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The Child in School and Education

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Confero: Essays on Education Philosophy & Politics

Editorial:
The Child in School and Education

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For this special issue of *Confero*, we invited contributions that explore the positionality of children and youth within educational contexts and educational research. In *The Child in School and Education* we present three thought-provoking essays that grapple with education through the lenses of pupilness, participatory perspectives, and the potential of student positions. With these perspectives, the essays bring intricacies of educational settings and their tranformative role in shaping identities to the fore. The issue concerns questions of how educational conditions are structured and performed as part of an institutionalized education, particularly in terms of agency, socialization, and subjecthood. A central topic in all three contributions is the divisionary tendency between the student/child as subject/object within education and educational research. The contributions problematize, although in different ways, how challenges emerge, depending on what kind of understandings of what constitutes a subject and an object respectively.

From this outset, educational decisions, traditions and practices inevitably become philosophical and political matters. By inviting scholars with various backgrounds to engage with these complex processes, this issue aims to contribute to an interdisciplinary discussion that problematizes how links between educational practice, educational research and conceptions of children-youth can be approached and understood.

In the first essay, Lina Lago explores pupilness as a position/ positioning/action within Swedish school-age educare. With a critical gaze, Lago discusses settings, normative structures, and value systems in relation to the child as active, taking on the role of pupil and the practice of *doing* pupilness. For the writer, the term "pupilness" has a discursive power to it. By foregrounding the act of "verbally positioning" the child as a pupil, Lago ventures into the domain of language-making practices to research and discuss what kind of effects this 'branding' can have, both within educational work and affiliated research. By considering distinctions between "pupil" and "pupilness", Lago argues for the acknowledgement of children as actors in the sense that they both produce and are produced by the educational context they are a part of. For the writer, doing and resisting pupilness involves making consensus, joint decision-making, as well as moments of resistance. An interesting tension brought forward in the essay is what happens when a child negotiates pupilness in ways that do not correspond to institutional expectations of what a 'proper' pupil *is*. Lago exemplifies both discursive patterns as well as potential discursive shifts. The act of performing pupilness is here empirically located through its contradictories, challenges as well as inherent possibilities.

In the second essay, Roger Säljö considers participant perspectives as historically located objects of research. Säljö initially argues that conventions in education that are based on structural, often oppositional perspectives, are at risk of overlooking important aspects of education – specifically by failing to tend to the daily practices and processes that produce the actual educational situations as well as the learning outcomes. By turning to the concept of participation, Säljö challenges the idea of education and educational processes as obscured 'black boxes'. The author explicates this through a historical gaze by focusing on the inclusion of participant agency and how it has been construed throughout different shifts. One important contribution offered in this essay is that participant perspectives are something that, from a fundamental standpoint, overlap several stakeholder-perspectives at once. By investigating often polarized and irreconcilable positions, Säljö addresses the historicity of Western

modern education through how it has shifted discursively via different philosophical and political onsets. Emphases is placed on what participatory perspectives and participation can add to contemporary perspectives on education. By contrasting academic positions, Säljö contributes with a critical and nuanced essay on tensions, differences, and possibilities concerning participation as a central touchstone for education and educational research.

The third essay, by Eleni Patoulioti and Claes Nilholm, takes a discursive approach towards how educational research – that understands the classroom as a form of community – affords subject positions to students involved. By drawing from a previous study of theirs, that offers four discursive formations (the idealized home, the idealized polis, the idealized academia, and the power-resisting space) as an analytical framework, the authors delve further into how subject positions are made available or unavailable for students. Patoulioti and Nilholm address the consequences these negotiations can have as an attempt to understand students' potential for both maintaining and challenging these positions. An important contribution made by the authors is that previous attempts at defining educational community fall short in providing subject positions with fundamental influence. In that sense, the discursive reading of *community* made by the authors directs attention not only to how the notion of community is understood, but also to how the actual inclusionary space for shared community is risking student subjecthood and positionality as well as agency. Patoulioti and Nilholm contribute with knowledge concerning how the positions afforded students' needs to be considered from the ground up for educational communities to thrive.

Collectively, these essays offer critical insights into how educators, policymakers, and researchers can reconsider educational communities and the spaces therein for voices of children, youth, pupils and students. They challenge us to consciously approach the classroom as a dynamic space where students are active contributors, and educational practices are transparent and inclusive.

Doing and Resisting Pupilness in Swedish School-Age Educare

Lina Lago

T his is a reflection on pupilness as a position/positioning/action within the Swedish school-age educare (SAEC) setting and the norms and values related to this. The aim is to explore what kind(s) of pupil that is constructed in SAEC and how children relate to and act in relation to the norms of the SAEC and thus perform pupilness in different ways. Lastly, the issue of language is considered – what it means to be verbally positioned as "pupil" and what this entails in practice and in research.

The term pupil is used to talk about a specific child position/positioning which children have in relation to the embedded/non-embedded norms and values of educational settings. Pupil is, in a sense, something that one is appointed. It is a position that cannot be (at least not easily) opted out of, since to be a child in an educational setting is to hold the position of a pupil. As with most positions, however, what it entails is something that needs to be performed and negotiated (cf. Lofors-Nyblom, 2009). Even if being a pupil is a position/positioning it is also closely linked to the actions of those in the pupil position. This 'doing' of being a pupil is understood as pupilness and draws on a perspective where actors, in this case children, are constantly producing and being produced by the context simultaneously. Such a perspective recognises children as social actors and active participants who have "valid ideas, values and understandings of her/himself and of the world" (MacNaughton, Hughes, & Smith, 2007, p. 460). To understand how pupilness is done in everyday life, action is vital. Even if the child as a social actor must be

understood in the context in which s/he performs pupilness, the label "pupil" is different from the performance of pupilness. The position of pupil can be embraced, adapted, negotiated, resisted, rejected, or transformed. Sometimes children do not want to be pupils and act accordingly – despite the "expectations" of the educational context. Pupilness is also something that is done in interaction with others, emphasising the negotiation of pupilness. In short, in the words of Kofoed (2008, p. 417), "All children in school become pupils, but they perform pupilness differently". This entails an understanding of pupil/pupilness as something that is simultaneously appointed and performed, that is, children's agency is emphasised alongside the contexts that frame children's actions. Pupil and pupilness thus refers to different aspects of being and acting as a pupil and are seen as intertwined (pupil/pupilness). As well as being a certain position (being a pupil), pupilness also incorporates acting against this position in various ways in any given situation.

This means that the everyday organisation of education – the context in which pupilness is played out – is of importance. According to Jackson (1990[1968]), the order in the school environment is communicated through explicit rules that tell children what is expected of them as pupils. As these explicit rules are communicated and visible to children, they can relate to these in a conscious way. However, the explicit rules make up only a part of the norms and values in school. Jackson argues that a large part of the web of norms and values that guide the expected behaviours of children in school is embedded and implicit. He calls this the hidden curriculum of school. The hidden curriculum, unlike the explicit one, is not communicated to children, and the teachers might not even be aware of all the things they expect children to be or do. Thornberg (2009) states that the rules and norms of school have two functions: to construct social order and regulate children's behaviour, and as moral socialisation or fostering: "[T]he rule system mediates the construction of the desirable or good pupil to children" (Thornberg, 2009, p. 251). It is important to relate the ways in which children understand their possibilities for action in different situations in school to both formal and informal curricula.

In terms of social order, the order of the classroom is relatively well established (cf. Denscombe, 2012). It is, at least, something that most people have certain expectations of. Classroom order is (often) characterised by a pattern of interaction where a teacher leads a group of pupils. Although this is a simplification – not all teaching in school is done in this way – much of the pupilness in school can be said to revolve around the classroom and an order by which pupils are to achieve formulated goals (Bartholdsson, 2007). In this way, parts of pupilness are linked to educational aspects, like academic performance (cf. Löfgren, Löfgren & Lindberg, 2019). There are also parts of pupilness that are more general and can be said to connect to ideas of being a "good" citizen (cf. Thornberg, 2009). Embedded values and norms are conveyed and negotiated in the spaces outside the classroom, such as during breaks or between lessons (cf. Lago, 2014; Lofors-Nyblom, 2009). The question of what it means to be a pupil and what is expected of children can change from one situation to the next during the school day. There may be one type of expected behaviour while the teacher is giving a lesson in the classroom, and another in P.E. activities; a third type of behaviour when children act as council representatives, a fourth during play with peers at break times, and so on. Lofors-Nyblom (2009) shows that in the classroom, attributes such as being responsible, reflexive or critical are valued, while values such as honesty, being helpful or caring are more prominent in peer interactions and therefore more important in situations outside the classroom. She also shows that the ability to adapt to different situations is important in order to be considered a "good" pupil. Pupil/pupilness is thus not fixed but under constant negotiation. Children's understandings of, and what adults communicate about, school order – consciously or unconsciously – are important factors as pupils negotiate how to be a child in school. In this process, children relate their behaviours to verbalised and non-verbalised norms and values, but also contribute to establishing or changing these values and norms. Lahelma and Gordon (1997, p. 120) describe pupilness as a "process /…/ embedded in everyday life". Such an approach implies that, to understand how pupilness is done in different contexts, one needs to study the different everyday practices of children in

educational settings. To explore this issue further, the Swedish SAEC is used as an example.

Pupilness and Swedish School-Age Educare

In Sweden, SAEC is a part of schooling for younger school children (aged six to twelve) and many children attend SAECs before and after school and during school holidays (Skolverket, 2019). SAEC is guided by the same curriculum as compulsory school but has its own section. The curriculum states that SAEC should contribute to children's development, that learning in SAEC should be group-based, that activities should be based on children's interests and that SAEC should provide children with opportunities to a meaningful leisure. Aspects such as social environment, play and communication are emphasized as means to achieve this (Skolverket, 2022). The SAEC is an interesting example to use to problematise and examine the concept of pupil/pupilness, even if questions regarding the pupil position/positioning/action are also of relevance within other educational settings such as school or preschool.

There are a few points that make SAEC interesting in this regard. Firstly, the use of the term 'pupil' is quite new in SAEC. Historically, children in SAEC have simply been labelled 'children'. It was only in 2010 that the children who attend SAEC began to be referred to as pupils in policy (SFS 2010:800). [1] In practice, there is still an ambivalence to the concept. This means that staff talk about pupils in SAEC, at the same time there are discussions of what the term does with the expectations the staff have on children and with the expectations that children have on SAEC. Secondly – and as an explanation for why children in SAEC have not been called pupils, even though SAEC traditionally has been an arena of children's

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[1] Children can, of course, do pupilness (or any kind of institutional position of a child) even if they are not labelled pupils. Educational arenas where children are not – officially – called pupils are also places that hold specific norms and values about how children are expected to act and perform (cf. Emilsson, 2008, on Swedish preschool where the term 'pupil' is not commonly used in either research, policy or practice).

learning – SAEC has been part of the education system only for a few decades. It was in the 1990s that SAEC became part of the school system and responsibilities for SAEC were transferred from social to educational authorities. The effects of this shift can still be said to be present in SAEC practice as a tension between tradition and new demands (Elvstrand & Lago, 2020; Lager, 2018). Thirdly, even though SAEC is part of the education system and, for instance, is governed by the school curriculum and shares facilities and organisational structure with compulsory school, it is a voluntary type of schooling. Of course, it might not be up to the individual child to decide whether or not to attend, since it is often the children's guardians who make that decision. Nevertheless, the compulsory aspect that is often associated with schooling is not in place. Jackson (1990 [1968]) points out that a vital part of being a pupil in school is that children, unlike staff, do not have the freedom to leave. This is, to some extent, not the case in SAEC. Fourthly, educational aspects in SAEC intersect with other, more social pedagogic or holistic aims such as the SAEC being an arena for social relations and children's leisure (Lager, 2018) since these aspects are much more clearly stated in the SAEC curriculum than in school (Skolverket, 2022).

Overall, this means that the norms around pupilness are different in SAEC than in school, and that children perform against different expectations of what it means to be a pupil. Previous studies show that children expect the SAEC pupil role to be freer than in school, and they expect to have influence and control over their activities (Elvstrand & Närvänen, 2016; Lago & Elvstrand, 2021, 2022). Lager (2021) shows how children also see influence and control as connected to how SAEC staff act. Staff who are present, create mutual relationships with children, and redistribute power, thus inviting the children to co-create activities, are considered to facilitate conditions for children to have influence and control over their activities. Lack of shared negotiation, on the other hand, limits these conditions. Children's agency and staff's expectations are thus connected. In her study on pupilness, Ayton (2008) points to the significant role of relationships between adults and children in constituting pupilness. In school, this power relationship merges into a teacher-pupil relationship as the institutional order of school

makes its way into the dynamic. When it comes to the staff's expectations of children in SAEC, Dahl (2014) shows that SAEC staff make normative assumptions about children and support children in relationships that meet those norms (for example consensus, tolerance, respect, inclusion, closeness, trust and adaptation to rules). In line with this, Hedrén and Lago (2023) show that SAEC staff tend to position children as group subjects, that is, as part of a collective. When children are positioned as individual subjects, generally it is when a child deviates from the norms, adult expectations, or the behaviour of the group. So, what happens to pupilness in this specific context where the framing of pupil/pupilness as well as the institutional norms in the SAEC settings can be described as fluid, under construction, or negotiated. In the next section, pupilness in SAEC is discussed based on examples from SAEC practice.

Doing and Resisting the Pupil Position in SAEC Practice

In SAEC there are, of course, many occasions where children simply act the part of SAEC pupils, that is they act according to the institutional norms in the SAEC settings. In the following, I will look more closely at three examples of when children resist or trouble some aspect of the norms of the SAEC and thus perform SAEC pupilness in diverse ways. This does not mean that these are the most common ways to perform pupilness, but it is interesting to look at situations where children do resist expectations regarding the position of an SAEC pupil, since they make visible the norms, values, and expectations of the institution. Pupilness is more visibly negotiated in these situations than in situations where children comply with or uphold the norms, values, and expectations around how to be an SAEC pupil.

This study is based on research conducted using qualitative methods in SAEC centers. Together with Helene Elvstrand, I have researched various aspects of SAEC, and although the idea of pupilness has not always been at the centre of attention, these studies have raised the question of the position of the child in this setting. In the following data from previous studies are re-analysed

to pin-point the issue of doing pupilness in SAEC. This means that the theoretical lens through which the examples have been analyzed is new, as are the interpretations of the individual examples. The examples are drawn from observational studies of everyday SAEC life and interview studies with children in SAEC. The research involved several schools and their SAEC centres and has followed the ethical guidelines of the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017). For further information and discussion about conduct, see Elvstrand and Lago (2019, 2020) and Lago and Elvstrand (2021, 2022).

Doing expected pupilness reluctantly

Sometimes the norms and values of the individual SAEC centre are made into explicit rules. It is not unusual for children to be part of this process by, for example, being invited to take part in an activity where it is discussed and decided which rules the centre should have. Children's participation is strongly emphasised in SAEC's mission as well as in tradition, and these kinds of formal ways of structuring participation can be seen as a way to ensure that children have a say in SAEC matters (Elvstrand & Lago, 2019). However, participation as experienced by the children and their space for action can also be limited within the activities meant to enable participation. This is shown in the following example.

> Ture, 8 years old, tells me that they have had an activity to decide rules for the SAEC centre where the pupils had to write rule suggestions on pieces of paper. Afterwards, they discussed the suggestions and the teachers wrote down the decided rules on a sheet of colourful paper, and then all the children put their thumbprint on the rule sheet [to show that they agreed with the rules]. The paper was then put on a wall in the SAEC centre. This is what Ture and I are looking at right now. Ture expresses displeasure and says that his and his friend's suggestions have not been included. "Why not?" I ask. "Our rules were 'unreasonable'," Ture replies. "Who decided that?" I wonder. "The adults," he replies. "What kind of rules did you want, then?" Ture says that one of the suggestions was that "you can bring your own toys to the SAEC centre". "Well," I say, "that might not work [all the time], but perhaps you could bring toys in with you one day a month?" "Yes, but they just said our rules didn't

work," Ture says. "What do you think of the rules, then? Do you agree?" "No!" says Ture. "But you put your thumbprint anyway?" I ask. "Yes," Ture replies. "Why did you do that if you don't think the rules are good?" I wonder. "Well, you have to!"

When asked why he had signed the rules (by putting his thumbprint on the paper) even though he did not seem to agree with them or feel included in how they had come about, Ture answers "Well, you have to". This can be interpreted as a reluctant submission to SAEC's order, but also demonstrates his perceived space for action in the activity, that is, that he has little or no such space. The perceived SAEC order is one where pupils take part in decision making but where the decisions ultimately lie with the adults. As a child, you are expected to follow the adults' decisions, giving the children a narrow frame within which they are expected to act. The ones who set this frame, in Ture's interpretation, are the adults, as they are the ones who have dismissed the proposals that transgress the limits of the frame and are "unreasonable".

In the above example, in addition to the norm that children should be involved in decisions about what rules to have at an SAEC centre, there are also norms about consensus and joint decisions (cf. Dahl, 2014). The act of letting the children put their thumbprints on the rule sheet can be seen as a way of manifesting a collective decision. Ture does not seem to perceive that he has the possibility to oppose the decision, even if he does not approve of the rules. This example highlights that the act of pupilness is not the same as not being critical or hesitant to the norms of the SAEC. Ture can be said to negotiate his position as a pupil between the idea of himself as someone who (has to) obey adult expectations, at the same time as he can be said to express a wish for other child positions. This makes visible the tension between children's different positions/positionings in SAEC; the institutional order and adult expectations on the one hand and children's wants on the other. Ture does, however, submit to what he understands as being expected behaviour and can be said to perform expected pupilness, even though he does so reluctantly.

Resisting doing 'proper' pupilness

In other cases, the children do not perform pupilness in the way that the SAEC staff expects them to; rather, they can be said to resist adults' expectations of how children in SAEC are to behave 'properly'. In a previous study, Helene Elvstrand and I explored the practice of doing choice in SAEC (Elvstrand & Lago, 2020). The results show that giving children choice is a strong value in SAEC, and that choice is a central part of how teachers organise activities. The study also shows that there is a strong norm that pupils must make an active choice, and that there are certain kinds of choice that are valued more than others, which is shown in the following example.

> A group of five pupils are sitting together on the sofa. They are making jokes together and doing funny drawings, writing love letters, and laughing at them. Stina, one of the SAEC teachers, enters the room. She looks at the group and says: "This is not okay. You can't just hang around. You have to decide what to do. This is not a good way to spend your afternoon at SAEC." Then Stina points to each of the pupils and asks: "What do you choose to do right now?"[2]

Seen through the lens of pupilness, the children are acting in a way that is not in line with the institutional expectations of how to act as a pupil, in any case not a "good" one. The example shows that the freedom of choice that can be said to characterise SAEC (Elvstrand & Lago, 2020) also has clear limits, and that there are activities that are seen as less desirable – or perhaps even as non-activities, as the teacher's statement "You have to decide what to do" can be interpreted as if she perceives that the children are currently doing nothing. What is conveyed by the teacher can be said to be an idea of what constitutes a useful or productive use of SAEC time (cf. Haglund, 2009; Holmberg & Börjesson, 2015). If the expected pupilness is understood as including an expectation that children in SAEC should be doing "something", at least something other than "just hanging around", then the children's actions can be understood as a form of resistance to acting like a proper SAEC pupil. The example makes visible that SAEC pupilness can be quite

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[2] The example has previously been published in Elvstrand & Lago (2020).

different things from the perspectives of adults and children. While values such as "just hanging around" with friends and having fun together are in the foreground for the children, this is not in line with adult expectation of being a 'proper' SAEC pupil.

Choosing not to be a pupil

One aspect that makes SAEC an interesting context for exploring pupilness is its voluntary nature. As previously mentioned, SAEC is a non-compulsory type of schooling, which means that the coercive mechanisms that control and keep children in compulsory school are not in place here – although of course, attendance in compulsory school can also be negotiated to a certain extent, e.g., through school absenteeism (cf. Bodén, 2016), and the voluntary nature of SAEC might not always mean "voluntary" for the individual pupil, as it is often the guardians who make the decision. Together with Helene Elvstrand, I have investigated how older SAEC children are sometimes given a space to negotiate their whereabouts at the junction between SAEC and home and that some children can choose whether they want to attend SAEC or not (Lago & Elvstrand, 2021, 2022).

In the following, Bitte, a girl in third grade, explains why she sometimes chooses not to attend SAEC with her parents' permission, something that she has mentioned earlier in the interview.

> Sometimes it's just that I'm really tired and sometimes I just want to go home and maybe just be with one friend because when you're at school then you can't say that someone can't be with you [during activities]. You can't do that. But at home you can play by yourself. And then on Fridays, I'd rather not stay [at SAEC] but just go home and be with the family and have a bit of a cosy time. And often it's like this that I have stuff to do, like this whole week it's been like that. On Monday I had swimming, and on Tuesday there was a school trip and then we had a class activity in the evening, all on the same day. And

yesterday, on Wednesday, I had horse riding and today I will go looking at summer houses, so… It has been a lot this week. [3]

Bitte describes SAEC as part of a more general regulated time/space in which she as a child/pupil appears to have little space for action. Listening to her listing one activity after another gave me the feeling of being overwhelmed by a wave of regulated activities. Being an SAEC pupil in this example becomes one of many regulated positions for Bitte. However, by "just going home" instead of staying at SAEC, Bitte abandons the requirements of pupilness. By doing so, she can create a space for herself to be with "one friend" (something that can be contrasted with SAEC where the norm is to include everyone) or to have "a cosy time" at home (something that SAEC does not seem to be able to provide). Understood from a perspective of pupilness, what Bitte is doing is removing herself from the exercise of power which in SAEC takes place through the regulation of time and space. Lofors-Nyblom (2009) argues that what positions children as pupils to a great extent is bound to the time/space world of being in the institution. By actively choosing not to be in SAEC, Bitte chooses not to be a pupil or perform pupilness at all. In one sense, Bitte's choice to leave can be viewed as aligning with the voluntariness of SAEC, at the same time she can be said to be troubling the notion of SAEC as a free space for children's leisure (cf. Lager, 2018) as she makes it a part of the regulated spaces of childhood.

Concluding Discussion

The outset of this text has been to reflect on pupilness as a position/positioning/action within the Swedish SAEC setting and the norms and values related to this. The examples show that children in SAEC have to perform pupilness in relation to specific norms, values, and expectations that are in place in SAEC. In this way this study contributes to an understanding of the construction and negotiation of pupilness within this specific context. When the children troubles, show reluctance, or resistance to this order, they both make this order visible and contribute to upholding and

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[3] The example has previously been published in Lago and Elvstrand (2021).

changing it. The established order is built on ideals of consensus and joint decisions; there are expectations on children to make an active choice, with some choices being more valid than others, and requirements to be social and include everyone. The values that are revealed in this study are linked to SAEC's social pedagogic or holistic assignment. There are, of course, also parts of SAEC pupilness that relate to teaching and learning, but in research, these social pedagogic or holistic norms, values, and expectations are present throughout SAEC practice and are thus equally important aspects of being an SAEC pupil (cf. Lager, 2018; Lago & Elvstrand 2021, 2022). The fact that pupilness in SAEC is so closely linked to social pedagogic or holistic norms, values, and expectations means that the doing of pupilness is balanced against a doing of childness. The children's troubling of adult expectation and institutional norms in the SAEC settings can thus be interpreted as a desire for an even looser framework and more diverse ways to be a pupil (or child) in SAEC. For the children values and activities such as "just" being with peers, having more opportunities to own their activities (e.g., by bringing and using their own toys) or having "a bit of a cosy time" seems to be desirable in SAEC.

The tensions made visible as the children embrace, adapt, negotiate, resist, reject, and transform the positions of SAEC pupil is part of the ongoing doings of pupilness. SAEC leaves space to choose not to be in the pupil position more than in other educational settings partly due to its social-pedagogical tradition, partly because of its non-compulsory form where some children can choose to leave if the demands of the institution do not suit their wishes. As SAEC is a voluntary type of schooling, the compulsory aspect that is often associated with schooling and being a pupil (cf. Jackson, 1990 [1968]) is not in place. Presence in SAEC is, at least for some children, something to be negotiated, particularly as they can choose to leave SAEC when they judge the social order to be unreasonable or not desirable. By exercising this choice, they also abandon the possibility (or demand) to be a pupil, since that position is strongly linked to being in the educational context – very few would use the label outside such institutions. For the children themselves, it is not necessarily a position they want to perform as expected. Rather, SAEC pupil/pupilness is (at least

more than in many other educational settings) positions/positionings/actions that need to be understood and done in diverse ways.

Positions and the use of language

Finally, I would like to discuss the role and function of language in relation to children's doing of pupilness/childness in educational settings such as SAEC. As mentioned, the concept of 'pupil' is still quite new in the SAEC setting. Officially, the term was introduced in 2010. Something that I often thought about while writing about SAEC practice was how I should name those I was writing about. I have also had similar discussions with SAEC teachers who express an ambivalence about using the label "pupil". When writing or talking about children's education, it is easy to automatically refer to children as pupils, since that is how they are labelled in law and in policy (SFS 2010:800; Skolverket, 2022). But is it right to use the prescribed official language in research and teaching practice, or should this language be challenged?

An argument I have encountered, both in research and in practice, is that using the term "pupil" in some ways risks limiting children's space for action. To be a pupil is, as already discussed, to act from a specific position and relate to specific norms and values. Although pupilness is seen as negotiable and constantly re-constructed, its core is nevertheless focused on the child as a learner and as someone who should be educated in order to qualify for further education and for citizenship (cf. Biesta, 2009). The risk with using the term "pupil" is that it is these parts of children's lives in educational settings that are made visible. The school context as a setting for children's everyday lives might therefore become less visible. Can research and practice, by challenging the official language, give space for other (important) activities rather than only those that position children as learners or that aim to shape children for society? The ways in which pupilness is done in SAEC points to the conclusion that children are not always acting pupilness. This is most likely true in other educational contexts as well. Challenging the language is one way of expanding children's space in education. Another way is to do as the children do in the

examples shown in this essay, and challenge norms and expectations in everyday practice.

Acknowledgements

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Learning in Educational Settings:
What Classics Can Teach Us about the Value of Attending to Participant Perspectives in Social Practices

Roger Säljö

The background of this article is an interest in the value of attending to participant perspectives when exploring educational activities. By including participant perspectives as objects of inquiry, I refer to an explicit attempt to capture, describe and analyse the nature of engagement participants display as they contribute to classroom practices, online activities, play or any other kind of socially situated practice. For instance, being a student or pupil in a class or an adult learner may be seen as engaging in clearly defined roles with specific entitlements and obligations, transparent to everyone. Yet, students in the same class, or all those who can be described as adult learners, differ in the ways they engage in their everyday practices; their motives will differ as will their interpretations of what is expected of them as participants (Sahlström & Lindblad, 1998; Illeris, 2003). A minority student, a student with learning difficulties or a student living under conditions of personal stress, may perceive an instructional setting very differently from students with other backgrounds, and this difference may be consequential for the nature of their participation and possibilities to learn. Participant perspectives are explored by focussing on the experiences of being involved in a situation. Various strands of phenomenological and hermeneutic inquiry explicitly provide tools for gaining access to human experiences (Dieumegard et al., 2019), but I will argue that the attention to participant perspectives is worthwhile as a general element when analysing learning, and it may enrich our

understanding of education/instruction. Our capacity to theorize learning in an increasingly diverse world will be strengthened by attending to the nature of engagement that participants display inside and outside institutional settings. I will illustrate this by referring to and summarizing some classical studies in the history of educational research, which, in my opinion, have added lasting insights about learning by attending to participants' perspectives. A common element of these studies is that the research operates in what I, following Hanson (1958), will refer to as a "context of discovery". i.e. the assumption is that the details of the activities we refer to as learning cannot be known or understood until we have in-depth insights into student engagement.

The tension between structure and agency

In the social and human sciences, there is a classical and important tension referred to as the structure-agency divide. This divide reflects differences between research and theories that, on the one hand, focus on how social structures determine human action and life trajectories, and, on the other hand, theories that take everyday social action as the basic point of departure when analysing human activities and the organization of society. When studying education, and socialization more generally, the structural, or functionalist, perspective implies that the focus is on how people are shaped and constrained by structures and by institutional conditions of their society, such as social background/class, family origin, cultural capital and other factors. This position, shared by otherwise irreconcilable perspectives such as marxism and the functionalism of the founder of educational sociology Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) and others, implies that structure and institutions maintain social order and make society possible (in the marxist version this happens to the detriment of the majority of citizens in capitalist societies). The role of education and learning is to make people fit into mainstream society and avoid what at a given time is seen as "deviance" (which, given the social climate, may be criminality, homosexuality, left handedness, atheism etc.). The central principle guiding research is that people are not independent of their social origin, and macro-conditions essentially determine processes of

socialization at the micro-level. Research conducted in such traditions often points to how social privileges, such as educational success, career and income, gender etc. correlate with the opportunities people have in society.

The alternative perspective builds on the assumption that social structures and institutions are grounded in, and exist through, social action. That is, social structure and institutions are continuously "made" by people in and through their everyday social actions. Schools are schools because people (students, teachers and others) come there every day and "do schooling" by engaging in teaching, learning and socializing. In this bottom-up perspective, ordinary and mundane social actions produce and maintain the continuities we recognize as social structure. A central assumption in traditions, such as micro-sociology, social phenomenology, cultural psychology and certain branches of social psychology, ethnomethodology and other approaches, is that human agency plays a central role in social life. That is, people exert agency and have the capacity to modify social activities and perhaps even shape their own lives. They may also contribute to transforming activities as well as institutions. Following this line of reasoning, attempts to analyse social practices thus make it necessary to pay attention to participant involvement and perspectives on what they are engaged in. The general spirit of much of this line of thinking is captured in suggestive formulations by the sociologist Harold Garfinkel (1967), one of the founders of ethnomethodology, when he argues that people are neither "puppets" controlled by the strings of their social origin, nor are they "cultural dopes" mindlessly following social norms (cf., Lynch, 2012).

This contrast between perspectives, or even world-views, is consequential at many levels in research, including issues such as how research problems are formulated, what methods are considered relevant for research and what counts as interesting results. For instance, in terms of research outcomes, a focus on structure implies that researchers are expected to produce strong (or sometimes lack of) causal relations between the conditions where people are socialized and their educational trajectories. Such causal connections are generally hard to prove in a strict sense, so

what research often produces are correlations between backgrounds and outcomes, and, if these are significant in the statistical sense, an interesting result has been reached. In a more agentic perspective, the expected outcome is to document and analyse the functional nature of social practices, for instance how people act and interact when in contexts of teaching and learning, and the consequences this will have for the participants and the institution in terms of interactional dominance, problem solving, learning and socialization more generally. Case studies, documentation of concrete practices and descriptions of how they unfold provide the means by which social action can be understood and explained in functional terms and as situated in specific activities. Interesting questions concern what can be learned at a general level from such cases and detailed inquiry, thus the generalization being conceptual rather than statistical (for examples, see below). In the post-Second World War period, leading social scientists, such as Antony Giddens (1984), Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) (1977) and Peter Berger (1929-2017) and Thomas Luckmann (1927-2016) (1966) and many others have attempted to bridge this gap by suggesting how structure and social action are neither separate, nor mechanically related, but rather interdependent, evolving and dialectically interwoven in complex societies.

Researching teaching, learning and education in the context of the structure-agency tension

In the study of learning, instruction and socialization, this difference between research perspectives is important to keep in mind. It points to the crucial role of perspective-taking in research, and the importance of considering what can be learned about the social world through different approaches and in relation to the knowledge interests of the communities that will use the results (Habermas, 1968). Thus, macro-analyses of the correlations between social backgrounds and educational performance, provide interesting results for policy and politics, and fit well into media and public discussions about education. Ministers of education,

policymakers and others will comment when results from international comparative studies are published, especially PISA[1] results, which are marketed through extensive media coverage as valid indicators of the effectiveness of educational systems (Landahl, 2020; Landahl & Lundahl, 2017). However, in many respects such studies provide less of value for teachers, educationalists and other professionals engaged in the daily practices of instruction and supporting students in classroom environments. The latter have slightly different knowledge interests in their professional activities. The results of large-scale studies are aggregated at a level which is very abstract in relation to the concrete task of teaching mathematics or language to diverse learners in an increasingly differentiated educational landscape.

Three elements in the research strategies that accompany the structure-agency divide are important to consider in the context of studying teaching and learning (and many other social phenomena). First, mainstream research in the structural perspective generally works in what Hanson (1958) describes as the "context of verification." This implies that the variables in terms of which backgrounds and outcomes are described (age, intelligence, educational performance measures, scores on scales of motivation etc.) are decided on prior to the concrete research effort is launched. Traditionally, researchers would even formulate hypotheses of the expected relationships before they generated their data. Research at the opposite strand, focusing on how people engage in social interaction, generally operates in what Hanson refers to as the "context of discovery". In this context, the focus is on how a social activity or situation evolves or the consequences it has for participants. This is not assumed to be known beforehand, but rather emerges from the research and the situated understanding it produces.

Second, mainstream research generally focuses on *products* of teaching and learning. This can be seen in most large-scale studies, international comparative research of educational performance and similar approaches. Such studies, however, say very little about

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[1] Programme for International Student Assessment. PISA

processes of teaching and learning, i.e. about how students come to know, and how teachers and others may help them to do so. As John Dewey (1859-1952) (1963, 1966) emphasized throughout his long career in philosophy and education, it is not possible to infer the process of learning by looking at the product. Following a similar line of argumentation, Jean Piaget (1896-1980), the most influential developmental psychologist of all time, argued that IQ test results primarily document products of thinking. They do not show how children think in daily activities, nor, even more importantly, how they develop intellectually. Development primarily has to do with qualitative aspects of cognitive functions, not with having more or less of the same intellectual "stuff." This was a revolutionary insight in its time, and Piaget drew the conclusion that he and his many collaborators had to attend to children's perspectives on the world if they were to understand development (Piaget, 1973). They did this by observing and interviewing children and listening to how they interpreted the social and natural world they live in, and which provides the physical and communicative ecology which their cognitive development adapts to. This intellectual turn-around, focusing children's perspectives, implied that he embarked on research in the "context of discovery", where the characterization of development eventually was the result of research, rather than something that was assumed to be known beforehand.

As a third point, instruction and educative processes largely rely on inter-personal communication in shared spaces (which nowadays occasionally may be digital). For professional knowledge to appear relevant in such situations, insight into participant perspectives is essential. This implies that there is an interest for one actor (the teacher/researcher) in understanding how another person or group of persons (pupils/students/apprentices) interpret a situation, a problem, a formula or a concept (cf., Vosniadou, 2008; Scott et al., 2013). There is also a need to observe and understand learners' involvement in activities and their concrete engagement as they attempt to learn, solve problems or teach. Teaching is a communicative and situated enterprise, rich in indexical contributions to communication, such as: "what do you mean?", "think carefully" and "do you remember what we talked about last

week?", which are contingent on what is, and has been, said and done in a classroom or in some other interactional context. Studies of learning in various academic subjects, for instance, seek to clarify how learners understand what they encounter and what they are supposed to learn (cf., Ametller et al., 2007; Duit, 2007). Again, when such activities are researched, the questions will concern qualitative issues as they were in Piaget's (and other developmentalists') studies: a focus on understanding how people approach tasks, what they struggle with, how far they get and the nature of support that would be productive.

The historical primacy of the functionalist perspective in research

In a historical perspective, the view of structure as primary, and individual and collective action as secondary, was a foundational assumption of most social sciences emerging in the 19th century, and it was built into the core of their research agenda. Auguste Comte (1798-1857), originally a philosopher, formulated the basic doctrines of positivism as guiding principles for sociology, a term he suggested for the new, empirically orientated, discipline dedicated to using empirical methods to study social issues (Lenzer, 1998). The road forward for the study of society and human behaviour, positivists argued, must be to model social science on the natural sciences, especially physics, which was seen as the "Queen science" in terms of objectivity, logic and theorizing. By using experiments, objective data and variables that can be reliably measured, and by incorporating other methods and analytical procedures of the more advanced sciences, social science would make progress and find its place as a recognized scientific enterprise. This intellectual climate implied that the empirical disciplines branching off from philosophy during this period (mid-19th to mid-20th century), such as sociology, psychology, educational research and other areas, were shaped in an era of positivist epistemological ideals, where universal laws of causality were seen as scientific and as providing the model for the expected outcome of scholarly inquiry.

In passing, it is interesting to note, however, that alternative perspectives and opposing voices about how to conduct research in the human and social sciences appeared during this period as well. Perhaps the most well-known of these alternative traditions is hermeneutics, a philosophy and epistemology with many interpretations, but where the essential element is a focus on interpretation and understanding of human activities, experiences and predicaments (cf., e.g., Gallagher, 1992; Ihde, 1999). Another, and in some respects related, tradition is phenomenology and phenomenological inquiry, which also has many interpretations, but where the focus is on human experience as the primary source of knowing about the world for people (Giorgi, 2009; Merleau-Ponty, 1962). The philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) attempted to formulate a foundation for phenomenological research which has inspired many social scientists, all the way from literary scholars to computer scientists. A third tradition, which is highly significant in the specific context of educational research, emerging at about the same time, is pragmatism, associated with scholars such as William James (1842-1910) and John Dewey (1859-1952). Pragmatism has played, and continues to play, an important role in educational research . Here, processes of learning, knowing and instruction are conceptualized very differently than in mainstream research (cf., Clancey, 2011; Garrison et al., 2022).

This brief account sketches the legacy of social science research, and the intellectual climate in which it developed. To be scientific, generally meant to adapt to a positivist ideal about how to generate data and how to do research to reach universal and causal laws of human behaviour that mimic what can be found in the study of atoms. Other traditions have had to argue for their perspectives to qualify as research against the backdrop of these, often taken-for-granted, assumptions. At a practical level, it is not surprising that such traditions have dominated the research agenda. Most questions that were raised, and continue to be raised, have been formulated from institutional and systemic perspectives: how can we make schooling more effective? How can we increase the performance on tests of educational outcomes? What are the life careers of people who have graduated from upper-secondary school in relation to those who have not? These are perfectly

legitimate questions to raise in the context of analysing systems where people spend increasing extended periods of their lives. But they do not necessary provide a complete, or even informative, background for understanding instruction, learning and development as daily practices in classrooms and other sites where human talents are cultivated.

The historical development of research on learning, development and to a large extent teaching, mirrors the general pattern described above. Modern empirical research on learning (and cognition more generally), for instance, first appeared as experimental work in the psychological laboratories in Germany and the USA during the latter half of the 19th century. The experiments were supposed to demonstrate the methods that produce the best performance and/or the best retention of what was learned. Although some interesting results emerged from this research, for instance the role of rehearsal in memorizing (Ebbinghaus, 1885), the results were hard to generalize to anything beyond the rather peculiar laboratory setting itself. A classroom situation, by comparison, is infinitely more complex and dynamic than a controlled laboratory setting, and it has proven hard to generalize between contexts. Later, a range of other perspectives on learning and development emerged, and they often rely on observations and other qualitative data originating in analyses of classrooms and other contexts of instruction and learning (see below).

Thus, the alleged conflict between quantitative and qualitative approaches and methods in social science that has been debated for so long is exaggerated and generally not very illuminating. There are questions of a quantitative and causal (even if causality in a strict sense is rarely, if ever, achieved) nature between variables that lend themselves to quantification, and there are questions that concern how children (and adults) think and develop, what they find difficult to cope with, how they develop friendships or solve conflicts and other issues of relevance to professional activities. The latter kind of research by necessity involves paying attention to participant perspectices and has grown in significance when societies become more diverse in terms of their organization,

institutional arrangements and aspirations for citizenship than what was the case when social science emerged. Social transformations such as migration, multiculturality, digitalization, prolongation of education, democratization, minority rights, gender issues, a rapidly expanding knowledge base and changing labour markets make the social fabric of society much more complex.

In the wake of these societal changes, accelerating in the post-Second World War period, additional questions about the nature of learning, schooling and education thus become visible. This is hardly surprising. Examples of such questions would be: How do we support learning by newly arrived immigrants in schools and classrooms? (Bunar, 2015); Why do so many students lose interest in learning in general or in learning science/maths/foreign languages or whatever? (Anderhag et al., 2016); How do children/pupils/students learn to understand proportional reasoning? (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958; Vanluydt et al., 2020) or the concept of evolution (Sinatra et al., 2003)?; How do teachers prevent racism and handle controversial political, religious and other issues in classrooms? (Flensner et al., 2021; Jovanović & Marić, 2020)?; How do patients learn to monitor their own health by using mobile technologies (Bengtsson et al., 2018) and so on. Questions of this kind invite research approaches that consider how learning is organized in different social practices and require in-depth insight into the communicative dynamics of these settings, i.e. they concern the *what* and *how* of teaching, learning and knowing in an increasingly complex society and here participant perspectives are central for theorizing as well as intervention.

Researching learning, development and the communication of knowledge: including participant perspectives

All societies have a need to reproduce the knowledge and skills which have emerged through history in that particular community. This implies that they must create contexts and institutions that

allow for young people to engage with, and contribute to the development of, the "cultural memory" of their society (Donald, 2018). There must be interactional niches, where knowledge and skills are encountered and where they may be picked up by newcomers, who later will carry them on to new generations in a never-ending cycle. In this dynamic, it is interesting to analyse learner perspectives and participation in social practices, whether these are designed for learning or not. In fact, the more complex society becomes, the more we have to learn throughout life and outside formal instructional settings as well. Digital skills, which most people have learned outside formal schooling, exemplify this pattern.

In spite of the historical dominance of mainstream research, there are many classics in educational research that have provided important insights into how educational institutions operate, and they have done so by using a bottom-up approach focussing on participant perspectives and engagement. Just to exemplify, in *Life in classrooms*, Philip W. Jackson (1928-2015) (1968), originally a psychologist, reported a study of the daily lives of teachers and students in classrooms. His research approach is ethnographic, involving extensive participant observation of what teachers and students do in class, and his work followed the logic of research in the context of discovery of avoiding to make too many initial commitments about the nature of social interaction in these settings. What Jackson shows is how teaching, when analysed in its own right, is an inherently complex and "opportunistic process", where "neither the teacher nor the students can predict with any certainty exactly what will happen next." In this social dynamic, "[p]lans are forever going awry and unexpected opportunities for the attainment of educational goals are constantly emerging" (p. 67). Thus, the teachers he followed had to innovate and adapt to situations in ways that they found to be conducive to learning. He shows how teachers developed skills in "crowd control" in the attempts to handle "as many as 1000 interpersonal exchanges" every day in school. Taking the student perspective, he shows how they learned an important skill in this particular social setting: how to wait. They waited for teacher attention, for assignments to be given out, for their turn to respond, for the lesson to be over and so

on. The analyses point to some of the many peculiarities of this communicative eco-system which are not prevalent elsewhere in society.

Jackson's study focuses participants' perspectives, and it provides a very different and down-to-earth account of the communicative logic of classroom activities, and what teachers and students do. Jackson's work is a case study and this is interesting because it points to a different kind of generalizability than the statistical one guiding mainstream research. One central conclusion of his analyses, among others, is that there is a clear pattern that regulates the activities and that is not the official curriculum. He referred to this pattern as "the hidden curriculum" (p. 33) of the classroom, i.e. the socialization that follows as students adapt to values, norms and expectations that they learn to identify in the classroom and school culture. The hidden curriculum is not taught, but rather inferred by students as they comply with expectations which are largely tacit. In this process, students learn about themselves, their performance and how they are perceived by teachers and by the institution. The concept of hidden curriculum is thus a product of research conducted in the context of discovery, and this idea had a strong impact on research and on the public debate about education. It is a conceptual generalization by means of which we can understand and discuss educational practices and socialization of young people. A search in some of the leading databases shows that there are hundreds, if not more, studies that continued on the basis of this finding, exploring how socialization and cultural reproduction are organized and how students struggle to adapt to classroom life.

Another classic study, carried out in university settings, is the seminal work by William G. Perry *Forms of intellectual and ethical development in the college years: A Scheme* (1970). This study is interesting at different levels. In a developmental perspective, what Perry analyses is intellectual and ethical development among adults, university students. In most theorizing, development has been seen as a research topic that is relevant for children and young people. The dominant conception at the time construed development as something that was completed at a specific age and

usually quite early in life. In Piaget's case, children were assumed to reach the "formal operational" (and most advanced) stage at around 12 years of age (Piaget, 1952). By this age the cognitive structures – schemas as Piaget referred to them – characterizing adulthood and mature logical thinking were present. What Perry shows in his research is that people do develop beyond this as they are exposed to and adapt to new opportunities. Thus, development has no final stage or end point, it may well extend into adulthood. This position later has become widely accepted, for instance in the context of adult education, and it is a basic premise in sociocultural research on learning and development (Säljö, 2023). Perry's interest in student learning grew out his work as student counsellor at one of the most selective and prestigious universities in the USA. What he noticed during his long-term career as counsellor was that in spite of the selection of students that took place before joining this institution, and the fact that those enrolled were all graduates with top grades wherever they came from, there were students who failed. As a counsellor these were the students he met. But in these encounters, he had no reason to doubt their scholastic capacities. Rather, there had to be something about teaching and learning at the university that did not match the expectations or experiences of these students. Put differently, student failure and even drop out did not happen by accident, there had to be something that was going on in the daily practices of teaching and learning that students could not cope with. He started gathering data systematically by interviewing students repeatedly and documenting how they studied.

One of the central conclusions of his work is that many of the students who failed had difficulties adapting to the nature of learning and the conceptions of knowledge on which teaching and learning were based in the university context. For example, some students assumed that knowledge–what they were supposed to acquire–was either correct or incorrect, i.e. they had a "dualist" conception of knowledge as either true or false as Perry puts it. What they expected was to learn (i. e., memorize) were the "truths" of their area of study. However, what they encountered was a more "relativistic" and expansive interpretation of the nature of knowledge. Teachers argued that there were different, and

sometimes even conflicting perspectives on a particular issue, and different research methods were used and yielded slightly different research results. They expected analyses and arguments for positions and claims. Thus, the basic assumption that guided much of the teaching was that what is true or correct in a scientific sense depends on the theories and perspectives used in scholarly inquiry. One theory points in one direction, another one in a slightly different direction, and conflicts between positions are frequent and, in fact, even expected. When facing argumentation of this kind presented by the teachers in class and in seminars, students with "dualist" conceptions were confused. Their assumption was that they expected the teacher to give them the correct answers and not to take a detour of presenting all these alternative perspectives. Perry then describes how students, though not all, embark on a journey where they develop conceptions of knowledge that allow for the existence of multiple perspectives ("multiplicity"), and they accept that there is not always one correct position or best method. Intellectual work relies on flexibility and the capacity to see problems, and the world, from different perspectives. What they learn is that knowledge, to some extent, is contextual and subject to modification as time goes on and new findings emerge. Perry also shows how this developmental trajectory has implications for students' ethical argumentation and the acceptance of more world-views in terms of religious beliefs and other respects.

Again, this research is in the context of discovery and builds on an in-depth documentation and analysis of a specific social context, the university. The rationale for this work is that there has to be something that happens in the setting that is functionally related to the fact that students succeed or fail. It is not the general capacity for learning of students that is the issue, nor is it their ambitions or motivation, rather it is what they do and how they engage in local academic practices that is decisive. The generalization that follows from this is that learning is not a uniform phenomenon if you pay attention to participant perspectives. Different students hold different interpretations of what it means to learn, and this will guide their concrete learning practices. This is a result that can be generalized at the conceptual level to many university and other

settings as extensive research has shown (cf., e.g., Entwistle, 2009; Marton & Säljö, 1984; Ramsden, 1988).

One of the basic ideas of the above examples is that learning and meaning-making are not general and abstract phenomena, they are always situated in social practices. In addition, the examples show the value of attending to participant perspectives and what they engage in as they go about learning. This type of knowledge is relevant for understanding difficulties that students may have and it provides a basis for interventions. Making claims about learning thus implies situating the argumentation in a context where there is a particular kind of learning, in these cases within educational institutions. But learning is also an element of many other settings, including professional practices. Several studies, conducted in a context of discovery, have shown what professional learning involves using similar approaches. The anthropologist Chuck Goodwin (1994) analysed how professionals develop what he refers to as "professional vision", i.e. ways of perceiving objects and processes that are relevant for a particular professional group. In one of his studies, Goodwin (1997) shows how learning was orchestrated on board a research vessel, where chemists engaged in analysing water and water quality. In one of these activities, novice members of the team on board had to learn how to take a test of water using a a piece of string which served as an indicator of water quality by changing colours. The point here was to learn to stop a chemical reaction when the material became "jet-black" as opposed to just "black." Thus, this colour category of jet-black is specific to this community, and it derives its significance from the role it plays in judgements and expertise in this particular activity. It is not a preformulated category that can be acquired outside the practices of the scientists, and it has no specific meaning outside the specific testing described. In order to be competent members of the team, the apprentices–newcomers–had to be scaffolded to appropriate the relevant distinction between black and jet-black by the more experienced members of the team through verbal and non-verbal guidance and through exposure to samples at various stages. The experts would attune the perceptions of the novices by asking questions and by helping to them to distinguish jet-black from other kinds of black. Other examples of professional learning,

and what the transition from novice to expert implies in a participant perspective, can be found in research on learning how to read medical images in professionally relevant ways (Asplund et al., 2011; Gegenfurtner et al., 2019), how meteorologists learn to interpret satellite images to make weather forecasts and study the atmosphere (Hoffman et al., 2017), how master mariners make students accountable for their decisions when navigating in simulators (Sellberg et al., 2021) or how student architects through critique by experts learn to see what is a relevant way of analysing architectural design (Lymer, 2009). The examples of analyses of learning and knowing in participant perspectives may be multiplied, but I will not go further here.

Concluding remarks

The main point of the argumentation above is to argue for the value of research that takes the participant perspective when attempting to understand learning and development. Thus, research approaches differ in terms of methods and explanatory frameworks, but so do the questions that are asked about educational processes in increasingly complex and knowledge-intensive societies. It is important to consider the central role that research in the context of discovery may play in inquiries into educational practices. Today, young people in many parts of the world spend 9 or 12 years in educational settings. If we include preschool and university, a substantial proportion of children and young adults spends 15 years or more of their lives in educational institutions. To an increasing extent, we live in an "education society" (Nilsson, 2006). This observation implies that schooling becomes a more complex research topic, where a multitude of issues have to be taken into account in research: learning, cognitive development, literacy skills, identity development, friendship, health and well-being and so on. In the study of educational success, history has shown that it is tempting to "import" explanations that have their origin in research in other contexts. For instance, during recent decades, explanations of school failure to a large extent have been based on categories that have been imported from neuropsychiatric and neuropsychological disciplines. Earlier in

history we have seen how intelligence testing provided similar accounts of children who were unable to participate in education.

An alternative strategy for research, is to analyse educational practices as they unfold and try to understand how they can be modified and improved on the basis of analyses and theorizing that concern education as an institutional activitity and by paying attention to participant perspectives. This implies engaging more intensively with the *description* of educational processes and how children/students succeed or fail when participating. This implies both describing what they do, and how they cope with various situations from an analytical point of view, but also giving a voice to children (and other learners) by articulating their perspective on what happens in school. In studies of student welfare meetings when school problems are attended to by teachers and experts, it seems to be quite unusual that the student's own perspective on what has happened, and why it has happened, becomes part of the agenda and the decision-making. Rather, institutional perspectives dominate situations when the future of students is decided on (Hjörne & Säljö, 2019; Tegtmejer et al., 2018).

A related argument for focusing on concrete practices and participant perspectives in research is to retain the *integrity* of educational (and other social) phenomena. Educational practices are very diverse as are students. Education also has many goals: learning, personal development, the promotion of a democratic and tolerant mind-set and contributing to equity exemplify what current curricula say about what should be achieved. This implies that there is a multitude of considerations that have to be taken into account as instruction is planned, implemented and evaluated. A consequence of this increasing diversity is that access to participant perspectives and experiences gives a broader and more fine-tuned conceptual background for understanding how students adapt to and engage in classroom and other practices. This is an important source of knowledge for those responsible for teaching and learning in the expanding educational systems across the world.

As a final point, and from the perspective of understanding learning and development, it is important to realize that they are *situated* phenomena. By initial commitment to abstract ideas about what constitutes learning, and by relying on data that refer solely to products, a complex reality of many diverse activities is subsumed under a very abstract heading. Learning is a multifaceted and diverse process, and by increasing our understanding of what promotes and supports the kinds of engagements that result in learning, our capacities to intervene and support will increase. Adopting this knowledge interest, analysing and giving voice to participant perspectives is vital, even necessary.

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Being heard?

Identifying Student Subject Positions in Research about School and Classroom Community

Eleni Patoulioti & Claes Nilholm

T he idea of re-thinking schools and classrooms as communities has a long-standing presence in education. Community is often seen as a counter-acting ideal to that of competitive individualism, which treats students as bearers of results (Slee, 2019). Several scholars have proposed the image of a community as a way to structure education and to develop a culture that can support diversity (Thomas & Macnab, 2019) and democratic citizenship (Fielding, 2012, 2013), and that can protect not only children, but also adults from alienation (Noddings, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1994a). However, the notion of community can be used in different ways and has acquired several meanings, and it has been studied from different perspectives and disciplines in educational research. Paradoxically, the term can even be used in ways that ultimately maintain instead of challenge the dominant individualistic educational paradigm (Fendler, 2006).

In a previous study, we identified four dominant metaphors in the meanings and uses of 'community' in relation to schools and classrooms in a corpus consisting of 50 influential educational papers focusing on 'community' sampled from the Web of Science (WoS) database (Patoulioti & Nilholm, 2023). Most of the papers (41 papers) were published in US-journals, and fewer (9 papers) were published in Europe-based or international journals. Community was found to be understood through the metaphors of the Idealized-Home, the Idealized-Polis, the Idealized-Academia,

and the Power-Resisting Space (Patoulioti & Nilholm, 2023). These metaphors were also related in the sampled articles to the theoretical traditions informing the articles and consequently to a range of intended changes in what schools and classrooms should be like if they are to be seen as communities. Our analysis revealed a diverse and multi-paradigmatic field. One of the most common features of this field is that understanding schools and classrooms as communities tends to be (at least at the surface level) contraposed to extreme individualistic understandings about the purposes of education. The rise of primarily individualistic purposes for educational systems in the West coincides with the introduction and domination of a neoliberal agenda that produces 'highly individualized, responsibilized students' (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 248).

Neoliberalism, according to Harvey (2007, pp. 1–2) is more than a theory of political and economic practice, as it becomes a dominant discourse which elevates market exchanges to an ethics to guide human action. Thus, in educational discourses that encompass this ethics, students are subjected to techniques that position them as fully self-sufficient, but at the same time, self-centred and isolated (Brunila, 2012a; Brunila & Siivonen, 2016). On the other hand, progressive or emancipatory discourses, which are traditionally seen as resisting neoliberal values (Bingham & Biesta, 2010), prioritize socially oriented values and norms that are often materialised in the image of a school or classroom that is a community. In these counter-discourses, subject positions for students are created as well. However, as Bingham and Biesta (2010, p. 69) have argued, both progressive and even emancipatory educational discourses often offer close-ended views of how students ought to become, and the available positions for students are constructed based on psychological rather than political terms. Thus, a better understanding of how students become positioned within research about school and classroom communities can reveal existing alternative subject positions and enable a discussion of how these student-subjects can be related to other student-subjects within educational discourses. In this paper we analyse the ways in which students are constructed in educational literature about communities in schools and classrooms. For

coherence, we use the term 'student' to refer to all children and youth attending school at the preschool, primary, and lower and upper secondary level. However, we would like to note that in the sampled papers other terms are also used occasionally, e.g. 'pupils', 'children', or 'adolescents'. We intend to investigate the positions available for students and the consequences of such positionings for their possibilities of action. Following this aim, we conduct an analysis of subject positions (Foucault, 1982; Kendall & Wickham, 1999) in our sample of papers in which we have previously identified the four metaphors underlying the understanding of community.

Student positions in educational discourses

Locating the study

Subject positions are constructed in the intertwining of power and knowledge, and human action within discourse always takes place through these subject positions (Foucault, 1982; Kendall & Wickham, 1999). Power relations, as understood in the Foucauldian sense, differentially position subjects within discourse (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 54). Thus, power here does not refer to powerful groups or institutions but involves techniques or forms of power (Foucault, 1982, pp. 781-782).

Hamre, Fristrup and Christensen (2016) identify two large domains of studies of students' subject positions in education, namely, on the one hand, these departing from analyses of the discursive construction of ideal or desirable subjects (and their Others) in general education and, on the other, these focusing directly on the construction of the several deviant subjects. Seminal studies that identify ideal student-subjects in dominant educational discourses include Walkerdine's (1993, 1998) work on the 'developing child', related to a discourse (developmentalism) about natural development with a common close-ended outcome, the establishment of abstract reasoning. In coupling developmentalism with progressive or child-centred pedagogies that aim to support children's natural development in a social

context, the educational framework conceals how conduct deemed as natural development can actually privilege masculinity and whiteness (Walkerdine, 1993, 1998) and how flexible pedagogies can be subordinated to 'ironically predetermined' outcomes (Fendler, 2001, p. 16). At the same time, studies of the various ways in which subject positions of deviancy are ascribed to students who belong to marginal groups or special categories also reveal the ways in which subject positions are constructed. For example Youdell's (2006) thorough work about students' subjectivities and the multiple discourses in play that construct some students as 'impossible learners', gives access to 'the proliferation of discourses of the educational Other' (p.97). In that sense, this research demonstrates how discourses about what students are or ought to become serve as the basis for hierarchizing possible student positions, and in that creating the conditions for both inclusion and exclusion.

Recent analyses of subject positions in education have pointed to a discourse of individualization and responsibilization constructing the ideal student as competent (Sjöberg, 2014), self-regulated, and entrepreneurial (Bradbury, 2019; Brunila, 2012a; Hilt et al., 2019). On the other hand, the 'proliferation of educational Others' (Youdell, 2006) that is generated still includes specific categories that are 'at risk', related to ethnicity, gender, ability, etc, but also creates new ones, e.g. the resilient/non resilient student (Brunila, 2012b), perpetuating the targeting of the individual as the locus for tackling socially produced distress. Thus, in our endeavour to better understand subject positions concerning the student-in-community in educational literature, we aim to explore the available subject positions and the ways in which different positions are created in relation to the reasoning about community relationships and practices, and how community members should relate to each other.

Metaphors about community in influential educational research

Seeing school as a community where the importance of relationships is emphasized is not new in educational theory. Dewey's educational philosophy was closely related to his goal to develop democracy in education where schools were to him 'embryonic' communities of life in which education should be organically democratic and teachers and students were to be members of a community, aiming together to learn through meaningful experiences (Dewey, 1900/2017). However, although the notion of a community has frequently been used to describe educational settings, the ways in which it is conceptualized throughout studies is not universal (Fendler, 2006; Roth & Lee, 2006). In our previous study (Patoulioti & Nilholm, 2023), we identified four metaphors underlying the understanding of community in a sample of 50 highly cited articles in the WoS that focused on the notion of 'community'. Community was found to be described with the underlying metaphors of:

A. Idealized-Home: schools and classrooms that are attentive to and nurture children's as well as adults' social needs. Importance is placed on personal relationships, helping, and being supportive.

B. Idealized-Polis: a 'small republic' of democratic governance, with members who share certain ideals, and who discuss and co-decide about important issues.

C. Idealized-Academia: schools and classrooms seen through the image of existing knowledgeable communities and their co-operative and communicative practices to which students become enculturated, through collaboration.

D. Power-Resisting Space: schools and classrooms where teachers, and to some extent students, challenge power and create a space where multiple narratives can co-exist. Privileges and oppressions can be exposed and teachers, and to some extent students, actively work to interrupt the ways power shapes relationships and knowledge.

Overall, talking about schools as communities often emphasizes communicative practices, dialogue, sharing of ideas, and collaborations that allow for caring relationships to be formed between individuals beyond differences or identities assumed based on people's belonging to specific social groups. As such, the organization of schooling and even of society as a community encompasses for several scholars (e.g. Slee 2019; Thomas and Macnab, 2019) an alternative possibility that opposes the dominating ethos of competitive individualism, which underlies not only policies, but an overall culture that normalizes exclusion. This opposition can be seen as resistance towards a particular technique or form of power, that of subjection, which ties individuals to themselves, hence as an instance in which relations of power and their workings can be located (Foucault, 1982, p. 780). Based on this approach to power, subjects are shaped exactly through 'a double process of the actions of power in relation to selves, that is both negative and positive' (Heyes, 2010, p. 160), i.e. power not only restricts the subjects' possibilities for action, but also enables action that becomes thinkable and available from the particular subject position created. Thus, between oppositional attempts to define students and their appropriate education we aim at providing an analysis that can establish an image of the students as subjects within a discourse of schools-as-communities, as this discourse is used to oppose (or not oppose) how subjects are formed within school contexts formed as spaces of competition and individualization. In other words, our aim is to examine how students are positioned in influential educational research about school and classroom communities and how students' subject positions in a community discourse can be related to the subject positions constructed in other educational discourses.

Research questions

Based on our interest in identifying the ways in which students are discursively positioned as subjects in research within which they are seen as members of classroom and school communities, we approach our sampled texts with two analytical foci in mind. First, we are looking at the subject positions that are constituted and assigned to students within different understandings of community

(the four metaphors). Secondly, we are looking at the relationships between subject positions, and especially how students are positioned in relation to each other and in relation to teachers. By identifying how subject positions relate to each other, we discuss consequences related to assigned positions. Thus, the research questions guiding this analysis are:

- What subject positions are students ascribed within each metaphor about community?
- How are subject positions of adults and students within each metaphor related to each other?
- Which other subject positions could potentially be available?

Discoursive subject positions and potentials

Theoretical and methodological considerations

Our approach to discourse derives from an understanding of it as a corpus of knowledge statements, encompassing its own rules of statement production, the organization of which is regular and systematic, allowing for the constitution and recognition of various objects of knowledge (Kendall & Wickham, 1999). Educational research is but one of several sources of such statements about understanding schools and classrooms as communities. Hall (2001, p. 73) argues that when statements are about subjects, the discourses become personified and certain attributes of the subjects are discerned and emphasized depending on the existing knowledge about them. The notion of the subject 'captures the possibility of being a certain kind of person', a possibility understood as being historically contingent and not as a general truth about human nature (Heyes, 2010, p. 159), although from within the discourse this contingency becomes concealed. Subject positions are thus constituted within discourse, and Foucault (1982, p. 792) further argues that one's action upon the actions of others is permitted through a system of differentiations, i.e. relations between positions that are established through law or

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status. These differentiations operate both as the conditions and results of actions, in the sense that the position functions as a vengeance point for speaking one's truth and for conducting oneself (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008, p. 117). Thus, subject positions in discourse are relational in the sense that their function and the possibilities and limitations of thinking about the self and being thought about by others is contingent on how the position is constructed in relation to other subject positions within the same discourse. Moreover, subject positions both enable and constrain action (Heyes, 2010, p. 161) in the sense that power not only works on the person in oppressive ways, but also allows us to be distinctive individuals (p.170). In order to examine these processes, the present study relies on discourse analysis guided by the notion of subject position (Foucault, 1982; Kendall & Wickham, 1999). In the creation of subject positions in discourse, power is exercised, in the sense that certain available knowledges and rationales – 'laws of truth'– define one's possibilities for action and the practices in which one is involved. In that sense, people become subjected to power – hence, that form of power is one of subjection -rather than one of domination or exploitation (Foucault, 1982, pp. 781–782). However, power always finds resistance, and from resistances, Foucault (1982, p. 780) proposes to begin empirical analyses. In other words, instead of solely focusing on internal rationalities, he suggests examining the strategies employed to dismantle them. For that, we turn to statements about the school that -at least at first appearance- depart from non-dominant discourses and offer alternative rationalizations, in which subject positions are also constructed differently.

One important issue to consider when conducting discourse analysis is the researcher's position, because we cannot step out of discourse to analyse it and it is only from within discourse that one speaks (I. Parker, 1994). The choices regarding how to conduct such an analysis reveal, to some degree, the position from which we approach the texts we are analysing, and we have remained reflective about both our personal and epistemological preconceptions throughout the process of the analysis (Willig, 2013, p. 10). To be more explicit, our interest in alternative student subjectivities stems from a concern about the continued

undermining of the relationship between school and democracy. Thus, from our perspective, understanding the subject positions that are made available and how they are constituted through discourse is important for the possibilities opening up, once these positions are understood, for re-constituting ourselves by engaging in alternative discursive practices, or as Foucault (1982, 785) puts it, 'to promote new forms of subjectivity'. Hence, the questions that arise in our approach concern the consequences of the ascribed subject positions in different metaphorical understandings of community and other subject positions that might be available given other discourses.

Turning to influential research as analytical material

The first step in our analysis of subject positions was to build a corpus of statements (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008; Hall, 2001; Kendall & Wickham, 1999) about the student in influential research about educational communities. The procedure followed the steps in the SMART methodology for reviewing research with a focus on mapping and analysing influential research (Nilholm, 2017). A sample of highly cited articles was thus searched for in the WoS database because of its recognition in the field as a database with high standards for selecting what research to include, as well as because it provides information about the number of times papers have been cited, which is our indicator of the influence of articles.

Searches were made in May and June 2021 in WoS with the words 'communit*' in the title AND 'educati* OR school OR classroom' in the topic of the papers. The results were listed from the most to the least cited. The first author then read through all the abstracts in the list, until the first 700 most cited papers were screened. Results in which schools and classrooms were referred to as communities and in which the focus was on preschool, primary, and/or secondary schools were included in the final sample. In contrast, results that referred to other kinds of classrooms, e.g., in higher education or at the post-secondary level, were excluded. That process led to a final corpus of 50 papers, the most influential of

which was cited 791 times at the time of sampling, while the least cited papers were referenced 26 times.

Identifying subject positions and common assumptions – A thematic approach

The initial coding considered key features of the papers, such as the date of publication, the journal, and the genre of the paper (empirical, review, or positional). The papers in the sample were published between 1989 and 2017 with 36 of the papers coded as empirical studies, 12 as positional papers, and 2 as reviews. The first round of analyses was reported in a previous article, and the analysis identified four metaphors about community in influential educational research and their relation to the main theoretical traditions that informed the papers (Patoulioti & Nilholm, 2023). A new round of reading and coding of excerpts took place for the purpose of the present study. This process took place between November 2022 and January 2023, almost a year after the previous analytical phase was completed. This time we were interested in creating a corpus of statements about the student in the community, thus the focus was on identifying and coding descriptive sentences concerning the position of students (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008; Hall, 2001; Kendall & Wickham, 1999).

All 50 papers were already uploaded to a folder in the Nvivo software for qualitative analysis. Moreover, each paper had been linked to a memo, in which contextualizing information was summarized, including the topic, aim, theoretical tradition, methodological approach, main findings, and understanding of community. These memos and each paper were read again in relation to the position of students in the community and large excerpts of the texts that were relevant to answering our research questions were identified (Braun & Clarke, 2022, pp. 53–54), with a focus on descriptions of students-in-the-community. Subject positions were identified in excerpts of each text. These excerpts were coded and labelled with the subject position identified in their content, e.g. 'committed to the community' in Strike (1999, p. 69).

The selected excerpts were subsequently distributed in two categories related to our first two research questions. For the first research question, about the subject positions, excerpts were coded in a broad category labelled 'Elements constituting the position'. These excerpts could be read as answers to the question of how students are described in the paper. For the second research question, about the relationships between positions, descriptions of teachers and other adults involved in the descriptions of students and the relationships between students and adults were coded in the broad category 'Relations between subjects'.

As explained earlier, the relation between subject positions is not limited to direct descriptions of relationships between subjects. The descriptions of teachers and other adults were coded based on the theoretical assumption that positions are relational within a discursive system based on a system of differentiations between subjects (Foucault 1982, p. 792), where positions are constructed in relation to other subject positions within the same discourse (see section 'Theoretical and methodological approach'). Hence, each selected excerpt was labelled with a short sentence summarizing analytically the content captured in its coding (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 52), in relation to the main idea about the students (or the adults) that was expressed. Excerpts were always read in relation to the community metaphor to which they had previously been assigned. The subject positions identified in each paper of each category and the elements (assumptions) constituting the positions were then thematized (Braun & Clarke, 2022) and the most common underlying theme in each category is presented in the next section. These themes were the ones that we identified as assumptions underlying all the subject positions in the category and were considered the main findings of this study. The whole process was continuously discussed between the two authors of the present study, both in text and in direct communication, in a reflective and critical manner aiming at gaining more nuanced and richer insights and providing credibility checks (Willig, 2013, p. 207).

In the following section, we present our main findings about the subject positions that students are ascribed in influential research

about school and classroom communities, with examples of quotations that characteristically indicate the main assumptions that shape these positions.

Findings

Between vulnerability and liberation

In this section we answer the first and the second research questions of this study. Thus, the subject positions of students are analysed in relation to the previously identified dominant understandings of community, i.e. the four underlying metaphors. Moreover, we analyse the relations between the identified positions within each metaphor. The third research question will be addressed in the Discussion. Through our analysis of students' positions within school and classroom communities based on the four different metaphors about community, we have identified the student-subject and the main elements that constitute each position, as well as the ways in which students are also positioned in relation to adults within the community. Thus, subject positions are described in relation to the discourses that allow for the positions and the elements that constitute them to make sense. Regarding these discourses, the student-subjects with which research seems to be commonly concerned within each metaphorical category of community have been labelled as follows: the 'vulnerable developing person' in the Idealized-Home metaphor, the 'initiated-to-our-norms newcomer' in the Idealized-Polis metaphor, the 'collective meaning-maker' in the Idealized-Academia metaphor, and 'the student to be liberated' in the Power-Resisting Space metaphor. The main assumptions about students within each category are analysed, and the created subject positions are also sketched out. The excerpts presented in the following sections were selected because of clearly expressing the identified subject positions and discourses, as well as the contradictions and discontinuities within the category.

Idealized-Home: protecting the 'vulnerable developing person'

In the sixteen papers that were analysed in this category, research primarily focuses on the binary alienation/belonging and the impact of close, caring relationships on students' motivation and performance. The subject positions identified in this category of papers are described and related to an implied danger of unfulfilled potential and imbalanced development. Thus, we describe the main subject positions and assumptions that constitute the discourse in which students, also in relation to teachers, are ascribed positions related to an overall theme of the student as a 'vulnerable developing person'. In the descriptions of students in the papers of the Idealized-Home category, the dangers of alienation and the benefits of a sense of belonging are seen as influencing the process of social development. When cared for and learning to care for others, students are presumably given opportunities to smoothly develop both socially and emotionally and to avoid the dangers of alienation. Students who are alienated do not sense their own importance and cannot rely on other members of the school community, whether teachers or peers, to meet their needs. While they may have a shared emotional connection and recognize the group's importance to them, their needs to experience relatedness are not always addressed (Osterman, 2000, p. 360).

A contrary image is painted when students are described in the context of the school community: Students experience the school as a community when their needs for belonging, autonomy, and competence are met within that setting. Students in such a community feel that they are respected, valued and cared about by the other community members, and that they make meaningful contributions to the group's plans and activities (Battistich et al., 1995, p. 629).

In these two statements about students, emotional alienation at school is seen as a barrier, preventing students from accessing a valuable benefit that non-alienated peers enjoy, namely the experience of relatedness and significance with others. This concern, which is encountered in most of the papers in this category, is presented as particularly alarming because this

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deprivation harms two important aspects: motivation for participation is educational activities and the development of students' social skills (Baker et al., 1997; Battistich et al., 1995, 1997; Felner et al., 2001, 2007; Osterman, 2000; Sergiovanni, 1994b). Overall, the ultimate benefit of a caring environment appears to encompass multidimensional development, with all aspects reaching their optimal levels. Particularly, the social and emotional aspects are emphasized, as their development is argued to be neglected in schools lacking a sense of community. This line of thinking opens a domain for interventions aiming at the training of social skills and the support of students' well-being through social activities.

Battistich et al. (1997, p. 138) provide a description of their guidelines of intervention to support social, ethical 'but ultimately also intellectual' development, positioning students-in-community as collaborating, helpful, reflective of and understanding each other's' experiences and behaviours, demonstrating prosocial values of 'fairness, concern and respect for others', developing social competencies and exercising autonomy in their participation in decision making about 'classroom norms, rules, and activities'. Here, a desirable form of sociability is introduced, as opportunities are offered to participate in practices seen as contributing to the ultimate goal of overcoming alienation. In this combination of techniques, a deep knowing of the other (the classmate, the student, or the group member) is expected to be achieved, pointing to a distinction between the student-member, who is personally known and understood by others and an alienated, disengaged subject, who can be misunderstood. Thus, the social development of the child is a central concern in this discourse, and it appears to be threatened by an imbalance in the process.

Regarding the position of students and teachers in the community, teachers are also described as benefiting from such an environment and as a result their sensitivity towards their students is presumed to increase, as in the example by McGinty et al. (2008, p. 366), where the quality of preschool education is related to teachers' sense of positive community. When students as members of a community are described as feeling they have found a home (e.g.

Grisham & Wolsey, 2006, p. 649), it is the teachers that are assumed to create it, as a safe and accepting environment. Affection is assumed to be self-evident as it becomes apparent in statements such as, '(c)hildren are accepted and loved because that is the way one treats community members' (Sergiovanni, 1994b, p. 222). Competition, which is rewarded in society but also in school in the way that it is traditionally organized as well as in school reformed by neoliberal policies, is understood as a barrier to intrinsic motivation, as in Ciani et al. (2010, p. 89) who point out the importance of researching 'how to maintain students' motivation to learn amidst performance pressures'. However, the danger of reduced motivation and, hence, unfulfilled potential lurks, for example when school fails to remove other 'developmentally hazardous conditions that may be present in the school context' (Felner et al., 2007, p. 210). This hazard-free, home-like space is created by teachers, but the expected outcome of the creation of such an environment for students can vary, as in the following example where Felner et al. describe the idea behind developing their project that fosters small learning communities in schools:

> How do we create educational contexts in which all students are nurtured and challenged in ways that lead them to be highly effective learners, to perform and achieve at high levels, and to be healthy, responsible, and successful citizens in our democracy? (2001, p. 190)

This sentence brings together categories that seem arbitrarily grouped and assembles them to depict a successfully completed development: academic achievement, health, responsibility, and success, jointly composing the educated citizen of 'our' democracy. What becomes apparent in this description is the discursive possibility of merging the two ideas about students' position that have been kept apart in other accounts about the importance of turning schools into communities, namely the individualistic idea that students' primary purpose in school is to perform vs. to grow up emotionally and socially balanced. These two discourses do not appear as oppositional in this context, but their merging becomes possible, when the close bonds emerging in 'small communities' are part of the techniques used to reach close-ended educational outcomes.

The discourse of community becomes often subordinated to a discourse about efficiency and achievement, thus the potential of forming schooling with an alternative organizing principle fades, as the students' individual, measurable development and performance remain the main objects of concern. One study in this category actually problematizes the use of the concept of community in schools that were promoted as both caring communities and excellence-oriented (Savage, 2011). In such contexts achievement ended up becoming a condition for belonging and receiving the support of the caring community, where 'underachievers' (used to) inhabit positions that (were) pathologized and symptomized as deficient and atypical (...), suggesting a school community in which performance is a prime ingredient for belonging and acceptance' (Savage, 2011). In general, students' positions in the community as Idealized-Home, are shaped in the intersection of experiences of collaborating and supporting each other in a family-like context created by teachers that also share a sense of community, while practices are commonly motivated on the assumed fragility of the process of development and the potential dangers of the process taking an unpredicted path.

Idealized-Polis: sharing a relatable morality with 'the initiated-to-our-norms newcomer'

Morality related to democratic schooling and future citizenship are the most central notions in the ten papers in this category, and one of the main foci in these papers is students' involvement in practices aimed at forming them as citizens. In this section we present excerpts that exemplify the most common theme related to the assignment of subject positions to students, namely the potential role of school in cultivating a certain type of democratic sociability that overcomes alienation through a shared 'mindset' offered by an Idealized-Polis school community. Adults are seen as responsible to invite students to embrace the values and ideals constituting their shared mindset, and based on that, students are constructed as 'initiated to-our-norms newcomers'. Alienation is problematized in this category, but the emphasis of the school's response to alienation shifts from extending the emotional family

bonds and supporting one's full development to providing a higher-order common ideal that is to be communicated to and internalized by students.

An emphasis on the need for coherent and relatable values and practices as a response to the fragmented experience of the alienating modern society constitutes the student as in need to share something valuable with everyone else in the community, that school and especially teachers can convey. As Strike (1999, p. 69) characteristically writes: 'When schools are communities … [t]heir members can see themselves as engaged in a shared project to which they are committed, and they can be committed to one another for this reason'.

Thus, in the Idealized-Polis relationships among members do not need to be direct but can be mediated through their relationship to the Polis itself, in this case the school. Moreover, the idea of moral coherence, which is also reflected in common goals, aspirations, and meaning making, is seen as central in the community and, hence, as central in shaping the subject as a newcomer whose commitment to the community is at stake.

Participation in decision making that includes the voices of as many members as possible is presented as preparing for regular democratic dialogue, which is considered to enable another kind of authentic relationships in the community – beyond kinship. This includes participatory school governance (Oser et al., 2008; L. Parker & Raihani, 2011; Power, 1988; Strike, 1993, 1999, 2000, 2004), often involving students' direct participation in decision-making processes about school affairs. That way, certain skills are to be exercised, the most emphasized among which being cooperation between members and understanding of decision-making processes, as students develop their democratic morality and are encouraged to practice it (Oser et al., 2008; Power, 1988). In this context, students' position is that of beneficiaries of democratically made decisions, even when they have not directly influenced decision making. Moreover, the student in a school community that provides a morally coherent context and invites participation is expected to develop into a person who behaves

according to what is considered good, not because they have to, but because they understand how to behave and find it reasonable to do so, e.g. developing self-regulation in accordance to a community they trust (Yowell & Smylie, 1999). However, during their school years, students' commitment to the overall community is seen as being negotiated, and it is the adults' responsibility to remain honest and open so that students' commitment will be earned (Yowell & Smylie, 1999). This process of negotiation is another element that constitutes students' subject position in the school community as newcomers. That is because the outcome of this process appears as potentially leading students to oppose their teachers, when for example the latter's moral teachings are proved untrue in relation to students' out-of-school experiences, and for that notions of adults' honesty and trust-worthiness become central in this research (Oser et al., 2008; Parker & Raihani, 2011, pp. 725–727; Power, 1988).

Educational practices are, therefore, supposed to be re-shaped to become engaging and to allow identification with group norms. However, although institutionalizing collective decision making at school is a re-emerging topic in most papers in this category, with varying degrees of influence assumed for students, little space is allowed for the group's norms to be questioned. In fact, the responsibility falls on adults to make sure that they are themselves engaged and 'inviting' enough to persuade the young about the value of what they want to share. Thus, students are positioned as innately capable of becoming moral citizens, but at the same time as 'at risk' of not becoming so, depending on the social context in which they will be educated and the ability of such a context to appeal to them. The main assumption that is expressed in this student position is that through education, not only will students build skills that will allow them to participate in collective decision making (as Habermasian 'competent speakers' in a universal dialogue in Strike, 1993, p. 266), but they will also acquire the capacity to see what is valuable in the world. This becomes visible in the following question that the author considers crucial: How can we help students to see the education they are offered as expressing a praiseworthy set of goals and values which they share

with us because they are the goals and values of communities of which we and they are members? (Strike, 2004, p. 219).

Adults are positioned as already inhabiting the world – as the hosts responsible for welcoming student-newcomers – and students need to find their place in the world presented. In two different articles, teachers in the school community are described as 'the first among equals', due to their experience and knowledge (Strike, 1993, pp. 168, 170, 171) and their role as consultants and not as authorities (Power 1988, 198). Further, much depends on adults' worldview, their honesty, and their passion, e.g., Wood (2014, p. 591) makes the point that the selection of specific topics by different teachers of citizenship education 'appeared to give certain topics/issues status and significance, thus reinforcing students' perceptions that they were "important"'. In that sense, although direct bonds are not a primary concern, the educational relation is still assumed to be emotionally mediated, as teachers' selection and presentation of content is presumed to reflect their own appreciation of certain aspects of it, creating a shared commonality in the group. Being a student in a school that is like an Idealized-Polis community, in other words becoming subjected to the processes that will persuade one to trust the larger community, is thus constructed as an indispensable part of avoiding the dangers of alienation.

Idealized-Academia: knowing for themselves by working together as 'collective meaning-makers'

The analysis of the 19 sampled papers with an Idealized-Academia metaphor identified subject positions constructed within a discourse about knowledge acquisition as a collective endeavour, in which students negotiate it through discussion and exercise it in practices that characterize knowledgeable communities. Students' willingness to become and remain engaged in classroom activities is described as awakened in such classrooms, in contrast to disciplined and monological classrooms that are described as having the opposite effect. Both students' and teachers' positions are constructed in this collective endeavour for meaning making, the first by participating in genuine experiences that can shape

them as 'collective meaning makers', and the latter by enabling the emergence of these experiences.

While in the previous two categories the focus is mostly on non-academic school outcomes, the main focus in this strand of research is on students' subject learning and knowledge acquisition. Students here are positioned as intellectuals in the making, capable of having sophisticated conversations about science and other academic subjects, also including intellectual activities such as reading literature (Cremin et al., 2009) or co-writing a musical (Kumpulainen, Mikkola and Jaatinen, 2014). For example, Roth (1995, p. 479), describing whole class discussions as part of an engineering project, writes: During this time, one of the teachers would point out features in children's joining or strengthening techniques that are also used by professional engineers; or students would present what they had done to date, the problems they had encountered, and how they had solved them.

Students do not appear just to learn something, but also to build a certain identity in relation to the knowledge and related practices and habits they are acquiring, e.g. the identity of the cultivated reader (Cremin et al., 2009), or the collaborative inquirer (Evnitskaya & Morton, 2011; Kumpulainen et al., 2014). As 'real issues [are] debated and discussed, and tough questions [are] always on the table' (Herrenkohl et al., 1999, p. 486), students are positioned as already interested and capable of dealing with real issues from a position of an emerging academic skilfulness.

That student-subject who is depicted as capable of understanding and using specialized knowledge in conversation with peers is characterized by a desire and willingness to participate in intellectual activities when given the opportunity, and to build habits that are central to already knowledgeable communities, such as scientists, engineers or literature readers. That willingness characterizes the relationship between students as well. What is at stake is students' engagement with the academic subjects, and their working together with tasks relevant to their lives and interests is presented as key to ensuring that engagement will persist. The identities that are cultivated derive from students' membership in newly shaped communities where members collectively research

and discuss issues to co-construct knowledge and meaning. Ultimately, desirable subject positions that are created concern persons entitled to the 'common' good of knowledge. Educational practices are being reshaped to prioritize dialogue over monologue, and that is seen as facilitating and cultivating a double entitlement for students, namely the ability to use knowledge instead of simply memorizing it, and the opportunity to engage in dialogue and action to test out ideas, promoting active participation. Meaning making is localized in 'dialogical activities rather than unilateral communication between student and teacher' (Kovalainen & Kumpulainen, 2005, p. 241). The 'collective meaning-maker' is contrasted to the passive student who memorizes de-contextualized information and repeats it in good time to demonstrate learning. Students are also positioned as becoming increasingly independent from teachers, as they achieve their goals cooperatively with their peers and with the knowledge available in the broader community of experts.

However, in some cases certain 'categories' of students can be seen as remaining in the 'waiting room' for the position of a 'collective meaning maker'. These students, described for example as second-language students (Hufferd-Ackles et al., 2004), exceptional/diverse children, or struggling (compared to advanced) learners (Tomlinson et al., 1997), can fully claim the position only after they acquire the necessary basic skills for participation. More specifically, it is accepted that there are prerequisites for entering the community, not in terms of rules or any authority deciding about it, but in terms of the very lay-out of the communal practices themselves. These practices are available for anyone to join as they gradually acquire at least the minimum capacity to participate and to contribute to the ongoing dialogues. However, this is not always the case, as, for example, in an intervention described by García-Carrión and Díez-Palomar (2015) in which all students in the studied schools were given opportunities to collaborate by participating in small heterogenous groups of students and adult volunteers from the community. Overall, though, the actual ability to speak becomes a central element in the discourse about students who are 'collective

meaning makers' and who are both seen as capable of using their knowledge in meaningful and relevant ways and expected to do so. Despite the obvious contrast of the 'collective meaning maker' to the traditional image of the passive student, when the teachers' position is considered more light is shed on understanding the position of the student. Teachers are described as facilitators of participation (e.g. Goos, 2004, p. 282), orchestrators of activities (Roth, 1995, p. 247), designers of educational experiences, and architects of communities of learners (Tomlinson et al., 1997). These metaphorical characterizations draw from a vocabulary of highly specialized professionals who can also be related to a sophisticated audience and can be responsive to very particular individual needs. On the other hand, in a few cases students and teachers are both positioned as collaborators, for example, when they are participating in activities with a common aim such as collaborating through on-line media to create a school musical, as described and analysed in Kumpulainen et al. (2014). There, the creative enrichment of the community is presented as equally important to individual gains from participating in the community, with the authors emphasizing 'the collaborative nature of the students' creative activity' (Kumpulainen et al., 2014, p. 67). Thus, two different patterns of relationships are constructed as opposing and replacing the traditional, unequal relationship between teacher and student: either a relationship between providers and users of services or a relationship between collaborative participants in intellectual activities.

The Power-Resisting Space: students 'to be liberated' are no one's others

In the five papers that were analysed in the category of community as a Power-Resisting Space, what is emphasized is the historical and situated production of student-subjects per se. Papers in this category position students as subjected to inequalities that influence the way they make sense of themselves and others. Much of the focus is on educators who are aware of and knowledgeable about the complex ways in which inequalities in society are reproduced and sustained. Education is seen as a context in which different norms can be established, and existing norms can be

challenged. In that sense, students are constructed as a diverse group representing different ways of experiencing the world and who are subjected to a universalizing process of meaning-making out of these experiences. The analysed papers in this category identify and expose underlying assumptions in education about the superiority of Western reasoning, whiteness, masculinity, intellectual and physical ability, and verbal communication. The students who are the focus of this area of research are schooled in contexts where educators are striving to resist these assumptions. All these and other norms can be seen as issues that communities need to consider if they are to become inclusive spaces – 'communities of difference' as Fine, Weis and Powell (1997) and Furman (1998) refer to these. In communities of that kind, educational spaces are represented as becoming more hospitable when existing norms that divide and marginalize are resisted. There, members can experience and experiment with different norms, such as when participation in common activities is normalized, without being dependent on predetermined expressive abilities (Berry, 2006; Kliewer et al., 2004). Thus, the subject in this kind of community is produced through practices of resistance that aim for liberation, i.e., students are 'to be liberated' in order to understand themselves and be understood as no-one's others.

Notions such as participation and belonging are not adopted uncritically in this strand of research; on the contrary, they become problematized. The community is seen as a locus for the examination of the relationship between macro-assumptions and the way these shape the group's existing practices and beliefs. For example, Fasheh (1990, p. 31), writing about the education of Palestinian children, criticizes the hegemonic imposition of Western-style education as superior and universal and argues for the importance of an education that can cultivate a communal feeling of self-worth and empowerment for a community that 'has been denied the value of their experience and robbed of their voice'. This problematization is based on two oppositional sides of the students' position that is shaped by power – the privileged and the marginalized student. In terms of existing norms, some students get to 'naturally' belong, while some tend to be understood as the

'Other'. In Fasheh's (1990) paper, for example, the criticized privileged position is that of the Western student, while the 'othered' student is the child of the oppressed non-Western community. For the latter, it is argued that an education relevant to their community can allow them to become empowered as students and as members of the overall community. Moving beyond the binary privileged/ marginalized is seen as the quest of a school or classroom community that is a Power-Resisting Space. The following citation demonstrates what situating certain students' marginalization can look like in this strand of research.

As was the case with particular social classes from previous centuries, children with construed significant developmental disabilities are today primarily considered to be naturally illiterate — cerebrally unable to master the sequenced subskills thought to precede literate citizenship. While the assumed natural literacy limitations ascribed in previous eras to slaves or agrarian workers have come to be understood as the cultural imposition of sub-literacy on one class by another more powerful group, the severely limited literacy skills associated today with children labelled developmentally disabled are considered to be organic and innate (Kliewer et al., 2004, p. 379).

This way of thinking about the norms around which education is organized is proposed as a way to re-shape school and classroom practices. Further, it is seen as dependent on teachers' awareness about and responsiveness to the historicity of social inequalities. Among the practices that should be contributing to the liberation of students are deep and difficult discussions and use of the subject matter to think from different perspectives (Fine et al., 1997), the inclusion of multiple narratives and ways of narrating (Kliewer et al., 2004), and a close examination of the way in which the curriculum and other discourses in school attempt to restrict the ways in which students can understand their selves and their experiences (Furman, 1998). In these practices, politically aware students are to be shaped, that can recognise as such theirs and others' oppression and marginalization, as well as their own and others' privileges.

The student within this educational discourse is presented as both being in a process of becoming socialized in a world falsely presented as meritocratic and fair and of being able to question this 'truth' and the norms that sustain it, if helped by adults who are dedicated to justice. This is achieved when educators 'throw their bodies' (Fine et al., 1997, p. 281) in front of the injustices that shape the educational system and defend their students' right to differ from the norm, by challenging the norm and not the student. The relationship between students is that of becoming allies and so is their relationship with their teachers, although the teachers are the ones who have the responsibility to address injustices. As Furman (1998, p. 319) puts it, both '[e]ducators and students need first to become critical theorists about the beliefs and practices that are barriers to acceptance of otherness'. Another way of producing the student 'to be liberated' is by enacting their right not to be defined negatively in relation to a norm but as a person in their own right. Thus, the school, through community and inclusion, becomes a space in which students can have the experience of living with different norms. However, it is acknowledged that achieving the goals of this work is not easy, as Berry (2006) observes, given that the classroom is only one among the many spaces in which social interactions and learning occur. There, teachers' and students' efforts can also be jeopardized by other discourses circulating at schools, e.g. concerning academic ability and gender norms (Berry, 2006, pp. 519–520).

Discussion

A fundamental joint assumption – Are students' being heard?

In this concluding discussion we will discuss the extent to which the subject positions ascribed to students in the different discourses complement or work against each other and how they relate to some prior student positions commonly identified in educational scholarship. Subsequently, to answer our third research question, we will attend to a fundamental joint assumption in the four metaphors having to do with the relation between the adult world and the world of students. In this context,

we will tentatively suggest that the metaphor of the Idealized-Agora, as an educational community allowing space for parrhesia (Foucault, 2001) on the assumptions of radical equality (Rancière, 1991, 1999), opens up for another understanding of student influence over the emergence of community.

Discourse analysis was selected for this study as a way to approach a socially constructed categorization, that of students, and to scrutinize the taken-for-granted ideas that support sub-categorizations. A discourse analysis focuses on texts, and for our study these texts were highly cited journal papers written in English. The focus of such an analysis is not on the intention of the authors of the analysed texts and the openly communicated meaning. On the contrary, with a close reading of knowledge statements about the students-in-the community we looked for the taken-for-granted ideas that make these positions possible. Returning to our aim, and to our third research question (about other potentially available subject positions), we will now look at oppositional attempts to define students and the education they should have in order to relate the identified subject positions of students-in-the-community to existing educational discourses.

To contextualize our findings and to examine them in relation to other potentially available subject positions, we turn to three co-existing dominant educational discourses to which we will refer to as the neoliberal, the progressivist (or student-centred), and the emancipatory. In relation to these three discourses, three respective positions of the student have been identified in the educational literature, which we will refer to as the entrepreneurial (based on Davies and Bansel, 2007), the humanistic (based on Biesta, 1998 and on Watkins, 2007), and the emancipated (based on Bingham and Biesta, 2010) educational subject.

The educational subject in neoliberal and progressivist discourses and the pursuit of self-realization

The entrepreneurial subject is one constructed in relation to notions of individual accountability and responsibility, as advanced in the neoliberal discourse (Davies & Bansel, 2007). The subject of

neoliberal discourse in general is the entrepreneurial subject, and education viewed from this perspective becomes an investment in human capital that can return individuals with increased abilities (Foucault, 2008, p. 229). Students in educational contexts in which they are expected to become skilled in maximizing every opportunity are praised to be 'entrepreneurial actors across all dimensions of their lives' (Brown, 2003). On the other hand, educational discourses that resist such a managerial understanding of the role of education tend to draw either on progressivist conceptions about schooling based on notions of liberal democracy and humanism (Biesta, 1998; Watkins, 2007) or to ideas about the emancipatory power of education, i.e. the capacity of meaningful knowledge to liberate the individual of the constraints of hegemonic forces. Progressivist pedagogical practices are driven by a student-centred ethos and a less intervening role for the teacher (Watkins, 2007, p. 301) in the assumption that this re-distribution of power will create a more equitable environment that values students' agency and freedom (Watkins, 2007, p. 314). In that sense, the humanistic subject of progressivist pedagogies is a self-motivated social being who benefits from an education that contributes to their full self-realization (Popkewitz, 2008).

Students of the Idealized-Home, Idealized-Polis, and Idealized-Academia metaphors seem to waver between the humanistic subject of progressivist discourses and the entrepreneurial, individualistic subject that is commonly constructed in neoliberal discourses. Vulnerable students whose development is threatened to be left incomplete or to take undesirable turns if alienation wins out over community and belonging can find a haven to develop their pro-social skills and self-esteem, with motivational benefits. At the same time, students who have opportunities to practice group organization, co-ordination, and collective decision-making, which are usually associated with democratic life, are presented as learning better, excelling, and thriving – and there the dimension of the collective shrinks. In that sense, the collective cannot be equated with the group, where individuals work on tasks with other individuals, and it cannot be assumed that any collective responsibility will be fostered besides the very specific one regarding the outcome of their joint work.

The emphasis on the individual has been noted by Watkins (2007), who identified a constellation she calls neoliberal progressivism, where the practices of progressive pedagogy are combined with a discourse of efficiency to produce a subjectivity of the teacher who does not teach but who promotes 'a form of "learning management"' (Watkins 2007, 314). Watkins attributes this appropriation of the characteristics of the humanistic subject by neoliberal discourses to the centrality that the individual holds within humanistic discourses, which emphasize individual autonomy, living up to one's potential, the fulfilment of needs, and the pursuit of meaning. While the tenets of neoliberal discourse differ significantly from the humanistic/progressivist, the notorious ability of neoliberalism to appropriate radical concepts has been observed both theoretically and empirically, e.g. in the ways in which the political concept of community has been used to advance neoliberal agendas (Rose, 2000), an issue that is also raised in Savage's (2011) article in our sample. In that sense, when Felner et al. (2001), for example, describe the aim of working in small communities at school as the creation of a robust future citizen of excellence, one can read between the lines and see a neoliberal subject that is combined with a democratic vocabulary. In that sense, student-centred approaches, which have been developed based on a completely different ethics, become objects of appropriation, and turn into individualized techniques that can increase individual performance (as a property and characteristic of the individual) while any importance for the community and for the development of coexistence is side-lined as more or less irrelevant.

The educational subject in emancipatory pedagogical discourses and students' limited voice

When it comes to emancipatory pedagogical discourses, Bingham and Biesta (2010) make a distinction between an emancipated subject understood in psychological terms and one that emphasizes the political character of the emancipated subjectivity. In brief, the difference lies in how one perceives equality between communicating beings, either as the outcome of a process where one part is made equal to the other, or as self-evident and as the

starting point of (pedagogical) interactions. Bingham and Biesta (2010) base their analysis on two examples, one taken from Paulo Freire's educational-philosophical work and one building on Jacque Rancière's political-philosophical work. Through these two examples, the authors demonstrate the qualitative difference between the two positions, as expressed through the figure of the child in the work of Freire and Rancière.

Based on their reading of Freire (2000), Bingham and Biesta (2010) describe students in emancipatory pedagogical contexts as deserving of an education that can liberate them from oppression and that can expose hegemonic ideologies and epistemologies that cultivate dependency between those who lack power and those who hold it. Freire (2000) contrasts these students to those that are produced in conventional schools, which work as 'banking systems'[1] and in which students are forced to internalize slogans that legitimize oppression and to receive the message that they need an authoritarian figure with immediate access to knowledge to communicate it to them. However, Bingham and Biesta (2010, p. 69) argue that students' emancipation in this view is still conceived of in psychological rather than political terms because it is mediated by an education based on Freire's 'problem posing' method, which Bigham and Biesta understand as another kind of 'psychological description', i.e. a need for explanation, before they become emancipated and able to speak with their own voice (2010, p. 71).

Among the four student positions in our findings, the students 'to be liberated' in the Power-Resisting Space metaphor occupy positions that point most directly towards the emancipated subject. In this research, however, it is broadly assumed that teachers have a responsibility to do this work in their classroom. Thus, the students' emancipation depends on teachers and on their bold move to take responsibility for doing this work. As we understand

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[1] Freire (2000, p. 72) explains that in traditional schools education 'becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor'. Hence, in the banking system of education students are restrained to solely storing information.

this move, however, it seems to remain in the realm of an emancipation in psychological/individual terms according to Bingham and Biesta (2010). Teachers and students become a community in the eyes of researchers and, most often, through the efforts of teachers. Less attention is paid to the students' efforts to speak or to their efforts to have a say in what it is ultimately like to live together. Equality between community members is mediated by factors such as seniority, access to certain forms of knowledge, or assumed needs that require specialized services, and even democratic participation becomes possible only after one is enabled for it through education. However, if we think in Dewey's (1931/2011) terms, democracy predates its institutions as a logic that governs relationships.

The student who can speak and the school community as an 'Idealized-Agora'

Turning at last to the Rancièrian approach (1991, 1999), a political conception of emancipated students would recognize them as already capable of inserting themselves in the world and thus as perfectly capable of speaking. 'Speaking' here does not solely refer to the actual act of uttering words, but also to the introduction of oneself into the world, with the certainty that they must be heard, that they are not 'noise' in the ears of others (Rancière, 1999, pp. 29–30). Bingham and Biesta (2010), with Rancière, understand the educational subject in this context as one that is already able to participate. This conception of the student is seen as political rather than psychological because it recognizes that the child is in no need of explanation or of any method to learn how to be free (Bingham & Biesta, 2010, p. 72). Thus, in this perspective, emancipation through education moves away from a conception of children as needing explanation of the world and of their place in it. This educational community is one where equality between parts is already presupposed before they enter the pedagogical relationship.

In Rancière (1999), democratic action concerns the moments at which various parts of the wider community, that have been positioned in their place through a 'partition of the perceptible'

which appears natural and self-evident, claim their entitlement to activities and places that are not theirs and that have not been granted to them. In other words, it is the logic that underpins their positioning and differentiation that is questioned and required to be dismantled and re-imagined, rather than just enlarged to include more individuals in the 'favourable' positions. In that act, the presupposition of equality is manifested, since one part questions the very system of criteria, despite not being entitled to do so, and the very action of granting is destabilized and bypassed. Then, potentially, a space that allows for parrhesia (i.e. speaking truth to power, Foucault, 2001) emerges, and the place where parrhesia used to appear in Athenian democracy is the Agora (Foucault, 2001, p. 22). So here we tentatively propose the metaphor of the Idealized-Agora, of a space or an instance of radical equality, as an addition to the other metaphors, but in which the ability to participate is presupposed and not awarded. We propose this metaphor as a starting point to think of the school as a common space and to be able to analyse communities in instances where they reclaim the dimension of the collective, and where their members act upon their freedom to challenge the logic that partitions the perceptible and to change the practices that shape their subjectivity. This metaphor does resemble that of the Power-Resisting Space in departing from an interest in emancipation, however, neither the outcome nor the process of liberation is pre-defined.

While the open-ended, collective processes of the community in the other four metaphors are intended to shape free and caring subjects, in the combination with close-ended criteria of what counts as such a subject – a comprehensively developed person and citizen, a knowledgeable collaborator or as a student in need of education to become liberated – the 'voice' that speaks can only be heard when saying something that is predictable, within the predefined limits of the desirable. From a place of presupposed equality, however, students are recognised as interested in learning about what-is, but also as both capable and allowed the space to influence their own subjectification (Biesta, 2020). However, it is important to note once again that educational research is one among several discourses available when people

involved in education organize their conduct and it is in students' accounts that one can better understand if and how the identified subject positions and discourses are actively shaping students' subjectivities. Consequently, for educational research we argue that departing from an Idealized-Agora metaphor can potentially contribute to a further theorization of educational communities, with a shift of the gaze to students' efforts of subjectification and to the formation of the collective by the community itself.

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