

Kompetens.
Tre utredningar av begreppets betydelse

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| Sedan mitten av 1990-talet och början av 2000-talet har många pedagogiska teoretiker bytt ut begrepp som kunskap, kvalifikation, bildning och utbildning mot begreppet kompetens. | |
| <p>Begreppet kompetens har beskrivits som ett "tidsenligt begrepp" (Illeris 2013, s. 38), en beskrivning som leder till två frågor: (1) I vilken tid lever vi om kompetensbegreppet är mera passande än andra begrepp som tidigare har varit centrala, såsom bildning, kvalifikation eller expertis? Och (2) vilka semantiska och djupgrammatiska strukturer gör just detta begrepp mera användbart än andra pedagogiska begrepp? Denna pro gradu-avhandling består av tre publicerade artiklar som letar efter svar på den andra frågan.</p> <p>I artikeln "Svårigheter i att definiera begreppet kompetens" (Schaffar 2019). kartläggs de många olika betydelser som kompetens har i det svenska språket. Begreppet "kompetens" används både som ett begrepp för att beskriva interpersonliga och organisationsteoretiska frågor, samt som en beskrivning av en förkroppsligad egenskap hos en enskild individ. Kompetens lyckas därmed omfatta såväl en psykologisk som sociologisk innebörd. Den förra sammanlänkar begreppet med en inre läggning eller disposition. Den senare förbinder begreppet med en kategori som fångar hur uppgifter och maktförhållanden organiseras i offentliga och privata institutioner. En kort historisk översikt visar att "kompetens" har en komplex etymologi som kan förklara dessa olika möjliga användningar och de ontologiska och epistemologiska antaganden som de förutsätter.</p> <p>Artikeln "Competent uses of competence: On the difference between a value-judgement and empirical assessability" (Schaffar 2021) utgör en djupgrammatisk analys av begreppet kompetens. Med hjälp av Wittgensteins distinktion mellan transitiva och intransitiva användningar av begrepp (1965) och Hollands beskrivning av "mastery" (1980) lyfter artikeln fram två betydelser av "att vara kompetent". Att vara kompetent uttrycker å ena sidan en uppskattning av personen i fråga. Det är ett värdeomdöme. Å andra sidan pekar det på en persons (formella) kvalifikationer.</p> <p>Den kontinentala pedagogiska traditionen har beskrivit denna centrala skillnad i pedagogik med hjälp av begreppsparet <i>Bildung</i> och <i>Ausbildung</i> där bildning återspeglar den intransitiva betydelsen i kontrast till utbildning eller träning som vilar på den transitiva betydelsen. Artikeln kritiserar begreppet kompetens för att vara ett svagare teoretiskt begrepp eftersom det osynliggör denna skillnad.</p> <p>Den tredje artikeln "Educating Judgment. Learning from the didactics of philosophy and sloyd" (Schaffar & Kronqvist 2017) fördjupar frågan om hur förmågan att agera i framtida okända situationer, som eftersträvas med begreppet kompetens, konkret kan förverkligas. (1) Att lära sig något implicerar att den kunskap som förmedlades i någon mån överskrider av eleverna eller studerandena. Hur ska lärare och utbildningsprogram konkret förbereda eleverna på framtida, okända uppgifter? (2) Studerande ska även sträva efter att producera arbete av god kvalitet. Hur kan utbildningar hjälpa dem att utveckla sin omdömesförmåga för att skilja mellan bättre och sämre kvalitet? I artikeln jämförs filosofins och slöjdens didaktik. Jämförelsen synliggör hur tätt sammanvävda dessa två utmaningar är i alla undervisningssituationer. Att utveckla förmågan att göra omdömen om vad som utgör god kvalitet innebär att man förmår se vad som är viktigt i den särskilda situationen som man befinner sig och ska utföra sitt arbete i. Det i sin tur låter studerande utveckla en beredskap att även kunna (re)agera i okända, framtida situationer.</p> <p>Som helhet kritiserar denna pro gradu-avhandling införandet av begreppet kompetens som ett centralt teoretiskt och utbildningspolitiskt begrepp och visar hur andra begrepp och begreppspar bättre tydliggör de förmågor som begreppet använts för att uppmärksamma.</p> | |
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Inledning

Kompetens – ett tidsenligt begrepp?

Sedan mitten av 1990-talet/början av 2000-talet har många pedagogiska teoretiker bytt ut begrepp som kunskap, kvalifikation, bildning och utbildning mot begreppet kompetens. Knud Illeris bok *Kompetens. Vad, varför, hur* (2013) har inom den nordiska kontexten blivit en av de centrala källorna i diskussionen kring begreppet. Illeris har skrivit och forskat kring livslångt lärande och utvecklat lärandeteorier inom vuxen- och yrkespedagogik. Han har även medverkat i nationella arbetsgrupper som hjälpte att lansera kompetensbegreppets genombrott på policy-nivå.

I en bisats beskriver Illeris begreppet kompetens som ett ”tidsenligt begrepp” (ibid 2013, s. 38), en beskrivning som väckte mitt intresse och som jag allt eftersom har kommit tillbaka till. Två frågor uppstår från denna formulering: (1) Vilken tid lever vi i som gör kompetensbegreppet mera passande än andra begrepp som till dess har varit centrala, liksom bildning, kvalifikation eller expertis? Och (2) vilka semantiska och djupgrammatiska strukturer gör just detta begrepp mera användbart än andra pedagogiska begrepp?

I tre artiklar, som samlas i denna pro-gradu-avhandling, har jag letat efter svar på fram för allt den andra frågan.

1. Illeris skriver i bokens inledning att fast begreppet kompetens har blivit ”ett av de mest centrala begreppen inom utbildning och management, både internationellt och i Danmark”, så råder ”en väldigt stor osäkerhet om vad kompetens är, det vill säga vad ordet innehåller och hänvisar till. Vad är det speciella med kompetens, till exempel i förhållande till färdighet, kvalifikation eller bildning?” (Illeris, 2013, s. 11). Medan Illeris inte verkar förvånas över hur ett begrepp kan få stor genomslagskraft och ersätta andra centrala teoretiska begrepp, samtidigt som det råder ”väldigt stor oklarhet” om vad begreppet egentligen innebär, blir denna spänning utgångspunkten för artikeln ”Svårigheter i att definiera begreppet kompetens” (Schaffar 2019). I artikeln kartlägger jag till att börja med de många olika betydelser som kompetens har i det svenska språket. Begreppet ”kompetens” används både som ett begrepp för att beskriva interpersonella och organisationsteoretiska frågor, samt som en beskrivning av en förkroppsligad egenskap hos en enskild individ. Kompetens lyckas därmed bära på både en psykologisk innebörd av en inre läggning eller disposition och en sociologisk betydelse som en kategori som organiserar uppgifter och maktförhållanden i offentliga och privata institutioner.

En kort historisk översikt visar att "kompetens" har en komplex etymologi som kan förklara dessa många möjliga användningar och de olika ontologiska och epistemologiska antaganden som uppstår ur dem. Vid en ytlig betraktelse verkar kompetens kunna vara ett mycket behövligt begrepp som möjliggör att övervinna interna teoretiska kommunikationsproblem inom den pedagogiska vetenskapen. Vid närmare betraktelse skapar dock just detta problem.

Begrepp behöver definieras entydigt för att möjliggöra empiriska mätningar. På det viset överraskar det att just kompetens med sitt mångfacetterade betydelsespektrum har intagit en central plats inom den empiriska pedagogiska forskningen. Vid strävan efter entydighet riskerar man att lämna viktiga meningsfulla användningsområden av ett begrepp utanför det som en empirisk studie mäter och uttalar sig om. Risken är att enbart det som är mätbart träder i förgrunden av den vetenskapliga och offentliga diskussionen och att en viss ontologisk läsning inom en viss vetenskaplig gren (t.ex. den psykologiska) osynliggör andra aspekter av begreppet (t.ex. sociologiska eller etiska betydelser). Artikeln uppmanar därför att se aktsamt och kritiskt på denna situation. Man behöver fråga vilka samhällspolitiska intressen som finns i att lyfta fram och empiriskt fokusera på vissa aspekter av ett komplext begrepp, medan man låter andra aspekter förbli osynliga.

Situationen för den pedagogiska diskussionen försvåras ytterligare när man ser att de senaste decennierna kännetecknas av en stark globaliserad diskussion och jämförelse av pedagogiska resultat. Det visar sig dock att det är allt svårare att formulera kritik mot den allt större påverkan av global nyliberal intressepolitik på den nationella pedagogiska verksamheten i den föreliggande situationen. Artikeln beskriver hur problem inte bara uppstår på grund av att ett begrepp kan ha olika betydelser (som t.ex. kompetens), utan samma pedagogiska, politiska eller institutionella företeelse kan beskrivas med olika begrepp. Beroende på sammanhanget kan begreppet kompetens användas synonymt med lärandemål, utbildningsresultat eller förutsättningar för att utföra ett arbete. Att pedagogisk teori allt mera använder begrepp som undanlider samhällelig kritik spelar den rådande globala maktbalansen och en instrumentalisering av pedagogisk verksamhet i handen.

2. Den andra artikeln "Competent uses of competence: On the difference between a value-judgement and empirical assessability" (Schaffar 2021) fördjupar denna kritik med en djupgramatisk analys av begreppet kompetens. Med hjälp av Wittgensteins distinktion mellan transitiva och intransitiva användningar av begrepp (1965) och Hollands beskrivning av "mastery" (1980) lyfter artikeln fram att vi kan skilja mellan två betydelser när vi beskriver någon som kompetent. Att vara kompetent uttrycker å ena sidan en uppskattning av personen i

fråga. Det är ett värdeomdöme. Å andra sidan pekar meningen ”hen är kompetent” på en persons (formella) kvalifikationer.

Den kontinentala pedagogiska traditionen har beskrivit denna centrala skillnad i pedagogik med begreppsparat *Bildung* och *Ausbildung* (bildning vs utbildning/träning) för att tydliggöra när man menar ett obestämt öppet ideal att sträva efter (den intransitiva betydelsen, eller bildning) eller när en viss kvalifikationsstandard behöver åberopas av pragmatiska utbildningsmässiga skäl, t.ex. när kunskapsnivån är tillräckligt hög för att tilldela någon en examen (den transitiva betydelsen av kompetens, eller utbildning).

Med exempel från pedagogiska forskningsprogram och pedagogiska policy-sammanhang pekar artikeln på problemet att den centrala teoretiska distinktionen mellan ett värdeomdöme och empirisk mätbarhet döljs eller glöms när enbart ett begrepp används för båda betydelseerna. Liksom i den första artikeln visar det sig att den semantiska komplexiteten i begreppet kompetens innebär att vissa betydelseskikt faller i skymundan. Wittgensteins oro verkar besannas och den empirisk mätbara, transitiva betydelsen vinner mark på bekostnad av det intransitiva värdeomdömet. Medan man i söndagstal kan hänvisa till kompetens som något eftersträvansvärt och som ett gemensamt samhälleligt mål som knappt tillåter kritik, kan man med samma begrepp till vardags fokusera på kompetens som ett pussel av empiriskt mätbara kompetenser (nu i pluralform) som man kan distribuera, sälja och äga.

Artikeln argumenterar att kompetensbegreppet är ett svagare teoretiskt begrepp än begreppsparat bildning-utbildning, då man använder ett ord för båda dessa betydelse. När kompetens som värdeomdöme enar den pedagogiska diskussionen att gemensamt sträva efter kompetens i en intransitiv betydelse riskerar man oaktsamt gå med på den transitiva betydelsens logik och spela instrumentaliserande tendenser av den pedagogiska verksamheten i händerna.

3. När Illeris beskriver kompetens som ett tidsenligt begrepp tänker han på följande situation som dagens samhälle enligt honom ställs inför. ”Vi lever i en värld där många förhållanden ändrar sig hela tiden; ingen vet på förhand helt hur, men det sker oavbrutet. Det kan vara allt, från små förändringar i det dagliga till förhållanden av grundläggande betydelse, och det kan ibland ske från den ena dagen till den andra.” Han betonar därför att ’flexibilitet’ och ’förändringsbenägenhet’ har blivit nyckelfärdigheter.

Den största generella utmaningen som ställs på utbildningar i dag blir i det perspektivet att de ska bidra till att utveckla deltagarnas dispositioner och potentialer, det vill säga de ska göra deltagarna beredda på att hantera problem och situationer som är obekanta eller inte kan förutsägas under utbildningen. Och inte minst i arbetslivet är det ett avgörande förhållande vilka dispositioner och

potentialer som medarbetarna på alla nivåer besitter och kan aktivera när det uppstår behov av det. (Illeris 2013, s. 38)

Till skillnad från vad Illeris antyder här så är det inte ett kännetecken för just vårt nutida samhälle att vi inte vet vilka problem morgondagen ställer oss inför och vilka kunskaper vi behöver för att kunna hantera det som vi av nödvändighet möter oförberedda. Under alla tider har människan (och pedagogiken) stått inför framtidens ovisshet. Det är på det viset inte ännu klart varför vi just nu behöver ett nytt begrepp, när vi inser att utgångsproblematiken inte egentligen skiljer sig från tidigare generationers pedagogiska förutsättningar.

Den tredje artikeln ”Educating Judgment. Learning from the didactics of philosophy and sloyd” (Schaffar & Kronqvist 2017) tar upp denna tanketråd och utvecklar frågan vad framtidens ovisshet konkret betyder för yrkesundervisningens praxis, som behöver möta de behov som Illeris tänker på, framtidens arbetsliv. Artikeln tar sin utgångspunkt i en yrkespedagogisk frågeställning, men kan läsas även med ett bredare didaktiskt perspektiv. Lärare står alltid inför två utmaningar. (1) Att lära sig något implicerar redan att den kunskap som förmedlades i någon mån överskrids av eleverna/studerandena. Vi skiljer begreppsligt mellan att någon ”lär sig” från att samma person t.ex. enbart ”imiterar” eller ”kopierar” någon. När elever och studerande lär sig något så implicerar vi alltså alltid samtidigt att studeranden har tillägnat sig förmågan att modifiera den förmedlade kunskap till nya situationer och omständigheter. Men hur konkret ska lärare och utbildningsprogram förmedla mer än bara det som deras enskilda lärandeuppgifter kräver av studerandena? Hur förbereder man eleverna på framtida, okända uppgifter? (2) Studerande inom yrkesutbildningar ska sträva efter att producera arbete av god kvalitet. Men hur kan yrkesutbildning hjälpa dem att utveckla sin omdömesförmåga för att skilja mellan bättre och sämre kvalitet? Artikeln beskriver att dessa två utmaningar är tätt sammanvävda i alla undervisningssituationer. Att utveckla förmågan att göra omdömen om vad som är god kvalitet i ett arbete innebär alltid samtidigt att man förmår se vad som är viktigt i just den särskilda situationen som man befinner sig i och ska utföra arbetet. Det i sin tur låter studerande utveckla beredskapen att även kunna (re)agera i okända t.ex. framtida situationer.

I artikeln jämförs filosofins och slöjdens didaktik. Båda didaktiska traditioner har utvecklats oberoende från varandra, men deras lösningar på hur man för fram förmågan till reflekterande bedömning är likartade. I jämförelsen blir det tydligt att omdömesförmåga inte bara handlar om att locka fram effektiva sätt att arbeta mot redan existerande mål, så som Illeris citat antyder. Okända situationer ställer de agerande personerna även inför uppgiften att formulera vad som är ett problem som behöver lösas till att börja med. Studerande behöver kunna reflektera över

vad deras mål i de olika (yrkespraktiska) verksamheter är och bör vara. Detta innebär att studeranden bör lära sig att reflektera över vad framtida problem, såväl som lösningar på dem, kräver av oss både på ett tekniskt, kognitivt, men även på ett socialt och moraliskt sätt.

Artikeln är skrivet tillsammans med filosofen Camilla Kronqvist. Jag har lagt fram idén och den övergripande röda tråden för vår argumentation. Alla kapitel bygger på en gemensam förståelse. Medan jag har huvudsakligen skrivit kapitel 1 och 2 har Kronqvist haft mera ansvar för de formuleringar som finns i kapitel 3.

I den här sammanställningen återstår att svara på frågan, huruvida kompetens är ett tidsenligt begrepp. Frågan är vilken tid vi lever i då ett mångtydigt begrepp tas i bruk för att lägga grunden för att hantera det som allmänt diskuteras som nya, inte skådade nationella och globala utmaningar. Begreppet ska dessutom bidra med en större förståelse mellan länder och mellan pedagogiska traditioner, men visar sig vara skiftande i betydelse och bruk.

Litteratur

Illeris, Knud (2013). *Kompetens. Vad, varför, hur*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

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Artikel 1

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Svårigheter i att definiera begreppet kompetens

(Difficulties in defining the notion of competence)

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Abstract

This article discusses theoretically and philosophically difficulties in defining the notion of competence. 'Competence' is a key-concept in today's educational discussion, where it combines both a psychological meaning of an inner disposition, and a sociological meaning as a category that organises tasks and power-relations in public and private institutions. A short historical overview shows that 'competence' has a complex etymology that explains these different layers of possible usages and the different ontological and epistemological assumptions that arise from them. Still, the article argues that an ambiguous notion is not a notion with an indistinct meaning. In concrete situations, 'competence' just has different meanings. Inspired by Wittgenstein, the article takes a philosophical view on science and methodology and argues that the strive to define 'competence' unequivocally can be understood in different ways. Notions have to be defined unambiguously to make empirical measurements possible. But definitions are running the risk to ignore important meaningful usages for the sake of what is empirically possible to measure and what kind of political interests there are in measuring certain aspects of a complex notions. Finally, it is argued that an ambiguous notion implies risks of undermining critical voices in the discussion about global educational policy.

Keywords: competence, etymology of competence, educational policy, definition, philosophy of science, Wittgenstein

Inledning

Denna artikel tar sin utgångspunkt i den förvirring som verkar drabba de flesta som försöker närma sig begreppet kompetens. Begreppet använts "inflationsartat" (t.ex. Granberg, 2009, s. 104; Ott, 2010; Späte, 2011), samtidigt som det inte råder enighet om exakt hur "kompetens" borde definieras. Många kritiserar begreppet för att vara flytande och så intetsägande att alla kan fylla det med precis den betydelse som de önskar (t.ex. Hjort, 2009; Granberg, 2009). De som är mindre kritiska bekräftar ändå att det finns riktiga behov att teoretiskt utveckla och precisera modeller för vad kompetens är (t.ex. Koeppen, Hartig, Klieme & Leutner, 2013; Pfadenhauer 2013). Trots dessa oklarheter i hur kompetensbegreppet ska förstås finns det knappast något annat fenomen i andra socialvetenskapliga discipliner som man satsar så mycket möda på att utveckla mätinstrument för som på begreppet kompetens (Cortina, 2016, s. 30).

En redogörelse av begreppets etymologi kommer till en början att visa att begreppets användningar genom tiderna öppnar för en mångfacetterad bredd av olika betydelser, vilket berör flera olika vetenskapliga grenar och synsätt. Jag skisserar kort denna mångfald av användningar inom olika vetenskapliga discipliner, för att därefter inta ett vetenskapsfilosofiskt perspektiv som inte stannar i den ofruktbara ontologiska diskussionen om vad kompetens sist och slutligen är. Istället tillåter detta mig att diskutera varför olika aktörer i debatten behöver ha mer eller mindre entydiga definitioner av olika (vetenskaps)politiska intressen.

Överblick över begreppets användningar

Kompetensbegreppets långa etymologiska historia bär med sig en mångtydighet som ger näring åt den aktuella teoretiska och empiriska debatten om kompetens. Som följande översikt visar betyder denna mångtydighet dock inte att begreppet är otydligt, utan enbart att det inte finns en entydig definition som är oberoende av en konkret kontext.

Begreppets etymologiska utvecklingslinjer

Ordet "kompetens" går etymologiskt tillbaka till latinets "*competentia*" och "*competere*" och har en tidig medeltida betydelse av "ett sammanträffande", "en överenskommelse" och "symmetri", till exempel i samband med vissa konstellationer av stjärnor inom astronomi (jfr Ritter & Gründer, 1976, s. 918; Competence, u.å.). Enligt en tysk historisk ordbok i filosofi började man under 1200-talet inom det romerska kanoniska rättsväsendet använda "*Kompetenz*" i bemärkelsen av de mest basala inkomster som någon, framför allt klerker, har rätt till och som inte fick utmätas. (Ritter & Gründer, 1976, s. 917). I ett engelskspråkigt etymologiskt lexikon dateras betydelsen "adequate supply" och "sufficiency of means for living at ease" till 1600-talet (Competence, u.å.). Ritter och Gründer visar vidare att betydelsen av "*Kompetenz*" senast under 1800-talet inom det tyska militärväsendet fungerade som en länk mellan det som någon har rätt till att få som inkomst och förmåner (pengar, förmåner in natura, boende och kläder) och de ansvarsområden som hen hade att sörja för, så som "avlöningskompetens, fältkompetens, marschkompetens" etc. (min översättning, Ritter & Gründer, 1976, s. 919). "Kompetens" betecknade alltså något som är både en av andra tilldelad rättighet och en organisatorisk avgränsning av ett större uppdrag.

Denna hänvisning visar på en ytterligare konnotationslinje, då det latinska begreppet "*competens*" redan inom det romerska rättsväsendet enbart användes som adjektiv, som betydde just "ansvarsfull, rättrådig och duglig". Adjektivet användes i relation till en enskild tjänsteman och betecknade denne som "kapabel och ansvarsfull" (Ritter & Gründer, 1976, s. 919). Det engelskspråkiga etymologiska lexikonet daterar adjektivets betydelse som "suitable, sufficient, appropriate" till sent 1300-tal, medan adjektivets juridiska status går tillbaka till sent 1400-tal (Competent, u.å.).

I engelska och svenska etymologiska lexikon hänvisas även till att engelskans "*competence*" resp. svenskans "*kompetent*" har gemensamma etymologiska rötter med engelskans "*compete*" som har en genklang i den ovan nämnda betydelsen av ett sammanträffande, en överenskommelse, samt också i den formella betydelsen "att vara kvalificerad för något". Det latinska ordet "*com-petere*" utgår från en gemensam företeelse (från "*com-*", tillsammans) som tillsammans med "*petere*" har ett vitt betydelsespektrum, från "att gemensamt sträva efter något" till "att attackera någon i rivalitet" (Compete, u.å.; Hellquist, 1922, s. 338).

Begreppet kompetens uppstod alltså till att börja med inom samhällliga, statliga och administrativa diskurser kring maktbefogenheter. Där rör sig användningarna mellan a) rätten till vissa inkomster, b) befogenheter, c) ansvarsområden, d) färdigheter och e) sammanhang som syftar till gemenskap eller är tävlingsinriktade.

Dessa användningar öppnar för en mångfacetterad betydelseskala. "Kompetens" har på så vis fungerat som ett teoretiskt begrepp inom många skilda vetenskaper; inom naturvetenskaperna, samhällsvetenskaperna och inom beteende-vetenskaperna. Som ett första, grovt indelningssätt kan man urskilja två huvuddrag i frågan *var* man lokaliserar kompetens, det vill säga vart man riktar den vetenskapliga blicken för att få syn på kompetens. Utifrån vissa ontologiska utgångspunkter antas kompetens vara en mellanmänsklig företeelse, medan kompetens, om utgångspunkterna är andra, ses som en inneboende egenskap hos en individ. Medan den sistnämnda förståelsen faller under det psykologiska vetenskapsområdet, har kompetens som en social företeelse snarare diskuterats inom sociologisk teori, till exempel i samband med organisations- och kommunikationsteoretiska antaganden. Jag kommer ytterligare att skilja detta från ett etiskt, existentiellt perspektiv.

Kompetens som sociologiskt begrepp

Inom sociologisk teori har begreppet kompetens använts allt sedan sociologin utvecklades som självständig vetenskap. Det anknyter där direkt till den etymologiska betydelsen av kompetens som ett begrepp i diskussionen om maktbefogenheter. Max Weber använder kompetens som en grundkategori inom ramen för sin teori om moderna samhällen, i vilka kompetens är nyckeln som möjliggör en rationell maktfördelning i en stat. De uppgifter som behöver genomföras för att staten ska fungera kan å ena sidan delas upp inom olika kompetensområden (t.ex. legislativ kompetens, administrativ kompetens), och möjliggör å andra sidan att enskilda personer har maktbefogenheter utifrån deras kompetenser i form av färdigheter och kvalifikationer. Centralt i Webers kompetensbegrepp är att det fungerar som en juridisk och politisk kategori som inte fokuserar på personer utan på organisationer. Med hjälp av kompetens som grundkategori kan maktbefogenheter inom byråkratin

legitimeras på ett sådant sätt att *på förhand* uppställda regler följs för att tillsätta personer på vissa hierarkiskt organiserade poster. På det viset övervinner, enligt Weber, moderna samhällen tidigare legitimitetsproblem där makt och befogenheter tilldelades utifrån personens härkomst och inte utifrån hennes faktiska färdigheter (Kurtz, 2010). Webers fokus på kompetens som en organisationsteoretisk kategori finns idag fortfarande i till exempel diskussioner om så kallade lärande organisationer, där man diskuterar vilka kompetenser en organisation behöver för att överleva och fungera i en ständigt förändrande omgivning.

Webers tanke om att fördelningen av befogenheter behöver strikta, på förhand fastslagna, juridiska ramar relaterar också till ett centralt pedagogiskt sammanhang när det kommer till frågan om hur man kan institutionalisera förfarandet att intyga en persons kompetens. Det är centralt att tydligt reglera vilka institutioner som får dela ut examen på olika utbildningsnivåer eftersom de på det sättet möjliggör att personen i fråga kan ta emot en befattning inom en organisation, eller inom staten, som antingen är bunden till bindande kvalitetsstandarder, eller som innebär offentliga maktbefogenheter. De juridiska ramarna för utbildningsorganisationer och deras examensstadgar fastställer på så sätt på förhand principer, kriterier, regler och rutiner för anordnande av examen, bedömning, och möjligheten att överklaga.

Begreppet kompetens har använts inom sociologin även i samband med begreppet kommunikativ kompetens. Jürgen Habermas talar inom ramen för sin teori om kommunikativt handlande om "kommunikativ kompetens" som en grundläggande, omfattande och förteoretisk nyckelkompetens. Det handlar inte enbart om semantisk och grammatisk kompetens utan också om en grundläggande förmåga att överlag stå i en kommunikativ relation med (om)världen. Den kommunikativa kompetensen handlar dessutom om hur samhällliga relationer struktureras (Habermas, 1981). Även Ervin Goffman, och via honom den så kallade Chicago School of Sociology, använder kommunikativ kompetens som ett nyckelbegrepp. Till skillnad från Habermas teoretiska perspektiv på samhället som helhet fokuserar Goffmans sociologiska analyser på kommunikativ kompetens inom professionella och vardagliga samtal, till exempel mellan läkare och patient (t.ex. Goffman, 1959).

Kurtz särskiljer, med hänvisning till Willke (2002), ytterligare en sociologisk användning av begreppet kompetens från dessa två. Från ett sociologiskt perspektiv kan den ökande mängden kunskap och information även beskrivas som en ökning av mängden icke-kunnande för en enskild individ. Att vara kompetent i ett sådant samhälle innebär att behöva ha förmågan att kunna hantera osäkerhet och icke-vetande. Kompetens innebär här att kunna ta beslut fast man uppenbarligen inte längre kan förvänta sig förmågan att överblicka all relevant information som borde noteras. Kompetens innebär här dessutom att hantera den osäkerhet kring de organisatoriska och samhällliga konsekvenser som ens handlingar kommer att ha (Kurtz, 2010, s. 15).

Kompetens som ett mellanmänniskt, existentiellt begrepp

Vid sidan av dessa sociologiska perspektiv och användningar av begreppet kompetens, finns en vidare aspekt av kompetens som ett mellanmänniskt fenomen. Begreppet kompetens används i samband med specifika relationer mellan människor.

Denna vidare användning uppmärksammar dessa relationers särskilda struktur, vilket innebär att begreppet också bär med sig etiska frågeställningar.

Kompetens är något som behöver bevitnas i mellanmännsliga situationer, antingen i formaliserade situationer så som under en examen, eller i informella situationer där till exempel en vän rekommenderar en hantverkare ("Jag skulle ringa X. Hen är en kompetent elektriker"). "Kompetens" uttrycker alltså i dubbel bemärkelse en persons uppskattning av det en annan person klarar av. En persons kompetens måste visa sig inför någon annan för att den ska kunna vittna om och intyga att personen besitter den. När en bedömare inom en utbildningsinstitution intygar en studerandes kompetens så gör hen det med hjälp av bindande bedömningskriterier som är oberoende av bedömarens egen person. Som ett bevitnande av någons kompetens är varje bedömning dock samtidigt uttryck för ett personligt omdöme. Bedömaren står i slutändan personligen, med sitt namn, för kvaliteten av bedömningen, och garanterar och intygar på så vis med sin egen person den andras kompetens (Jönsson, 2016, s. 45). Den pedagogiska diskussionen pendlar här mellan frågan om hur man kan minska risken för subjektiv partiskhet i bedömningen utan att å andra sidan falla för frestelsen att tänka att det kunde finnas ett fullständigt standardiserat och objektivt system för bedömning (ibid.). Kompetensbedömning ställer på det viset de involverade inför etiska frågor om uppriktighet, transparens och rättvisa (Utbildningsstyrelsen, 2017).

Bedömningen av kompetens anknyter här även till de etymologiska rötterna, som lyfte fram tävlingsmomentet i begreppet. Vid tillsättningen av en befattning har en persons kompetens i regel bedömts genom två jämförelser. Till att börja med genom en jämförande bedömning i slutet av en utbildning (examen) och sedan vid tillsättande av en konkret tjänst eller anställning. En examen är på sätt och vis en abstraherad tävling, där man till exempel genom ett slutvitsord klassas både i jämförelse med andra som har tagit samma examen och i jämförelse med de kunskapsmässiga och innehållsliga mål som professionen och ämnet kräver. Vid tillsättande av en tjänst eller anställning jämförs sökandenas kompetenser ytterligare, både sinsemellan och med tanke på de kompetenser som behövs för att framgångsrikt kunna genomföra arbetsuppgifterna.

Bourdieu (1991) skriver att det finns en social sida när vi tillskriver en person kompetens. Han kallar det för "social kompetens", vilket ur dagens perspektiv är lite vilseledande. Han menar inte sociala färdigheter, utan vill snarare uppmärksamma "att benägenheten att förvärva vad man kallar teknisk kompetens är desto större, [...] ju mer man är socialt erkänd som värdig, alltså förväntas förvärva" en viss kompetens (Bourdieu, 1991, s. 258f). Olika sociala konstellationer medför alltså att man förväntar sig vissa kompetenser av vissa personer, men inte av andra. Hans exempel på detta är att män i regel anses vara mera kompetenta för att svara på politiska frågor än kvinnor, eller att personer som tillhör vissa samhällsklasser har mer eller mindre benägenhet att svara på undersökningar, beroende på huruvida de själva, och de som utformar enkäterna, anser att de är kompetenta för att svara eller inte. Bourdieu påpekar alltså att kompetensbegreppet bär på en förståelse av att någon är både berättigad och förpliktigad att befatta sig med vissa uppgifter. Dessa rättigheter och skyldigheter baserar sig inte enbart på personens plats i en organisatorisk hierarki som bygger på en juridisk struktur, utan baserar sig också på vissa sociala positioner och konventioner.

Som sociolog beskriver Bourdieu inte dessa sammanhang i etiska termer. Frågan om huruvida människor formar varandras möjligheter för att bli den man är beskrivs fram för allt inom den existencialistiska filosofin som en genuin etisk fråga (t.ex. Buber, 1994; Lévinas, 2003). Där betonas att människan existerar i relation till andra och inte först och främst som en isolerad individ. Vår existens som människor med egna individuella egenskaper, individuella färdigheter och talanger är beroende av att andra ser och bekräftar oss i vår partikularitet och annanhet (Lévinas, 2003). Att bevittna och intyga någons kompetens är på det viset även en grundläggande bekräftelse av den andres existens och egenart.

Samtidigt är det först i relation till andra som en människa erfar att hen har en egen vilja som i sin tur förmår påverka andra och deras liv. Vi behöver hela tiden fråga oss: vad får jag göra, vad borde jag göra och vad vill jag göra med tanke på de konsekvenser mitt agerande har för andra människor? För den som har kompetens (eller: för den kompetenta personen) inställer sig dessa frågor till exempel i form av befogenheter att ta beslut och att delegera uppgifter. På det viset bestämmer man över andra människor och över (delar av) deras livsvillkor. Kompetenta handlingar är således hela tiden underkastade en (yrkes-) etisk frågeställning och granskning.

Utan att beskriva detta som explicit etiska frågeställningar beskriver Pfadenhauer (2013) just det här som en väsentlig del av kompetensbegreppet. Hon betonar att då vi talar om kompetens eller tillskriver någon kompetens, så innebär det ett aktivt aktörskap. Hon hävdar att kompetens inte bara visar sig i hur någon löser ett givet problem i konkreta situationer; den kompetenta personen måste i regel först identifiera och definiera vad "en situation" är och på vilket vis situationen kräver åtgärder, vilket i sin tur ger ramen för vad som kan anses vara lämpliga lösningar (ibid.).

Här glider frågan om vad kompetens är så småningom från ett sociologiskt och mellanmänniskt fenomen till ett psykologiskt fenomen, där kompetens snarare förstås som en individs handlingsberedskap, med antingen bredare ("generiska") eller snävare (färdighetsbetonade "tekniska") egenskaper.

Kompetens som en individuell förkroppsligad egenskap

När man ser på kompetens som en egenskap hos en individ behöver definitionerna till att börja med balansera mellan två betraktelsesätt. Å ena sidan kan kompetens betraktas som *resultatet* av en lärandeprocess. Detta syns tydligast när kompetensmätningar används med syfte att utvärdera individuella lärandeprocesser eller större helheter som nationella utbildningssystem (jfr kompetensmätningar inom ramen av PISA, TIMSS; se även Brosziewski, 2010; Koeppen m.fl., 2013). "Kompetensdiagnostik", ett jämförelsevis nytt begrepp inom pedagogisk psykologi, tyder på denna förståelse av kompetens (bl.a. Prenzel, Gogolin & Krüger, 2007).

Denna förståelse av kompetens som ett mätbart resultat vid en viss tidpunkt (t.ex. i slutet av den obligatoriska skoltiden) kritiserar dock för att snäva av förståelsen av kompetens. Bland många andra påpekar Cortina (2016) att en mätning av kompetens inte enbart borde ses som intressant som en retrospektiv indikator för utfallet av en bildningsprocess, utan att den även borde beakta att våra utbildningssystem är framtidsorienterade, och därmed också indikera ett prospektivt utfall. Kompetens som

begrepp borde alltså omfatta en individs förutsättningar att lösa vissa problem i framtiden (ibid., s. 34), ett perspektiv som ger begreppet rollen som en *disposition*.

Denna framtidsorientering är central för till exempel Illeris definition av kompetens (Illeris, 2013). Han skriver att eftersom förhållandena i vår värld hela tiden förändras blir "flexibilitet" och "förändringsbenägenhet" nyckelord, "och därför är det av avgörande betydelse vilka möjligheter i form av dispositioner och potentialer som står till förfogande" (Illeris, 2013, s. 38). Illeris anser att "kompetens" i denna situation är det teoretiska begrepp som förmår uttrycka denna behövliga förändringsbenägenhet.

När kompetens beskrivs som en disposition för framtida handlingar i olika sammanhang görs det både i en snävare och i en vidare bemärkelse. Kompetensbegreppets användning i samband med "generiska kompetenser" inom högre utbildning eller de "nyckelkompetenser för livslångt lärande" som nämns i europeiska styrdokument (Eur-Lex, 2006) är exempel på en bredare förståelse av kompetens som en disposition. Här handlar det om att kompetenserna i fråga inte nödvändigtvis är specifika, det vill säga snäva tekniska, färdigheter. Det innebär istället, som till exempel i Illeris beskrivning, att någon har förutsättning att utveckla *ytterligare* färdigheter som behövs i framtiden.

Under denna användning av kompetensbegreppet som en disposition i bred bemärkelse faller även diskussionerna som sedan 1960-talet har förts inom psykologi och humanbiologi, där man med hjälp av kompetensbegreppet kritiserade diskussionen om intelligenstester. Kritiken handlar om att begreppet intelligens, till skillnad från begreppet kompetens, bortser från motivation och från sociala och emotionella aspekter av intelligensen. (Kompetenz, u.å.) Vidare kritiseras uppställningen i intelligenstest, som uppvisar en snäv uppfattning om intelligens, då man tror sig kunna testa intelligens som en faktor oberoende av en specifik kontext. Kompetens däremot implicerar att en person förmår lösa problem i konkreta sammanhang (t.ex. Klieme & Hartig, 2007, s. 14).

Till skillnad från denna breda förståelse av kompetens kan man, ofta i professionsutbildande sammanhang, tala om kompetens även med tanke på mera tekniska yrkeskompetenser. Det är då snarare exempel på kompetens i bemärkelsen av en disposition i snävare mening. Exempel på detta är Finlands så kallade kompetenspoängssystem som infördes i augusti 2015 inom andra stadiets yrkesutbildningar (Finlex (630/1998)). Här (och i många liknande sammanhang) stavas enskilda kompetenser ut i detalj för att kommunicera vad en studerande exakt förväntas kunna för att godkännas inom en viss examensdel. Kompetenspoängssystemet använder alltså begreppet kompetens med en rätt liknande betydelse som begreppen "lärandemål" eller "kunskapsmål" har i många läroplaner och styrdokument (jfr Clarke & Westerhuis, 2011).

Denna korta överblick över användningar av begreppet kompetens visar upp en lång etymologisk historia som i sin tur är sammanvävd med en komplext förgrenad vetenskapsteoretisk historia. Att kompetensbegreppet har använts "inflationsartat" inom den pedagogiska diskussionen under de senaste 20–30 åren kan säkert delvis föras tillbaka på att pedagogiska fenomen har denna mångsidiga karaktär som behöver beakta både en individs egen utveckling samt pedagogikens mellanmänskliga och samhällliga aspekter. Eftersom begreppet kompetens är lika gångbart på dessa tre områden kan det se ut som om kompetensbegreppet erbjuder

en eftertraktad möjlighet att kombinera de epistemologiska och ontologiska områden som psykologi och sociologi representerar (se t.ex. Illeris, s. 25f).

Jag vill i det följande dock lyfta fram några av de vetenskapsfilosofiska utmaningar som ett mångtydigt begrepp medför.

Behövs entydiga definitioner?

Mångtydighet som ett "själsligt bryderi"

Som jag skisserade ovan används begreppet kompetens ontologiskt både som ett begrepp för att beskriva interpersonella och organisationsteoretiska frågor, samt som en beskrivning av en förkroppsligad egenskap hos en enskild individ. När man inser att begreppet används på flera olika meningsfulla sätt är det inte överraskande att det i de interna vetenskapliga diskussionerna inte råder någon enighet om en allmänt accepterad, entydig definition.

Sett ur detta perspektiv är det snarare ett meningslöst sisyfosarbete att söka efter "den rätta" definitionen, när det finns olika möjliga meningsfulla användningar som glider in i varandra. Wittgenstein jämför en sådan situation med likheterna i en familj (Wittgenstein, 1999, s. 20). I en familj ser man att olika medlemmar liknar varandra och att de på det viset hör ihop. Det finns dock inte en enda egenskap som alla har gemensamt, snarare finns det flera olika drag som finns hos några i familjen, medan åter andra egenskaper kan vara gemensamma med personer utanför familjen. Så är det enligt Wittgenstein ofta i vetenskapsfilosofiska diskussioner, där man till exempel söker efter en definition.

Vi förmår inte att klart avgränsa de begrepp vi använder, inte för att vi inte känner till deras riktiga definition, utan för att det inte finns någon riktig "definition" av dem. Att anta att det måste finnas en är som att anta att då barn leker med en boll så leker de en lek enligt strikta regler. (1999, s. 30)

När vi alltså frågar efter en definition "Vad är X?" så ger vi enligt Wittgenstein uttryck för att vi är förvirrade i vad vi riktigt menar och talar om. De många olika möjliga bruken av ett ord verkar förvirra oss. Wittgenstein beskriver detta som ett uttryck för ett "själsligt bryderi" (Wittgenstein, 1999, s. 31). Att vi frågar efter en definition och kräver entydighet kan alltså till att börja med förstås som ett sätt att lugna vårt sinne och det tyder på att man har att göra med en filosofisk förvirring, och inte med en krävande situation där man inte förmår vara tillräckligt entydig.

Wittgenstein skriver att språket i sådana fall vilseleder oss. Frågan "vad är X?" låter oss att tänka att X är något visst, liksom ett ting som motsvarar substantivet X (Wittgenstein, 1999 s. 1). Annorlunda uttryckt så implicerar strävan att entydigt avgränsa ett begrepps betydelse att man letar efter något föremålsliknande, något som har en egen, avgränsbar och kontextoberoende betydelse. Med "oberoende av kontext" menas här att man ofta är frestad att föreställa sig att ett begrepps betydelse finns någonstans i en sfär som är skenbart oberoende av den meningsstruktur som vi skapar i våra liv och i vårt språk, och att betydelsen är något som skulle kunna upptäckas. Wittgenstein föreslår däremot att man borde samla på olika användningar av ett begrepp för att få syn på dess betydelse i våra liv. Språkligt uttrycker vi ju inte enbart faktuell påståenden, utan vi söker efter och uttrycker mening. Wittgensteins filosofiska begreppsanalyser söker alltså inte efter ett föremålsliknande fenomen som

man sedan försöker beskriva i detalj, utan han frågar sig vad det betyder att använda begreppet X i en viss situation och vilka implikationer det innebär för den som talar och den mening som hen ser i just den situationen (som en del av livet) genom användningen av X (Lagerspetz, 2006, s. 10f; Wittgenstein, 1999, s. 23–26).

Att ett begrepp inte har en definition som är oberoende av kontexten borde alltså inte missförstås som att vi har att göra med en "floating signifier", som till exempel Hjort skriver med referens till Laclau och Mouffe samt Foucault (Hjort, 2009, s. 114). Hjort skriver:

In a theoretical perspective, the concept of competence development could be defined as a 'floating signifier' [...]. Like many other key concepts in the discourse concerning public transformation – modernization, development, quality, learning, efficiency etc. – competence development may be understood as a phrase the most important meaning of which is that it does not mean anything. Or more accurately, the concept's 'reference to reality' has not been fixed but is still floating. (ibid.).

I detta citat finns det en viss spänning. "Kompetens" beskrivs å ena sidan som ett begrepp "vars viktigaste betydelseinnehåll är att det inte betyder något." Beskrivningarna ovan antyder dock att kompetens som begrepp *har* betydelse. Betydelseerna är dessutom många. Men det i sin tur kan ge sken av det som Hjort beskriver, nämligen att begreppets "referens till verkligheten" inte är fastställd utan "fortfarande flytande." (Hjort, 2009, s. 114). Det är dock viktigt att se att begreppets betydelse i konkreta sammanhang inte är flytande utan ofta ganska klar. Ibland talar vi om kompetens som en egenskap hos en person, som ibland kan kompetens intygas med hjälp av olika formella papper, och ibland avses en ansvarsfördelning inom en organisation.

Det som verkar vilseleda oss här är att när man söker efter en entydig ("fastställd") betydelse av begreppet så försöker man inta en betraktande position oberoende av de konkreta situationer i vilka ordet används. Denna oberoende, neutrala position inom vetenskapliga diskussioner är visserligen frestande, men den har dock på många sätt blivit kritiserad, framför allt med tanke på ett vetenskapligt ideal inom människovetenskaperna, där oberoende observationspositioner varken är möjliga eller önskvärda (bl.a. Hyldgaard, 2008; Winch, 1991). Uppenbarligen fortsätter flera möjliga meningsfulla sätt att använda begreppet kompetens att finnas, oberoende av vad olika vetenskapsgrenar sinsemellan försöker avtala om den korrekta användningen.

Entydighet som förutsättning för empiriska mätningar

Sökandet efter en kontextoberoende entydighet i definitionen av ett begrepp har dock också en annan sida. Som vi såg kan begreppet kompetens placeras ontologiskt i olika vetenskapsfilosofiska diskussioner, beroende av om kompetens beskrivs som ett psykologiskt, mellanmänniskt, sociologiskt eller organisationsteoretiskt fenomen. Dessa olika ontologiska antaganden för med sig vidare epistemologiska frågor och empiriska tillvägagångssätt. Den beteendevetenskapliga, empiriska pedagogiken diskuterar hur man kan finslipa psykometriska tillvägagångssätt för att mäta nivån på olika kompetenser som ska kunna beskrivas i detalj (se t.ex. den omfattande metodologiska diskussionen i samband med övernationella kompetensmätningar som PISA, TIMSS). Dessa diskussioner har en postpositivistisk vetenskapsfilosofisk utgångspunkt (Brinkkjær & Høyen, 2011; Hyldgaard, 2008). Undersökningar av

kompetens som ett interpersonellt, organisationsteoretiskt begrepp genomförs däremot snarare med hjälp av tolkande och diskursiva analyser, till exempel analyser av kommunikation i olika situationer och på olika samhällliga nivåer, av synliga och osynliga maktstrukturer samt av konstruerade och reproducerande hierarkier. De vetenskapsfilosofiska utgångspunkterna är här alltså inte postpositivism utan hermeneutik, fenomenologi och konstruktivism (ibid.).

Oberoende av vilken epistemologisk ansats man använder sig av så förenas empiriska undersökningar av kravet på att fenomenet som ska undersökas måste vara entydigt definierat för att det ska vara möjligt att samla in datamaterial. Inom vetenskapsteori skiljer man mellan ett begrepps betydelse och en terms definition (Backman m.fl., 2012, s. 37). En term är ofta en snävare, operationaliserbar avgränsning för empiriskt vetenskapliga syften. I början av vetenskapliga rapporter definieras då termer för att så tydligt som möjligt kommunicera vad man mer precist kommer att undersöka och mäta (ibid., s. 38f).

Mot denna bakgrund är det som händer i många teoretiska diskussioner kring kompetens förvånande. I sökandet efter en entydig definition av ett mångtydigt begrepp avfärdas mångtydigheten ofta som en brist. Man kan till exempel kalla det som inte passar in i ens definition felaktiga användningar (jfr. Illeris, 2013, s. 16) eller vardagliga bruk av begreppet som inte har någon plats i en vetenskaplig undersökning (jfr. Cortina, 2016, s. 30). I de vetenskapsteoretiska och metodologiska definitionsdiskussionerna som föregår empiriska tillvägagångssätt försöker man ofta på ett sådant sätt rensa bort mångtydigheten genom att beskriva den som en otydlighet, istället för att enbart konstatera vilken aspekt av kompetens man kommer att fokusera på. Diskussionen hamnar på det viset i långa utläggningar om vilka aspekter av kompetens som borde beaktas. Räcker det till exempel att förstå kompetens enbart som ett resultat av en lärandeprocess (något Cortina kritiserar utgångspunkterna i PISA-undersökningarna för), eller borde man även beakta personens benägenhet att handla kompetent i framtida situationer? (Cortina, 2016) Denna ontologiska fråga får en epistemologisk motsvarighet hos till exempel Pfadenhauer som med rätta kritiserar ansatser som bortser från den kompetenta personens förmåga (disposition) att överblicka en situation i sin helhet och som därför förmår handla kompetent. Men hur kan man mäta en sådan benägenhet eller disposition? (Pfadenhauer, 2013)

Denna metodologiska svårighet speglar en central vetenskapsfilosofisk debatt kring frågan om vilka aspekter av det mänskliga livet som överlag kan mätas och empiriskt undersökas, och vilka sidor som inte låter sig fångas av dessa metoder. Debatten handlar om skillnaden mellan kvalitativa och kvantitativa egenskaper hos ett fenomen. Exempelvis positivistiska ansatser måste per definition bortse från sådana aspekter som inte går att mäta. Hit räknas etiska och estetiska frågor samt upplevelser av meningsfullhet. Det är centrala aspekter av mänskliga liv som ofta helt enkelt inte beaktas av mätningar (jfr. Hyldgaard, 2008; Liedman, 2007; Wittgenstein, 1999, s. 41). När det gäller kompetens hamnar därmed aspekter såsom en persons aktörskap och ansvar, hens förutsättningar i fråga om motivation och attityder, samt etiska frågor om att intyga en persons kompetens och att uppskatta någon för hens kompetens, utanför den vetenskapliga debatten. Dessa aspekter är svåra, om inte omöjliga att operationalisera och att mäta, men de är icke desto mindre tungt meningsbärande

aspekter av både våra liv som individer och av vårt gemensamma samhällsliga och politiska liv.

Detta problem syns till exempel i OECD:s planer att i den aktuella PISA-mätningen även undersöka skolelevernas så kallade "globala kompetens" (OECD, 2018). Global kompetens beskrivs som ett mycket omfattande och flerdimensionellt fenomen; en kombination av specifika kunskaper, kognitiva och sociala färdigheter, attityder och värderingar. I de konkreta planerna för vilket datamaterial som ska samlas in under PISA-undersökningen faller dock de etiska frågeställningarna helt enkelt bort (OECD, 2018, s. 18). Det är visserligen bra att forskarna tydliggör vilka aspekter av det komplexa begreppet "global kompetens" som ska undersökas och vilka inte, vad de alltså menar med termen "global kompetens". Det som snarare är problematiskt är att det i resultatredovisningen blir svårt att undvika missförstånd, då man kommer att redogöra för olika nivåer av global kompetens i olika länder. Även om forskarna i de vetenskapliga rapporterna tydligt skiljer mellan termen och begreppet "global kompetens", bär "global kompetens" framför allt i den populariserade redovisningen med sig en mängd olika vardagliga betydelser, där "kompetens" som ett etiskt förhållningssätt är en central del av dess betydelse. Liksom i de andra PISA-mätningarna finns en stor risk att allmänheten och utbildningspolitiker tolkar resultaten i denna bredare bemärkelse, som om mätningen faktiskt skulle kunna uttala sig om global kompetens som ett omfattande och etiskt fenomen, medan man de facto har valt bort viktiga delaspekter av kompetens under mätningen.

Exemplet visar att empiriska ansatser är i behov av att rensa bort betydelseskikt från de begrepp och fenomen som inte passar in i deras epistemologiska ansatser och grundantaganden, medan dessa fenomen och begrepp ändå spelar en viktig roll i vår så kallade "vardagliga" förståelse. Att rensa bland betydelseskikt kan förstås även göras retrospektivt. Definitionen av en term är då en efterhandskonstruktion som passar in på det man kunde mäta, istället för att först komma till klarhet om vad precis man söker efter innan man utvecklar mätinstrument och tolkar resultaten. (Detta handlar om undersökningarnas validitets- och reliabilitetsproblematik, jfr. Cortina, 2016, s. 34ff).

När ett begrepp inte har en entydig betydelse, varken en sådan som har getts av "en oberoende kraft" som Wittgenstein skriver (Wittgenstein, 1999, s. 28) eller en entydighet, oberoende av kontext, som kunde åstadkommas genom en intern överenskommelse inom det vetenskapliga samfundet, så är det centralt att ställa vetenskapspolitiska och forskningsetiska frågor. Vilka och vems intressen finns närvarande i hur forskningsfenomenet definieras på det ena eller det andra sättet? Vilka intressen finns i att inte beakta vissa aspekter av möjliga meningsfulla användningar? Vidare, hur fördelas forskningsfinansiering mellan olika vetenskapliga ansatser och projekt som bygger på olika definitionsmässiga avgränsningar? Och så vidare.

[Samma begrepp – olika betydelser, samma företeelse – olika begrepp](#)

I sin studie om National Qualification Frameworks (2014) lyfter Allais fram en mera allmän svårighet. Hon diskuterar den globala trenden i utbildningspolitiken, ett förenhetligande av kunskap, och skriver att det är svårt att jämföra och diskutera olika globala företeelser då ett begrepp kan ha olika betydelser inom olika språk och, som

vi såg, även inom samma språkområde. När man till exempel enbart ser på dagens användning av "kompetens" respektive engelskans "*competence*" inom olika europeiska språk, syns en tydlig skillnad. Cedefop, det europeiska centret för yrkesutbildningsutveckling, har jämfört dessa olika skiftningar (2009), och tar på samma gång ställning till hur de vill kommunicera olika policyplaner inom det europeiska språkområdet. De kom fram till att på tyska, nederländska och franska används "*Kompetenz*", "*competentie*" respektive "*compétence*" i bred, generisk bemärkelse: "Competence is defined as 'capacity' in relation to a broad occupational field. It is a multi-dimensional concept, combining different forms of knowledge and skills, as well as social and personal qualities. It relates to a person's ability to draw on multiple resources to deal with a given work situation" (Cedefop, 2009, s. 19). I engelska dokument avser begreppet "*competence*" däremot inte "the overall capacity of the individual". Begreppet "*competence*" hänvisar här snarare till "the individual's performance of prescribed tasks or skills to a defined standard" (Cedefop, 2009, s. 20; se även Brockmann, Clark & Winch, 2008), alltså kompetenser i en snävare teknisk bemärkelse av enskilda färdigheter. I den engelskspråkiga pedagogiska diskussionen talar man däremot om "*expertise*" när man menar den mera övergripande, bredare beredskapen att handla (för exempel se Addi & Winch, 2017).

Att den snävare användningen av kompetens, i bemärkelsen specifika tekniska färdigheter inom de nordiska yrkespedagogiska sammanhangen, existerar parallellt med kompetensbegreppets vidare betydelse (t.ex. "nyckelkompetenser") skulle kunna ses som ett tecken på att de nordiska språken och de nordiska pedagogiska idéerna har influerats av både det kontinentala och det anglo-saxiska språkområdet.

Men situationen försvåras ytterligare då liknande företeelser beskrivs med hjälp av olika begrepp i olika nationella utformningar av policyn eller även inom samma språkområde. Så kan man i vissa sammanhang och under olika skeden av denna nutida idéhistoriska utveckling se att olika begrepp, till exempel "*competence*", "*learning outcome*" och "*qualification*", ofta skiljs noggrant från varandra, medan de lika ofta används synonymt. Allais skriver:

Sometimes, policy makers seem to change from one term to another to signal a policy shift or hoped for shift. In many cases, authors or policy makers seem to attempt to use a different term to distance themselves from an approach with which they disagree or which is seen to have failed. (Allais, 2014, s. xxvi).

I sin studie ger hon en rad exempel från olika länder i världen som har genomfört olika reformer som dock vid närmare påseende har upprätthållit samma struktur fast olika nyckelbegrepp har lanserats. Denna oklarhet i exakt hur vi ska definiera och använda vissa begrepp är problematisk, då den underminerar möjligheten att kritisera de internationella trenderna inom utbildningspolitiken. Allais argumenterar med Young (2009):

that the terms 'learning outcomes' and 'competences' have become almost synonymous in recent policy documents, partly because they are both expressions of the increasingly instrumental approach to education, in which emphasis is placed on the economic benefits of general, as well as vocational, education, and all education is judged in terms of potential benefits for the labour market and economy (Allais, 2014, s. xxvii).

Hon utesluter inte att de som är inblandade i utarbetandet av policies skiljer dessa begrepp noga från varandra, men hon påpekar att "this area of policy is so laden with jargon that it tends to be opaque and tedious to outsiders, contributing perhaps to a lack of critical engagement in this area of policy" (Allais, 2014, s. xxvi).

Att inte enas om en definition av centrala pedagogiska begrepp försvårar alltså den kritiska bevakningen av till exempel internationell policyutveckling. Begrepp byts dessutom ut mot nya begrepp när en kritiserad utbildningspolitik vill signalera en kursändring, medan just dessa byten av begrepp paradoxalt nog möjliggör upprätthållandet av *status quo*, som Allais studie visar.

Sammanfattning

Begreppet kompetens har en mångtydig etymologi, som medför att man rör sig bland ett komplex av konnotationer som öppnar upp för många olika tankelinjer. Dessa olika betydelseträdar löper in i rätt skilda vetenskaper, som skiljer sig från varandra i sina ontologiska och epistemologiska grundantaganden. Vid sidan om begreppets användning i pedagogik så förekommer kompetens som teoretiskt begrepp i åtminstone sociologi, psykologi och biologi. Ett mångtydigt begrepp är inte ett begrepp med otydlig betydelse. I konkreta sammanhang har begreppet kompetens helt enkelt olika betydelser och kan användas på olika sätt.

Strävan efter att hitta en entydig definition som är oberoende av ett konkret sammanhang kan förstås på olika sätt. Å ena sidan finns det en frestande föreställning om att varje substantiv har en viss föremålsliknande motsvarighet i verkligheten. Enligt Wittgenstein blir vi förvirrade när det finns olika användningar; vi är frestade att fråga efter vilken den rätta definitionen är, som om en sådan kunde finnas oberoende av den mening vi ger begreppet i konkreta situationer. Att fråga efter en sådan entydighet som är oberoende av kontext får ytterligare stöd av den vetenskapliga strävan efter empiriskt mätbart datamaterial. Begrepp behöver vara entydigt definierade så att man med största möjliga precision vet vad som ska undersökas. När betydelserna av ett begrepp dock är många olika, blir definitionskampen en arena för vetenskapspolitiska frågor om till exempel tolkningsföreträde och finansiering.

Medan entydighet, i bemärkelse av en kontextoberoende definition, inte finns, spelar denna mångtydighet å andra sidan utbildningspolitiken i händerna. Så länge den akademiska diskussionen är upptagen med att diskutera begreppens definitioner kan utbildningspolitikens aktörer använda och byta begrepp på eget bevåg. Det här har i många fall lett till att samma policy förs fram med hjälp av olika begrepp. Det försvårar och undergräver i sin tur kritiken som kan riktas mot olika utbildningspolitiska trender.

Om författaren

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Artikel 2

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Competent uses of competence:

On the difference between a value-judgement and empirical assessability

Abstract

This article considers the concept of *Competence* as applied to educational theory and policy, and illuminates the possibility of significant variations in meaning. Referring to Wittgenstein's distinctions between transitive and intransitive uses of notions (1965) and Holland's description of mastery (1980), the article argues in favour of two senses in which someone can be described as *being competent*: i) as expressive of a value judgement; and ii) as pointing to a person's (formal) qualifications. While the latter opens a path towards different forms of measurements of competence, *being competent* as a value judgement eludes any such treatment.

Making this distinction, it is argued that competence is a less illuminative theoretical term than for example, the pair of concepts *Bildung* versus *Ausbildung* ((self-)subjectivation vs training), that has been used in the Continental tradition in order to describe a similar distinction.

With examples from educational contexts, the article demonstrates that the moment educational theory is using one word for two meanings, this central distinction in education is either concealed or forgotten. Focusing on competence purely as an empirically assessable notion risks playing into the hands of instrumentalising education.

Keywords: competence, assessability, value-judgement, knowledge capitalism, Bildung

1 Introduction

Discussions about educational policy, educational processes, efficiency, and comparative analyses have become increasingly global. Yet the desire to compare educational processes globally demands a high level of shared theoretical conceptions about what education is, both in general and in detail, about what education aims for, and how it is organised in relation to

other societal institutions. This has led to a growing theoretical awareness of different conceptual frameworks in quite distinct academic traditions, between national contexts and linguistic communities (Siljander et al, 2012; Uljens and Ylimaki, 2017). Besides other notions, *Competence* has been introduced and explicitly promoted as a useful and necessary concept to bridge the gap between different theoretical positions and to help articulate a shared ground for education (Illeris, 2013, 38; Koeppen et al, 2013, 171).

In the following, I want to go beyond the theoretical discussions of the past three decades in which scholars from different disciplines and with different purposes have tried to find and establish an accurate definition of the notion of *competence* (for an overview, see Schaffar 2019). There, I have argued, that the confusion about how competence can and should be defined emerges from the notion's various linguistic, semantical and etymological roots. There are convincing arguments for both a broader understanding of the concept, and a more detailed appreciation of it, so that even very different methodological approaches can be argued for in the discussion about competence.

Instead, I want to point towards a feature in the concept of competence that is relevant beyond the discussion about how to define it. I will argue that the same notion can have different meanings depending on how it is used, and in different contexts. Neither the meaning of a concept nor the significance of its relevant context are predefined, given or fixed. While this does not imply the possibility of randomly choosing or stating what meaning a word has, it leaves room for individual and collective interpretation, judgement, negotiation or disagreement. What concepts we choose to describe the circumstances of a situation also has a bearing on how the situation will be perceived; and vice versa, acting in a certain way may reveal a specific understanding of the concept used, while other possible, meaningful implications are set aside (Hertzberg 2001).

Referring to Wittgenstein's distinctions between transitive and intransitive uses of notions (1965) and Holland's description of mastery (1980), I assert two distinct interpretations for someone as *being competent* depending on context: i) as expressive of a value-judgement; and ii) as pointing to a person's (formal) qualifications. While the latter opens a path towards different forms of measurements of competence, *being competent* as a value-judgement eludes any such treatment. Making this distinction, I argue that competence is a less illuminative theoretical term than for example, the pair of concepts *Bildung* versus *Ausbildung* ((self-)subjectivation vs training), that has been used in the Continental tradition in order to describe the distinction between the evaluative judgement and strive for an ideal goal in education (*Bildung*), and the pragmatic necessity of assessable outcomes in specific educational processes

(*Ausbildung*). Using only one term for both meanings, there is the risk of displacing the meaning of *being competent* within the same theoretical texts and policy documents. One slips from competence as a value-judgement to speaking of it as a factual judgement. In philosophy, this type of mistake is commonly discussed as Hume's guillotine; we cannot derive statements of value or *what ought to be* from factual statements about *what is*.

With examples from educational contexts, I describe that the intransitive value-judgement of the notion is easily left aside. The moment educational theory begins using the same word for both terms, the central distinction in education between the value-laden aim of our educational endeavours, and what can be measured and assessed empirically is either concealed or forgotten. In this case, the focus on competence as an empirically assessable notion risks playing into the hands of instrumentalising education, for example, for neoliberal purposes and promotes non-democratic developments.

2 The ambiguity of the notion of competence

During the last 20-30 years, an immense volume of literature has emerged that seeks to define what competence is, how it is structured, and how it can be developed and assessed (Schaffar, 2019). It can be seen that the notion of competence has a complex structure of different meanings, both in different languages and within the same language (Allais, 2014; Brockmann, Clark and Winch, 2008), that can be traced back through a long etymological history of the word (Schaffar, 2019). Very roughly, one can say that today's German, French and Dutch notions of *Kompetenz*, *compétence* or *competentie* are used in a broad, generic sense, while the English word *competence* describes an individual's abilities in a rather narrow, technical sense (Cedefop, 2009, 19-20). In English, the notion of *expertise* is used when referring to a person's broad capacity, for example, for high performance as a professional (Addis and Winch, 2017). Despite these general linguistic aspects, the global discussion about educational policy and theory has over time led to a spectrum of uses and meanings of central notions. Allais (2014) points out that sometimes different notions, for example *competence*, *learning outcome* and *qualification*, are treated as distinct from each other, but that just as often they are used synonymously (ibid. xxvi).

Depending on the perspective one wishes to take, we can say that we either see an openness in, or a confusion about, what central educational conceptions like *competence* mean and what role this notion should play in the global educational discussion. In their study *The shift to learning outcome. Policies and practices in Europe* (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, 2009), Cedefop tries for example to 'address the need to create bridges

between different parts of the educational and training system', and therefore wants to introduce a *common language* that would make it easier to communicate (ibid, 1). After a closer conceptual examination, they come to the conclusion the 'problem is that the term competence (as well as competences and competencies) lacks a clear, standard meaning both in the English language and across European language traditions. Once we introduce the term competence, definitions become fuzzy at best, and there is no way to place a single discipline or definition on it' (ibid, 18).

While Cedefop prefers to use the notion *learning outcome* in their studies and policy-documents, we find elsewhere, studies that explicitly promote *competence* as the notion that will serve as common ground. Koeppen et al (2013), for example, write in their description of a six-year '*priority program*' on *Competence models for assessing individual learning outcomes and evaluating educational processes*, financed by the German Research Foundation (DFG) that several international large-scale assessments 'have recently drawn increased public and scientific attention to educational outcomes and their assessment.' This has led to 'an increasing focus within educational systems on defining and evaluating the goals to be attained by schools. In many cases, however, adequate assessment procedures are still lacking as are procedures for analysing and reporting the results.' In order to respond to this theoretical and methodological deficit, they point out that 'the concept of competence is increasingly considered as *an anchor point* in this discussion' (Koeppen et al, 2013, 171, my emphasis).

From yet another angle, Han also attributes the notion of *competence* as having a central role in today's educational discussion when he calls competence the 'new DNA in the world of education' (Han, 2009, 57). In a chapter on competence as a commodification of human ability, he writes: 'The dominant force of the societal learning system has been slowly relocated from the arena of state politics to that of market exchangeability. [...] The game of education and the game of economics had been clearly distinguished, linked only with blurry connections for school to work transition, at least until neoliberal social politics swept the world of social policies from the 1990s.' Han says that major social policies including education, medical services, and social welfare 'were redirected to fit into this framework' under this new trend. Especially, the education sector was 'heavily targeted to reformulate a new learning market as a major carrier of the emerging knowledge economy.' He points out that the 'notion of *competence* in this context had the spotlight' (Han, 2009, 65).

These diverging discussions of competence paint an ambiguous and confusing picture. On the one hand, we find several scholars who criticise the notion of *competence* for being used in an inflationary manner (eg Granberg, 2009, 104; Späte, 2011; Ott, 2010) and who show awareness

of the risk that without a uniform definition researchers tend to follow ‘their own approaches in defining and classifying competence in line with their respective research tradition’ (Haasler, Erpenbeck, 2008, 766). On the other hand, there might not be any other phenomenon in the social sciences that garners as much attention as *competence* in the development of instruments for measuring outcomes of educational processes (Cortina, 2016, 30).

While this confusion is commonly seen as the result of insufficient stipulations about what competence *is*, I want to leave the search for clarity of definition aside, and rather look for perspicuity in how differently a notion such as ‘*competence*’ *can be used* in one and the same text and line of thought. This will help to analyse the source of this ambiguity and shed light on central distinctions within our common, and more theoretical, understanding of what is central in education, and to discern how these play out in discussions of what it is to be competent.

3 ‘*Being competent*’ as a transitive and intransitive notion

To the later Wittgenstein many of our philosophical problems about grasping the meaning of words originate in a failure to make clear to ourselves how those words are used in everyday language (cf Agam-Segal, 2018). Thus, he often reminds us of a possible gap between how we are initially inclined to define a word in our philosophical thinking – what we want something to mean – and the meaning of a word as it emerges in its actual use in language. One such distinction that he returns to in several discussions, is the distinction between transitive and intransitive uses of a word (Wittgenstein, 1965). He borrows this distinction from linguistics, but applies it in a broad way to clarify not only a rather superficial grammatical difference, but to show the constitutive role our ways of speaking about something have for our understanding of what kind of object it is.

Some verbs can be used with or without an object, for example, thinking or waiting; I am thinking (intransitive) versus I am thinking of something (transitive), or he is waiting (intransitive) versus he is waiting for X to happen (transitive). In these cases, we use the same verb, but the predicate is different. Wittgenstein expounds the importance of this difference in relation to understanding the concepts in question (ibid). In this article, I will use Wittgenstein’s distinction as a reminder that allows me to analyse the way we speak and theorise about competence. I will not provide an exegetical discussion of Wittgenstein’s work on related notions such as *ability*, *learning* or *knowledge*.

If we apply the distinction between transitive and intransitive uses to the notion of *being competent*, we can see a similar structure, although, unlike Wittgenstein’s examples, *being competent* is not a verb. This difference between a transitive and intransitive use of *being*

competent is not as apparent as in the cases of *thinking* and *waiting* where we can see the different predicate directly (*x is thinking* versus *x is thinking of something*). Rather, ‘She is definitely competent’ might be uttered in a meeting when choosing someone for a certain job. The difference will be in the way the predicate *being competent* is used. ‘She is definitely competent’ could refer to the formal papers that are required for the job that confirm, attest and verify the competence that she possesses. This would be a transitive use. On the other hand, we could imagine that she has just left the room after her interview and one of the interview panel utters spontaneously, ‘She is *definitely* competent’. In this case, *being competent* is used in an intransitive way. It is an expression of appreciation rather than a reference to her portfolio with all the formally required papers.

On the surface, the sentence ‘She is competent’ has the same grammatical structure in both cases, but looking at the way in which the sentence is being used, *being competent* has two different propositional contents. When used in a transitive way, it takes the form of a factual proposition – the interviewee is holding a certain set of competencies (the object in the transitive use). These competences have been achieved, measured and confirmed in a formalised situation. The intransitive use, however, is not pointing to something specific in the person’s knowledge, that is, there is nothing, no object that one could point towards – it is rather a judgement of value regarding the person as a whole.

Think, for example, of situations where two formally competent individuals are compared in relation to their performance of a certain task. Both might get the job done, but only the latter is doing it in a way that satisfies the customer, that is, both are competent but only the second one in a transitive as well as an intransitive sense.

Being competent in the sense of this second person might remind us of Hilary Putnam’s discussion of *thick concepts* (2002). It is possible to think of the words ‘S/he is competent’ as both descriptions and evaluations at the same time, and of the attribution of *competence* to someone as *entangled* with the evaluation of this as something to recommend (Putnam, 2002). Here, the case of this second person, who is competent in both the transitive and intransitive sense seems to follow the attributions of *generosity* and *cruelty* to an individual. The description of someone as *generous* or *cruel* depends for its sense on understanding these features of their behavior as something that is valued as good or bad (Putnam, 2002), as behaviour we can or cannot recommend. However, as seen in the case of the first person, there are uses of *competence* where the factual descriptions of someone having the formal competences for a position can be disentangled from the evaluative judgement that the person is someone, the person making the judgement, would recommend. Therefore, I do not want to argue that the

factual and the evaluative are *always* entangled, as one would do in calling *competence* a thick concept in Putnam's description of it.¹

These discussions remind us that the distinction between transitive and intransitive uses contains the well-known difficulty of how judgements of value and propositions of facts are related to each other. As it is often argued throughout the history of philosophy, it is problematic to try to describe value judgements as a series of factual propositions. Holland, who is following Wittgenstein's line of thought, argues in his essays: *Against empiricism* (1980) that appreciating someone for being competent *as a whole*, as formulated above, can easily be misunderstood in a factual way. But *the whole* is not a list of everything that can be known and done; it is not a reference to something complete. It is rather, what Holland describes as *mastery*, an open-ended concept. 'What it focuses upon is an ideal and not an actual resting place' (Holland, 1980, 56). According to Holland, *mastery*, and in our case the intransitive meaning of competence,

is an achievement that never annihilates the task. It is a finding in which an essential part of what is found is that there is more to seek. The reason why mastery has this property is that the achievement is not external to the task. Hence that combination of unbowing independence with humility towards the subject which noticeably characterises the mastery. (ibid).

In a related essay: *Education and the spirit*, Holland further develops the idea that when we are describing someone as doing something with spirit, we are obviously uttering 'judgements of value' (Holland, 1980, 63). But, he stresses, *spirit* should not be taken 'to be the name of a class of invisible substances' (ibid, 63-64). Rather, it is 'non-discursive' or 'non-theoretical', by which he means that it is

unformulatable in discourse of the kind which by a series of statements expounds a subject in an itemising, orderly, argumentative way. One could equally use the term *non-propositional*, especially in so far as one thinks of propositions as vehicles of factuality, bald specifications of states of affairs (Holland, 1980, 64).

In this quotation, Holland provides his version of Hume's guillotine, the notion that judgements of value cannot be derived from judgements of facts. He can also be seen as spelling out the

¹ As will be demonstrated in the next sections, I aim to show problems in discussions about competence arise because there are situations where the factual judgement can be disentangled from the evaluative judgement. Therein different problems are possible. We can think the evaluative judgement can be replaced by the making of (a complex set of) factual judgements. Or we do not recognise that the evaluative judgements are never fully reducible to the factual descriptions, although we in some situations can explicate what is of value to us in statements that can be considered as statements of fact. These are problems that arise when we, as Wittgenstein says, become 'entangled in our own rules' (Wittgenstein 1953, § 125).

implications of Wittgenstein's distinction between transitive and intransitive uses of concepts. The gist of these arguments is that the uses of a notion as a value-judgement cannot be reduced to a set of factual propositions, even if it would be a very complex set of propositions.

Throughout the history of knowledge and education, we find sophisticated descriptions and analyses on this distinction. In education for example, the Continental tradition has distinguished between the notions of *Bildung* and *Ausbildung* in order to be able to communicate this central difference (Schaffar and Uljens, 2015). *Bildung* could be described in Holland's words as the strive for the ideal of mastery, 'an achievement that never annihilates the task', an ongoing movement of searching just in order to find that 'an essential part of what is found is that there is more to seek.' However, the Continental tradition was at the same time aware of the pragmatic necessity in educational processes, and distinguished the strive for *Bildung* from discussion about when educational relationships and processes should come to an end, what (assessable) level of knowledge and skills are required in order to receive an exam and to be called qualified for certain civic and professional tasks in society. Here, the notion of *Ausbildung* was used. With two distinct terms, it is feasible to keep apart these different foci in educational theory and practice (cf Horlacher, 2015, 123).

Still, by using the notion of competence, educational theory and policy is able to refer to both, the overarching, never ending strive towards an ideal, and the search for pragmatic solutions for concrete educational processes. It is not surprising that in the discussion about competence, we find voices who recognise the problems involved in reducing intransitive uses of *competence*, which in our case imply a value-judgement, to transitive, factual propositions, as well as those voices that describe and handle the situation by just asserting the immense complexity of competence, but still suggest that this complexity can be captured in factual propositions.

From one voice, we find Illeris, who describes difficulties of assessing some features of competence that rather belong to generic competences (creativity, problem-solving, flexibility, personality or attitudes). Without referring to distinctions like those between transitive versus intransitive, or value-judgements versus factual propositions, he points out that 'a complete assessment of competencies is not possible' (ibid, 137, my translation); assessments of someone's real competence, that is, what s/he is able to do in a certain situation, should always be understood 'as assessments of just limited parts and elements of competence' (ibid).

Among other voices, however, we find the methodological discussions of how to assess and empirically measure competence, for example in regard to the increasing amount of large-scale

national and international assessments (cf TIMSS, PISA, IALS, ALL)². Here, measuring competence is treated as very complex and multilayered, but in principle still a manageable, empirical task. Koeppen et al (2013), for example, write ‘The new focus on competence has shifted attention from the measurement of general cognitive abilities to more complex ability constructs related to real world contexts. Sophisticated models of the structure and levels of these complex constructs need to be developed’ (Koeppen et al, 2013, 171); or ‘The difficulties and complexities of assessing learners’ baseline competencies and learning gains are often underestimated in educational policy and practice. Developing appropriate measurement instruments that can be used for different purposes is a time- and resource-intensive undertaking’ (Koeppen et al, 2013, 172). In these quotations, competence is seen as something that in principle can be described by a complex set of measurable features. What follows in the educational literature after descriptions like this are detailed discussions about different theoretical definitions and models, and about the validity and reliability of different psychometric tests and scales. But the willingness to measure competence at any price disguises the central problem, namely that an open-ended concept like Holland’s description of mastery, or the intransitive use of *being competent*, cannot be translated into empirically measurable units.

Wittgenstein’s point in bringing out the distinction between the transitive and intransitive use is not to put one over the other, but to alert us to the difference in use that changes the meaning of the word in a concrete case. The same awareness can be accomplished when using two different words in order to keep the two necessarily different discussions apart. While the intransitive use as a value-judgement cannot be reduced to empirical propositions, the transitive use invites us to use the concept in just such a way. The problem I want to highlight in the following section is that when the same word is used for these very different educational meanings, the central distinction between what is empirically measurable and what is not, becomes invisible.

4 From value-judgements to factual statements

Wittgenstein’s discussion of transitive and intransitive uses calls attention to the possibility of theoretical imprecision, that might cause confusion and misunderstanding when used in the

² TIMSS: Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study; PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment; IALS: International Adult Literacy Survey; ALL: Accessible Literacy Learning.

global discussion about educational goals and measurements. At its worst, it enables the possibility of rhetorically misleading narratives in current educational discussions.

Intransitive formulations are often mistaken as just less accurate expressions of seemingly similar transitive applications. Wittgenstein discusses, for example, the transitive and intransitive differences between longing, waiting, wishing, being afraid, and so on, and writes that there is a temptation to conceal the differences between transitive and intransitive uses by saying, ‘The difference between the two cases is simply that in one case we know what we are longing for and in the other we don’t’ (Wittgenstein, 1965, 29). But, as he continues, the expression ‘I am longing’ is neither the same as ‘I am longing, but do not know what I am longing for’, nor ‘I am longing, but not for something specific’ (cf Wittgenstein, 1965, 30). The same can be seen in the discussion above. The value-judgement that is involved in *someone being competent* cannot be completely translated into a list of detailed factual propositions. With these inaccurate *translations* from intransitive to transitive forms, the intransitive use risks being pushed to the background in favour of the seemingly more detailed and precise transitive descriptions (Wittgenstein, 1965; Agam-Segal, 2018). Let us keep this risk in mind and have a closer look at how the notion of competence is used in two examples.

As sketched above, the notion of competence has been presented and promoted as a possible core notion for educational theory and policy since the early 1990’s. Earlier notions like knowledge, ability, qualification or, as mentioned, the Continental notion of *Bildung* have become increasingly sidelined (Horlacher, 2015, 124). It is interesting to take a closer look at how competence is introduced and argued for as a necessary notion precisely for our time.

Knut Illeris, for example, has written extensively on competence. In numerous texts, he writes that competence refers to a person’s broad capabilities, something that is increasingly needed in ‘this modern, ever-changing world’. This is why it is ‘a modern expression’ for what a person is actually able to do or to achieve (Illeris, 2009, 83). Quoting Jørgensen 1999, Illeris provides the following definition:

The concept of competence refers [...] to a person being qualified in a broader sense. It is not merely that a person masters a professional area, but also that the person can apply this professional knowledge – and more than that, apply it in relation to the requirements inherent in a situation which, in addition may be uncertain and unpredictable. Thus, competence also includes the person’s assessments and attitudes, and ability to draw on a considerable part of his/her personal qualifications (Illeris, 2009, 84).

Illeris emphasises that the importance and appeal of the notion lies in the insight that it ‘involves the ability to deal appropriately with future and unforeseen situations. [...] The ability to

immediately make the professionally proper judgements and decisions in all new situations that constantly arise in working life' is, according to Illeris with reference to Beckett and Hager (2002), the crucial quality of a competency (Illeris, 2009, 84).

Illeris begins his account of competence by describing it as a notion relating to very high expectations. Someone who is able to *appropriately* deal with *any kind* of future situation by making *professionally proper* judgements and decisions is beyond any possible critique. This description relies essentially on value judgements. Competence is not only about being able to deal with future complex situations, but to deal with these situations appropriately. Or, in other words, the assessment is not only about making judgements and decisions, but about being able to judge and decide in a professionally proper way. It is Holland's notion of the open-ended mastery – 'an ideal and not an actual resting place' – that Illeris aims for in his definition of competence. Here, *being competent* is used in an intransitive way.³

The first step in introducing the notion as the one needed for today's educational discussions, therefore, is to describe competence as an ideal everyone is to approve of and to affirm as the ultimate aim for any educational endeavour. No educational theory, no educational policy maker or practising teacher can possibly have objections against this description as worth striving for. Already in 2003, Bramming critically noticed that competence is '*a plus-word*', a word that can only be understood in a positive way. 'We cannot imagine a person, a company or a public institution that seriously would say "Development of competence, no thanks – I know enough" or "We will have no use for competent employees in the future" ' (Bramming, 2003, 18, my translation). Quite correctly, she notices that it is not possible to argue for a reasonable point of view opposed to this. That means, at this stage of the discussion, the reader is already entangled in the argument; it is competent people that our society needs, that our educational institutions should strive for and that our academic educational discussions should provide the means for.

In principle, the same goes for the notion of Bildung, as described above. It is a *plus-word* by which we indicate the goal to strive for. Still, a difference from the notion of competence is that discussions about the need to strive for Bildung were easier to maintain as questions with open answers, due to its distinction from the pragmatic discussions about Ausbildung.

In presenting competence as the notion that is needed in our societies today, the step that follows is crucial. From this unquestionable value-description of competence, the next questions to

³ It is interesting to notice that Illeris is criticising the notion of Bildung as not appropriate for today's needs (Illeris 2013, 21). At the same time his description of competence is very much precisely what was meant by Bildung as well.

appear in a theoretical and public policy debate are about competence in the transitive sense. If competence is what we need today, then the question is what precisely should be done to reach competence for as many people as possible in society? What follows are analyses and discussions about *what competence is* in detail, that is, the discussion shifts to the transitive use of *being competent as holding a set of competences*.

In Illeris' and many other theorists' cases, we find at this stage of the presentation a thorough discussion about how precisely competence is internally structured, and an analysis of its different components (2013). Theorists distinguish between different competences (now in plural), which leads to questions of their internal relationship and hierarchy (eg generic competences vs specific competences). Further, it is analysed how to enable the most effective learning process for the desired competencies through different arrangements in school-settings as, according to the above presented goal, our shared interest is to guarantee the existence, emergence and stability of competence.

These are all important questions, but they differ in character from the intransitive use. It is *Ausbildung* that is investigated, when *being competent* is understood as a (complex) set of items, and not as a person's quality. It is the attempt to 'itemise the unformulatable into a series of statements' (Holland), and for this purpose the concept in question has to be imagined as consisting of factual properties. As a concept that refers to a set of items, questions and discussions about their factual properties are now understandable and meaningful to pose. The concept of *being competent* is *used* in a transitive way, and thus its meaning has changed. Now it is meaningful to ask how *being competent* could be attested, defined, assessed, measured and compared, that is, how it could be empirically assessed. *Being competent* has received a 'resting place' (Holland), while the intransitive, open-ended meaning of the concept in the beginning of the argument is always dynamic and never fixed.

Illeris describes this problem explicitly, when he writes that we 'have to take it very seriously that quantifications and comparisons of these measurements inevitably leads to prioritising those assessable elements at the expense of what is not measurable. This again leads to a one-sidedness that the notion of competence precisely wanted to overcome' (Illeris, 2013, 137, my translation).

Still, it is not enough to mention this risk. We have to understand the conceptual structure of the notion *being competent* that allows us to use the same word to mean both the value-judgement and the assessable factual statement depending on the different contexts of our argument in order to prevent the domination of transitive use.

Another example of the possibility of silently shifting between intransitive value-judgements and transitive factual assessability can be seen in the presentation of the urgent need for the project that Koeppen et al suggest. Here, the shifting between intransitive and transitive use is not as obvious as in the Illeris' case. Rather, their argument that we need more sophisticated models and tools of competence assessment, is made via a constant pointing towards the intransitive meaning of competence without spelling out, as Illeris did, the details of what this would imply. For example, they start their article by stating 'Social change, social cohesion, and opportunities for social development are all dependent on the educational level of the members of a society' and continue by underlining the problem that the results of large scale international assessments, have 'identified huge gaps between the competencies attained, on one hand, and the goals of the educational system, on the other' Further: 'There has been an increasing focus within educational systems on defining and evaluating the goals to be attained by schools.' (Koeppen et al, 2013, 171). In these quotations, they acknowledge a distinction to be made between *attained competencies* and *the goal of educational systems* as such, and state that 'the concept of competence is increasingly considered as *an anchor point* in this discussion' (Koeppen et al, 2013, 171, my emphasis).

It might not be as explicit as in Illeris' case whether they are referring only to specific measurable cognitive goals in relation to specific school-related tasks when they talk about competence, or to wider societal questions and phenomenon. But the relevance of their project relies on the immediate link between the measurability of competence that they aim to develop and competence as the central indicator for societal enhancement. These (assumably) valuable strives for *social change, social cohesion and opportunities for social development* indicate that the intransitive use of competence is at work when 'Current discussions in educational research emphasise the importance of the products of educational processes' (ibid). In their formulations, they essentially build on value-laden goals, but give the impression that the solution will be found in a sophisticated model of competence and a complex measurement tool-box.

These examples illustrate, that the notion of competence enables us to blur a central distinction in educational theory, viz the distinction between what the value-laden aims of our endeavours in education are, and what can be measured and assessed empirically. On the surface, we are using the same words, but the meaning of them is shifting depending on the context of argument and discussion. Both uses are meaningful and necessary in educational discussions, but it is important to keep their characteristics distinct. As Gert Biesta puts it: 'It is always advisable to use factual information when making decisions about what ought to be done, [but] (my insertion) what ought to be done can never be logically *derived* from what is the case' (Biesta,

2010, 12). By conflating both uses, the risk is we present the transitive use as a solution to specific intransitive aims, and without further notice, the value-laden and *not-measurable* meaning of competence is set aside or forgotten.

5 Further consequences

Wittgenstein's interest in elucidating the difference between transitive and intransitive use is mainly philosophical or conceptual. It is however important to recognise that the blurring of this central distinction in education is not only a theoretical failure of characterising the different uses of the concept correctly. While on the surface, the notion of competence might seem to bridge a gap between different theoretical schools and educational cultures, neglecting the possibility of this dual use rather conceals the central educational distinction between what the value-laden aim of our educational endeavours is, and what can be measured and assessed empirically. This might not have caused, but has at least tolerated confusions and misunderstandings in the public, political and professional discussion of education, which in some cases might explain why the notion has become so popular, despite – or maybe even because of its lack of theoretical accuracy.

For example, it has been widely analysed and argued that neoliberal shifts in national and international policy making forces education increasingly into a new self-conception (cf Parreira do Amaral et al (eds), 2019; Dovemark et al, 2018; Ball, 2012). At its core, education is pushed into the logic of economic phenomenon, a logic that is fundamentally based on a transitive understanding of competence. Han points out, that it was through the discipline of Human Resource Development (HRD) that the concept of competence gained attention in the educational realm, through the reduction of the intransitive use to the transitive. He writes,

While HRD investigates the nature of human experience and its maxim *development*, human competence is a “displayed characteristic of expertise, not the expertise itself, but very behaviour-specific, definable, and measurable subsets within an individual's domain of expertise”. [...] If considering that current HRD presupposes capitalism and market system as fundamentals, the characteristics of competence interpreted as the *measurable*, the *definable*, and the *manageable* are directly linked with monetary forms of marketable goods or *human capital* in a capitalist society (Han, 2009, 58).

In the logic of capitalist economic processes, education is taken to be similar to most other production processes. Since only measurable, assessable units, processes and outcomes, are tradable, it is only those parts of our educational discussion that are seen as relevant in a

dominant capitalist view of education. Here, the transitive use of competence is in focus when competences are imagined and conceptualised as something that can be given a price, can be traded, owned, bought or sold. The intransitive use of competence (or the perspective of *Bildung*) is falling out of sight, and literally losing its value, as it is the perspective on education that cannot be nailed down to factual propositions. Consequently, because it is not available as an object for monetary evaluations, the intransitive perspective appears to be not valuable, not useful and thus not at all worthy of consideration.

The possibility of treating the notion of *being competent* as a set of items with definable and measurable (factual) features, and with comparable, assessable and manageable smaller units (competences), while at the same time still echoing a desirable overarching goal in society, might have been an important factor in facilitating the commodification of competences. The notion of competence might not have caused this development, but the lack of theoretical accuracy and precision has at least not helped to restrain the growing one-sidedness of the educational discourse. The use of two distinct notions, like the concepts of *Bildung* and *Ausbildung*, might have helped to highlight that the commodification of education is only focusing on the assessable, pragmatic questions about education.

Gert Biesta's book *Good Education in an Age of Measurement* (2010) reminds of yet another problem that is related to the imprecision of the notion of competence. Although he is not directly discussing the notion of competence, his main analytical line of thought is the relation between discussions about quality on one hand and what is measurable on the other. He describes education as a process with a direction and purpose, which makes it necessary to constantly pose the question about quality, what education actually is for, and what we mean by aiming for *good* education. But, he writes:

The problem is not only that the question of good education seems to have disappeared. I also believe that in many cases the question of good education has been replaced by other discourses. Such discourses often appear to be about the quality of education – think, for example, of discussions about the effectiveness of education or on accountability in education – but in fact never address the question of good education itself. They rather displace the *normative* question of good education with technical and managerial questions about the efficiency and effectiveness of processes, not what these processes are supposed to be for (Biesta, 2010, 2).

Despite those voices who explicitly presented competence as the salving notion in our struggle to communicate beyond different educational and cultural traditions, his diagnosis of the current problem is rather that 'If there is anything lacking [...] it is first and foremost a *language* or

vocabulary that allows us to articulate questions about the purpose of education and to do so in a precise enough manner' (Biesta, 2010, 4, my emphasis). Biesta criticises today's educational theory for not being able to express this central strive for good education as an ideal or quality in itself, as it was indicated by the notion of *Bildung*. Instead, the discussion about quality has shifted and focusses on quality-control of educational process and their outcomes, like it is possible to do in discussions about *Ausbildung*.⁴

Biesta links this development to an even deeper problem. The moment we are narrowing the discussion about quality in education to an issue of quality-controlling educational processes, it risks being understood as a question for experts to find solution to, rather than a central question for a democratic public to engage in. Questions about the aims and goals for educating the next generation has always been one of the central tasks for public debate and consideration in democratic societies. What is worth knowing and passing on, what should be improved in society, in short: how do we want our society to be in the future, are central democratic, evaluative questions. However, as can be seen in large scale assessments, it is assumed to be possible to compare the academic achievements of a certain cohort in any country despite the differences between cultural and historical peculiarities and their national curricula, for example, OECD's *PISA Programme*. The need to be alert to the specific cultural discussions about what is seen as important and valuable to strive for in education (as the intransitive use of competence or the term *Bildung* essentially depend on), is eliminated as much as possible in the scope of these assessments.

On one hand this is possible, due to the unquestionable aim of *competent people* as the ultimate outcome of our shared educational endeavours. Compare for example, OECD's first report on the PISA results, which was called *Knowledge and Skills for Life*. The foreword is asking: 'Are students well prepared to meet the challenges of the future? Are they able to analyse, reason and communicate their ideas effectively? Do they have the capacity to continue learning throughout life?' (OECD, 2000, 3). These are broad and highly valued educational aims that are hard to question – at least at first sight. Here, the intransitive use seems to help overcome different national traditions and cultures and to establish a global vocabulary for discussion.

But on the other hand, this runs the risk of a loss of democratic involvement in educational questions. When the aim of education is conceived as unquestionable and obvious, what is there left to discuss for the public community? This possible shift in meaning, described above, invites us to think that what remains to be done is up to educational experts to manage, plan,

⁴ For a similar analysis and argument in the field of health care, see Bornemark 2018.

conduct, assess and improve the educational processes, that is, to focus on the transitive meaning of competence. In this respect, the foreword to the first PISA report continues interestingly by stating that ‘Parents, students, the public and those who run education systems need to know the answers to these questions’ (OECD, *ibid*). Here, the democratic public is addressed as passive in relation to the debate; in need of (and having the right) to know, they are waiting for the experts to answer the questions about the educational future, for example, by comparing the achievements in reading, mathematical and scientific literacy of 15-yearolds in several countries. Biesta writes: ‘Those who should be involved in discussions about what constituted good education – such as teachers, parents, students and society as a whole – [are precluded] (my insertion) from taking part in them’ (Biesta, 2010, 2). Discussions about the aims of education are increasingly transferred to experts who, as argued above, often rather confuse the question about good education (ie about value judgements) by asserting how elusive and complex learning and assessment processes are. Education as a democratic endeavour and a shared engagement in value-discussions (*Bildung*) is at risk in favour of education as a learning-process controlled and operated by experts only (*Ausbildung*).

6 Conclusion

Given that theoretical considerations and terms should illuminate our understanding of the phenomenon in question, and should provide analytical tools to better understand the challenges as well as offer a language that helps us to communicate with each other to prevent possible misunderstanding, *Competence* must be considered a weak concept for educational theory and policy. At first sight, we might say that educational policy is about translating complex value-laden ideals to practical guidelines and this is precisely what could be achieved by the term competence. But the translation from the value-laden ideal into pragmatic solutions is crucial and should be done as informed as possible. With reference to the pair of concepts *Bildung* – *Ausbildung*, that is used in the German-speaking educational tradition in order to name the two distinct foci in educational discussions, I argue that both perspectives are necessary to be aware of. Using the same word for both sides of the translation-process is rather confusing than illuminating the discussion. While theoretical concepts should help us to understand the complexity in educational questions, the notion of competence, with its varying uses, enables us to blur one of the central distinctions in educational discussions.

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Educar el juicio

**- Aprendiendo de la didáctica de la filosofía y de las manualidades
(Educating Judgment-Learning from the didactics of philosophy and sloyd)**

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Abstracto

Profesores de la enseñanza vocacional se enfrentan con dos problemas. (1) El aprendizaje incluye la capacidad para trascender y modificar conocimientos adquiridos a nuevas circunstancias. ¿Cómo debería la educación vocacional preparar los estudiantes para futuras, todavía desconocidas tareas? (2) Los estudiantes deberían producir trabajos de buena calidad. ¿En qué modo les ayuda la educación vocacional a desarrollar su habilidad para distinguir entre mejor y peor calidad? Estas dos preguntas son fuertemente enlazadas. El artículo compara la didáctica de la filosofía con la didáctica de las manualidades. Las dos se han venido desarrollando independientemente, pero la similitud entre sus respectivas soluciones para fomentar el desarrollo de la capacidad de reflexión es significativa. Tal capacidad no se centra únicamente en idear modos eficaces para laborar hacia metas predefinidas, sino implica reflexionar en la práctica sobre la meta que uno tiene o debería tener. Esto implica asimismo reflexión sobre lo que futuros obstáculos y sus soluciones requieren de uno en términos técnicos, cognitivos, sociales y morales.

Abstract

Teachers in vocational education face two problems. (1) Learning involves the ability to transcend and modify learned knowledge to new circumstances. How should vocational education prepare students for future, unknown tasks? (2) Students should strive to produce work of good quality. How does vocational education help them develop their faculty of judgment to differentiate between better and worse quality? These two questions are tightly interwoven. The paper compares the didactics of philosophy and sloyd. Both developed independently, but their solutions to how one advances the capacity for reflective judgment are similar. Central to this capacity is not merely devising efficient means to work towards pre-existing aims, but to reflect in practice on what one's aim are and should be. This implies reflection on what future problems, as well as solutions to them, demand of us technically, cognitively, socially and morally.

Palabras clave, didáctica de la filosofía, didáctica de las manualidades, capacidad de reflexión, competencia

Keywords: Philosophy for children, sloyd education, faculty of judgment, competence.

1. Introduction

Students in vocational education learn to produce services and products. The aim of this learning is not only to be able to repeat school-tasks, but to deliver similar services and products in future situations that are different from the ones in the student's vocational education. Teachers are thus challenged to teach their students in such a way that they learn to apply their knowledge and abilities to unknown circumstances. This is needed to respond to the labor market's demand for vocational professionals who are not only professional in their own trades, but also flexible to the changing demands of society and on the labor market. This demand of the labor market, as well as of earlier and present educational policy, appears somehow paradoxical: as a professional you should both be deeply familiar and situated in the trade's knowledge and you should be open and flexible, even to the extent of questioning and reinventing the professional knowledge itself.

Furthermore, the purpose in manufacturing things or delivering services is not only to realize the production in any possible way. When becoming professionals, students are asked to strive for good quality in their work. A student might have fulfilled the task of cutting someone's hair, serving salad or repairing a car, but the important question remains whether this was done in a good way, resulting in good quality. Vocational education should therefore help students develop their faculty of judgment, to differentiate between better and worse quality in their own and in other's work.

This raises two demanding questions for vocational education. (1) How should we prepare students for future, unknown tasks? (2) How do we help students develop their faculty of judgment to differentiate between better and worse quality? Throughout this article we argue that these two questions are tightly interwoven.

In the following, we examine these questions via a comparison of two didactical practices, the didactical school that developed methods for teaching philosophy for children and the didactics for sloyd-education⁵. This comparative study allows us to describe some central features of the educational processes that further the quality of student learning, independently of their particular content and the national context in which they have been developed.

These two schools developed theories and methods independently from each other, but came to similar solutions as to how to teach in a way that enables the student to transcend previous knowledge,

⁵ Sloyd (Swedish: slöjd) is the education of manual skills gained in woodwork and handicraft.

and doing it in a good manner. Taking different points of departure, both came to focus on reflection as a central feature of teaching and learning. In doing this, they offer a concrete, methodological, but still theoretically insightful treatment of the recognition that thinking and reflecting as well as being in action and engaging in a practice cannot be seen as two distinct activities.

Using insights from Donald Schön's "The Reflective Practitioner" (1983) and virtue theory, we argue that both didactical fields offer examples of learning to reflect in practice and provide reasons for thinking that such reflection is an intellectual virtue. Central to this capacity for making reflective judgment is not merely devising efficient means to work towards pre-existing aims, but to reflect in practice on what one's aim are and should be. This implies reflection on what future problems, as well as solutions to them, demand of us technically, cognitively, socially and morally. In conclusion, we tie these insights to current debates on educating competences and using formative assessment to further the quality of student learning.

2. How to teach thinking and producing? A presentation of didactic of philosophy and sloyd

Every field of knowledge is surrounded by some kind of public myth, which often leads to problematic stereotypical ideas and far too often stereotypical realities. For example, mathematics or technical subjects are often called hard subjects, while healthcare and art are called soft. Languages are discussed as necessary and useful, while sports are considered as fun. Similarly, philosophy and sloyd are connected with images that spontaneously make them appear the opposites of one another. Philosophy is seen as pure thinking about complex questions, which are hard to understand. Sloyd or craft is concrete, and produces real things. Philosophy is seen as a pure brain-activity, while sloyd is considered a purely bodily activity.

The first common task for anyone working within the didactics of philosophy and sloyd is to struggle against these stereotypes. In this article we concentrate on the insights and methods that Matthew Lipman (1922-2010) developed under the name Philosophy for Children (often P4C) and the sloyd-education that in the Nordic countries is academically grounded. In Finland it is e.g. possible to gain a PhD in sloyd-education. We will present and compare both didactical fields and finally discuss some important insights as to how these methods contribute to developing the faculty of judgment.

2.1. Philosophy for Children

We easily accept that it takes several years until a student learns to write, read and calculate. Compared to the amount of detailed didactical tools and methods for, as well as research on, teaching

these abilities, it is interesting that the ability to think and reason, to question and argue is marginalised in the didactical discussion. Philosophy is not only faced with the public image of being complex and difficult. At the same time (school) education and curriculum-writers seem to assume that the ability to reason and question comes automatically with the other knowledge and skills a student obtain during the years spent in school. In the case philosophy is a subject in school at all, it is mainly for students in secondary school. It often only appears in more academically orientated programs and is not mandatory.

A noteworthy contribution to change this kind of thinking about philosophizing and critical thinking is found within the program Philosophy for Children (P4C). Philosophy for Children is a set of methods, games and discussions, aimed at improving the reasoning skills of kindergarten and school children. It was originally developed by American philosopher Matthew Lipman (1976, 2003, 2009), to remedy what he found to be poor thinking skills in his philosophy students. They were, he argued, not encouraged to philosophize themselves, but rather to gain knowledge about philosophy. A central insight in Lipman's work is therefore the distinction between knowledge *about* philosophy, the work and life of philosophers, philosophical theories etc., and the ability *to do* philosophy. Lipman wrote and published textbooks of his own in which central philosophical questions were raised without any links to the factual persons and circumstances in which they were discussed originally. The aim was to engage students in the question itself and not in historical facts about the life and time of certain persons (BØRRESEN & MALMHESTER 2004: 13).

[P]hilosophy for children is [...] about philosophical problems. These problems are not owned by specialists or by people with academic philosophical training, but are indispensable parts of every human life. (BØRRESEN & MALMHESTER, 2004: 13, *our translation.*)

P4C encompasses different didactical methods, and there is no one distinct structure for philosophical inquiries. However, a central place is held by the so-called *community of inquiry*. Here students, coached by the teacher, independently philosophize about questions they pose themselves. This can be a subject that is directly from the curriculum, or something else that the teacher or the students want to discuss more closely. The topic might be presented by a text, a video, a picture, a scene that just happened in the schoolyard or a visit to the local theatre. After some minutes that the students spend individually to formulate their own question concerning the topic, they are asked to agree upon one question that they want to discuss. Depending on the topic and the age of the students, the inquiry can be divided in different parts, with breaks for the individuals to reflect and formulate thoughts and questions. A central part of the whole inquiry is a closing meta-discussion about whether or not the

initial question was answered, about the way it had been discussed and about what should be learned for the next inquiry together.

In these inquiries, the teacher and students work together towards something that could be described as the best answer to issues that, as Børresen and Malmhester say, “are obviously packed into problems and situations with which they are familiar.”

The basic ethical question "How should we live?" is often formulated concretely, maybe in the manner: "Do I have to go to school today?", "Can't we go out and play?" or "Can't we do something fun?" This last question can in turn lead to questions such as "What kind of fun things can we do?", "What's really funny?", "What can 'fun' mean?" or "Is it good to (just) do what is funny?" (BØRRESEN & MALMHETER, 2004: 13, *our translation*.)

The aim for the Community of Inquiry is the search for truth, understood in such a way that it contributes to develop the student's self-awareness and understanding of his/her existence in the world.

In such a community students encourage each other's imagination, they investigate what is possible, by listening to and assessing the critical arguments that come up, and by reflecting on the conclusions and their work together. [...] It also stimulates the individual independent thinking, the conceptual and linguistic development and the ability to provide arguments and judge different opinions. (BØRRESEN & MALMHETER, 2004: 12, *our translation*).

A central question here is how to understand the thinking and reasoning skills, or the critical thinking, which these inquiries aim to develop. Often they are described as just a range of tools, as rational instruments or logical techniques that serve to reach a certain goal that was defined in advance. Here thinking is conceived an instrument for solving problems or answering questions by calculating facts or balancing pros and cons against each other. This idea of instrumental rationality has been strongly criticised (see e.g. SCHÖN 1983), but is still a widespread point of view.

Besides this limited notion of critical thinking, there are also more encompassing notions of critical thinking (see ENNIS 1996, PAUL 2000). Ohlsson and Sigge, however, argue that the notion of critical thinking, when it is elaborated to incorporate all forms of good thinking easily becomes too vague to be usefully employed. Rather, they suggest that speaking of intellectual virtues is a more fruitful way of elaborating on the skills developed in the philosophical practice with children (OHLSSON & SIGGE 2013: 17-18). The emphasis on virtues also incorporates the recognition that certain demands and ideals are embodied in the practice. What is involved in thinking and reflection cannot, in other words, be separated from acknowledging that there are standards for thinking well.

This emphasis on the virtues of thinking, seeks to find a way of surpassing the “relativistic perspective” (DANIEL et al. 2002; 2004) that may often emerge on the way to more developed philosophical thinking. Daniel et al. distinguish three perspectives: the egocentric, the relativistic and the intersubjective. They argue that children participating in P4C usually stop at the second stage, or only partly reach the third stage after more training. At the relativistic stage, the children are capable of reflecting over problems, but not of questioning their own and others’ opinions. Sigge and Ohlsson describe this as a *laissez-faire* view where everyone is considered to be right in their own way, or where there is no wrong or right in philosophical questions (OHLSSON & SIGGE 2013: 20).

The notion of virtues is central in responding to such relativistic views of thinking. It enables us to shift the perspective from conceptualizing the act of thinking as a simple instrument to the insight that the act of thinking has clear moral implications (cf. PAUL 2000). Thinking requires courage, e.g. to question notions that are generally accepted, or to think independently, to endure criticism and be capable of changing. Thinking also requires patience and perseverance to think carefully about a problem and to tolerate ambivalence and frustration (SCHAFFAR 2012). Thinking well also requires good judgment so that one is able to ponder the arguments to be considered. Ohlsson and Sigge stress that a central difficulty lies in the insight that the rules and principles that are governing such a weighing themselves rest on rules and principles that can and should be argued for and against (OHLSSON & SIGGE 2013: 25f). In this regard methods in philosophy for children also develop children's faculty of judgment, by enabling them to become better judges of what constitutes good judgment.

When we realize that we cannot have one certain foundation from which other principles of truth can be derived, we must learn to see problems and solutions in a different way. We need to take a position on them as individuals with a will and ability to influence others, not as people who mechanically try to calculate facts in the hope of arriving at the correct solution. When we approach the foundations of thinking in this manner, a moral dimension is revealed in the attitudes and dispositions of individual thinkers. Among such desirable attitudes, or virtues, Ohlsson and Sigge list, among others, the love of truth, intellectual honesty, skepticism, humility, courage and compassion (OHLSSON & SIGGE 2013, chapter 5).

In the didactics of philosophy, a leading insight is that thinking is not a contrast to actions or practice. Thinking or reflection is not to be conceived as an inner mental process (cf. KRONQVIST 2008, chapter 1 and 2, HERTZBERG 2007). It is neither a contrast to action, nor a preparation for future “real” actions, but a way of *being in action*. Learning to become better at reflection, or in critical thinking, is here centrally seen as a change in attitude, as the outcome of practicing a skill or training a new habit. In particular, it is a way of learning, by engaging in practice, what is a good way of posing a question, as well as the ways in which different questions can and cannot be answered. By engaging in this practice,

students discover that they have to take a stand in different questions. Every thought, argument, moment of reflection and decision is a concrete action in the process of discussion.

2.2. Sloyd education

Historically the curriculum of sloyd education shows a long tradition of teaching both social and cognitive skills as an internal part of the process of production itself (cf. FRÖBEL, DIESTERWEG, CYGNAEUS, see PELTONEN 2011, p. 314). The aim of sloyd-didactics is not only to trade different crafts and practical techniques to the students. Rather, sloyd requires both practical and reflective skills from the students. This reflection focuses both on the product and on the process. That is why Peltonen describes the core of sloyd as the conception of a production-process that not only accompanies, but also steers the situation of production (PELTONEN 2011: 320).

Sloyd is a practice within which the person's thoughts change from concerning simple conceptions about products and demands of the situation in relation to the tools used towards reasoning in advance about how one should approach the very act of production and what the conditions are for completing the act of production. The result of this act of production is a product and a conception of whether one masters the act of production. (PELTONEN 2011: 320, *our translation*)

Engaging in reflection about one's production is, in this sense, centrally not conceived as an additional task, but as integrated in the very act of production.

Lindström points out that teaching creative activities should encourage students to actively experiment, investigate and change circumstances, material, tools and techniques. Students develop a habit to formulate problems and to find new possibilities throughout their work (LINDSTRÖM 2007: 12). In the education of creative activities the manufacturing of a product is combined with observation, reflection and the training of sensitivity. Lindfors lists several abilities that are trained by the sloyd-education process; students learn to perceive, investigate, analyse, control, regulate, judge, choose, express, form, perform, communicate and to act socially (LINDFORS 1991: 84). Lindström adds that the process even involves courage and the will to take risks when students are faced with the need to reformulate the problem or to try new solutions. In some way, Lindström says, it is part of the nature of creative activity that experiment and risk taking not always leads to a satisfying result (LINDSTRÖM 2007: 12; LINDFORS 1991: 123f).

In a similar manner to the discussion about the didactics of philosophy, the skills that sloyd education generate can be understood in a simple instrumental sense, as practical tools aimed at solving a problem or need in a concrete situation. Sloyd educational theorists, however, often stress the moral

and existential questions that are implied in the planning and manufacturing of things. Lindfors e.g. distinguishes between several levels of reflection that students have to take into account when practicing sloyd. On a technical level, students have to experience and reflect on their own concrete handcraft achievements: "Is the seam straight enough?" This reflection often implies an aesthetical judgment comparable to "Does the strand's color match with the rest of the fabric?" Further, students are confronted with economical questions: "This fabric would provide better cover, but it is more expensive. How could it be used more economically?" These questions are in turn related to a political and environmental level of reflection: "Is it necessary to use new material, or can some used material be recycled? Who produces the material that we use, and under what conditions?" Students are working with and experiencing different cultural and traditional heritage: "What kind of weaving looms did earlier generations and other cultures use? How are different ways and tools for knotting linked together?" The social level comes to the fore when students plan and work together during the entire sloyd-process as a team or when they give each other a hand or share tips, but even when they plan to give their piece to somebody as a present (cf. LINDFORS 1991: 56).

Peltonen further deepens these aspects of reflection by bringing in a moral and existential level. In his article "The philosophical foundations of sloyd-education", he discusses four different philosophical questions and principles at work in sloyd-education. (1) Sloyd raises existential questions about our existence in the (material and spiritual) world, and about the way humans are able and compelled to use nature. (2) Sloyd-education facilitates a deeper understanding of the traditions and history of craft and tools, and raises questions about what characterizes a good practitioner in relation to the remaining and changing features of our history of habits and practices. (3) Sloyd facilitates the student's own maturation from a consumer of a certain content or product towards a producer of content. The important difference lies in the students' ability to verbally communicate the meta-theory that led them through the production. It enables the student to consciously discern different alternative solutions, to choose and to realize one distinct solution. (4) Finally Peltonen describes a pacteistic perspective in sloyd by drawing on Michel Serres' philosophy about the necessity of a contract between humans and nature. Before entering a concrete act of production the result or product should be evaluated with respect to the effects it will have on the material environment and with respect to the effects on the human and social conditions it creates or influences. (PELTONEN 2011: 322f).

In sloyd education, as in the education of creative activities as such, the concrete manufacturing of a product is embedded in distinct phases of planning, reflecting and evaluating both the product itself and the whole process (LINDFORS 1991, PELTONEN 2011). Different theories and production-processes might have slightly different descriptions of the process of manufacturing, but they share some general features. Lindfors lists three phases that are necessary in the student's sloyd process. (1)

The process of design in which the general orientation about the task, the circumstances of the situation, the demand and possible ideas for a product are combined with the development of the structure, form and function. (2) The phase of planning the production, in which the student is asked to prepare the task by searching for further information that aids in reaching decisions about questions related to technique, details and construction. (3) The phase of production, which includes preparing the production-process, manufacturing the product and finishing the process. These three phases are seen as a constant circle of orientation, preparation, modification and realization towards the task of production. Each phase is in itself completed by a moment of evaluation and documentation, and the whole process of production is discussed in a meta-evaluation at the end (LINDFORS 1991: 90, 125).

3. What we can learn about the faculty of judgment from a comparison between the didactics of sloyd and philosophy?

We framed our considerations about how to educate the faculty of judgment with two questions. (1) How can vocational education help students develop their faculty of judgment, to ensure that they not only repeat the skills from their educational training, but transcend their knowledge and modify it to yet unknown situations? (2) How can students learn to differentiate between better and worse quality in their own and in other's work?

In the following we want to bring to the fore some similarities in the two contexts we examined to throw light on how students develop their faculty of judgment and how teachers can be of aid in this. Although seemingly distant from each other, the one concerned with, as it seems, pure reflection and the other with pure technique, this short introduction into their basic assumptions and methods already showed that neither the didactics of P4C nor the didactics of sloyd can be reduced to either gaining factual knowledge, applying knowledge or learning a technique.

Our main interest in the didactic of sloyd and philosophy, here, is the central notion given to learning to reflect in and on one's practice. Both didactical schools have developed methods for learning to reflect on one's thoughts and actions. In this respect, they contribute to the long history of ideas in which the division between theory and practice is critically discussed and questioned. We begin by discussing central features of this reflection in relation to Donald Schön's notion of reflection in practice. We submit, with Schön, that becoming good practitioners involves the ability not merely to devise means to realize previously established goals and to find solutions to problems or tasks that confront us. It also involves the ability to reflect on and articulate what the good goals are within our practices. However, we deepen this point by considering how such reflection depends on the shared understanding of a community of what is involved in a practice. We then go beyond Schön's account of reflection in action, by suggesting that thinking about what the problem is, or what is a good way of construing the situation, as a shared social practice, also raise moral questions. This is seen in the

emphasis of intellectual virtues in P4C, and in the need to place one's reflections in an ethico-existential setting within sloyd.

3.1. Donald Schön on being a reflective practitioner

In *The Reflective Practitioner* Donald Schön introduces a fruitful analytical distinction between "knowing-in-action" and "reflecting-in-action" (SCHÖN 1983: 50-58). The first notion asks us to recall the know-how involved in mastering a practice. This is the sense in which doing something is not to be equated with blindly applying one's knowledge or a technique, but involves a form of seeing, a form of knowledge of *how* something is done that is often tacit. This also points to the ways in which knowledge, in the sense of know how, is embodied. The knowledge manifests itself in the way we react—seemingly without thinking—to unknown situations in an adequate way. The second notion rather calls on our ability to at different points articulate this tacit, intuitive, knowledge. Both these forms of reflection can be seen in our two examples.

The notion of knowing in action alerts us to the ways in which the knowledge sought in practicing a trade, is only available through training. It sits, as it were, in the skilled hands, in the familiarity with working with materials and tools that is gained through training, but also in the feeling of security after learning to pose one's question in a clear way. Certainly a person can be said to have some knowledge of what it is to sew a straight seam on a sewing machine, or hit a nail with a hammer, without having personal experience of doing it (cf. HAMLYN 1994, p. 218-219). Someone can be able to distinguish straight seams from uneven ones, and even know methods for keeping the fabric straight. Yet they may not be able to sew one themselves, because they are not used to the resistance provided by both fabric and sewing machine. Similarly someone might know that nails are used to fasten two pieces of wood, yet be unable to use a hammer to do it, not knowing how to allow the force of the hand to run through the hammer to the head of the nail. However, there are also cases in which the knowledge *that* "One should hold it like this and not like that" can only be obtained by engaging in the actual practice. Without doing it, one cannot even perceive the difference in how it should be held. In coming to master this technique, it is also clear that many of the initial considerations fall into the background, and thus become more tacit. One does not need to think about how to hold the hammer, rather the tool becomes an extension of one's body.

This notion of an embodied, tacit know-how, obtained through practice, is clear enough in the case of sloyd didactics. Nevertheless, it is also an aspect of philosophical practice. Learning to give voice to one's thought does not only involve a process of transmission, where something inner, a mental process, is turned into something outer, audible words and sentences. Giving voice to one's thoughts involves learning to use one's voice as an instrument, to say something without stumbling on the

words, to speak slowly and clearly. Here, practice is usually needed to overcome the bodily discomfort associated with the nervousness, shame and fear of speaking in front of a group of people. It involves the embodied experience of taking a stand on an issue, sometimes even literally, revealing one's thoughts, and oneself in the action. It also involves presenting one's thoughts in an orderly way, as well as learning to speak in full sentences and framing one's sentences in a manner that makes the content of one's thought clear; "I don't think this is a good argument because ..." "Now, I take a stand on this..." "Now, I give an example of that..." Here there is no simple distinction between the form and content of one's thoughts. In giving them this form, one is able to see exactly what one's thoughts are.

The notion of knowing-in-action, shows how familiarity with a practice itself is a form of knowledge. Turning to "reflecting-in-action" points to ways in which this tacit knowledge can be transformed by finding ways of articulating it. Reflection for Schön is not just a means of finding solutions to pre-given problems. This again introduces an instrumental understanding of reflection, where reflection is conceived as a means to reaching certain aims. Rather Schön submits that good practitioners are not only problem solvers, but framers or setters of problems. Speaking about the significance of recognizing problem setting as a central characteristic of being professional, he writes,

although problem setting is a necessary condition for problem solving, it is not itself a technical problem. When we set the problem, we select what we will treat as the 'things' of the situation, we set the boundaries of our attention to it, and we impose upon it a coherence which allows us to say what is wrong and in what direction the situation needs to be changed. Problem setting is a process in which, interactively, we *name* the things to which we will attend and *frame* the context in which we will attend to them. (SCHÖN, 1983: 40)

This aspect of reflection is embedded in both didactical methods that let students constantly move between their doing and their reflection, at three stages of their action, *planning*, *reflecting in one's action*, and *evaluation*. For analytical purposes, we describe these features as part of three different stages. However, engaging in a practice involves an ongoing movement between them.

The first stage appears in the *initial* questions, "What is my problem?" "What is my plan?" "What do I want to do?" "How should I do it?" Both didactical schools stress the importance of initially carefully focusing on a systematic analysis of what actually is the question to discuss or the task to solve by a concrete production. The process starts with a separate phase in which students and teachers consciously discuss the starting point of the student's endeavor. Problem setting is an essential feature of the practice in which both didactics involve students. This answers to the insight that seeking out what the problem is, is essential to the method one chooses for solving it.

The second stage is the *ongoing* reflective endeavor of the philosophical inquiry or the sloyd process. This is characterized by questions such as, “What am I doing now?” “How does this contribute to doing what I planned?” Central to this stage is the realization that a failure to follow one’s plan, may result in a failure to do what one was supposed to do. If one e.g. is about to make a shirt out of limited amount of fabric, one needs a plan for how to make the most of the material, but one also needs to take care to follow the plan. Otherwise, one may end up unable to make a shirt, for lack of useable material. Significantly, however, this reflection may also involve adjusting and at some points redefining one’s plan to the present situation. This involves the constant redefinition of the problem and the challenges one faces, i.e. Schön’s problem setting, when one receives more detailed knowledge of e.g. the material used and specific production-circumstances.

The final stage occurs in the assessment of what I have done, and whether I could have done something differently. “What did I do?” “Did I solve the problem?” “Did I formulate it in a good way?” Here, both P4C and sloyd-education emphasize the importance of meta-reflection *at the end* of each part of the process and at the end of the process as a whole. Even here the reflection is directed towards the process or discussion and towards the results of them. “Did we get an answer to our question”, “Did I manufacture a good product?”, “Precisely why or why not did the discussion and the production succeed?”

Both the didactics of philosophy and of sloyd formulate concrete methods that trade the knowledge of earlier generations but also provide a necessary distance and space to plan solutions, to constantly evaluate the process and the results, to think of alternative solutions, and to plan new steps. Significantly, this procedure has no given end and no given content. Every discussion and insight can be deepened further and every product can be improved in some way. It confronts students with the openness of future situations and develops their flexibility to adapt and to even question the traded knowledge, i.e. to transcend knowledge based on educated judgments.

These features of the reflective process develop the students’ ability to make judgment in unknown situations in at least three ways. (1) They strengthen the ability to see different options and possibilities with which a concrete situation could be improved or a problem solved. This requires imagination, creativity and innovative thinking. (2) They further the ability to ponder the different demands that the concrete situation imposes on the product, service or argument. This requires sensitivity for the particularity of every situation. (3) They advance the ability to ponder what needs to be implemented of one’s own specific knowledge and skills. This requires a realistic estimation of one’s own abilities and one’s available resources. In this way both the didactics of philosophy and of sloyd ensure a constant challenge for the students to exceed, i.e. to transcend, their factual knowledge, their skills and routines in a certain action.

In these ways, both schools provide answers to how one can initiate, structure and maintain the learning process in such a way that the students are able to modify their knowledge in new circumstances. Yet, it is significant that what the students learn in doing this, on these accounts, is not a capacity or skill of its own, but something that comes with learning the practice, by becoming reflective practitioners. Every act of learning, as it were, involves the ability to transcend previous knowledge: the concept of learning itself implies this ability. In education, we differentiate clearly between *learning*—the person understands a certain content—and imitation—the person just repeats something without an understanding of their own (see e.g. KANT in LEHMANN 1979: 77). In these ways, learning as a concept implies the embodiment and transformation of knowledge into insights and abilities of our own. At the same time, we will see that knowledge also forms, changes and develops us as human beings.

3.2. Meta-reflection as a way of developing a shared understanding

At the meta-level of discussion, after a shared experience of engaging in an activity in philosophy and sloyd, several aspects of learning are made possible and apparent. The meta-reflection addresses the group and the collective processes. Both a philosophical discussion and the manufacturing of a product are joint endeavors, even though there are situations in which the individual students are asked to think of their own answer to a certain question or in situations where the students are working on their own with a product or parts of a shared product. The joint group situation also underlies the individual tasks, both on a seemingly superficial level and on an existential level.

Børresen & Malmhester touch on these two levels when they summarize the two main reasons to allow children to philosophize.

It's good and it's fun. The students discover the benefits when they notice that they can solve problems by thinking for themselves, and when their own experience is of value. Furthermore, such discoveries are often enjoyable: finding the absurd sides of an opportunity for example. Games and exercises are obviously fun as long as they last, but kids notice gradually that what they do is part of a larger context, too. They sometimes say that they learn to think better. They rarely think about all the fundamental and everyday concepts they constantly practice in different contexts. But this is finally what first and foremost helps to create and increase meaning for the children - both in school and in life in general. (BØRRESEN & MALMHESTER 2004: 20, *our translation*).

Experiencing themselves as part of a community, is here central to the students' learning. At its best this enables the existential experience of being welcomed in a group that on the one hand sets and

develops frames for actions and behavior, and on the other hand welcomes them as individuals with voices of their own.

At a first glance these two aspects appear paradoxical or impossible. Nevertheless, the ability to develop a voice of one's own is essentially linked to a shared community with others (SCHAFFAR 2014). What might look like a group's power to limit a student's individuality, from one perspective, can, from another perspective, be seen as the frame of criteria within which it is possible to speak of the individual's effort as being directed towards a possible product or an answer in the first place.

Consider this in relation to philosophizing. It is often stated that in philosophy there is no one correct answer. This can be said as an encouragement to students to dare to say what they think on an issue, without thinking that they will fail by giving the wrong answer. As we saw, such a statement often leads to a form of relativism in the initial stages of being introduced to philosophy. Yet, the point of this is not that anything the student says serves equally well as an answer to the question. Rather they offer their thoughts as a contribution to the joint endeavor of trying out what counts as a real answer to the question. Some students will always try to respond in an arbitrary, random, merely funny or meaningless way, but the onus is on the students, individually and in the group, to show why their thoughts can be seen as answering the question, and furthermore as providing a good answer to it. Thus they are asked to provide *convincing arguments*, not mere opinions.

The meta-reflection offers the opportunity to delve deeper into this issue. There one raises questions such as, "What did we learn?" "What did we agree and disagree upon" but also "Did we listen well?" and "Should we change something?" At this stage of meta-reflection it becomes obvious that a discussion is not possible if some people are never serious in what they say, if they are not able to explain and develop their thoughts. However, the discussion also fails if one does not take the time to listen to what people say, when they are serious. The group and the shared desire to understand an issue here act as a counterpart to random individual utterances. Such utterances should also not be taken as an expression of the individual's freedom of speech. If the others do not understand what the person is saying, it is not an act of speech, in the sense that others are asked to take it into account in their further discussion.

Similarly we can see the need of a community in the process of production. On the one hand, there is no one right expression in the context of creativity. On the other hand, as the hermeneutic tradition has shown, it is only in contact with the responses of others that it is possible to discuss the meaning of the work. A product can be more or less useful, beautiful or fitting to certain needs, but to judge whether it is requires a shared community that reflects on both the product itself and on the criteria used in judging it. The individual students are not able to define on their own what is understandable, useful, beautiful or serious, rather it is in relation to another, and to a shared community that such questions arise.

Reflection, and significantly self-reflection, is in that way, something that essentially happens in interaction with each other (NYMAN 2012). In these respects P4C and sloyd-education shares many of the features of reasoning about learning, that are seen in the move in educational theory from more behaviorist approaches which measure learning as a matter of stimulus and response, to seeing learning as socially and culturally constructed (cf. works of VYGOTSKY and DEWEY).

3.3. Reflection as intellectual virtue

The former considerations naturally lead us to the intellectual virtues that were central to the conception of P4C that we introduced. Engaging in the practice of philosophy and sloyd, both raise questions about what it means to do something, and do it well, as well as to who I am who is doing it. The meta-reflection serves as a scene for reaching a common understanding of what is being done, what the problem is and how to solve it. It provides the participants with a sense of assurance of being together in the world and carrying responsible for their actions in it. The meta-reflection also calls for the need to recognize *how* something should be done, carefully, attentively, creatively, imaginatively, honestly, and so on, with an ever-growing understanding of what it is that is being done. All these virtues conspire to a certain form of practical wisdom that characterizes the person who knows how to do something well (cf. BIESTA 2010, HEILBRONN 2011, BENNETT 2012). By attending to the way something is being done, students in the meta-reflection are also faced with reflecting on questions directed towards themselves, their own efforts and their place in and responsibility for the shared experience. It is important to learn both to honestly evaluate their own work and their own effort in the whole process and to develop procedures for an honest evaluation of other's work. The aim of this meta-reflective discussion in both philosophy and sloyd is meant to lead to an improvement of the individual student, the teamwork and the concrete results/products.

Just as in the case of learning, the ability to go beyond, transcend and modify what one has been told and shown, learning what it is to do something well, is not anything we learn in addition to learning the particular practice. Rather it is something we learn *in* learning the practice. We learn what we should attend to, to be able to sew a straight seam, why it is important to be serious in making a contribution to a discussion, why we should take our time in some cases, and how to speed up the process in others. To some extent, it is possible to separate what it is to do something from doing it well. A slightly uneven seam still does the work of holding two pieces of fabric together, and its faults may not show on the outside. Thus, it may fulfill its purpose, although it does not stand an aesthetic judgment. However, there are also times where the failure to attend to one's work carefully, will lead to one not doing what one was supposed to in the first place. If a seam is so uneven that it runs outside the fabric, it will not fulfill its purpose, nor look good. In these cases we see how the notion of doing something well also comes into our understanding of *what* it is we are doing.

When discussing virtues, it is important to remark on a certain circularity in the argument. Aristotle, who is the major source of inspiration for modern versions of virtue theory (ANSCOMBE 1981, MACINTYRE 2007, on virtues in an educational context see KOTZEE 2013), noted that one already needs to be a virtuous person to recognize virtue. The virtuous person is “as it were a standard and measure” of what is virtuous. (ARISTOTLE 2000: 3.5.1113a29-33). This does not mean that the virtuous person can willfully decide on what the virtues are. Such a view, again, neglects the sense in which these activities are fundamentally couched within a social and interpersonal setting. It also neglects that someone who does not act virtuously would not be conceived as being virtuous. Remarking on this circularity, rather points to the need of understanding how what we perceive as good in a practice is internal to our understanding of that practice. The moral demands, as Lars Hertzberg notes in a different context, “are not imposed from outside but are internal to an agent’s perception.” (HERTZBERG 2011: 7).

The training in thinking that P4C promotes, e.g., presupposes an understanding of what constitutes good forms of reasoning that can only be acquired through this training, or through philosophical reflection taken more broadly. (Cf. DUNNE 1993: 293.) This creates difficulties in judging whether someone has learnt to be more reflective using any form of external standards (cf. CURREN and KOTZEE 2014). For this reason, there has been criticism of the research done on the positive contributions of P4C for being limited in its approach, as, “largely unsystematic reflections on the goals and practices of the practices” (REZNITSKAYA 2004: 4.) Yet, as Sigge and Ohlsson point out, the aim of studies with a qualitative approach “have been to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and processes [involved in the practice of P4C] rather than generalizable results.” (OHLSSON & SIGGE 2013: 20, *our translation*). Even more, P4C was developed, precisely as a response to the need for ways of improving our sense of what constitutes good reasoning, or a reasonable position, given the limitations in establishing an external standard of what constitutes good thinking. To be able to judge a chain of reasoning as good, as it were, we need to develop into becoming more reasonable persons. This involves, coming to see how the standards and demands we recognize in a practice are internal to our understanding of that practice.

This allows us to articulate two ways of thinking about what it is do something well, or to do it in a *good way*, which helps to consider what constitutes good quality. On the one hand, we may think of goodness as the means, which contribute to reaching certain aims. “Goodness” is then understood instrumentally, as relative to reaching one’s aims in such an efficient and time-saving way as possible. It is then judged according to external standards, such as efficiency. On the other hand, we may think of “goodness” as a central aspect of the reflection about what one’s aims are, what one seriously, honestly and imaginatively can think of as possible aims of different practices (BIESTA 2010). In this case the standard called upon is internal to one’s understanding of these practices.

4. Conclusion

We began this article with the questions, “How should vocational education prepare students for future, yet unknown tasks?” and, “How does vocational education help students develop their faculty of judgment to differentiate between better and worse quality?” To clarify the possible aims of these questions, we compared two different didactical schools. Both are seemingly marginalized in the educational discussion, and, since they are easily considered as essentially different, they have not been discussed together before. We made this comparison very aware of the recent discussions about the notion of competence, which some educational theorists and policy-maker prefer to the notion of knowledge or *Bildung*, and the recent discussions about methods for formative assessment. In our conclusion we would like to address some issues raised by these two fields.

In today’s language in vocational curricula, in policy documents and in educational theories the knowledge and abilities aimed at for learning how to answer future, unknown demands is often described with the term “competence”. This concept is introduced to answer precisely the same challenge that we raised in this article. That is, the insight that having great knowledge (understood as facts) about a certain subject or being skilled to conduct a certain practical action is not sufficient to solve the problems that a person encounters in their (professional) life. In order to respond to new, unusual situations where results are not given in advance, people need to be able to work in ways that go beyond what they have learnt in their training (CEDEFOP 2010, KEEN 2003, ILLERIS 2013: 24f).

This notion of competence is meant in a broad sense, to overcome the simple idea of knowledge as cumulative. Yet, competence is often used and discussed in the literature in a way that invites us to think of it as a specific, separable skill or ability. One distinguishes e.g. between the basic key competences and the more specific competences that are necessary for certain tasks. This distinction itself suggests a cumulative picture of knowledge and learning (cf. ALLAIS 2014). Furthermore, it is unclear what problem the concept of competence is expected to solve. The motivation for introducing competence appears to be dissatisfaction with earlier central concepts, such as knowledge, qualification or *Bildung* (see e.g. ILLERIS 2013: 19f). Yet, a survey of the concerns motivating the earlier choices of concept shows a considerable similarity with the motivation for speaking about “competence”.

The concept of knowledge, such as it was used by e.g. Aristotle, already held the significance now attributed to the concept of competence, namely, a knowledge that goes far beyond the one-sided familiarity with the facts or know-how to perform skill-based actions. Aristotle distinguished between different aspects of knowledge (*episteme*, *techne*, *phronesis*, *doxa*, see ARISTOTLE 2000, and e.g. GUSTAVSSON 2000), but kept the notion of knowledge as the overarching concept. Similarly with the notion of *Bildung*. Thinkers of the Enlightenment and Romanticism (KANT, VON HUMBOLDT,

SCHLEIERMACHER, FICHTE, ROUSSEAU etc.) attempted to transcend precisely the sort of narrow-mindedness in facts and actions that some people show after being, according to these philosophers, poorly educated and taught. The process of *Bildung*, they meant, had failed if these people were not able to act appropriately in unexpected situations. Acting “appropriately”, here, is understood in the very broad sense that we tried to spell out in this discussion, including the profound moral implications of humanism (for an overview see e.g.: SCHAFFAR & ULJENS 2015, SILJANDER, KIVILÄ & SUTINEN 2012, THOMPSON 2009).

The question that “competence” is designed to answer, therefore, is no new question. Rather it touches on one of the central themes in the history of philosophy and several disciplines that emerged out of philosophy, such as education. In accordance with our previous argumentation, every theory of education in some way answers to the question about how learning enables the student to go beyond the original learning situation. They do so because this is a central characteristic of how we understand the concept of learning, as distinct from, say, repetition and imitation. For this reason, the ability in learning to go beyond the actual learning situation should not be conceived as yet another skill that we learn in addition to other specific skills or knowledge. Rather this ability is a fundamental aspect of human life, an enabling condition for the concept of learning.

The aim of introducing competence as a new concept, thus, appears to be to find a solution to an age-old problem in the philosophy of education. Our discussion was rather aimed at showing that it is not enough to introduce a new concept if we want to reach a better understanding of this problem. What is demanded is a greater transformation in how we conceptualize and learn to reflect on the issues at hand and a move away from the temptation to define new educational concepts.

The insight that making judgments, and reflecting on a practice cannot be conceptualized as a simple skill, technique or competence, reveals other similarities between philosophy and sloyd, since both practices situate us in a moral context. They alert us to moral questions that arise in the reflection of what kind of practice it is in which we are initially involved, how to engage in it in a good way, and who we become as practitioners. This allowed us to in part answer the question about how to judge the quality of what one does. A deepening understanding of the practice in which one is engaged, we argued, will involve a greater grasp of the standards inherent in it, and what it takes for the practitioner to meet these standards.

The comparison between sloyd and philosophy also shows significant similarities with methods for formative assessment. Wiliam Dylan (2011) e.g. formulates five strategies for improving the teacher’s practice and the student’s learning. These strategies stress several of the didactical aspects that we have mentioned and discussed. Thus they serve to summarize key features of our discussion. Formative assessment takes its starting point in methods that enable regular planning and evaluation. These methods are embedded in a group setting, which enables both self-reflection and evaluation,

peer-feedback and evaluation and feedback by the teacher. Learning is fundamentally situated and conceptualized as a group endeavor where it is essential that the individual is seen and sees him- or herself as an essentially active participant. The methods are finally conceptualized to make the process of success visible both for the student and the teacher. Dylan describes these features of learning and teaching methods without any concrete subject matter in mind. Our comparison between these two different subjects can be read as confirming the virtues of these methods situated in a concrete context.

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