who will be the new teachers in the classes, they discuss the matter vividly. They agree that at the local school some teachers are better than others, and the parents also think that good teachers often get good classes in which all the pupils are achievers.*

### **Inclusive teaching strategies**

The above case and pedagogical research in general show that the teacher is very important when it comes to giving all the pupils in a class optimal learning conditions. Therefore, the teacher's awareness and development of Inclusive teaching strategies is crucial when the goal is a more inclusive school. In other words, the teacher's various choices before, during and after lessons have a significant impact on the opportunities each pupil gets to participate in lessons and in school life as such. In this regard, it is imperative that the teacher is well aware that inclusion and pedagogical choices are two interdependent aspects of teaching and learning. These two dimensions are exactly what the concept of Inclusive teaching strategies is all about. Inclusive teaching strategies is about creating opportunities for everyone to participate in lessons so that the learning potential of each pupil is optimally utilised (see chapter 1). In this context, we may define Inclusive teaching strategies as *The teachers' systematic studies and development of the class' learning environment and the pupils' learning processes and progression with the aim of creating increased opportunities for participation and optimized achievements for all the pupils.*

Inclusive teaching strategies thus involves pedagogical efforts that are not only aimed at the pupil, but rather a professional awareness of and insight in both the individual and its context (in this case primarily the teaching and learning environment) and especially in the relationship between the pupil and the learning environment.

### **Inclusion – a field with many perspectives and dilemmas**

In 1994, 92 countries, including Denmark, joined the Salamanca Declaration, which states that pupils with special needs must attend ordinary schools which are able to fulfill their needs. With the Salamanca Declaration and the 2009 Disability Convention, Denmark is compelled to establish an inclusive ordinary school that ensures equal opportunities for everyone to learn and be together with other children and adolescents at the local school. Furthermore, national initiatives such as the Inclusion Act (Law No. 379 of 28/04/1012), the establishment of resource centres under the Ministry of Education focusing on special education and inclusion as well as the Government and KL's agreements and objectives to ensure a more inclusive school all together form the point of departure for work with inclusion in schools. Thus, from a political point of view, it has been signaled that the vision of inclusion

and inclusive practice in schools and other places must be realised, and that it will be necessary not only to discuss and focus on the 'why' of inclusion but also to take a closer look at the 'how' of inclusion, which also explains why in 2011, 97 per cent of the municipalities in Denmark had inclusion as their special focus area (EVA 2011).

### **Inclusion in a dilemma perspective**

The work of inclusion is characterized by many different agendas and theoretical and practical approaches (Dyson 1999; Allan & Slee 2008; Molbæk, 2016). Altogether, the different views on inclusion comprise the visions of inclusion on the one hand and the physical localisation on the other (Tetler 2004; Nilholm 2010), which triggers a number of dilemmas that the teacher will have to deal with. One dilemma is the teacher's experience of often having to "compromise" between academic content and time spent on the pupils' well-being and social skills. Another of the basic dilemmas in relation to inclusion is about fulfilling the needs of each child while at the same time having to reach out to the other pupils and ensure that the learning community is not destroyed.

A third dilemma is the need continuously to adjust and change their teaching and be flexible in relation to the pupils' needs and at the same time comply with the academic goals and requirements. But what is in a dilemma, actually? A dilemma is characterized by not having one 'correct solution'. It is an awkward situation, a predicament, which often contains conflicting emotional, intellectual and practical components (Berthelsen 2006): The dilemma can be termed as an impossible choice or an impossible situation because known roads are blocked, people feel trapped, and there is no way out. However, the dilemma may at the same time contain energy to pave new ways, it may offer an opportunity to meet unknown sides of oneself and the surroundings, and it may present opinions and values that have not previously been questioned (ibid.:11).

Teachers' analyses and reflections on practical dilemmas can help to create new attitudes and thereby help to change the way things used to be done (Engeström 1986; Hertz 2008). Thus, the teacher's awareness of and work on some of the dilemmas associated with creating a more inclusive teaching practice may also help to enhance focus on and make decisions about inclusive and exclusive processes in the community. When, individually or jointly, teachers work with these processes and seek new opportunities to ensure everybody's participation, they work with inclusion-promoting initiatives that cannot be solved through quick and simple explanations and models of 'correct inclusion'. In many ways, this approach to work with inclusion will also entail a shift in the school culture and organisation so that it becomes more flexible and open to new initiatives and perspectives on development and learning, which again means that we are constantly adjusting and changing practice to meet the pupils' needs (Skrtic 1991). This will also lead to the removal of predetermined solutions and the idea that

inclusion is a project that can be completed, as such an approach to inclusion seems to neglect the potential for development and change (Hausstätter 2013).

### Inclusion is about participation and opportunities for participation

Inclusion and the inclusive school is basically about removing barriers to access and participation in order to ensure all the pupils the optimal achievements - both academically, personally and socially - through both community and cooperation. The pedagogical challenge, therefore, is to adapt the teaching to the pupils' comprehension and the overall learning environment to the children of the school and class, by constantly dealing with the dilemmas involved in the work with inclusion.

The concept of participation and work on the relationships between pupils and environment as the focal point for work with inclusion presents a breach with the previous psycho-medical approach, in which the pupil is adapted to the learning environment. While a child's development and well-being were previously considered dependent on the individual child's personality, inclusion understood as participation is related to the conditions and opportunities for the child to fully participate, which the specific everyday life must offer the child. Thus, focus has shifted from individual-oriented explanations to relational explanations so that the teacher also analyses and changes the way in which teaching is planned and carried out.

The use of the idea of participation in the understanding of inclusion draws on social constructivist theories, which see and understand humans as being involved in concrete historical practices, where they can take different positions, and where learning and development require participation in social contexts. Human beings are developed by and develops the environment they are part of, and the concrete practice helps to determine what specific opportunities of participation will be possible (McDermott 1996; Dreier 2008; Lave 2008). In this view, it is important to replace the general and often individualised understanding of participation and opportunities with a situated and varied understanding of the pupils' possibilities for participation. Inspired by pedagogical theorist, Wenger's, thoughts about marginal and peripheral participation (Wenger 1998), when establishing inclusive teaching practice, it is crucial for the teacher through systematic observation and analysis to assess the participation of a pupil, and subsequently, to decide whether a pupil's lack of participation in the specific learning community can be characterized as either peripheral or marginal. Wenger's understanding of peripheral and marginal participation is illustrated in figure 3.1 (Wenger 1998: 167).

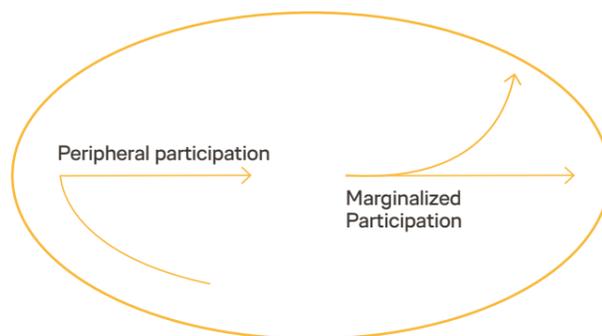


Figure 3.1. Wenger's difference between peripheral and marginalized participation.

The difference between peripheral and marginal participation is explained by the pupils' participation 'paths' i.e. whether the pupils' participation paths are 'on the way into' or 'on the way out of' the learning community. The model further illustrates the fact that an apparently excluded position (in the model a peripheral participation) in the learning community may be a 'good enough' position i.e. if the pupil, for example, being a newcomer or an unexperienced pupil, is moving into a community where, in the long run, he will obtain "full participation." In terms of understanding inclusive practice, the model and its concepts of peripheral and marginal participation can help to analyse some of the processes that take place – for instance in the classroom – and affect whether a pupil obtains optimal participation, and whether the paths offered to and chosen by the pupil lead into or out of the community. In an analysis of practice and in the work to practice Inclusive teaching strategies, teachers can ask:

- Who is where in the learning community - who is at the centre of the model - who is in the periphery - who is marginalised? - and how is this seen?
- What and who do the teachers focus on - and why?
- Who form connections/relationships - and who is alone?
- How do we try to control and possibly change our own and others' participation?
- What can/should we do to ensure full and active participation for everyone?

The positions may be changed and do change according to context and situation. An analysis of a pupil's opportunities for participation must therefore always use authentic situations as the point of departure and must be considered in the context or communication that opens or closes for participation. Thus, a school, a class and a group of pupils have many possible opportunities in which communication and interaction intertwine. A pupil's participation and positions in the various school communities must therefore be seen and understood as dynamic, and it is the responsibility of all the pupils to provide ample opportunities for the pupils who, for one reason or another, find themselves in the external positions and to make room for them to move from one position

or one group of pupils to another. Inclusion is a process in which the pupil is offered and occupies temporary positions that may be changed and develop. It is in this very perspective that Inclusive teaching strategies should be seen i.e. as an endeavor to avoid pupils being equalized with their position/special needs situation and stigmatised or identified as e.g. 'the ADHD girl' or 'the OCD boy' but instead being considered as an individual in a learning and development process towards increased inclusion provided that the right circumstances are there, which is determined by the teacher's inclusive teaching strategies. So, inclusion is all about increasing the opportunities for participation for all the children so that they participate actively both socially and academically, and thereby gain the best possible academic and personal result from their schooling.

### Dimensions in inclusive teaching strategies

Inclusive teaching strategies can be divided into four overall dimensions: a framing dimension, a relational dimension, a didactic dimension and an organisational dimension (Molbæk & Tetler 2015). These categories of existing knowledge about inclusive teaching strategies form a frame of reference for the analysis of empirical practice, which allows both for seeing the wide perspective and for zooming in on a single element for analysis or further development.

#### The framing dimension

In short, this dimension is about who decides what, and here it is central that the teacher explains what is expected of the pupils and how the pupils can participate productively. The teacher may establish daily routines e.g. for the beginning and end of lessons, and he/she may go over day and lesson plans. Within a clear framework with a transparent pedagogy, all communication is characterized by clarity of expectations (Bernstein 2001; Nordenbo, Søgaaard Larsen, Tiftikçi et al. 2008). Fixed behavioral rules and procedures can help to ensure time and space for what the school is about: development and learning. For many children, such routines mean predictability and security, which makes them more able to use their energy for learning. In this dimension, one of the challenges for the teachers is to be clear and consistent in accordance with the framework but at the same time able to provide room for spontaneity and adjustment of teaching. Thus, it is a matter of establishing a practice that comprises both continuity/consistency and flexibility by, for example, being consistent in terms of goals and structure while being responsive and flexible in relation to individual pupils' needs and goals.

#### The relational dimension

This dimension is about how the teacher's knowledge of and communication with and about the pupil affect the pupil's opportunities for participation in the academic and social communities of the class.

The teacher's management of the class reflects his/her attitude to, for example, normality, learning and development, which forms the basis for his pedagogical choices before, during and after lessons. In this perspective, the teacher, the team and the school culture determine whether a pupil experiences meaningful inclusion, and there is a close connection between the academic and social dimensions of the teaching and learning processes. Moreover, this dimension focuses on the teacher's ability and willingness to cooperate i.e. pupils, colleagues and parents are crucial partners in the establishment of good opportunities for inclusive teaching strategies. In this dimension, it will be the teachers' task to facilitate communication and cooperation among all these partners. Here, systemic and narrative perspectives on communication and collaboration can open new paths of development. In this dimension, the teachers' attention to the pupils' mutual relationships and the teacher-pupil relationships is pivotal - and so is the teacher's own relational competence (Fleming, Moen & Gudmundsdottir 2004; Nordenbo, Søgaaard Larsen, Tiftikçi et al., 2008; Aspelin 2013).

#### The didactic dimension

This dimension is about the teacher's academic knowledge of the subject, the teacher's knowledge of the pupils' different qualifications, the teacher's ability, willingness and time to plan and carry out Differentiated teaching as well as the teacher's use of evaluation for the continuous adjustment of his teaching.

In this dimension, the teacher's work with differentiated goals becomes central (Tetler & Baltzer et al. 2014). In particular, many of the evidence-based strategies identified by researchers throughout the years may serve as the frame of reference for an analysis and discussion of didactic choices (Meyer 2005; Mitchell 2008; Hattie 2009). Thus, the teachers' task in relation to the pedagogical dimension is to work with the central pedagogical categories such as goals, feedback and feed-forward (Hattie 2009), and continuously to develop practice through critical reflection and construction of new pedagogical theory (Dale 1989; Schön 2000) which ensures increased opportunities for participation and achievement for all pupils.

#### The organisational dimension

This dimension is about the school values and culture and the overall strategies for inclusive practice and teaching (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson 2006; Ratner 2013). When working with and developing this dimension, it becomes clear that inclusion is not just another method or something which applies only to a minority (for example, 'inclusion children' or 'children with special needs'), but it is a fundamental approach to all school life and not least to school organization, and all teachers and managers are obligated to establish inclusive communities at their schools.

In this dimension, the role and priorities of the school leaders are important when it comes to knowledge sharing, the development of a common terminology about and responsibility for everybody's

opportunities for participation – be it pupils, parents or school employees. Thus, at school level, work must be done to establish the best possible conditions for working inclusively and continuously to develop a more inclusive practice by, for example, working with and developing classroom management in relation to all four dimensions. This work may, for example, involve regular team meetings during which the team discuss and prioritise:

1. Where focus should be in the next period of time
2. What initiatives should be taken and implemented
3. When and how the initiatives should be followed up

In figure 3.2 the four dimensions are summarised and exemplified with sub-elements so that it is possible to zoom in and analyze part of the work with inclusive teaching strategies as it may not make sense to focus on everything at once.

Based on the questions in the model, teachers and student teachers can discuss, analyse and choose focus of study and development. The themes and questions under the four dimensions are interdependent, and they are intended as inspiration for reflection and discussion of inclusive teaching strategies at teacher level, team level and school level.

What is and remains the key to inclusion and development of opportunities for participation is to uncover and systematically and continuously work to provide new opportunities and patterns to ensure more inclusive practices. Moreover, to a still greater extent, we must strive to see inclusive practice as being a task

for everybody at all levels rather than a specific task for individual teachers focusing on specific pupils categorised as 'special' or having 'special needs'. With reference to the narrative at the beginning of this chapter, the 'good' teacher, whose pupils are achievers, is the teacher who – together with colleagues and partners in and around the school - manages to work with and develop the pivotal dimensions and elements of inclusive teaching strategies .

### Suggestions for further reading

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Hedegaard-Sørensen, L. (2013). *Inkluderende specialpædagogik – procesdidaktik og situeret professionalisme i undervisning*. København: Akademisk Forlag.

Jensen, E & O. Løw (2009). *Klasseledelse – nye forståelser og handlemuligheder*. København: Akademisk Forlag.

Molbæk, M., L. Hedegaard-Sørensen & C. Quvang (2014). *Deltagelse og forskellighed – en grundbog om inklusion og specialpædagogik i lærerpraksis*. Aarhus: VIA Systeme.

Molbæk, M. (2016) *Inkluderende klasse- og læringsledelse*. Ph.d.-afhandling. Aarhus: Aarhus Universitet

<p><b>The framing dimension</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Which common <i>rules</i> are there in the school/ in the team/ with each teacher?</li> <li>- How do the teachers <i>react</i> when the common rules are violated or if there is noise?</li> <li>- Which daily routines are there, and how are the days and lessons structured?</li> <li>- Which <i>concrete methods</i> do the teachers use?</li> <li>- How are the <i>classrooms organized</i> and why?</li> </ul>	<p><b>The relational dimension</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How is the school leaders' and the teacher's communication with and about the pupils?</li> <li>- How does the teacher <i>meet</i> the pupils?</li> <li>- How do the children and adults <i>handle conflicts</i>?</li> <li>- How do the management and teachers ensure focus on the <i>individual pupil</i> as well as the <i>community/class</i> as a unit?</li> <li>- How do the teachers, parents, pupils and management <i>cooperate</i>?</li> <li>- How is a democratic <i>class culture</i> established?</li> <li>- Is every teacher aware of their own management style?</li> </ul>
<p><b>The didactic dimension</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do the school leaders, teachers, pupils, parents etc. work with <i>goals</i>?</li> <li>- How do the school leaders and teachers work with <i>evaluation/ feedback</i>?</li> <li>- How do the teachers work with the pupils' own awareness of their <i>learning process</i>?</li> <li>- How do the teachers work with <i>differentiation</i> and group work?</li> <li>- How do the teachers work with <i>various</i> teaching and learning activities?</li> <li>- How do the teachers support the pupils' cognitive and social <i>learning processes</i>?</li> </ul>	<p><b>The organisational dimension</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How is work done regarding the <i>school culture</i>, strategies and practices?</li> <li>- Does the school leaders <i>frame</i> common tasks?</li> <li>- Does the school staff have a <i>common terminology</i> focusing on what works?</li> <li>- Does <i>everyone participate</i> in the tasks?</li> <li>- Are there forums where <i>everyday dilemmas</i> are discussed and solutions are found?</li> <li>- How is <i>knowledge shared</i> between teams and across schools?</li> <li>- Is collegial <i>supervision</i> part of the school culture?</li> </ul>

How do the management and teachers **ensure focus** on the individual pupil as well as the community/class as a unit?



# Chapter 7

## Communication in relationships

By Ole Løw

*At the beginning of every lesson Karin keeps chitchatting loudly. The teacher's attempts to limit Karin's disturbing chitchatting has become part of his daily routines in the class.*

In this chapter all interaction between people, all learning and all teaching is considered communication. The school and the class are consequently full of communication. When people are together, they communicate whether they know it, they want it - or not. Therefore, the teacher must be able to communicate and build good relations to pupils, parents, colleagues, management and many more.

### Communication as the creation of social worlds

Communication can be seen as a way to build social worlds rather than a way to talk about them (Pearce 2007). I write 'worlds' because our worlds are *different*. Each one of us may well perceive our own world as 'the world.' We may say that we live in differently experienced worlds even though we share the same physical environment. It is this diversity of realities which we term the 'multi-verse' - as opposed to the uni-verse (Løw 2009).

There are many social worlds - well, in principle, an infinite number of social worlds (Pearce 2007). These many social worlds are created and recreated in dialogue with others. 'Social worlds' is an analytical concept, which can help us to observe, analyse, and understand the many different communicative situations we participate in. As a teacher, I define a social situation according to my position - being the teacher - and to the perspective I take, which in turn determines how I act. This realisation is expressed in the so-called Thomas' theorem<sup>9</sup>, which in the present context could go like this: The way in which the teacher defines the learner may become reality. Our participation in social worlds will create and change our experienced worlds. In the same way, our current and past experiences in different social contexts affect the sense we make of our own and others' actions.

The many different social worlds are created in communication with other people. Something happens when we give and take in interrelationships. The language we use has consequences because our awareness of the world is created through language and in interaction with others (ibid.).

The sense we make of a pedagogical or any other situation is created through language. For example, when a group of student teachers discuss a presentation about inclusion which, through dialogue, they have just participated in, they create something. They create themselves as student teachers, perhaps with insight, humour and critical sense. They create their mutual relationship, perhaps characterised by understanding, agreement and alliances. They create learning, perhaps about inclusion. Finally, they create

the actual situation, perhaps with an experience of something successful. Their discussion is part of a larger context - the class and the lessons - and, together with all the other minor social worlds created in the various group interactions, forms part of the teaching and learning context.

All the participants are actors in the social process where what they say and do is important for the further development of communication. In this actors' view, it is more useful, for example, to ask: What are we doing together? rather than: What did you mean? In other words, communication is not only a way of talking about the social world, but also - and perhaps first and foremost - a way of creating social worlds. We must therefore ask what we create with what we say and do in communication with each other. With this in mind, I will now explain some basic assumptions about human communication exemplified by situations and examples from school classes.

### A communicative perspective on the school

As mentioned earlier, it is impossible not to communicate - humans cannot "not-communicate" (Watzlawick et al., 1967: 51). When teachers and pupils are together in the classroom or elsewhere, they will interact, whether they want it or not. You cannot show non-behaviour - the opposite of behaviour does not exist. In such situations, all actions are communicative. Even when the teacher does not want to communicate with anyone, she communicates. My silence gives the interlocutor a message - a rejection, for instance. In other words, the point is that it is as impossible to avoid communication as it is to avoid interaction, when, passively or actively, speaking or non-speaking, we form part of social relations (ibid.). We are pedagogically committed to seeing all interaction in the classroom as communication that affects our actions.

### Communication happens in relations

All communication takes place in relationships, which can be very different and have many different structures and patterns. They can be analytically categorised in two main types of relationships: symmetrical and complementary relationships (Bateson 1972) - or vertical and horizontal relationships (Schaffer 1999).

In schools we recognise *symmetrical relationships* as relationships between pupils and between teachers. They are basically characterised by equality regarding the positions that the participants occupy in the ongoing communication. This kind of relationship is usually based on reciprocal interaction as for instance in children's hide-and-seek games, in which one child hides and the other child seeks. The roles as the hider and the seeker can be swapped because, in principle, the two parts of the symmetrical relationship are equally competent (Løw 2002).

<sup>9</sup> The classic Thomas theorem goes: "If people define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (William Isaac & Dorothy Swaine Thomas, quoted by Pearce (2007): 205).

In schools we know the *complementary relationship* as the relationship between teacher and pupil or between teacher and principal. It is basically characterised by inequality - asymmetry - regarding the roles that the participants play in the interaction. In complementary interaction, the two parts act differently. One action from the principal triggers a different but related action from the teacher, such as leadership and compliance, respectively. The teacher-pupil relationship is based on complementary interaction, in which the teacher teaches the pupil, and the pupil learns - not vice versa. One can say that the teacher role does not make sense without the pupil - they mutually depend on each other (ibid; Løw 2006). In the complementary relationship communication between teacher and pupil may well be carried out respectfully and on equal terms in spite of the difference in power, responsibility and competence in that we have to distinguish between equality and equivalence. In accordance with Anne-Lise Løvlie Schibbye, equivalence is about showing respect for the other's world of experiences: this does not mean they are equal, but both are entitled to their own experiences. My *desire* to punch someone may be valid. The action, however, must be condemned. (Schibbye 2010: 237). The teacher has superior responsibility for the nature of the relationship and communication between teacher and pupil. I consider this the focal point of relational competence, which is the theme of this book.

#### We communicative both about content and relations

In class, there is always communication on multiple levels. At the same time as they communicate about the content of a conversation, implicitly the interlocutors communicate about how they see the relationship between those involved. I have illustrated this in a model with three core units that coincide in the teaching situation (see the Triadian model in Løw 2014): teacher-pupil, pupil-content and teacher-content. The relational aspect, the teacher-pupil relationship, classifies the content aspect (pupil - content and teacher - content) and functions as "meta-communication" (Bateson 2000, p. 54). This assumption follows from what was said about 'non-communication,' namely that all communication has a message and a meta - message i.e. a message about how the message should be perceived. In the process of classroom communication all messages are not on the same level. There are subordinate and superordinate messages, in that some messages refer to other messages and thereby function as classifiers. Gregory Bateson calls these meta-communicative messages. When communication goes wrong, it is often due to a confusion of the logical levels, which I will return to later.

The verbal statement "I was only joking" may clarify this. The message assures the interlocutor that what was said was meant to be playful and not about anything serious or a competition about being better at something, for instance. The message classifies what is going on as play. The statement is about what is going on, it is a meta-message in relation to just that. Similar to the con-

cept of meta-communication is the concept of context. The context can be said to function as a co-text that conveys the meaning of a message or action. The context classifies the message, as in the example "I was only joking." It sets a frame within which everything should be perceived as play. The context can change, of course, which will lead to a relational change - play may change into something serious such as mutual rivalry. "I was only joking" as a statement cannot stand alone. The statement will be understood differently depending on the interrelationship between the interlocutors cf. the above-mentioned communication in relationships. It will also be understood differently depending on what the interlocutors communicate with their body language, facial expressions etc., because we communicate on different levels at the same time.

#### We communicate on different levels at the same time

The teacher can express interest verbally: "Exciting - tell me more about it", and at the same time, with his body language - posture, facial expressions, pitch etc. - show attention and participation. These two fundamentally different ways of communicating are referred to as "digital and analogue communication" (Watzlawick et al., 1967: 66-67). *Digital communication* takes place through signs and signals. The words of a language are mostly digital. In digital communication there is no similarity between sign and meaning. For example, the word 'forest' does not look like the meaning it conveys. Together with digital communication, we also communicate analogously. It happens through intonation, gestures, posture, etc. In *analogous communication* there is some similarity between the message and the way it is expressed. For example, when pupils shout for joy, the volume and pitch of their voices will often match the intensity of the joy.

The terms 'digital' and 'analogous' indicate two parallel levels of communication. We may say that digital messages convey information whereas analogous communication conveys the meaning of information i.e. how the information should be perceived. In other words, analogous communication describes the relationship between the interlocutors.

Analogous communication is closely linked to the concept of context, in that it helps us to interpret the message within a frame of reference, for example, play. Analogous communication is characterized by being ambiguous. When we interpret body language as being e.g. acceptable, aggressive, rejective etc., the relationship between the interlocutors helps us to infer the meaning, and it may always be interpreted in different ways. In other words, we face a problem of translation.

In principle, analogous communication works dually: congruously and incongruously. In the above case, the pupil experiences harmony (congruence) between analogous and digital communication - they support each other mutually. If, on the other hand, the teacher had been uneasy and had looked at the clock while say-

ing "Exciting - tell me more about it", the connection between what was shown and what was said would probably have been perceived as being incongruous (conflicting). How much attention we pay to analogous communication is, to a large extent, dependent on the quality of the relationship (ibid). In other words, the clearer and safer the relationship, the more attention we pay to what is being said, and vice versa.

The teacher's crucial importance for the pupils' social and academic learning is well documented (Hattie 2013, Nordahl 2013, Nordenbo et al. 2008). In relation to establishing a communicative learning environment, the teacher must create an open and safe atmosphere, in which he strives for his digital and analogue communication to be in harmony i.e. to be congruous.

#### Communication and interaction as circular processes

Communication and interaction between people is often described as a causality. The teacher yells and shouts because the pupil is unruly and noisy. The teacher describes the situation from a so-called linear understanding (Watzlawick et al., 1967): The pupil's unruliness is the reason, the noisy pupil is to blame. Communication and interaction between people are interdependent but can be described in a different and more complex way. When people are together, for example in the classroom, everything they say and do hang together and affect each other mutually. It is called a circular understanding (ibid), which I have previously translated into reciprocal connection (Løw 1997, 2002, 2006).

When interaction and communication are understood as circular processes, it means that all classroom events affect each other through uninterrupted interaction patterns. What is said and done is tied together without any clear beginning or end. Thus, the surroundings affect our actions, which in turn, affect the surroundings (see Figure 1.1)

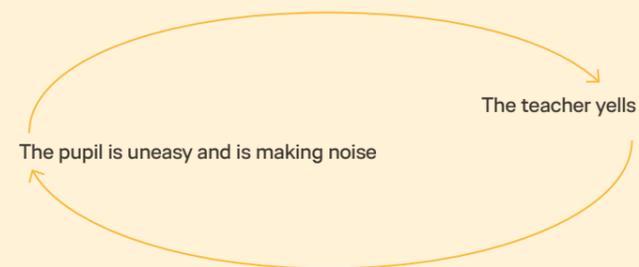


Figure 1.1 Mutual connection

From this point of view, the situation is seen as interaction in which both teacher and pupils are actors. They have developed a communicative pattern based on their roles as pupil and teacher, respectively.

Linear thinking is often associated with thinking in characteristics and in placement of guilt - the pupil is blamed when he is an unruly and noisy boy. With a circular approach, the view moves from characteristics to relationships and context. Focusing on the reciprocal connection that the teacher and pupils are part of paves new ways of thinking and interpreting communication. Here it may be useful to introduce the term *pinpointing*.

As mentioned before, we are in the habit of dividing social interaction and communication into sequences with one beginning and one end (one cause and one effect): The pupil is noisy -> the teacher yells. Bateson refers to this kind of subjective division using the term *pinpointing*. Pinpointing means to point out one aspect of the interaction and communication process and name it, as in the above example: The pupil is noisy. Such linear pinpointing is not necessarily wrong, but it is usually insufficient as it includes only one part of a larger whole. What happens before, during and after the interactions between pupil and teacher is not obvious when we pinpoint. We make such divisions as a matter of course and without paying much attention to the significance of the division for our interpretation of the situation in question. Moreover, we often pinpoint differently, for example, from different points of view, and consequently we also perceive the same situation differently. This is not necessarily a problem, but often it will be when the teacher has to understand and handle difficult relationships and conflict situations: "Disagreements about how to pinpoint a sequence of events cause an infinite number of relational conflicts." (Watzlawick et al. 1967: 56).

However, in different cultures - and thus in school cultures, too - there will be certain pinpointing habits i.e. preferred ways of understanding interaction and communication. For example, it would not be likely for the teacher in the above example to see his own yelling as the obvious cause of the pupil's noisy behaviour. Thinking about one's own and other people's pinpointing can be helpful when analysing communication and interaction patterns which we want to change. In a circular process of understanding, the teacher and the student teacher can ask themselves or each other a number of questions: How may teacher and pupil be trapped in a vicious circle? How do the interlocutors understand the unwanted situation? What will change in the class when the situation changes? What patterns of repeated action occur in the unwanted situation? How did I pinpoint this specific undesirable situation? Can I point at a different aspect and make a different analysis? Can new possible actions provide a different understanding? Finally, I will give an example of how a teacher can use his insight in the class as a social ecosystem (Løw 2012). At the same time, it will illustrate the various changes that may occur when a difficult situation develops.

**If what you do does not work, then do something else!**

When the school and class are viewed as a social ecosystem, any action in the class will influence and be influenced by a given action. Seen in this perspective, everyone who is part of the interactive situation has the opportunity to influence it in positive (and negative) ways (ibid). Thus, when all parts of the class as a system are interconnected, we may see a kind of domino effect, which means that minor changes affect the entire system and can lead to major changes. This thought is the foundation of the teacher's actions in the following example. He would probably agree with Steve de Shazer's suggestion to do something else if what you do does not work (see Løw 2009, chapter 7).

A teacher refers to a pupil, Karin, in the seventh grade, who started every lesson chitchatting noisily. Politely but firmly, the teacher tried to recommend her to stop, and Karin would stop for two to five minutes. When she began talking again, the teacher made his recommendations more serious and admonitory. For example, the teacher said, "Karin, stop talking - immediately!" Typically, Karin would defend herself with remarks like: "But she asked me something." The attempts to make Karin cease her eternal babbling had become part of the teacher's daily routine in the class. The other pupils in the class had become accustomed to this daily ritual and contributed from time to time by asking Karin quite resolutely to "shut up".

Since what the teacher had tried so far did not work, he decided to try something else. He chose to explain to the class how he understood the situation. The teacher wanted to point out to Karin that the fact that she appreciated the friendships in the class so much was actually something positive, even though her constant chitchatting had a bad influence on her academic learning. He encouraged her to continue to value her friendships but in a way that did not disturb the rest of the class. Finally, he would emphasise to the classmates that although Karin's babbling often disturbed them, everyone might learn how to handle disturbances.

As usual, Karin started the following lesson by chatting. The teacher now tried to follow his new approach. He ignored Karin's small talk until her lack of attention caused difficulties. It did not take long! It was Karin's turn, she did not pay attention, and she did not know what she was supposed to do. Instead of the usual and much expected reprimand, the teacher told the class what he thought of the consequences of Karin's chitchat. He sincerely explained what he thought, but the pupils did not quite know how to interpret his new signals and what to do in the new situation. Karin only chatted a little bit during the rest of the lesson. The fol-

lowing days, however, she continued talking. However, the teacher acted according to his new approach and ignored it. Some of the near-by pupils became annoyed at Karin and asked her to 'shut her mouth.' Other pupils quite sarcastically gave comments like 'She is merely appreciating her friendships.' This made the teacher start a renewed conversation with the class pointing out the other function of Karin's chatting i.e. that the classmates should learn to cope with disturbances. Karin chatted much less during the rest of the week.

The next week, however, the situation was the same. Karin babbled on again obtrusively and noisily. To the class's great surprise, the teacher now suggested that if there was something Karin absolutely had to tell a friend, she should write a note and hand it over. Likewise, any possible answer should be given in writing. Karin tried the notes but did not get many answers. When, the following day, she was chatting again, the teacher reminded her to write a note instead.

Karin has not completely ceased her disturbing small talk, but the amount has been significantly reduced. Perhaps the teacher's next problem will be the introduced note writing? Anyway, he gained valuable experience seeking opportunities of change!

**Suggestions on further reading**

Hermansen, M., O. Løw & V. Petersen (2013). *Kommunikation og samarbejde i professionelle relationer*. 3. udg. København: Akademisk Forlag.

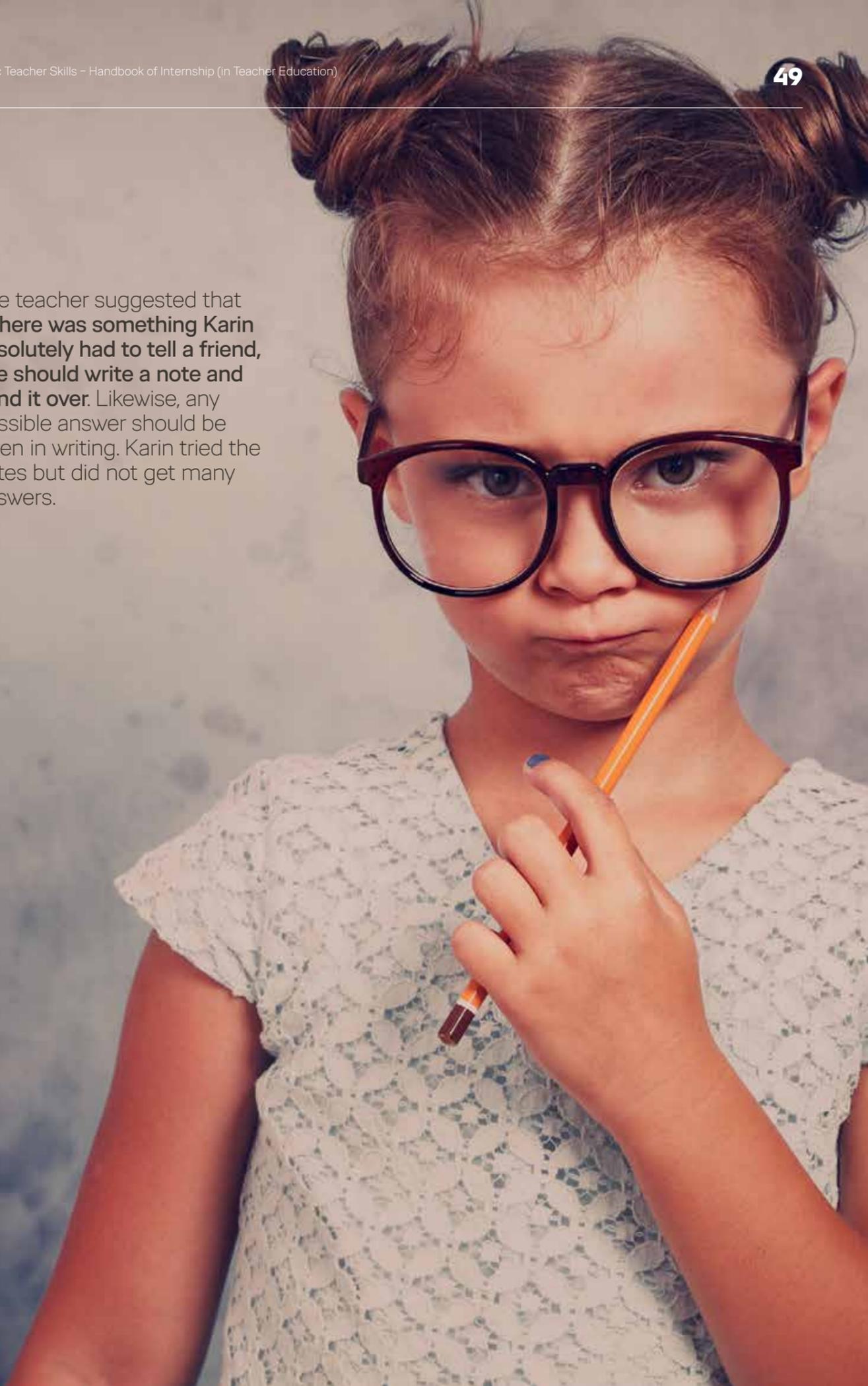
Jensen, P. & I. Ulleberg (2012). *Mellem ordene. Kommunikation i professionel praksis*. Med forord af Ole Løw. Aarhus: Forlaget Klim.

Løw, O. (2012): *Lærerens klasserumsarbejde i systemisk & løsningsorienteret perspektiv*. (Netversion: [www.loew.dk](http://www.loew.dk) - Let revideret version af dobbeltartikel i *Unge pædagoger*, nr. 1-2 1997)

Løw, O. (2014): *Kommunikationsteori og anerkendende kommunikation mellem elev og lærer*. In O. Løw & E. Skibsted (red.): *Elevers læring og udvikling - også i komplicerede læringsituationer*. København: Akademisk Forlag

Pearce, W.B. (2007): *Kommunikation og skabelsen af sociale verdener*. København: Dansk Psykologisk Forlag.

The teacher suggested that **if there was something Karin absolutely had to tell a friend, she should write a note and hand it over**. Likewise, any possible answer should be given in writing. Karin tried the notes but did not get many answers.



# Chapter 8

## Teacher-teacher relationships. Collegial cooperation and counselling

By Else Skibsted

*At our school the reform means that teachers need to cooperate more. We need to attend and observe each other's classes, and we will be four teachers teaching three classes. I think the quality of the teaching is getting better because we do not just mind our own business. We cooperate when we plan teaching and we exchange teaching programmes and ideas ...*

This was how one teacher answered the question about what opportunities she saw in her work after the school reform 2014 in Denmark. There is hardly any doubt that a lot of new and exciting things are taking place in schools - schools are constantly evolving! At the same time, the school is a complex and large organisation, which it takes time and effort to change, especially in the case of major changes, which must be realized in a common changed practice and school culture. Thus, to professionalise and ensure the quality of the school as such is not an easy task, and there is a tendency for the educational system to react to demands of changes by changing structural conditions i.e. to adapt external rather than internal structures.

This chapter will focus on the school's internal structure and the importance of involving teachers in such a way that they feel ownership to the developmental changes that they face. In the first part of the chapter I will analyse and describe perspectives of teacher cooperation as the basis of the continuous professional development of the school. In the second part of the chapter I will present a few supportive models of teacher-teacher cooperation, and finally, I will briefly include collegial counselling as a tool for developing the practices of the individual teacher and the teacher teams. The idea is, simply, that by disclosing one's teaching, one may become aware of new ways to understand things and to act in the classroom.

### **Professional capital in a professional school culture**

Is competence a characteristic of the teacher or rather a quality of the environment that the teacher works in? The following reflections on teacher cooperation as a pivotal source of a teacher's professional development are based on an understanding of competence as a common social concern and of learning as the common production of knowledge. Thus, the professional teacher's skills do not belong to the individual teacher as a kind of 'individual quality', but they are shared and developed in the educational community and collaboration of the school (Løvlie 2003). Professional competence is relational and can be seen as a combination of insight (knowledge of what) and skills (knowledge of how) within the academic field to which the competence applies.

In general, the teacher's practice in school is unpredictable and complex and characterised by a constant situational compulsion to act. The core of the teacher's professionalism is therefore to be able to make qualified estimates of specific situations i.e. to demonstrate judgmental skills based on knowledge, experience and, above all, reflections on own practice (Krogh-Jespersen 2005). With the expression 'The Reflective Practitioner', American Educational Researcher, Donald Schön, captures an understanding of the professional teacher which comprises situational improvisation and flexibility building on solid academic knowledge and systematic focus on the teacher's task. The reflective practitioner does not have the correct answers to a problem in advance but openly addresses the ambiguity of his daily pedagogical practice. The teacher can be seen as a kind of 'researcher in own practice', who forms theories based on his ongoing studies of different teaching situations. The concept reflection-in-action does not take its point of departure in the linear understanding that first you think and then you act. Studies and reflection of practice consist of circular processes that often repeat themselves and are basically characterized by the following sub-processes: identification of a problem, observation, analysis and reflection<sup>10</sup>. Although Schön focuses on the reflectional competence of the individual teacher and the situational aspect of the teacher's knowledge, he emphasises the importance of teachers' cooperation and the development of a professional school culture as the foundation of the teacher's continuous learning. The teacher's competence is enhanced through conversations with colleagues and other professionals in the school:

*The teacher's isolation in the classroom counteracts his reflection-in-action. He needs to communicate about his personal considerations and insights, needs to test them against those of his colleagues and peers. (Schön 2001: 277)*

Schön also argues for the importance of seeing the professional development of the teacher in a lifelong perspective, since the professionalism of the teacher does not automatically come with his educational qualification. It is based on the knowledge and skills he has acquired through the theoretical and practical education, but it is further developed through the experience of practice. So, there is good reason to focus on the ongoing professional development of teachers, in which reflection on practice together with colleagues is the focal point. For many years, two other American educational researchers, Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan, have been studying development in professions and the development of educational organisations, and in particular, they have examined the conditions for and importance of cultures characterised by cooperation. In an interview in *Gymnasieskolen* Hargreaves argues for the necessity of putting an end to 'the privately practicing teacher:'

<sup>10</sup> The concept of the reflective practitioner has several similarities with the idea of the teacher as action researcher. For school purposes, action research has the purpose of developing and improving teaching and is a method where teachers together explore and experiment with practice in order to base knowledge and refinement on practice. See, for example, Plauborg, Andersen and Bayer (2007) for further descriptions of action research and learning

First and foremost, teachers must realize that the classroom is no longer their personal kingdom. The time of monarchy in the world of teaching and learning is over! Now it is about cooperation – about far more issues and much more advanced forms than team meetings on academic projects ... (Interview with A. Hargreaves in the gymnasium, 16 April 2014))

Hargreaves directs our attention to the culture of schools and the potential for mobilising the schools' professional capital. Responsibility for a modern, well-functioning learning environment can be said no longer to rest on the individual teacher but on the school as such. This requires new forms of cooperation - for example, to prepare and evaluate together with colleagues instead of doing it individually. Professional capital is associated with the building of professional learning environments in schools.

Professional capital is the co-function of three things: human capital, social capital and decisive capital (Hargreaves & Fullan 2013). *Human capital* refers broadly to the teachers' academic competences, their commitment and knowledge of relevant research in the academic field, their pedagogical knowledge and skills and their social and relational competences of cooperation and communication in schools. All these factors will enable the teachers to constantly develop and improve their teaching. However, we cannot develop the human capital without social capital.

*Social capital* is the most fundamental of the three forms of capital. It consists of strong relationships, both between teachers and between teachers and management, and it is characterized by mutual trust and comprehensive knowledge sharing. In schools with a large social capital there are common values and visions, a common terminology, common goals, cooperation and reflective conversations. Hargreaves and Fullan refer to quite extensive literature that points out that the social capital in schools is of great importance to the quality of the teaching and in particular to the school's ability to reduce the negative significance of social inheritance. Social capital is a pillar in the development of teacher professionalism: *Teaching is the job, but social capital is the fuel. If the social capital is weak, then everything else is doomed to fail.* (Hargreaves & Full 2013: 92, my translation)

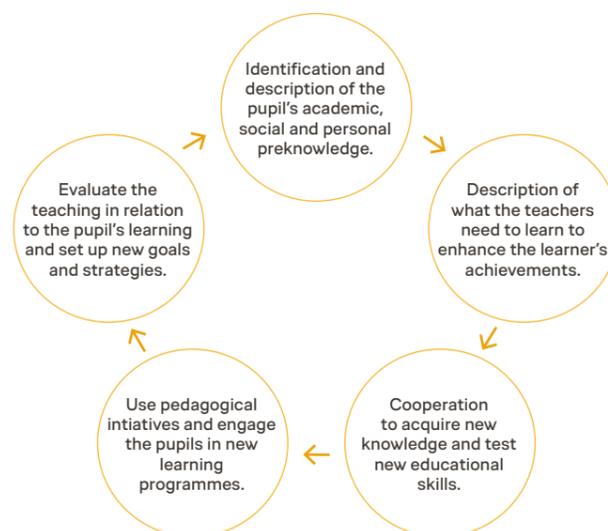
*Decisive capital* comprises the teacher's ability to make professional and well-founded decisions in the everchanging situations of everyday life. Among other things, decisive capital is built on experience and practice, but if a teacher works alone without feedback from others and without benchmarks for the quality of his teaching, he may continue to make wrong decisions without ever getting any wiser or better. Building decisive capital requires an environment built on trust, an environment where people

share experiences and do not conceal their mistakes and doubts. Pedagogical reflection cannot be carried out alone: Capital must be shared, and it will gain power from school communities.

#### Communication and cooperation

Teachers must be able to communicate and cooperate with many people in different contexts: with colleagues about teaching and other activities in a particular class and with parents about the individual pupil or the class as a whole. Also, they must communicate with the management and colleagues about the development of the school. In the following, I will present two models as inspiration and possible points of departure for cooperation. The first model aims at scaffolding<sup>11</sup> the teachers' cooperation about the development of good teaching. The other is based on a conversation about a specific problem, and the model may open the teachers' eyes to new ways of understanding and acting. Both models support more systematic and analytical approaches in teacher cooperation.

Figure 4.1 focuses on the further development of good teaching and can be seen as a scaffold for teachers' study of their own and others' practices. It is inspired by Timberley's cyclical learning model (Timberley 2011: 11) and consists of five parts.



4.1 Figure 4.1. A model for the development of own and others' teaching

<sup>11</sup> The concept of scaffolding reflects the gradually accepted view that learning is socially based and that the learner needs an appropriate form of support from his environment if the learning process is to be optimized.

The teachers' competence to change perspectives and ask questions about their assumptions and what has so far been taken for granted in their teaching is an important part of the cooperation. In addition, observation of each other's teaching may prove an effective factor. Mutual 'visits' and observations in each other's classrooms support the process of experimenting with and changing one's own everyday practices. When we need to change our practice, it is important that we dare make experiments - and mistakes. When we 'fail', we have the opportunity to learn and do something else.

Moreover, Maturana's domain theory may inspire and promote a reflective and analytical approach in the work with model 4.1. It shows us that we can study and reflect on teaching on three levels:

1. *The domain of personal approach*, that is, the subjective perspective, which is based on the individual teacher's attitudes and values.
2. *The domain of reflection*, which consists of different perceptions. The aim is to explore and develop new perspectives on teaching and new ways of thinking, understanding and acting.
3. *The domain of action*, which is where attitudes and reflections are transformed into specific teaching<sup>12</sup>.

In order to continue to develop pedagogical practice, the teacher needs to be able to observe, analyse, and communicate about his own and others' practices. It is necessary to practice the ability to describe teaching and cooperation situations empirically and to train the investigation of and reflection on the many influential factors of a situation. Figure 4.2 is an example of a pedagogical analysis model that can support the cooperation of a team of teachers about certain pupils who may be challenging for the teacher to handle alone. The model consists of three phases: identification and analysis of the difficult situation, systematic testing and follow-up on individual strategies.

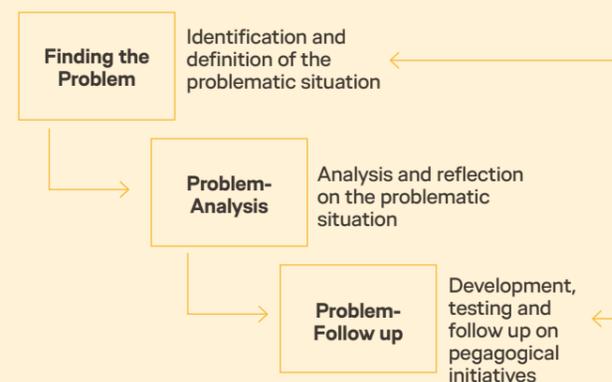


Figure 4.2. Educational analysis model.

<sup>12</sup> For more on Maturana's domain theory, see for example Løv (2009) and Alenkær (2008).

In the *first phase* the teachers must jointly describe the difficult situations for each other and jointly try to identify and define what is the problem i.e. make a thorough mapping of the difficulties and formulate a specific and realistic goal for the remedial work. Many teachers have a quite natural desire quickly to change and improve the conditions of pupils in difficulties. However, one point of the analytical model is the importance of the initial stage: to be careful and collect observations and specific descriptions of the pupil's behaviour in the situations and relationships which the actions form part of. Making action descriptions may immediately seem easy, but it is a common experience regarding school observations that descriptions are easily confused with interpretations, which presents a risk that pupils will be wrongly attributed characteristics to explain their behaviour (the pupil as 'a problem maker'). Action descriptions are based on very specific questions, such as: What happens? When does it happen? Where does it happen? In relation to who does it happen? The identification of the problematic situation also includes recordings of the duration of the difficulties (how long the difficult behaviour has been seen), the frequency (how often the behaviour occurs), the extent (how extensive or intense the behaviour seems) and finally the context (school context and out - of - school contexts).

The *second phase* concerns analysis and reflection on the problematic situation. Here, it is the teachers' task to find connections between the difficulties the pupil exhibits and the factors that provoke and maintain the difficulties. This phase requires both time and thoroughness, as the analyses here function as prerequisites for a targeted intervention. It is important to focus on the analyses themselves and complete them before any action is discussed and agreed upon in the teacher group. The teacher group must reflect on possibilities and contexts and formulate hypotheses that will later be tested. During this phase it is important to investigate and familiarise oneself with how the difficulty is experienced from the pupil's perspective.

In the *third phase*, it is the teachers' task to select, test and follow up on the remedial initiatives they have come up with in cooperation. The process of change as such consists of several parts: to decide which pedagogical measures should be taken, to try them out in practice, and finally to follow up and evaluate on them. Key issues in this phase are: What potential for changes do the descriptions contain? What pedagogical initiatives do the descriptions make room for? Thus, the core of the process consists of removing or reducing the influence from the specific circumstances that cause the difficult behaviour. This contrasts with more 'traditional' actions, which will be aimed directly at the pupils and their behaviour. By changing the conditions that contribute to creating or maintaining the difficult behaviour, new opportunities will occur for the pupils' participation and thereby new opportunities to involve the pupils in the attempt to generate positive changes.



# Chapter 9

## Teacher-parent relationships. Cooperating with parents.

By Helle Jensen

*A teacher has summoned the parents of a year one class for a parents' meeting, and fortunately, a lot of parents are present. The teacher is well prepared, he has written the agenda for the meeting on the board, and he is going to conduct the meeting together with a colleague. They get well started, but when they get to a point about the pupils' behaviour in class, problems arise: The teachers want the pupils to be less noisy, but a parent very loudly criticises the teacher for using various exercises to calm down the pupils in the classroom. The parent thinks that this takes too much time from the academic content and suggests that the unruly children simply leave the classroom.*

Cooperation with parents is a much-discussed issue among teachers, who often see it as a challenge. It may apply to those parents who have great ambitions on behalf of their children and who put reasonable or unreasonable demands on the teachers, or to the parents who do not have the resources to spend a fair amount of time on their children and therefore do not give them the support that the school could wish for. A primary and secondary school teacher must be able to meet all types of parents from all levels of society and be able to establish a relation that can last throughout the child's school time including times of disagreement and conflict. According to the law, teachers have an obligation to cooperate with the parents - primarily about the pupil's learning and progression but also about the pupil's well-being and general development (Jensen & Jensen 2007). Experience says that good cooperation with the parents forms the basis of good schooling, so there is good reason to pay attention to the area.

In this chapter I want to give a brief introduction to some of the most important aspects of a good teacher-parent relationship, as this may be trained during the three internships. It may be a good idea to utilise the models and agreements on practice cooperation that have been made by the teacher education and the internship schools in cooperation.

Thus, the student teachers and practice teachers can make use of the fact that the arrangement allows the student teachers to attend parents' meetings or conversations that take place beyond the six internship periods. After the introduction of the key concepts and areas, I will give suggestions on concrete work with the teacher-parent relationship during the three practice periods.

### Teacher - relation - parents

In cooperation with the parents, it is necessary to gain knowledge of:

- oneself as a cooperative partner
- what factors are crucial in a good teacher-parent relationship
- how the cooperation can be seen and understood from the parent's point of view.

Good cooperation is dependent on good contact between the parties. The point of departure for good contact between humans is for the individual person to be in harmony with his own self. In the contact between teacher and parent, it is the teacher who carries the main responsibility for creating an atmosphere in which it is possible for the participants to be present with the thoughts, wishes, and concerns that each one of them may have. It is also the primary responsibility of the teacher to help the parents to express themselves, even if this may feel difficult because they have a different opinion or view of things than the teacher, or because they are not used to putting their wishes and thoughts into words. Due to this primary responsibility for the quality of the conversation, I will first focus on the teacher.

### The teacher's perspective

The teacher education focuses on the academic skills that the individual student teacher must acquire in order to qualify as a teacher. It is also important to focus on the professional qualities that may either promote or impede the teacher's ability to create a good learning environment in the class including academic knowledge as well as pedagogical and psychological knowledge. Interaction with the children and cooperation with the parents require the teacher's constant efforts to develop his ability to be in touch both with his own self and with the people who surround him. The initial case of this chapter is an example of what it means to be in contact, and what it means to lose such contact.

What happens to the teacher in the case? Of course, we react quite individually under pressure. However, the following reactions will be recognisable to many teachers: 'Oh no, what am I to do?' Or 'She cannot say that her child is always quiet' or 'I need this person to be quiet as soon as possible so that this does not escalate.' If we look at the teacher's feelings at that moment, they will often be difficult for him to describe, and it may signify that the teacher has already lost self-contact due to the parent's initial criticism. The thought 'Oh no, what am I to do!' expresses a feeling of insecurity and doubt about the person's ability to control the situation, and often follows a tension in the body so that knees, shoulders and neck are strained to almost make the person lose ground. The person's breath may also go from being a deep breath to reaching only the top of the chest, as it often happens when we are nervous or tense about something. Perhaps the person also strains the throat muscles and becomes dry in the mouth so that the words do not come out with the same authority and power as otherwise. Maybe the person feels everything turn black followed by a total lack of ability to move on from this point. This condition is so uncomfortable that most people will do what they can to avoid it. A well-known reaction is to focus one's thoughts and desperately try to find explanations that will justify one's actions in the criticised situation. These explanations may be received by the parent as a lack of will or ability to see things from the parent's perspective,

and therefore, the cooperation is at risk of going awry. The case is an example of a situation in which a teacher can lose his ability to be present and respond with personal authority. Responding with personal authority is based on the ability and willingness to approach the relationship with authenticity – i.e. in the highest possible agreement with professional and personal values, professional commitment, self-esteem and internal responsibility (Juul & Jensen 2002, Jørgensen 1999).

A person can enhance this agreement by being conscious of what is going on in the mind, in the emotions and in the body when being under pressure. This ability can be reinforced through exercises that strengthen the contact to the person's consciousness, to feelings such as empathy and compassion, to the body, to the breath and to the innate creativity (see Jensen in Svinth 2010, Jensen et al., 2012, Jensen 2014). It is best to carry out such exercises regularly and precisely in training situations completely free of pressure so that the contact is automated when pressure occurs.

In *Presence and empathy in school* (Jensen 2014) I elaborate on how and why such exercises can be a useful tool in the daily teaching.

Another approach to enhancing the agreement is through supervision and collegial reflection. Here, dialogue is the primary tool. Training in dialogue groups is a good investment. This may be realised in groups of three or four people, in which the group members take turns being the focus person, the interlocutor and the provider of feedback to the interlocutor. It is important to concentrate on the focus person's perspective and professional experience of the parents' meeting and, in particular, to help the focus person to be aware of what happened to herself i.e. how was her contact to her consciousness, emotions, body and breath - as described above. It often requires help to restore contact to oneself after being under pressure, and that help can be provided by a trained colleague.

During the first internship period, a trained practice teacher can be the interlocutor, while the students can take turns in the other positions. During the next internship periods, students can be interlocutors if they have trained the method with their teachers in the teacher education.

Only a few years ago – and, in some contexts, even today - personal reactions and reflections like these would not be considered appropriate in the professional universe. Today, we know that a professional pedagogue must consider the human factors, which are always at play when we are together with other people because otherwise, they will stand in the way of good and direct teacher –

parent contact. We know that a relationship built on direct contact is a sustainable element of all development, and as mentioned above, this can only be established if the teacher is true to his self-contact (see Susan Hart's Foreword in Jensen 2014). Such honesty and open-mindedness towards the teacher's self makes the teacher education and the qualified teacher's job quite challenging in that the teacher may have to face thoughts and actions that he may not even like to be confronted with. On the other hand, and more positively, however, it allows the teacher to experience both personal and professional development while promoting development and learning in others.

#### The parents' perspective

*We hand over what is dearest to us to the school ...* this is the title of a Swedish book on teacher - parent cooperation (School Development Agency 2008), which teachers should bear in mind when cooperating with parents. When parents leave something so valuable – what is dearest to them - their children - in somebody else's care, it is obvious that a lot of emotions are at stake, and in that case, it may not always be easy to think clearly and listen with an open mind.

In the above case, if we look at it from the parent's perspective, the speaker (from the teacher's perspective, the criticising mother) may be deeply concerned about her child, who may be sensitive to the noise in class and keeps coming home from school tired and irritable. A child may be unruly and yet be sensitive and lack concentration due to the noise of others.

Besides, there may be various other reasons for the parent's criticism - for example, great ambitions on behalf of the child, bad conscience (unconsciously) about not meeting the current demands on the "perfect parent" or the idea that she can claim a lot from the school without ever having to give anything back. Some parents may find support for the last-mentioned opinion in the current tendency to commercialise the public sector. Regarding schools, this trend is seen in the increasing number of central demands in the form of e.g. common goals, national curricula, tests and documentation. These conditions may support the parent's idea of having a customer's right, when it comes to the school, rather than a citizen's duty to make a given relationship work. (Jensen & Jensen 2007).

Another current trend in society is the increased individualisation, which may lead the parents to find it completely appropriate to make demands that accommodate the individual child without taking the school community into consideration. Right now, with inclusion being a special focus area in schools, it is an important task for the teacher to get the whole group of parents in a class to work together to establish inclusive communities.

Also, experiences from their own school time may influence the parents' view on cooperation. If the parents' own schooling was problematic and carries many bad memories, these will often interfere with the perception of the child's school, in that it may be difficult for the parents to distinguish between their own and the child's experiences. If teachers and parents are open-minded and show each other trust and respect, it is often possible to put such discrepancies into words. The open-minded teacher takes the parents' concern seriously and gives them the opportunity to express their thoughts and fears, so that together they can sort out what is relevant to the present situation and the child's schooling.

#### The relationship

The above-mentioned parents' and teacher's perspectives lead me to take a closer look at the relationship between teacher and parents. Teacher-parent relationships are professional and therefore asymmetrical. As part of a public institution, the teacher has greater power. The teacher may not always feel powerful when working with parents, but, nevertheless, this is how it is when formally there is back-up from a system. With power comes responsibility. That is to say, the teacher bears the main responsibility for the framework and quality of the conversation. The teacher must see to it that the values of the school are obvious in meetings and conversations with parents i.e. values which the school considers pivotal in the relationship between school and parents. Values such as openness, trust, respect for diversity and good dialogue are often mentioned as goals in teacher-parent cooperation. When cooperation with the parents goes smoothly, there is usually no problem implementing those values. It is in the difficult situations that challenges occur.

The case at the beginning of this chapter shows that it may often be difficult to maintain openness and respect for diversity - here a parent's different view on the life and learning environment in class than the teacher's - which may result in the parent having a feeling of not being met and taken seriously.

The teacher's reaction and uncertainty in the situation was described above, and when I recommend the teacher to find time for daily or regular exercises to strengthen the teacher's ability to show authenticity under pressure, it is in order for him to be able to act more adequately in such situations. If the teacher is capable of registering what is going on when the parent criticises, it is easier for him to show empathy and to accept his own reactions. This ability may develop, for example through training and supervision. When teachers recognise their own reactions, these will not necessarily occupy the teacher's power or mental focus in the situation. The acceptance of one's own reactions will make it possible to be open-minded and attentive and to be interested in the parent's perspective by inquiring and making sure that the teacher has understood the parent's intentions as well as possible. This

does not mean that the teacher must agree with the parent. For instance, the parent's suggestion to send unruly children out of the class will hardly be followed, and the teacher may not stop using his means to create a better learning environment in the class. However, the parent's criticism may well lead to a constructive dialogue, perhaps even with the entire parent group, on how best to ensure a good learning environment in the class. It is up to the teacher to make this possible by being open and respectful partly by respecting the views of others without taking it personally and without being judgmental and unnecessarily critical towards others, partly by being open about his own limits and by communicating clearly. Thus, when the teacher is able to take responsibility for the quality of the interaction, it usually influences the other actors i.e. the parents, who may also be able to relate openly and respectfully to each other (Juul & Jensen 2002, Schibbye 2005).

The relationship between teacher and parent obviously influences many other situations than at the parents' meeting. There is contact via weekly letters, intranets, text messages, e-mails, phone calls, regular conversations and extraordinary calls. E-mails and text messages work well when it comes to providing actual information. They are less appropriate in the case of potential problems or when it comes to extra measures to be taken for a child. Here a conversation and a face-to-face meeting are preferable. However, a telephone call can be viable in some cases, especially if sustainable contact has already been established.

#### Content and process

At the parents' meeting as well as the parent conversation regarding the individual child, the teacher must be aware of both content and process. A relation is characterised by the close connection between content and process, in which we understand the content as what is being said and the process as how it is said. The way in which it is said is crucial to the atmosphere of the meeting, which again is crucial to the reception of the message. Traditionally, teachers have paid much attention to the content of the relation or dialogue, and the process of the conversation has received less attention. Any conversation - short or long - has a beginning, a course and an end. At the beginning contact is established, the agenda is presented or agreed on, and the time frame is fixed. The actual dialogue takes place in the course of the meeting. Each of the interlocutors will present their views and listen to each other to learn more on the subject matter and possibly reach new conclusions and possible actions. In the end, which may be announced by the teacher a few minutes beforehand, agreements are settled upon, and there is time for an evaluation of the conversation or meeting.

Being process oriented also means that while focusing on the content, the teacher must constantly make sure that the conversation is characterised by openness, trust, and respect. The conversa-

tion is best kept open if the teacher is open about himself and his own points of view on the subject matter. If the teacher wants to talk about Linda preferring to be alone during breaks and rejecting playdates with friends, it is not very wise to start with a question like 'Does Linda have someone to play with at home?' The teacher must be clear and open about what she sees and what causes concern while ensuring that her message comes through. In this way, the teacher is straightforward and comprehensible to the parent, which creates peace of mind and confidence. Openness goes both ways, however: the teacher must be openly attentive and interested in the parent's point of view and willing to help the parent to formulate his perspective if necessary.

#### Suggestions for the individual internships

Here at the end of the chapter, I will provide some ideas on how teacher-parent cooperation can be a part of the internships:

##### 1st internship:

*Preparing a conversation about learning goals.* Choose a conversation which, according to the practice teacher, is without specific challenges, and assign the student teacher to take part in describing the learning goals so that focus is kept on the content.

*Formulating a weekly letter to the parents.* Together with the practice teacher the student teacher makes an outline for a weekly letter, which the student teacher will afterwards complete.

*Participating in a parents' meeting.* The student teacher is assigned to observe how the practice teacher is aware of the atmosphere at the meeting. For example, how discrepancies are handled, how openness facilitates cooperation, and how the practice teacher creates a safe and trustworthy atmosphere at the meeting.

##### 2nd internship:

*Preparing and participating in a conversation about learning goals.* This time it may be a conversation with certain challenges. During the conversation, the student teacher must have specific tasks and possibly different focus areas: Will the parents' perspectives come through? Does the practice teacher's message come through? Is the conversation mostly a dialogue in which they listen to each other? There may be other aspects of the meeting that practice teachers and student teachers find relevant.

*Participating in a parents-meeting and being responsible for an item on the agenda.* This may be to convey observations from the classroom or to tell the parents about a project in which the student teacher has taken part.

*Designing an invitation for a teacher-parent conversation because the teacher needs to cooperate with the parents about special challenges.* It may be the invitation for a conversation that the student teacher is going to participate in as an observer.

##### 3rd internship:

*Preparing and conducting a point at the parents' meeting that deals with the social life or the learning environment in the class, in which the parents should be involved as active cooperators.*

*Participating in a teacher-parent conversation (before - during - after) that takes place due to certain challenges.* The student teacher must convey what she has seen, and what she thinks is worrying, and together with the practice teacher and the parents she must discuss what measures should be taken in relation to the child.

Teacher - parent cooperation is only one part of the teacher's job - but a very important one in that the parents are still the most significant people in the children's lives, even though today's children spend much longer hours at school and day-care than children did years ago. Time spent on establishing good relations with the parents is time well spent. When there is no doubt that the school and the home are in harmony, the child's peace of mind is ensured, which leaves energy for development and learning.

#### Suggestions on further reading

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Another current trend in society is the increased individualisation, which may lead the parents to find it completely appropriate to make demands that **accommodate the individual child** without taking the school community into consideration.



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