<http://www.diva-portal.org>

Postprint

This is the accepted version of a paper published in *Ethics and Education*. This paper has been peer-reviewed but does not include the final publisher proof-corrections or journal pagination.

Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Irisdotter Aldenmyr, S. (2016)

What values, whose perspective in social and emotional training?: A study on how ethical approaches and values may be handled analytically in education and educational research.

Ethics and Education, 11(2): 141-158

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17449642.2015.1115613>

Access to the published version may require subscription.

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:du-19844>

What Values, Whose Perspective in Social and Emotional Training?

A study on how ethical approaches and values may be handled analytically in education and educational research

Abstract

This present article takes an interest in the fairly new phenomena of social and emotional training programs in youth education. Prior research has shown that values and norms produced in these types of programs are supporting ethical systems that teachers may not always be aware of. This motivates the development of methods for analyzing these activities from an ethical point of view. An analysis model has been developed and piloted in the analyses of two different classroom activities. The model is based on theories of communicative ethics and an ethics of dialogicity, drawing upon the work of Jürgen Habermas, Iris Marion Young and Emmanuel Levinas. The analyses show that norms concerning whose perspective is prioritized and what ethical values are constituted in the classroom vary depending on how the program is organized and how the teacher chooses to use the program. The article also argues that the analytical model suggested might serve as a contribution to both teachers' own professional, ethical awareness, and to critical studies on what takes place within social and emotional training activities in education.

Key words: therapeutic education, teacher ethics, communicative ethics, social and emotional training.

Introduction

A suggested trend referred to as a “therapeutic turn” in education in Western countries, is partly manifested in various types of educational programs or a working-method for the social and emotional fostering of pupils. In this article, I suggest that values and norms produced within the realm of these therapeutic or socio-emotional oriented activities are of special concern. Prior studies have shown that therapeutic and systematically organized activities seem to support ethical orientations that differ from those supported in traditionally established school subjects or in the everyday communication in schools. (cf. Bergh, 2013; Irisdotter Aldenmyr & G 2013). This calls for research on how the pupil, here understood as “the Other”, is met within the communicative acts of therapeutic education and social-emotional training. We need to scrutinize the various types of ethical notions and norms that are brought to the fore, both explicitly and implicitly, not only in social and emotional training programs, but in all educational activities. This is not least important due to the fact that the activities organized in programs and working manuals may risk depriving teachers of their professional autonomy to development strategies for interaction and make wise, professional judgments on how to meet students (cf. Irisdotter Aldenmyr 2012).

In this article, I wish to outline and suggest an analytical model that may have the capacity to consider various levels of ethical communication and ethical qualities in education. To do so, I turn to a theoretical framework of communicative ethics *and* an infinite ethical responsibility to the face of the Other. These ethical theories may be seen as difficult, if not impossible to combine since they formulate the origin of ethics in radically different ways and on radically different levels. I will return to the question of how they, despite their contradictions may co-exist analytically, in the theoretical outlines below.

Purpose and questions

In the present paper, I will outline a model based on theories of communicative ethics and an ethics of dialogicity, mainly drawing upon the work of Jürgen Habermas (1990, 1993, 2007), Iris Marion Young (1997, 2000, 2002) and Emmanuel Lévinas (1981). The model will then be piloted as I begin to analyze two lessons of “Life Skills Education” in two different classes in Swedish high school (age 12-16).

The overall purpose is twofold. I aim to develop an outline of an analytical model which has the capacity to illuminate ethical notions and qualities that emerge in concrete meetings in educational contexts, with a certain emphasis on the tension between what is said and what is not, as well as the tension between distance and proximity in teacher and student meetings. Such a model may hopefully contribute to reaching a rich analytical depth and suggest various interpretations when analyzing empirical situations. I also aim to identify some possible ethical implications of systematic fostering activities in Swedish education, which may be labeled as “Life Skills Education” which in turn exemplifies what, in a larger international context have been called “therapeutic education”.

The research questions are:

1. Based on examples from the classroom, on what types of ethical presumptions do two different social-emotional programs seem to rely?
2. What kinds of approaches towards the pupils are represented in these classroom activities?
3. How can a theoretical model that was inspired by communicative ethics and the concept of an infinite ethical responsibility to the face of the Other contribute to analyses of ethical qualities in concrete classroom situations?

The ethical challenges of educational meetings

David T. Hansen (2007) elaborates on questions concerning what kind of relationships teachers should develop with their students, how close they should be, and what distinguishes teachers' relationships from those of other professionals such as doctors and councilors. It is, Hansen claims, not the degree of closeness or intimacy, but the two specific qualities of moral and intellectual attentiveness that characterize the relationships between teacher and students. The professional qualities of moral attentiveness are generally a delicate matter that holds certain risks. Such risks are reflected upon by several researchers who in various ways have stressed the importance of keeping an ethical sensitivity towards the student as a significant Other with the right to be met with dignity, (Giesinger, 201 2a, 2012b), respect, (Stojanov, 2009), and to be protected in their development as persons with self-respect, (Jonsdottir, 2007). In this article, I will claim that teachers' moral attentiveness is exposed to especially tangible risks as teachers are required to work with special programs or manuals in order to foster moral citizenship in individual students (cf. Irisdotter Aldenmyr & Grönlien Zetterqvist 2013, Irisdotter Aldenmyr & Olson, forthcoming). Following manuals in order to meet the challenge of teaching social and ethical skills may hinder teachers from acting sensitively in meetings with their students.

How then, is it possible to grasp ethical values, norms and approaches that emerge in classroom activities and in what ways do these explicitly and implicitly affect the meetings between teachers and students? One problem involved with this research task is that ethical truths and norms may emerge on various levels in human communication. For example, some things are said and proclaimed while others emerge behind or beyond what is said. Furthermore, some ethical values and norms may be constructed in discourse as a result of deliberation and agreement, while other norms and ethical “truths” are taken for granted or developed as teachers and students communicate around other issues.

A model for the analysis of ethical qualities in concrete classroom situations

The analytical model contains two steps. In the first step, the analytical attention is focused on *what* is said in a communicative event. Hence, the theoretical framework that is activated in this step embraces an ethics of discourse; when partakers in a communicative event exchange experiences and opinions, notions and agreements that are manifested discursively and constituted as social norms, rules or ethical guidelines.

In the second step, the analytical attention is drawn from ethics as something solely constituted in discourse, to a possibility that there are ethical dimensions before or beyond discourse. In some aspects, this step may be seen as a theoretical advancement since it problematizes and offers the possibility of various ontological interpretations of what ethics might be. In this step there is still a position where ethics is seen *or acted upon* as something socially constituted through the power of discourse. But there is also another dimension added, where ethical qualities are implicated (in a specific situation) as something already there, not open for negotiation, nor pre-defined as principles or self-given rules.

Approaches of discourse ethics – tensions and positions

Taking point of departure from a discourse ethical point of view includes accepting that ethics is a matter of discourse. The rules, principles, norms and values agreed upon may be reconsidered and reconstructed within discourse. Nevertheless, there are some principles that serve as normative conditions upon which the theory of discourse ethics rely. These principles state that all possible participants within a certain discourse should be able to agree with the norms of the discourse (D, principle of discourse) as with their practical consequences (U, principle of universalization). If these principles are achieved during the process of reaching a moral judgment, the judgment is considered to be morally legitimate (cf. Habermas 1990, 1993). This creates what I would like to label as a tension between what we may understand as a situated, solely socially constructed ethical system, and a claim for a universalistic ethics. On the one hand, there are no empirical circumstances under which one cannot question the available ethical norms. Furthermore, the discourse is always positioned within a certain context, and its participants are always speaking from within that context as well as from their own points of view. The Swedish ethicist Carl-Henrik Grenholm (2014, 281) touches upon this matter by highlighting the fact that Habermas, unlike John Rawls who claims that moral judgments should be separated from knowledge about all social circumstances, declares that the practical ethical discourse should take various social positions and terms into consideration. In this aspect, the contextual matters and the actual people involved in the matters are always recognized. On the other hand, as the Danish theorist Anders Bording states, the rational power of the ethical argument is *not* locally situated by Habermas. It is legitimized only by its level of rationality and ability to stand strong in the argumentative acts towards consensus (Bording, 2001, 100ff).

In this matter, Habermas gives the rational argument the same status within discourse ethics as Kant gives the categorical imperative (Habermas, 1990, 283). The main difference between the two is, as far as I can judge, the fact that Habermas places the rationality of ethics in the communicative space *between* people involved in the same lifeworld, while Kant places it in every rationally functioning human mind. This makes discourse ethics a universal theory of ethics, but compared to Kant's deontological ethics or Rawls liberal ethics of justice, it has a closer connection to how the interpretation and logics of ethics ought to be negotiated in a certain context while considering empirical matter of facts. This connection is developed as

Habermas combines his formal pragmatic communication theory with an understanding of a sociocultural lifeworld. Niclas Rönnsström (2006, 2011), has discussed how Habermas's theories of language and communication can be seen as a reconstruction of speech act theory for sociological purposes, but still informed by a philosophical hermeneutical understanding of how language depends on tradition and lifeworld. Habermas's speech act theory, that is, his theory of communicative action, draws from three different approaches to the philosophical study of language: the formal semantic approach, the Gricean intentionalist approach and a practice oriented approach mainly connected to Wittgenstein (Rönnsström, 2006, 178-227). Rönnsström (2006, 196 ff) argues that Habermas's concept of communicative action includes a view of linguistic meaning that relies on both semantic conventions and also on communicative intentions, contexts and social practices. Linguistic communication cannot be explained solely with reference to semantic conventions since it also depends on the intentions of concrete speakers and also on the ways speech acts are used in specific social contexts and practices in an already pre-interpreted lifeworld. Habermas's hermeneutically and sociologically informed concept of an illocutionary act, a concept essential to speech act theory, is much broader compared to the concept developed by Searle and other speech act theorists because "communication is not some self-sufficient game in which interlocutors inform each other about their beliefs and intentions (Habermas, 2003, p. 165). It is Habermas's sociological aims that give rise to his broadening of the concept of the speech acts because he needs a concept that can explain not only the conditions for communicative understanding, but also conditions for cultural re-construction, action coordination and identity formation in the lifeworld (Rönnsström, 2006, 194 ff) This latter point is of importance in this article since I focus on how speech acts are involved in the shaping and communication of values and norms in education.

Some critics within the field of communicative ethics, however, claim that ethically just communication must take into consideration a wider range of human life experience and behavior than what is recognized in the discourse ethics and communicative theories of Habermas. Emotions, various types of expressions, intersectional power relationships and circumstances are examples of important conditions which cannot be reduced to rational arguments. These factors do not only need to be considered in every attempt to justify or constitute ethical norms or principles but they also have to be recognized in a reformulation of the very communicative procedure itself. One of the most prominent reformulations of discourse ethics, or communicative ethics, was done by Seyla Benhabib (1994) who further stresses the situated character of each communicative act and questions the possibility of reaching consensus as well as the attempt to always strive for consensus. Instead, the communicative act and the ethical qualities shown and constituted *within* the communication may be a goal in itself.

The feminist communicative theorist Iris Marion Young (1997, 2000, 2002) has further contributed to the field by stressing the necessity of being open to several forms of expressions in communication. The diversities of how people communicate make clear that it is not enough to be open minded towards what is said, but also towards how it is said (Young 2002, 55). We need to learn how to listen to other ways of expressing one self and be sensitive towards unknown communicative rationales (Young 2000, 160 ff). This reasoning challenges, to some extent, Habermas's faith in the power of the rational argument and its ethical legitimacy. Habermas (1997) has responded to this kind of criticism by emphasising that all participants in a communicative act must take personal responsibility of the integrity, autonomy and dignity of the other. According to this response, a sincere respect not only for the rules of communication but also for the other participants would be enough to secure the

possibility for everyone to participate on equal terms. This faith in the communicative rules set by Habermas is however, dismissed by the communicative theorist Lois McNay, who stresses that all attempts to add sensitivity for diverse life experiences within a theory that takes its point of departure from a notion of everyone's potentially equal possibility to participate in a rationally organized argumentation, is doomed to fail. If we wish to recognize and counteract unjust positions and inequality in society, we need to abandon ideas of symmetrical communicative acts with a purpose to reach consensus (McNay 2003). This critique may in some ways be supported by Axel Honneth's ethical theories of recognition and empathy. Honneth does not share Habermas's faith in symmetrical communication, as he formulates a normative ethical theory which recognizes the dangers of violation in communication and takes a normative stand for a relational ethics built upon a responsibility to recognize the other. In that sense, his work is connected to the communicative theory of Habermas, but also touches upon relational aspects that may not be controlled merely in the normative imperative of just communication. Honneth (1995/2005) seeks a deeper level of human intersubjectivity where aspects of recognition may be seen as a crucial part of communication and a language of its own (Honneth, 1995/2005) In these acts of recognition the ability to empathize with others is crucial and prior to any attempt to understand others. Empathic engagement comes before any cognitive understanding of the other and of the world through language (Honneth, 2008).

Taking these discussions into consideration, some diverse positions regarding (1) what ought to be recognized (rational argument or other types of expressions and situated life terms) and (2) in what way I should apprehend the Other (as someone autonomous or someone vulnerable) in a communicative event, emerge. None of the theorists referred to above represent the positions in their most extreme versions but their theories of just communication are, in my interpretation, possible to place within the field of tension created in the model below.

Figure 1 should be shown here

Theories of ethics before and beyond discourse

While Habermas bases his discourse ethical norms in his pragmatic theory of communication, Benhabib (1994, 49ff) bases her communicative norms of respect in ancient traditions of socialization. Honneth (1995/2005) seeks a deeper level of human intersubjectivity where communication must be understood in a broader sense, and Young (2002) – to whom we will soon return, connects the discursive aspect to attitudes and recognition.

If we deepen the position above which represents a recognition of various expressions of emotions and situatedness, we may have to challenge an ontological landscape where ethical values are products of discursive acts of socialization. Instead, we may have to approach notions of ethics as something pre-linguistic and pre-cultural. We may have to approach ethics as a phenomenon that appears in people's minds, and analytically try to grasp it as it shows and emerges in subjective lifeworlds (cf. Grenholm 2014). One phenomenological ethical orientation, mainly represented by Emmanuel Lévinas, takes as its point of departure the ethical quality that is the foundation of all human interaction and human experiences. While the communicative ethical tradition places ethics as something embedded in, sprung from and upheld by, the logics of language, Lévinas talks about an ethics of responsibility that exists before language and is an infinite, absolute response to the face of the Other – not to

the rational message of the other (Lévinas 1981). Ethics has, in this tradition, been named as “the first philosophy”, and it has been given the status not only of a crucial phenomenon in people’s minds, but as perhaps the most crucial phenomenon of our social reality. Steven Crowell puts it like this:

Ethics is first philosophy because it is only by acknowledging the command in the ‘face’ of the Other that we can account for the sensitivity to the normative distinctions that structure intentional content (Crowell, 2012, p. 1).

The communicative ethicist Iris Marion Young makes an interesting and valuable contribution as she follows the discourse ethical line of thoughts developed by Habermas, and connects it to the existential and phenomenological dimension of a Lévinasian ethics, stressing the point of absolute responsibility before the face of the Other (Lévinas 1981). Young refers to Lévinas distinction between “the Said” – as the actual message – and “the Saying” as the very communicative act in which we connect to each other. The latter may be understood as part of the act of greeting, but can also be understood as a symbolic, pre-linguistic moment of reaching out towards another human being (Young 1997, 7). This moment represents the ethical foundation of all human encounters. The ethical quality is already established before we have even begun verbal communication on a certain topic. In this sense, Young suggests a bridge between two theoretical points of departure in ethics, where human beings may and ought to recognize each other existentially before they meet in discursive activities, and also in cases when discursive activities fail in a more narrow understanding of communication. In this bridging, Honneth’s line of thought touched upon above is also important to recognize. Another attempt to combine the two radically different ethical approaches of Habermas and Lévinas is made by Steven Hendley (2000). He stresses the two theorists’ joint believe in an universally shared moral responsibility between human beings that is not primarily depending on shared forms of life. In that sense, Hendley suggests a joint point of departure in the ethics of Habermas and Lévinas that supports the writings of Young.

The term *recognition* is central in the writings of Lévinas, Honneth and Young and may in this article represent a moment or initial quality in human encounters that precedes any other form of communication. In the moment of recognition, there are some crucial aspects to take into consideration. One such aspect is highlighted by the theorist Ivana Marková (2003) as she stresses the fact that the way we apprehend the other in a dialogue holds some risks. If the attention towards the other is too intense, I risk going into a fusion with the perspective of the other, losing the ability to define myself in the dialogue. This line of thought may be associated to the line of thought presented by Young as she develops the two concepts of distance and recognition in meetings. In short, Young emphasizes the importance of recognizing the unique situation and voice of the Other, while simultaneously maintaining distance. Without distance one risks entering the mode of interpreting the Other and believing to know the Other. This calls for an obvious risk of dictating needs and wishes *for* the Other. The quality of distance is therefore crucial since it protects the particularity and unknowingness about the Other (Young 2002, 59ff).

Distance is, in my interpretation, a communicative space which lets the other speak and formulate his or her needs, wishes and situation. This space provides just conditions for “the Said”. But it is also an existential space in which one may recognize the Other without taking the life terms of the other for granted, and without trying to integrating the experiences and need of oneself with the lifeworld of the other. Understanding distance as an existential space connects the quality not only to what is said, but also to “the Saying”. In educational settings, especially ones that involve teachers and young students, these two levels or dimensions of

ethics need to be recognized, since they are built upon asymmetric relationships where someone's (the teacher's) experience and knowledge prevails over the experience and knowledge of the other (the student).

Johannes Giesinger (2012a) has touched upon the possibility to find an ethics for education that recognizes the need for a mutual ethical meeting between teachers and students. He is inspired by both Kant and Honneth in his writings on human dignity and distinguishes between two levels of dignity. The first may be understood as a basic, metaphysical dignity owned by each person in the power of being a human being. This dignity, and the call to others to be treated as dignified by others, are independent from how one develops and acts in accordance to moral law. The next level of dignity is connected to the social world and how a person acts morally, in accordance or in conflict with the law. This figure may also serve as a possible bridge between the ethical strand of discourse ethics, which is preoccupied with the discursive actions of ethical agreements, and a pre-linguistic strand of responsibility in the face of the Other. The possible bridge provided by Giesinger is however, similar to the bridging presented by Iris Marion Young and places Habermas's discourse ethics at the level of the Said, while she also operates at Lévinas's level of the Saying, as something that is prior to the Said (2002). In youth education, these two aspects of dignity are crucial, since the young, growing person may have to be partially neglected in education, due to his or her cognitive or experience based deficiencies, but still the same, deserves the absolute right as a human being to experience "absolute protection of his dignity" (Giesinger, (2012 b, p. 10).

Taking these theoretical outlooks into consideration, I wish to revise my model from just being a model that illustrates tension within a theoretical field of communicative ethics, to include larger theoretical tensions. The position B here moves towards a somewhat other ethical ontology, suggesting that ethics may be understood as a phenomenon experienced by humans in a shared yet subjective lifeworld. Ethics is thereby not primarily a discursive matter but exists before and beyond discourse. Understanding ethics in accordance to the position A or in accordance with position B is, to many ethicists, an important theoretical choice which intrinsically excludes the opposite position. However, I suggest an understanding of ethics that works on two levels, beyond and in discourse. In this sense, I recognize the ethical imperative of Lévinas and the discourse ethics of Habermas in the same way as Iris Marion Young does – which also in my interpretation is supported by Hendley (2000) and Giesinger (2012a, 2012b) who also, with support from Honneth and Kant, identify at least two levels of ethical relevance in educational settings.

The positions 1 and 2 which are connected by the horizontal line have also come to include additional aspects in this expanded and extended version of the model. The earlier version pointed out two different notions about and approaches to the other in a communicative act, while this version which is shown below, adds the existential qualities of closeness with the hazard of fusion between the ones involved in a meeting on the one hand, and existential qualities of distance on the other. The corresponding risk on the right side of the model, compared to the risk of fusion on the left, would be an existential distance that is pushed too far, from a respectful recognition of the other's unknown life terms and needs, to an existential alienation in which no actual meeting takes place. The expressions of this alienation may be rejection and xenophobia, exclusion and hatred. I do not add these aspects into the model, since these dangers are not to be seen as possible expressions of ethical meetings. In this sense, the model is not entirely theoretically symmetrical. As a consequence of this reasoning, the dangers of immoderate closeness may be subtle and a matter of

interpretation, while it seems more obvious when the dangers of distance turn into something other than ethical intentions.

Figure 2 should be shown here

Empirical examples from classrooms

Below, two different social-emotional training programs are used as empirical examples of how the theoretical model may be used in analysis. I have, together with two research colleagues, participated as an observer of these lessons, and have taken field notes.¹

The situation called *Conversation about life* is part of a research-based training program for students in their adolescence and is led by a researcher in psychology. The program is entitled “The Dream of the Good”, and is built around relaxation exercises, life conversations and stress relief activities that follow a mindfulness-inspired method. The main goal of the program is to reach higher levels of mental wellbeing and abilities to cope in stressful life situations. The various activities in the program are included in the students’ schedule. The activities take place several times a week. This kind of therapeutic activity began as a research project in psychology in which the school cooperated with a researcher who wished to investigate the effects of mindfulness exercises on students (Terjestam et al. 2011). The approach has been analyzed in detail in prior research (Grönlien Zetterqvist, 2014). Additionally the approach of the two teachers who teach the program has been the subject of prior analysis (Irisdotter Aldenmyr, 2013). These prior studies show that the program has a high status among the teachers involved as it is spoken of as an evidence-based method with positive effects.

The situation *What is important?* is part of locally produced working materials that target students from preschool to senior high school. The materials were produced in cooperation between a working group in the municipality and a therapist and consultant of communication (cf. Söderberg, 2006). The development of the working material was part of a larger, municipal initiative to promote the wellbeing of the young and was inspired by psychosynthesis and the communication theory NonViolent Communication (cf. Rosenberg 1999). The exercises in the manual are structured around the four key concepts of safety, emotions, roles and needs. The main goal of the program is to promote mental wellbeing by strengthening students’ self-esteem and autonomy. Students participated in activities that are contained in the manual on a weekly basis. This working material has also been analyzed in prior research which shows that traditionally ethical values and norms are to some extent replaced by behavioristic features (Irisdotter Aldenmyr & Grönlien Zetterqvist, 2013).

In the following section I will describe each situation and thereafter analyze the situations, using to two analytical questions of the model (*What seems to be recognized in the communicative event* and *What apprehensions of the Other emerge*). I will subsequently attempt to position each situation within the field of tension outlined in the model.

¹ The data materials were collected between 2010-2012 as a part of the research project “Life Skills in Swedish youth education”. The project was financed by The Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet) and the project leader was Professor Geir Skeie. The results from the project are presented in Irisdotter Aldenmyr (red.) (2014)

Analysis

Conversation about life

The female teacher meets ten 15 and 16 year old girls for yet another lesson in Life Skills Education and the- to these girls- well known activity called “conversation about life”. The teacher and the girls sit on chairs placed in a circle in the middle of the classroom. They are calm and quiet and seem to be happy about the situation. They have been doing this every week for over three years, but the theme for every conversation is unknown to the girls when they enter the classroom.

There are rules in these conversions. Every conversation has a certain theme, decided by the teacher, and everyone gets the chance to say something related to the theme. A small porcelain egg is passed around the circle and only the one holding it may speak. One may also refrain from speaking, but then one has to hold the egg for a while and just be quiet. Every girl will have her space, with or without commenting. No one is allowed to comment on what is said during the conversation. And no one is allowed to speak about what has been said to anyone else after the conversation.

The theme of this conversation is “stress”. The teacher starts by explaining how she has recently gone through a stressful period in her life. Then she raises some questions about what stress is, what it feels like, different things that can be stressful for different people, how to tackle the feeling of stress. She shares a feeling of sometimes not being a very good mother to her son, because she always has so much to do.

All the girls say something about stress. They reflect upon it and share thoughts and events from their lives. One girl says that talking about stress makes her even more stressed. One girl says that she has felt pressure from school, there are a lot of things that should be done while she feels that she ought to prioritize to spend more time with her grandparents as they are getting old and ill. “They won’t live much longer”, she says. The teacher’s eyes are filled with tears as she speaks.

When every girl in the circle has spoken, the teacher makes a comment upon her own reaction. “I was touched at one point there, you noticed it didn’t you?” She also says that she has never before thought about the possibility that talking about stress may stress you even more. “I will think about that”, the teacher says. And then she adds that she hopes that this moment has contributed to something good for everyone. The girls listen to her and seem to take her comments seriously.

I begin my analysis of this situation by raising the top question of the analytical model presented above; *What is recognized in this communicative event?* In a first round, I focus on the dimensions included in the first model, which pinpoint the positions within a discourse or communicative ethical field of tension. So then, what is recognized here? The very label of the event, “conversations about life” strongly suggest that verbal communication is desirable here. It is given a special status. However, it isn’t clarified what type of utterances are expected. The topic is given by the teacher, but it could be interpreted more as an entrance to something beyond the actual messages, than as a topic with a self-given purpose. In that sense, the rational messages, arguments or deliberation qualities are not obviously stressed. The openness regarding what is permissible to say is further emphasized as there are routines for how to be silent and how to choose not to say anything. The space and the moment of attention is more important than the actual message, which is why I choose to place the situation close to the lower position, on the axis of “what is recognized”. In this classroom, emotional expressions, shared experiences as well as moments of silence are recognized as something important. This is exemplified as the teacher makes a comment on her own emotional reaction when tears filled her eyes. The very concept of “conversation” may even have to be re-negotiated in this context as there are no responses to what has been said. In a

strictly rationally oriented communicative event, it would perhaps be considered as a fruitless form of interaction not to respond to or comment on the others' utterances. Here, the silent listener is, contrarily, given an important role in the conversation (which is an aspect we need to revisit in the second, deeper analytical round).

I turn to the other axis of the model, on which the analytical question of *apprehension of the Other* is raised. Who is the student here? Is s/he someone vulnerable who's needs I have to grasp and embrace? Or is s/he an autonomous Other who's arguments I need respect and search for other psychological rationales and needs? In this situation, it is not clear who or if anyone receives advice, guidance, answers or comfort. The teacher ends the lesson by adding a few comments on her own emotional reaction, and she tells the class about a statement made in the conversation that she hadn't considered before. In these final comments, it is the teacher herself that brings to the fore the lesson she learn during the conversation. She stresses the importance of a certain thought expressed, not from a teacher's point of view, confirming that "this is important to you all", but rather as a fellow-human-being sharing what it meant to her. Most contributions were however left without any comments. Implicitly, this shows that there is no need for the teacher to "take care" of the emotions or expressions shared. No one in the room has a clear role to confirm or fulfill, but everyone has the important role of listening and recognizing in silence. Due to these circumstances, I choose to place the situation in the middle of the model on the axis between seeing the Other as someone vulnerable to take care of in communication (to the left) or as someone capable and rational in her own narrative (to the right). Although there is no obvious asymmetrical relationship indicating that the teacher should emotionally take care of or responsibility for the expression or message from the student, the very framing of the situation seems to presume that there is a therapeutic or spiritual value in sharing personal matters that may be connected to joint topics, issues or aspects of life. The teacher has no clear care-taking role, but the setting of the situation has care-taking ambitions; it provides room for taking care of that need to be cared for.

I have now stated that the silent listener is given an important role in the conversation and that this may have to be further investigated in relation to the second version of the model, which captures a wider field of tension between ontological standpoints. In this step of the analysis, the question of what is recognized leads to the question of what happens in a moral dimension of an empirical event. Should we recognize only what is said, constituted and reconstituted as ethical norms or values or should we be open to ethical dimensions that may be "there" before we even try to activate them in language use? Are the ethical "truths" that seem to be present in the room based on principles, professional praxis or agreements or are they rather emerging as perceived responsibilities or undetermined existential structures that can only be activated in an ethical response to the concrete face of the Other? In the latter case, each room, each meeting has its own, undetermined, immanent possibilities or conditions from which ethical responses may emanate.

In my interpretation, the openness to uncertain, unpredicted chains of events dominated the meeting, even though the rules and structures of the conversation were very clear. Nobody can for sure know what type of expressions will take place in the room, and what one will be required to recognize in respectful silence. The procedural principle of communicative ethics may be exchanged by the responsibility to be close to and embrace another person's tears, personal stories, silence or anxiety. The rules of just communication are no longer adequate since the ethical dimension may be opened up to situations for which preparation is an impossibility. This can, of course, be a possible outcome of every meeting no matter the pedagogical setting, but the setting and the attitude surrounding this situation suggest that it is

not just a distant potentiality but a welcomed possibility and thereby something the situation is harboring. This analysis makes me more confident in placing the situation far down on the axis towards the position of recognizing undetermined ethical qualities and responsibilities that arises in the concrete meeting.

When it comes to the horizontal axis and the question of how to apprehend the Other, some new aspects emerge in relation to the second version of the model. I have already placed the situation in the middle of the model, suggesting that the Other is seen as someone capable of presenting her own line of thought or message but that is done in a situation that in itself suggests that everyone needs therapeutic attention. The teacher stands back and transforms into a potential learner and someone who shares emotional reactions in the group. The roles and power relationships seem more uncertain than in traditional pedagogical settings in which the teacher knows and the students learn. If we go deeper into the question of who the Other becomes in this situation, we may also add the analytical question of subject positions and how these relate to each other. Is there any distance between the subjects involved? Are differences allowed to emerge or are they swallowed by an ambition to embrace the other and reach understanding and proximity?

In this case, there seems to be some room for distance, as the teacher does not involve herself in the narratives of the students. She reacts upon hearing some narratives, but when she does, it is from her own, personal point of view. The stories or messages from the students remain untouched. However, the teacher's shared reactions and the personal issues she shared, could end up in constructing a norm or expectation on the student to share such things that are very personal, difficult and shameful. There is a potential risk of making proximity and personal exposure into a norm that in turn could force the situation to be moved from a position in the middle of the model, towards a fusion mode where all participators end up telling the same type of story which includes the same qualities of vulnerability. This however, does not seem to be the case in this particular situation.

What is important?

The two teachers, a man and a woman, meet their class of upper secondary students who are in the second year in a nature science program. The lesson in Life Skills Education starts with the task that everyone in the class will line up in alphabetic order..When that is done, the teachers divide the students into smaller groups. The male teacher then talks for a while about human rights in general and students' rights in particular. Which rights do they have and which do they not have? A list of human rights, formulated very freely, is passed around the classroom. The students are given the task of evaluating the importance of the rights on a scale from 1, "not so important", to 4, "very important". The evaluation is done within the smaller groups and after a while the teachers begins a class discussion.

No group has used the possibility to evaluate something as a four, "very important" or number one "not so important". One group has ranked the right "to listen to the kind of music one prefers" as a number two since "it is not essential to life, you can live without it". A number of rights are ranked as number three by all groups. Among these are the rights to...

*...speak one's own language,
...participate in demonstrations or organizations,
...have spare time and time to rest.
...wear the kind of clothes one likes,
...chose one's own religious beliefs,
...study a field one desires,
... be romantically involved with whom one chooses,*

The male teacher takes up the question of religion for discussion. In the discussion, the students stress the importance of one's practice of a religion not interfering with another person's rights.

The impression is that the students listen to each other and meet each other's opinions and arguments in a respectful way. The teacher continues by asking if there are any rights they missed and failed to add to the list? One group answers "the right not to be discriminated against". In many schools, they continue, people are being called "whore" or "fag" - not so much at this school, but it happens. Other students speak up and say that some teachers give different grades depending on the sex of the student. After a while a girl says that "some male teachers do not look me in the eyes, they look downward..." Several students confirm this and one girl adds that "it is uncomfortable when it happens". The teachers listen to the discussion without interfering.

"Aren't the boys discriminated against in any ways?", the male teachers asks after a while. Some boys answer by raising the question of the practically oriented school subjects in general and physical education in particular. They find the logic of the grading in these subjects discriminatory since it is not one's actual ability that counts but the degree of development. The effect of this may be that a very talented student may have a lower grade in PE because no obvious development has been shown during the lessons. An intense debate takes place. Some students think that it's good since it gives all students a chance. "Is that a legitimate argument when it comes to mathematics too?", a boy objects. After a while, it becomes clear that he is an active athlete who feels mistreated by the logic of this grading rubric. Time runs out and the vivid discussion has to end.

The attention in this situation is clearly focused on the argument and on the ability to express oneself and to accept the arguments of others and respond to them in a proper way. In that sense the situation responds to most of Habermas' principles of ethical discourse. The discussion takes as its point of departure a set of general questions for discussion, with the result that the discussion is focused on general principles, disconnected from situated circumstances. Initially, I want to place the situation rather close to the upper position (A) in the model, since it seems to support the assumption that human rights may be ranked in general grades of importance, as if these rights may have the same universal importance for all people.

After a while, however, the teacher steers the discussions towards issues related to the everyday life of the students. He tries to make them connect the principle oriented arguments to their own experiences and life terms. A rational, argumentative genre of conversation is still dominating, but the communicative act is gradually changing in direction towards the lower position of situatedness and emotional aspects (B) along the vertical axis of the model. The students respond to the initiative and raises issues that are personally important and associated with strong feelings. Some issues, as when a few girls bring up that some male teachers look at them in ways that make them feel uncomfortable, may be seen as controversial and very personal. Although the teachers do not directly comment on the girls' experiences, they seem to be recognized as important life situations that are allowed to be shared in the classroom.

I turn to the other axis of the model, where the analytical question of *apprehension of the Other* is raised. The freedom of choosing what to bring up as relevant examples within the theme of human rights, speaks to interpreting the student's position as autonomous with a rather large space of distance provided in this communicative act. The trust in the student as one who is capable of deciding what s/he wishes to share or argue for in the classroom, appears as the teachers do not try to avoid or divert the discussion away from possibly controversial or sensitive issues. The teachers do not try to comfort, silence or diminish the importance or impact of the shared experiences or viewpoints. The student is thereby considered as an autonomous communicative agent whose personal life situation and experiences are recognized as integrated aspects of a rational argumentation.

I have now stated that the personal experiences that are associated with the rational argument in a discussion are recognized as relevant in the situation. This may be further investigated in relation to the second version of the model, which captures a wider field of tension between ontological standpoints.

In this step of the analysis, the question of what is recognized in a certain communicative act becomes a question of what happens in the moral dimension of a certain communicative act. Can we, within a communicative meeting as presented above, try to connect to ethical dimensions that may be present but not articulated or verbalized? Are the ethical “truths” that seem to be present in the room based on principles, professional praxis or agreements or are they rather emerging as perceived responsibilities or undetermined structures, only activated in an ethical response to the concrete face of the Other? In the latter case, each room, each meeting has its own, undetermined, immanent possibilities or conditions from which ethical responses may emanate. In this particular situation, it seems however, as if the message of the girls, underpinned by emotions and the concrete life experiences of being young female bodies, is only corresponding to the thinner question of rights and just principles. There is no attention paid to the phenomenon of living in the world as an objectified body and the ethical dimension of living in such a body and how it effects one's relationships. The level of the Saying is potentially repressed here, by the important principles of the level of the Said.

Concluding remarks

I will now briefly return to my research questions and make a few comments. The first question was: *Based on examples from the classroom, on what types of ethical presumptions do two different social-emotional programs seem to rely?* The analysis shows that the first situation responds to ethical dimensions of emotional closeness, openness to uncertainty and values that are not entirely constituted by words or principles but rather by closeness, sensitivity and openness towards the life situation and unique experience of the Other. The second situation rather responds to ethical aspects of rational argumentation. Personal experiences and emotions are not in the foreground, but rather considered as additional aspect that may strengthen and exemplify arguments and principles brought to the fore. This empirical variation, although very small and selective in the present study, shows how different ethical theoretical strands may help interpreting and analyzing different qualities in social and emotional training.

The second research question was: *What kind of approaches towards the pupils are represented in these classroom activities?* The analysis shows that the first situation was arranged in a way that seemed to presume a certain vulnerability and the need for emotional care, while the relationship between teacher and student within this framing was a rather symmetrical one. The teacher in the second situation puts, to a higher extent, trust in the student to take full responsibility for his or her own communicative choice and deal with the reactions (both his or her own reactions and reactions from others) that may follow.

The third research question, *How can a theoretical model which was inspired by communicative ethics and an infinite ethical responsibility to the face of the Other contribute to analysis of ethical qualities in concrete classroom situations?* needs further attention and should rather be answered by others who wish to try the model and evaluate it. Accordingly, I will just make a few remarks. The model has contributed to the noticing of aspects in each

situation that would have been difficult to recognize as ethical aspects of relevance without the theoretical tension and the wide range of ethical theories that have inspired the development of the analytical model. In that sense, the model may hopefully be seen as a contribution to the deepening of understanding of empirical events in youth education in the light of philosophical and theoretical reasoning.

Theoretically, there are still several uncertainties and problems unattended. When I developed the second version of the model which claims to include a wider theoretical tension, the risk is obvious that the diverse theories of Habermas and Levinas are analytically combined in ways that do not do justice to either of the theories of ethics. However, in this analytical model I recognize both of the ethical strands as theoretical perspectives which may help to grasp and analyze various ethical aspects of a complex reality of education. The development of the model is thereby a conceptual and theoretical work, with the ambition to provide analytical tools for empirical research. The main motivation for this project is thereby to develop analytical methods to better identify, reflect upon and evaluate events that possesses ethical relevance in education. This, I argue, is better done if a wide range of communicative and existentially significant moments and meetings are recognized by the researcher.

Furthermore, the analytical model may be used as a starting point for teachers who wish to reflect upon, discuss and evaluate their own practice and their own approaches in the classroom – not least in activities that aim to strengthen the students' personal growth in social, emotional and ethical aspects. This may in turn strengthen the teacher's professional autonomy and ability to meet with their students in ways that rely upon ethical awareness rather than predetermined programs that steers the behavior of the student as well as that of the teachers. Theoretically it may help teachers and other school actors to take into consideration the importance of balancing between what are construed as ethical and emotional norms in the classroom, and his or her own sense of being an equal fellow human being, meeting the students before and beyond the role of being a teacher who knows and instead meets the students with a sensibility and openness towards their existence as human beings. These latter aspects further stress the benefit of understanding ethics on at least two different levels or in two dimensions in education – one being the level of the ethics of the Said and the other being the level of the Saying.

References

- Benhabib, S. 1994. *Autonomi och gemenskap: kommunikativ etik, feminism och postmodernism*. Göteborg: Daidalos
- Bergh, A. 2013. *Värdepremisser i främjande och förebyggande program i skolan: rapport från forskningsprojektet En värdefull skola*. [Value premisses in helath promoting and preventing programs in School.] Örebro: Örebro universitet
- Biesta, S. 2008. "Pedagogy with Empty Hands. Levinas, Education and the Question of Being Human" *Levinas and Education. An intersection of Faith and Reason*. 198-209
- Critchley, S. 1998. "Metaphysics of the Dark. A response to Richard Rorty and Ernesto Laclau" *Political Theory*. 26(6) 803-817
- Crowell, S. 2012, Why is Ethics First Philosophy? Levinas in Phenomenological Context. *European Journal of Philosophy*. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-0378.2012.00550
- Giesinger, J. 2012a. "Kant on dignity and Education" *Educational Theory* 61(6) 609-620
- Giesinger, J. 2012b. "Respect in Education" *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 46(1) 100-112
- Jonsdottir, F. 2007. *Barns kamratrelationer i förskolan* [Children's friend relations in pre-school] *Diss. Malmö : Malmö Högskola, 2007*.
- Grenholm, CH. 2014 *Etisk teori. Kritik av moralen*. [Ethics. A Critique of Morality] Lund: Studentlitteratur
- Habermas; J. 1990. *Kommunikativt handlande: Texter om spark, rationalitet och samhälle*. [Communicative action] Göteborg: Daidalos
- Habermas, J. & Cooke, M. 1998. *On the pragmatics of communication*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
- Habermas, J. (2003) *Truth and Justification*. The MIT Press.
- Hansen. T. D. 2007. "Understanding Students", in: Curren, R.R. (ed.). 2007. *Philosophy of education: an anthology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Honneth, A., 1995/2005. *Struggle for recognition: the moral grammar of social conflicts*. Cambridge: Polity Press
- Honneth, A. Butler, J., Geuss, R., Lear, J. 2008. *Reification: a new look at an old idea*. Oxford: Oxford university press (ed. Martin Jay)
- Irisdotter, Aldenmyr, S. 2012 "Moral Aspects of Therapeutic Education. A case study of Life Skills Education in Swedish Education". *Journal of Moral Education*. 41(1) 23-37
- Irisdotter, Aldenmyr, S. 2013 "Handling Challenge and Becoming a Teacher. An analysis of teachers' narration about Life Skills Education" *Teachers and Teaching. Theory and Practice*.
- Irisdotter, Aldenmyr, S. & Grönlien Zetterqvist, K. 2013 "Etisk aktör eller solitär reaktör? Om etisk otydlighet i socio-emotionellt värdegrundsarbete". [Ethical actor or solitary reactor?] *Utbildning och demokrati. Tidskrift för didaktik och utbildningspolitik*. 2013:1
- Irisdotter, Aldenmyr, S. 2013. "Recognition and Distance in Therapeutic Education" *Ethics and Education* 8:2, 140-152
- Irisdotter Aldenmyr, S. (ed.). 2014. *Hyfs, hälsa och gemensamma värden. Studier av skolans komplexa fostrans- och värdegrundsuppdrag*. [Good manners, health and common values] Malmö: Gleerups förlag
- Irisdotter Aldenmyr, S. & Olson M. (forthcoming, 2015) "The inward turn in therapeutic youth education – an individual enterprise promoted in the name of the common good" *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*
- Lévinas, E. 1981. *Otherwise than being or beyond essence*. The Hague: Nijhoff
- McNay, L. 2003. "Having it both ways" *Theory, Culture & Society*. 20(6). 1-20

- Marková, I. 2003. "Dialogicity as an ontology of humanity". *Rethinking Communicative Interaction: New Interdisciplinary Horizons*. (ed. Grant, Collin. B.) Philadelphia: Johnsbenedamins Publishing Company. 29-51
- Rosenberg, M. 1999. *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Compassion*. Encinitas: PuddleDancer Press
- Rönnström, N. 2006. *Kommunikativ naturalism: om den pedagogiska kommunikationens villkor*. [Communicative Naturalism: on the terms of communication in education] Diss. Stockholm : Stockholms universitet, 2007. Stockholm.
- Rönnström, N. 2011. "Cosmopolitan Communication and the Broken Dream of a Common Language" *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 43(3) 260-282
- Stojanov, K. 2009. "Overcoming Social Pathologies in Education: On the Concept of Respect in R. S. Peters and Axel Honneth, *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 43, Issue Complement, 161-172
- Söderberg, J. 2006. *Våga vara: en handbok för att visa barn vägen till bättre självkänsla*. [Dare To Be: A Handbook for Showing Children the Way to Better Self-esteem] Västerås: Ica
- Terjestam, Y. 2011. "Stillness at school: Wellbeing after eight weeks of meditation-based practice in secondary school" In *Psyke & Logos*. 32(1). 105-116.
- Young, I. M. 1997. *Intersecting Voices. Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy*. Princeton University Press.
- Young, I. M. 2000. *Att kasta tjejkast. Texter om feminism och rättvisa*. [Throwing like a girl] Stockholm: Atlas
- Young, I. M. 2002. *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zetterqvist Grönlien, Z. 2014. "Mindfulness som kunskap om livet?" [Mindfulness as knowledge of life] In: Irisdotter Aldenmyr (ed.). 2014. *Hyfs, hälsa och gemensamma värden. Studier av skolans komplexa fostrans- och värdegrundsuppdrag*. [Good manners, health and common values] Malmö: Gleerups förlag