

Teachers' Voices About Being a Teacher: Comparative Studies in England, Finland and Sweden¹

LA VOIX DE PROFESSEUR CONCERNANT ÊTRE UN PROFESSEUR:

ÉTUDES COMPARATIVES EN ANGLETERRE, EN FINLANDE ET EN SUÈDE

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Abstract: The aim of the article is to present and discuss a study in which Finnish, English and Swedish teachers and student teachers described the implications of being a teacher. It is cross-national and consists of multiple case studies. Data were collected through twenty-four focus group dialogues, and 110 teachers/student teachers participated in the study. According to the study, we have found that teachers and student teachers in all three countries promoted pupils' development of critical thinking, which is another way of saying that they focused on 'the attitudes and values' aspect of citizenship education; however, this was most evident in the Finnish and the Swedish focus groups. In England there is a subject emphasis to the professional role, the three countries ranked the topics (the pupils; the subject; the

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organization; the society; teacher identity; parents) equally, in Finland the teacher role did not appear to be as post modern as in the two other countries.

Key words: attitudes and values; citizenship education; cross-national case studies; teachers' voices

Résumé: Le but de l'article est à présenter et à discuter une étude où des professeurs finnois, anglais et suédois et des professeurs d'étudiant décrivent les implications d'être un professeur. L'étude est internationale et consiste en multiples cas d'études. Les données ont été collectées par vingt-quatre foyers de dialogues en groupe, et 110 professeurs=professeurs d'étudiant ont participé à l'étude. Les professeurs et les professeurs d'étudiant dans tous les trois pays ont promu la pensée le développement de la pensée critique pour les élèves, ce qui est une autre voie de dire qu'ils ont concentré sur les attitudes et les valeurs l'aspect de la nationalité de l'éducation; pourtant, cette voie était plus évidente dans le finnois et le suédois. L'anglais a concentré plus sur l'apprentissage du sujet, les trois pays ont classé les projets(les élèves, le sujet, l'organisation, la société, l'identité de professeur, les parents)de même, en Finlande le rôle de professeur apparaissait aussi postmoderne que dans les deux autres pays.

Mots-Clés: attitudes et values; l'éducation de la nationalité; études international du cas; voix de professeur

1. INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on teachers' and student teachers personal descriptions of their identity. The aim is to find out what teachers (T) and student teachers (ST) in England, Finland and Sweden view as their most important tasks as teachers. Research questions are: What aspects do T and ST mention, and to what extent? In which ways, and to what extent, do T and ST describe that they focus on promoting pupils' development of critical thinking? Which similarities and differences are there between the countries, and between teachers and student teachers?

Fredriksson (2007) draws attention to how teachers today are expected to play many different roles: apart from teaching, they need to act as cooperators (keep up good dialogue with parents), bureaucrats (consult guiding documents), professionals (discuss value conflicts with colleagues), sales persons (compete for pupils).

Hargreaves (1998) argues that the more postmodern the teacher role is, the more complex it is. A modern teacher role, on the other hand, is more restricted to the traditional teacher role of delivering subject knowledge to pupils. In addition to what is said above, a postmodern teacher role includes mastering the competence to promote a classroom dialogue in which the pupils' apprehension of the world is allowed to be focused. This is a goal on the European level, and it has been formulated by the concept 'citizenship education'.

The term 'citizenship' evokes multiple connotations. In some countries it primarily implies a judicial relationship between the citizen and the State, whereas in other countries it refers to the social role of coexisting in society (Torres, 2006; Roth, 2007). The Eurydice (2005) study examines how 'citizenship' is conceptualized in school curricula and if/how teachers may be supported with citizenship education. It also gives example of how teachers themselves describe their practice in this respect. However, it does not go into detail about how citizenship is to be put into practice in teacher-pupil relationships in the classroom. It does conclude that the matter needs to be studied further, though. Eurydice (2005) distinguishes between different aspects of citizenship (1) political literacy, (2) development of critical

thinking and certain attitudes and values, and (3) active participation. They consider the order to be hierarchical, implying that first of all, political literacy must be achieved. However, we maintain that the primary target is the second aspect, development of critical thinking and certain attitudes and values. If pupils do not master that skill, they will not be able to exercise citizenship.

Citizenship education focusing on the 'political literacy' aspect aims at providing pupils with theoretical knowledge of the rights and responsibilities of a citizen (similar to when school rules are taught to pupils). Citizenship education focusing on the 'attitudes and values' aspect aims at providing pupils with "skills needed to participate actively in public life, develop recognition and respect for oneself and others with a view to achieving mutual understanding, acquiring social and moral responsibility, including self-confidence" (Eurydice, 2005, p. 10). We maintain that focusing upon this aspect of citizenship education demands horizontal teacher-pupil communication, which means that teachers take a sincere interest in the pupils' understanding of the world. Citizenship education focusing on the 'active participation' aspect aims at encouraging community involvement amongst pupils – one example would be when pupils are encouraged to participate in the school council.

The aspect of critical thinking and certain attitudes and values is formulated differently in different countries' guiding documents for the school. In Sweden the National curriculum, Lpo 94 (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1994), puts a strong focus on the claim that all work in schools should be permeated by encouraging pupils to make themselves heard in the classroom dialogue; this dialogue must therefore, by necessity, be horizontal. 'Horizontal communication' means that the two parties are perceived as equal, and 'vertical communication' means that the relationship between the two is unequal. Any adult-child relation is by necessity to some extent vertical (Janson, 2002); hence, provided by their institutionalised role, teachers have a positional advantage compared to their pupils. Yet, by being 'omnipresent' and receptive in classroom discussions, teachers can facilitate horizontal communication. This is another way of saying that there is a focus on 'the attitudes and values' aspect of citizenship education.

In Finland the National Curriculum (Finnish Board of Education 2004) puts a strong focus on active classroom dialogue already from the first grade and throughout the school years. Also, attitudes and values as well as growing into an active citizen are emphasized in school curriculum. Pupils should be encouraged to think independently.

Drawing from five national case studies, Sandström Kjellin and Stier (2008a) found that those teachers who communicated an 'attitude of citizenship' in the classroom (the 'attitudes and values' aspect of citizenship education) managed to engage their pupils more in the lesson contents than those colleagues who merely taught about citizenship. Sandström Kjellin and Stier conclude that teacher education needs to stress more horizontal classroom dialogue if goals for citizenship education are to be reached.

In a European collaboration project under the Comenius 2.1 action (Sandström Kjellin & Stier, 2008b) it was found that even in countries where the political goal is in line with the thoughts of Gutmann (1987), that is to say, to teach children to judge critically, the pupils at an upper secondary school were neither aware of, nor critical of, the ways in which they were treated at school (Gustafsson, 2008). Comparative multiple case studies (Sandström Kjellin, Stier, Einarson, Davies and Asunta, 2007) showed that, according to pupils' understanding, the focus of citizenship education varied significantly in three European countries. In England, the teenagers seemed to be well-informed about 'political literacy'; however, they did not seem to be accustomed to confident relationships with adults. In Sweden on the other hand, the situation was quite the opposite; the teenagers did not seem very well-informed about 'political literacy', but they seemed familiar with open and confident dialogues with teachers, which corresponds to 'the attitudes and values' aspect of citizenship education. In Finland the pupils were altogether very taciturn and it was hard to perform dialogues with them. In short, the conditions for citizenship education seemed to vary a lot.

With respect to the level of verticality/ horizontality in teacher-pupils interaction patterns, Colnerud's (2004) singles out three types of moral education – 'moral instruction', 'moral conversation' and 'moral interaction'. Moral instruction means instructing pupils' value-based 'rights and 'wrongs'. To

Colnerud, such instruction is necessary for instance, when pupils harm each other or themselves. Moral instruction is an example of the 'political literacy' aspect of citizenship education.

Moral conversation refers to joint teacher-pupil explorations of moral problems originating in the classroom or in society as such. Teachers must find a productive balance between a classroom situation where values are 'passed on' to the pupils (and where they may not reflect upon them) and one where the pupils themselves are responsible for scrutinizing and arguing for adoption of their values. Moral conversation is an example of the 'attitudes and values' aspect of citizenship education.

Finally, moral interaction refers to teacher-pupil interplay, where the teacher treats pupils respectfully, and pupils feel that he or she listens to them and has confidence in their abilities. Moral interaction is an example of the 'attitudes and values' aspect of citizenship education.

1.1 Literature review England

Teachers and other professional workers in education in England have roles that are clearly and explicitly defined by Government; measured in terms of their impacts and results by Government through Performance Management (TDA 1, 2008). Professional development pathways are rationalised and organised in strategic and progressive and logically orientated steps and pathways through whole careers. Qualifications and experiences are judged in terms of their suitability and relevance with respect to professional worth and Local Authorities and schools are given the 'tools' by Government with which to conduct the processes and activities for 'facilitating' professional enhancement and development. Courses and professional development activities are also validated and controlled by Government in terms of their fitness for purpose (TDA 2, 2008). Quite clearly the professional values, beliefs and priorities that teachers assimilate about their roles in classrooms reflect the ways in which Government manages the decision-making processes and the direct control it exercises. Kennedy (2005) argues the case vigorously that teachers' professionalism has been forced into narrow channels of reactive responsibility whilst at the same time there are in England wider expectations that teachers should work with other stakeholders in society to 'rectify societies' ills'.

Moral education was put firmly on the map in the 1992 Education reform Act that required Ofsted inspectors to officially inspect five areas of pupils' development including that of moral development. Ofsted has continued to refine its understanding of what moral development means and in 2004 issued guidelines in 'promoting and evaluating pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development' (Ofsted, 2004). This is matched in teacher education by having standards identified in 'moral development' that students are required to achieve before becoming accredited teachers. The rhetoric and the assessment strategies are rigorous, but as with other educational legislative programmes, the teaching and learning, and culture in the classroom miss deep and clear engagement related to the needs of the learners. So the environment for learning about moral education is shallow and often perceived to be meaningless. The same argument can be levelled at the way in which citizenship education is conceived and legislated but results in procedural and prescriptive delivery that impacts minimally on the learning of students and gives a negative flavour to the value acquisition of students and teachers.

Whitty (2006) reflects broadly on how notions of teacher professionalism have changed over time and how now 'the nature of teachers' professional mandate has become a key policy issue for governments in many countries, sometimes as part of a broader attempt to redefine professionalism, especially in the public sector, and sometimes as a specific aspect of education reform.' (p 3). He argues that there has been a movement away from 'up-skilling teachers' as being responsible for educational improvement and focussing on 'collective endeavour' involving many stakeholders not only the State and teachers. Part of the educational reform of recent years has been to make teacher training more tightly-controlled and regulated; school-based and to be based, even with university led programmes – on training rather than education. For continuous professional development – only now are broader opportunities beginning to open up, for teachers have for years been exposed to a narrow range of assessment and examination focussed professional development opportunities. Whilst involving many stakeholders is in essence a good thing from a democratic point of view, the problem comes with a

Government that defines precisely what, who and when the stakeholders should exercise their voice and influence.

1.2 Literature review Finland

Primary school teacher education in Finland was established in 1863. Thereafter there have been many stages in its development and the qualification requirements for teachers have changed many times – mostly due to changes in society and school organization.

Today there is the wide International interest in the Finnish school system and teacher education since then PISA study (OECD, 2006). The questions such as “Why is Finnish pupil performance so high in international tests” and “why are the Finns ‘top of the class’ in innovation?” are often posed to Finnish teacher educators. Finland is famous for the equality of education having a high priority, the basic education is the same for all people and there are also social and regional equalities following comprehensive school reform in 1970s. The facts also effecting the pupils’ good results are well educated parents and the elaborated home language. The specific characteristics of Finnish teacher education play a role and also the surprising fact that there is a huge number of applicants for teacher education; for example at Jyväskylä University the amount of applicants has grown from 1740 applicants in the year 2004 to 2 290 applicants in the year 2008 (Jyväskylä University, 2008).

Twenty years after the school reform teachers in schools as well as the universities and at the Board of Education felt that it was the time for an internal reform of the school. The central school governmental power was breaking down and being delegated to local authorities and schools. This was the case; for the curriculum, pedagogic methods and assessment. There was a situation when teachers who were willing to develop their work were asking and looking for possibilities to work together (Asunta et.al., 2005).

Säntti has studied in his thesis the development and construction of teacherhood by the ‘narrative method’. In his study many teachers in the study emphasize the fact that being a teacher means that you should be able to develop yourself all the time; a teacher is never completely formed. Many teachers also emphasize the role of the teachers as a listener as well as the teacher being more an educator than just information distributor. They also strongly favour the change from working alone to cooperation (Säntti 2007, 258).

1.3 Literature review Sweden

Swedish teachers are supposed to reflect upon their practice, have a good connection to research and also be able to develop their own school (Alexandersson, 2007). The Swedish school has the double task of both delivering knowledge and also to teach values. Both have historically been very important for the school (Pierre, 2007). The values referred to are of course the fundamental democratic values. Traditionally, values have been *mediated* in school, whereas postmodern ethics demand that they are *negotiated*.

When Lpo 94, the National Curriculum for the compulsory school in Sweden (Utbildningsdepartementet, 1994) was introduced, substantial changes were made in the Swedish school system. From that year on, each school (and its teachers) was to be responsible for their own development. A set of ‘fundamental values’ should be the basis for all school work; this included that the pupils should be involved in making decisions about for example the character of the classroom dialogue. Two kinds of goals for the school were formulated: ‘Goals to be attained’ and ‘Goals to strive towards’. Both kinds of goals contain goals of mastering skills. In particular, Goals to be attained concern mastering of basic skills, whereas Goals to strive towards concern the mastering of more ‘sophisticated’ skills and are based on the fundamental values. According to these values, the purpose is, in short, to educate citizens who can participate in a public debate on problems of modern society, for sustainable development (which seems equivalent to paying attention to the ‘attitudes and values’ aspect of

citizenship education).

The goals for the school in Sweden are now being reconsidered, but the fundamental values will still be emphasized in the National Curriculum (Utbildningsdepartementet, 2007). Voices are being raised saying that Swedish teachers must focus more on reaching the Goals to be attained than on the fundamental values. The present government in Sweden has put very strong emphasis on pupils' achievement of fundamental skills, referring to Swedish pupils' average performance in studies like the PISA study.

1.4 Possible differences in the understanding of the teacher role

Naturally enough, the teacher role differs in different countries, since societies differ. According to Hargreaves (1998) these differences in societies can be described as societies being modern or postmodern. In postmodern societies the teacher role tends to be more diverse and includes a wide variety of tasks, whereas in modern societies the teacher role more focused on one task, to 'deliver knowledge'. In countries where the teacher's task is more precisely defined (to deliver knowledge) it is much easier for teachers to know if they have achieved the goal or not.

Differences as regards being modern or postmodern in the teacher role may also show between qualified teachers and student teachers. Being younger and thus representing postmodernism to a higher extent, student teachers may appear to promote a positive learning climate more than teachers examined a long time ago (Hargreaves, 1998).

2. METHOD

Twenty-four focus group dialogues were conducted and 110 T/ST participated in the study; in each country, four focus group dialogues with groups of T, and four focus group dialogues with groups of ST were performed. There was a mix of age groups; the age of T/ST varied between 20 and 60. There was also a mix of age groups taught, varying from pre-school T/ST to upper secondary school T/ST. The detailed distribution of participants appears in table 1.

Table 1 shows that many more women (79) than men (31) participated. This mirrors the natural distribution of men/women in the teacher profession. Of all 110 participants there were 54 T, and 56 ST.

Dialogues were conducted over a three-month period. Using the same manual, data was collected in England, Sweden and Finland. Dialogues lasted between 20 and 60 minutes, were tape-recorded and transcribed, and the dialogues in Finland and Sweden were translated into English. In the dialogues, participants were asked to discuss three questions: What does it imply to be a teacher? What is the most important teacher task in the classroom? What is a good classroom dialogue?

Transcriptions of focus group dialogues can be made with different detail precision (Wibeck, 2000). For the purposes here, where focus was the contents of the T/STs' statements, less detailed transcriptions sufficed. However, the researchers documented their impressions of the dialogue sessions – accounting for prosodic cues, silence, apparent contradictions in statements etc in the conversations. After the dialogues, study participants also completed a written evaluation, where they were asked to state the extent ('completely'/'to some extent'/'not so much' or 'not at all') to which they had stated their opinions in the conversation. Evaluations were then summarized quantitatively. Dialogues were analyzed qualitatively. All three researchers undertook the categorization together, and the whole analysis was made together.

2.1 Categorization

In the data analysis, Colnerud's (2004) distinction of moral education was used. Additionally, other categories were formulated by the three researchers together. In the analysis of the dialogues, retorts were categorized in one of the following categories: (1) *subject* (subject knowledge; teaching methods; meta cognition), (2) *pupils* (upholding a positive school climate and helping pupils to learn and understand; caring, warmth and love; expressing views of individual children and learning styles; moral instruction; moral conversation or moral interaction; talk about pupils in a negative way), (3) *parents* (positive or negative wording of parents), (4) *society* (this included: positive or negative to changes in society; referring to the school society or to the wider society), (5) *teacher identity* (mentioning a lack in teacher education; mentioning that they have learnt something from teacher education; making meta-cognitive professional reflections), (6) *organization* (curriculum; logistics: cooperation in teacher teams). The (few) retorts that were not categorized did not concern the teacher work; typically, such retorts concerned suggestions of having a coffee break or something similar.

As regards category (2) *pupils*, it was distinguished if the focus was on the 'attitudes and values' aspect of citizenship education or not. The sub-categories 'talk about moral conversation, moral interaction or talk about teachers being role models for pupils' were considered to focus on the 'attitudes and values' aspect of citizenship education.

Categorized as moral conversation were for example: "[...] keep the conversation active and lead it to those things that you want them to discuss" (Finnish T) or "[...] it is better to divide them in discussion groups where they can first talk together and state their views and then meet other groups and let their thoughts meet" (Swedish ST) or "That's a great thing to go off on – I like that – was Henry 8th a gangster of his days? – that's quite nice discussion" (English ST).

Examples of categorizing as 'moral interaction' were: "Pupils are very sensitive and easily will know if you are pretending to be something else than you are. And then since we are also different, so pupils will see that there are different kinds of people" (Finnish T) or "These TV dramas maybe you can connect them to existential questions? Bring them up and talk to the pupils about what they 'are really saying'." (Swedish ST) or "They like it that you are interested in them as an individual so I guess a good dialogue in class is the basis really of a good teacher-pupil relationship (English T).

Examples of categorizing as 'role models' were: "Well, I just put my own personality in that. One must use one's own personality fully" (Finnish ST) or "[...] but above all to be good models for tomorrow's adults, to give them that solid ground to stand on" (Swedish T) or "[...] being role model and teaching them skills for life so they can go out into that big wide world and do something with that" (English T).

The reason that 'caring, warmth and love' is not considered to be equivalent to focusing on the 'attitudes and values' aspect of citizenship education is that only involves, as said, caring etc. and not promoting skills that enhance pupils' participation in the society.

2.2 Results

First, the result of the study participants' self- evaluations of how active they were in the focus group dialogues are reported, and then an overview is given of which topics were focused by the groups of English, Finnish and Swedish T/ST. After that the overviews are compared. Finally, a more detailed description is given of the most focused topic, the pupils.

2.3 Self-evaluation of participation

After the focus group dialogue participants were asked to self-evaluate their participation in dialogue. They were asked to state if they had participated in the dialogues 'absolutely', 'to some extent', 'not very much' or 'not at all'. Table 2 gives an overview of the self-evaluation of participation in the focus group

dialogues.

Table 2 shows that focus group dialogue participation was self-assessed to be very good. 76% of the participants had 'absolutely' participated in the dialogues, and the rest, 24% had participated 'to some extent'. The reasons that were given by the few who had not participated completely were such as "it was difficult to make yourself heard", "sometimes everything was said", "I would have liked to make preparations for this" or "the tape-recorder disturbed me".

Moreover, 43% of all the categorized retorts were produced by the English T/ST; 32% by the Swedish and 25% by the Finnish. In all three countries ST produced more retorts (i. e. talked more) than T. To make figures comparable, the amount of retorts in all figures is therefore indicated in percentage.

2.4 Overview of the distribution of retorts among the six topics

First an overview is given of the distribution of retorts in the focus group dialogues with ST and T. Figure 1 shows which aspects of the teacher profession that were focused in the dialogues performed with English T and ST.

Figure 1 displays that apart from 'pupils', 'the subject' was frequently mentioned. The explanation for this is probably the fact that the English curriculum is prescriptive and rigid. Teachers are legally bound and inspected against their ability to deliver Government requirements. It is surprising that 'parents' were not mentioned at all by the students, and hardly mentioned by the teachers. Parents hold a great deal of power having a majority voice on the Governing Bodies of schools in England. Hence teachers are very careful in their dealings with them. If we leave 'parents' out of account, English T/ST talked about all five topics.

Figure 2 shows which aspects of the teacher profession that were focused on the dialogues performed with Finnish T and ST. As one can see, mainly three topics were mentioned, and 'pupils' was by far the most common. The three topics hardly mentioned were brought up just a little bit more by the students than by the teachers.

Figure 3 shows the aspects of the teacher profession that were focal in the dialogues performed with Swedish T and ST. Here, topic mentioning is a little more varied. The topic 'Pupils' is mentioned nearly as much as in Finland.

2.5 Comparison of the above overviews

The topics were ranked equally in all three countries, which means that the topic most spoken of was 'pupils' and the least 'parents'. As regards 'Pupils', in all three countries ST talk more about the pupils than T. Finland is the country where 'pupils' is most focused, after that Sweden and finally England. This goes for both T and ST. Concerning the topic 'Subject', the result from England stands out, both for T and ST; also Finnish T talk a lot about the subject (more than the ST do). The result for the topic 'Organization' shows that in England ST talk about this as much as T, which is not the case in Finland and Sweden. On the other hand, in Finland and Sweden T talk more about the organization than T in England do. As regards the topic 'Society', results show that in Finland both T and ST talk little about it, even though ST mention it more than T. The result for the topic 'Teacher identity' is very similar in all three countries and between student teachers; this category was not very focused. Maybe the explanation is that this may have become a sort of 'left-over category'? In a way the whole result can be labelled as concerning the teacher identity. It is surprising that 'parents' is not even mentioned by English student teacher and by Finnish teachers, and very little by English teachers and Finnish student teachers.

2.6 Detailed description of the most focused topic: the pupils

A closer look is now taken on the results for each country as regards the most focused theme, the pupils.

First the detailed results for England are reported. Figure 4 provides a detailed description of what English teachers and student teachers talked about more specifically, when they talked about 'pupils'.

In figure 4 the most striking is the focus on giving opinions of what certain children, or groups of children, can do or cannot do; this is focused more by T than by ST. What also strikes is STs' focusing on supporting learning and a good classroom climate, and also focusing on moral conversation and moral interaction. Also, there is a tendency to talk negatively of children which is more apparent with T than ST. Figure 5 shows in more detail what Finnish T and ST talked about more specifically, when they talked about 'pupils'.

As is seen in figure 5 the strongest response from the Finnish is the focus on moral conversation and interaction, together with the support of learning and a good classroom climate, and also a focus on giving opinions of what certain children can do or cannot do. Figure 6 shows in more detail what Swedish teachers and student teachers talked about more specifically, when they talked about 'pupils'.

Figure 6 shows that also in Sweden there is a strong focus on moral conversation and interaction, in fact a very strong focus by ST. In comparison T focused more on supporting learning and a good classroom climate. The result from Sweden resembles that from Finland in mentioning 'caring, warmth and love' more than was the case among English T/ST.

3. DISCUSSION

When comparing figures 1, 2 and 3 it showed that the topic 'subject' was focused very much in England both by T and ST. Similarly, Finnish T talked a lot about the subject. The explanation for this is probably different for the two countries. For England the explanation is probably the fact that T/ST are required to follow very strict detailed rules concerning the performance of teaching the subjects (TDA 1, 2008; TDA 2, 2008; Kennedy, 2005; Ofsted, 2004; Whitty (2006). The explanation for Finland may be that Finnish T are very focused on their pupils' good performance in specific subjects (OECD, 2006). In Finland not so many topics were mentioned as in the other two countries, although the Finnish ST mentioned more subjects than Finnish T did. This points in the direction that the Finnish teacher role, although much is done to develop it (Asunta et al., 2005; Sääntti, 2007) may not be as postmodern as the teacher role in the two other countries (Hargreaves, 1998). Also between Sweden and England there was this difference in that the Swedish T and ST talked more variedly of many topics than the English. Hargreaves (1998) has also noticed that in countries where the teacher role is not postmodern they can concentrate more on the traditional teacher task: to teach subject knowledge. This can be at least part of an explanation of the Finnish success in studies like PISA. An alternative explanation is that Finnish teachers did not mention issues such as cooperation between the school and the home because they find it too obvious.

Hargreaves also maintains that it is natural that a younger generation is more post-modern than an older generation. This is consistent with the result that Finnish ST touched upon more topics than Finnish T. In Sweden both teachers and student teachers focused on many different aspects of the teacher role (e.g. Sweden was the only country that mentioned 'parents'). This result points in the direction that in Sweden the teacher role is already 'very' post modern.

When comparing the results of figures 4, 5 and 6, the result from England, figure 4, showed that ST seemed more postmodern than T in their teacher role, since ST focused more on moral conversation and interaction and of supporting learning and a good classroom climate, whereas T focused much both on opinions of what specific children can do or no and on talking negatively of children. It is already pointed out that it is expected that ST are more postmodern than T (Hargreaves, 1998). This is strengthened by the result that English ST focused much more on moral conversation and interaction and also on supporting learning and good classroom climate; these are all considered to be a way of promoting pupils' development of critical thinking.

Figure 5 showed that in Finland there was a strong focus on moral conversation and supporting good

classroom climate, something which is stressed more by T than ST. This shows that, T promoted pupils' development of critical thinking more than ST did. This is not quite consistent with the previous explanation that Finnish ST are more post modern than T. Finnish researchers have pointed out in many studies since 1998 that teachers should be helped to adapt the postmodern society (Sahlberg, 1996; Meri, & Volmari, 2006).

The result from Sweden, in figure 6, showed that T/ST focused a lot on the factors that promote development of critical thinking. An interesting result is that ST focused very much on moral conversation and interaction and not so much on supporting a good learning climate, which may suggest that moral conversation and interaction have been over-emphasized in Swedish teacher education.

To summarize, one conclusion is that T and ST in all three countries promoted pupils' development of critical thinking, which is another way of saying that they focused on 'the attitudes and values' aspect of citizenship education. However, the Finnish and the Swedish did this more than the English. It seemed that English T and ST may not 'be allowed' to focus as much as the Nordic on democratic dialogue with pupils, since they have to focus on teaching the subject. This result is not quite consistent with the findings by Colnerud (2005). She found that teachers tend to "instruct moral" instead of negotiating and discussing it. However, it is in agreement with the European ambition of 'the attitudes and values' aspect of citizenship education, pupils' critical thinking and certain attitudes and values (Eurydice, 2005). It should also be noted that the present study concerns what T and ST *say that they do*, whereas Colnerud had studied what teachers *did*.

A second conclusion from the study is that T/ST in the three countries ranked the topics equally. However, the topic 'parents' was observed mainly by the Swedes.

A third conclusion is that in Finland the teacher role did not appear to be as postmodern as in England and particularly not as the one in Sweden, even though Finnish ST seemed a bit more postmodern than Finnish T. This result can not be generalized, but it would be interesting to study further.

A fourth conclusion is that the result from Sweden showed that, particularly ST, focused very much on the horizontal dialogue (which is implicit in 'moral conversation and moral interaction'), whereas the Finnish focused also on supporting learning and a good classroom climate. This could also be part of an explanation to the Finnish success and the Swedish average results in surveys like the PISA study. In Sweden some politicians claim that Swedish teachers focus too much on democratic classroom dialogue and too little on pupils' mastering of basic skills of reading and writing.

However, it needs to be discussed whether it is more important to provide pupils with skills of critical thinking than with basic skills of reading and writing. On a European level there is a goal to make future Europeans capable to participate in the democratic societal dialogue about sustainable development. The question is if this is a more desirable skill in the long run than mastering basic skills. Researchers such as Gutmann (1987) maintains that this is critical.

4. LIMITATIONS

The study has limitations, in that it is performed as case studies; therefore, the result cannot be generalized to the whole population. The knowledge contribution of the study is that it points out interesting and crucial matters which need to be investigated further. The method, which included self assessments of participation in the focus group dialogues, seemed to answer well to the aims and research questions of the study.

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Table 1. Distribution of study participants

Country	ST Men	ST Women	T Men	T Women	Total
England	7	10	6	12	35
Finland	5	16	4	13	38
Sweden	3	15	6	13	37
Total	15	41	16	38	110

Table 2. Self-evaluation of participation in the focus group dialogues

Country	Absolutely	To some extent	Not very much	Not at all
England	28	7		
Finland	23	15		
Sweden	33	4		
Total	84	26		

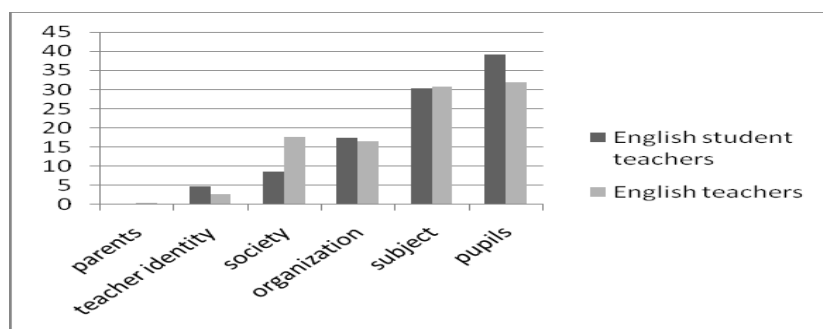


Figure 1. Mentioning of topics in England

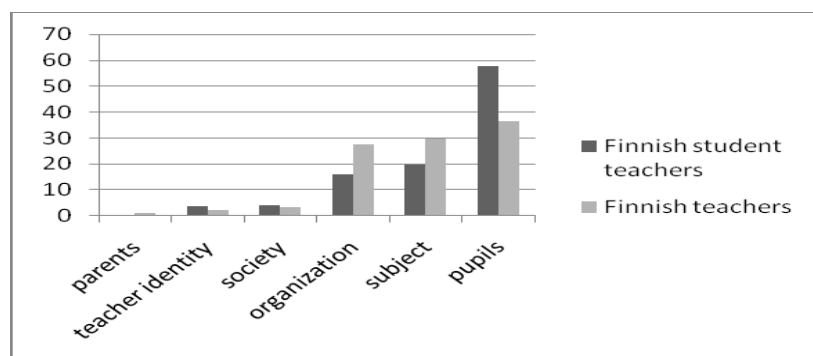


Figure 2. Mentioning of topics in Finland

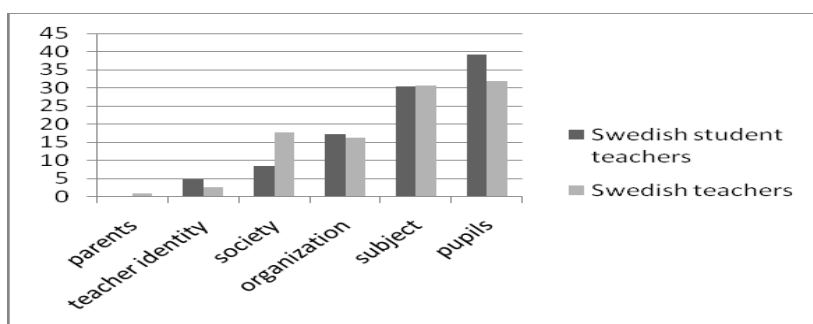


Figure 3. Mentioning of topics in Sweden

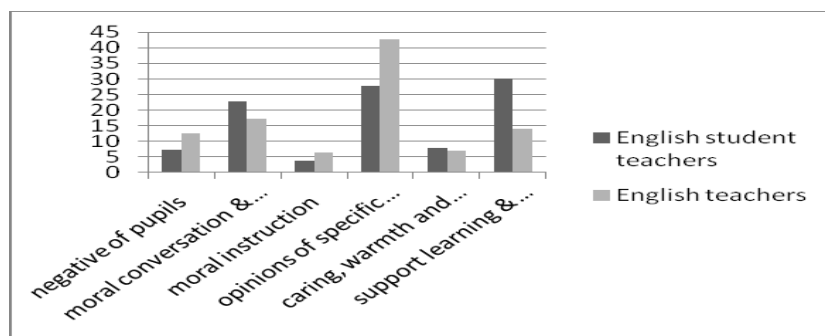


Figure 4. Detailed description of English Ts' and STs' focusing on Pupils

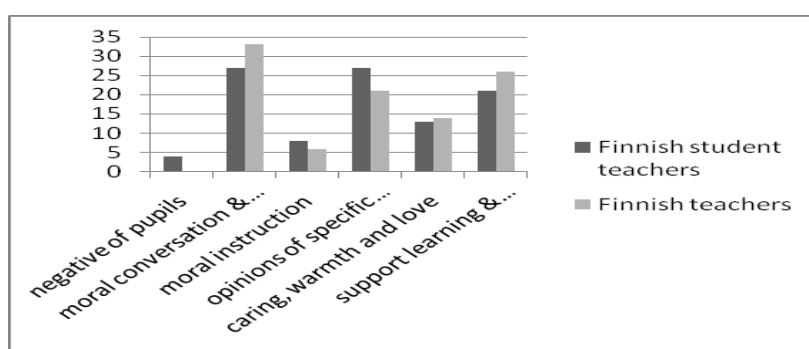


Figure 5. Detailed description of Finnish Ts' and STs' focusing on Pupils

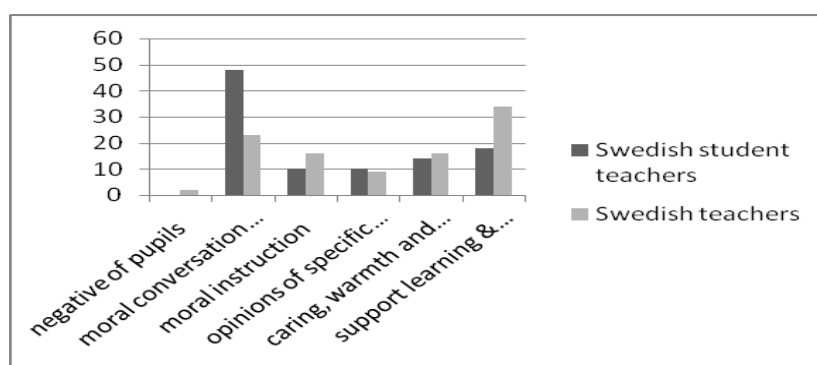


Figure 6. Detailed description of Swedish Ts' and STs' focusing on Pupils

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