Chapter

How Philosophizing the Dialogos Way Can Promote Education for Sustainable Development

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Abstract

This paper is an inquiry into an action research process in which staff from a combined vocational and academic upper secondary school philosophized "The Dialogos Way" together, as part of ongoing curriculum reforms in Norway. Some teachers were also trained in facilitating such dialogs with their students. Since sustainable development is one of three interdisciplinary topics now supposed to run through all subjects at all educational levels, our chosen action inquiry research question in this paper reads as follows: How can training teachers in philosophizing the Dialogos Way promote attitudes and skills required for dialogic learning-and-teaching, and how can this form of learning-and-teaching support education for sustainable development? Using teachers' and students' meta-reflection notes as data, the authors find that the Dialogos approach offers a fruitful way of integrating sustainable development issues in the curriculum.

Keywords: dialogic learning-and-teaching, philosophical practice, sustainable development, philosophizing the Dialogos way, philosophical dialog, dialog facilitation, dialogical schooling

1. Introduction

In august 2020 a new national curriculum for education was implemented in Norway. The new curriculum is putting increased emphasis on the values enshrined in §1 in the Education Act of Norway [1]. Respect for human dignity and nature, intellectual freedom, charity, forgiveness, equality, solidarity, democracy, scientific thinking and insight into cultural diversity are among the values highlighted in this education act. These values are supposed to run through education at all levels. Furthermore, three interdisciplinary themes are supposed to be in the focus throughout all school subjects and school levels, from primary through upper secondary education. These are respectively *public health and life skills*, *democratic citizenship* and *sustainable development* [2].

When it comes to teaching practice, one of the challenges is *how* these values and themes can be taught and focused on in practice at schools. Is it enough to teach content the traditional way, whether digital or book-based, where the teacher is the one who knows, while the students are not-knowing? In such traditional didactics the young are supposed to learn through lectures, reading

and written tasks. Or do we, at least to some extent, need to rethink the relationship between teaching and learning, and thus the relationship between teachers and students if we are to enhance the learning and practice of values in schools? In this article, we assume that the values and practices involved for instance in the interdisciplinary theme *sustainable development* can only to a certain extent be taught through traditional didactics. More important, teachers and teacher students need to learn how to facilitate dialogs in such a way that their students can explore such topics themselves, and through this, learn how to view issues from multiple perspectives, including the perspectives of their peers. Learning to listen to and consider the perspectives of others, are important skills, which also involve the ability for the self to critically examine one's own beliefs and practices.

By holding this stance, we position ourselves within the classical Greek tradition, with Socrates in the Platonic dialogs as a key-figure. Unlike the sophists, who taught people the art of persuasion, which they (mis)understood as the art of teaching and argumentation, Socrates was rather concerned with existential and ethical reflections. He was questioning what was assumed to be knowledge. He did so through the practice of philosophical dialog, and it seems to be this kind of practice that is of significant relevance when it comes to integrating and practicing the values and themes which are now at the centre of the new national curriculum in Norway.

Teaching values and complex themes like life skills, democracy and sustainable development, appears be doomed to fail when done by means of traditional top-down didactics (the teacher knows while the students are ignorant) and monological teaching methods (the teachers didactically organizing or transmitting the "right" knowledge to students). Rather, it needs to be done in such a way that both teacher and students can shake up their more or less shallow opinions and start searching for wisdom together, and thus gradually "come to consciousness". Instead of top-down didactics, a dialogical "bottom-up" pedagogy needs to be developed. But how?

This is the question that we have explored in an action learning and research project leading up to this article. More concretely, we have tried out the Dialogos approach to pedagogical philosophical practice (see [3, 4]) when training teachers at a combined academic and vocational upper secondary school in facilitating philosophical dialogs with their students. A part of this project was studied by Marcussen in his master thesis [5]. Our collaboration in the project forms the basis for this article.

1.1 Research question and further structure of the article

The action learning and research project, which will be ongoing until June 2022, has centrally involved philosophizing about several of the values and themes included in the curriculum reform, such as charity, life skills and sustainable development. However, in this article, we have limited our scope on the part of the project that explicitly dealt with sustainable development issues. Our overarching action inquiry research question reads as follows:

How can training teachers in philosophizing the Dialogos Way promote dialogic learning-and-teaching, and support education for sustainable development?

First, we discuss some political, theoretical and practical perspectives on education for sustainable development, before we present the Dialogos approach to wisdom oriented pedagogy (see [3]). We discuss what dialogic teaching might mean in more general terms. After the methodology section, we use excerpts from a longitudinal action learning and research project to investigate how philosophizing the Dialogos way might promote sustainable development in education. More concretely, we briefly describe three dialogs in which teachers philosophized together by means of the Dialogos approach. Based on teachers' self-reported experiences,

we discuss the teachers' development of attitudes and skills in relation to the approaches presented in the introduction section. We conclude that training teachers in philosophizing the Dialogos Way might be a fruitful way to promote dialog facilitation skills among teachers, as well as awareness of sustainable development issues. This again, appears to be a prerequisite for sustainable action.

1.2 Education for sustainable development

The vastness and complexity of the theme sustainable development comes to the fore in the 17 United Nations goals for sustainable development adopted by all UN Member States in 2015. The goals are to be understood as a "call for action by all countries – poor, rich and middle-income – to promote prosperity while protecting the planet" [6]. The call includes the goals to:

- end poverty, hunger and inequality
- promote good health and education, gender equality and womens' empowerment
- provide water, sanitation and (sustainable) energy, economic growth, infrastructure and industrialization
- develop sustainable cities and sustainable consumption and production
- cope with climate change, protect oceans, biodiversity and forests, stop desertification, promote peace, justice and strong institutions, and develop international partnerships

Thus, when sustainable development is enshrined as an interdisciplinary theme in the new national curriculum in Norway, it can be understood as an attempt to answer the UN call to action. Education for sustainable development is broadly defined by the Norwegian government as enhancing understanding of the relationships between social, economical and environmental conditions [7]. Literature about education for sustainable development is based on the same broad definition, revealing a complex and multifaceted field (see i.e. [8]). Thus, there is no consensus about what an education for sustainable development should look like ([9], p. 36), and teachers are insecure as to how they should teach this complex theme [10, 11]. Several researchers argue for a so-called "whole-school approach" [12–15]. This implies that all staff are included in developmental work aimed at promoting sustainable ways of living.

Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss [16] is considered one of the founders of the *deep ecological movement*. The movement is based on the belief that the environmental problems today are symptoms of deeper problems in our societies [17]. The aim of deep ecology is a radical social, political and ideological reorientation for a more sustainable society, as opposed to a shallow ecology ([18], p. 22). The latter lacks philosophical grounding, and works towards short term and limited goals without breaking with dominant ways of life. As part of deep ecology philosophy, Næss argues that animism (the view that everything in nature has soul) is a more realistic approach to the world than modern technical views promoted by the natural sciences. He states that fundamentally speaking, "life as a phenomena is one" ([16], p. 325). A core idea is that diversity increases the potential for survival ([16], p. 282). Thus, we need to awaken the openness to diversity also in people. This can lead individuals to support radical ecological measures, even though they might threaten

material standards of living, Næss states ([16], p. 386). One way to do this, is, as already mentioned, for people to formulate their life philosophies of diversity and how things are connected, and then let others formulate theirs ([18], p. 31).

Based on the early work of Næss and others, Norwegian educational theorists Bjørndal and Lieberg [19] argued that education needs to give students thorough insight into the interplay between human beings and their (cultural and natural) surroundings. This is also in line with deep ecologist Richard Kahn [20], who argues that the focus on processes and interrelations instead of on singular aspects of human action requires dialogical pedagogical approaches. He describes dialog as a critical and self-critical practice in which our self-understanding, discourses and practices are questioned:

> *For instance, caring, dialogical, and transformative social relations in critical learning situations would promote civic cooperation, democracy, and positive cultural values, as well as fulfill human needs for communication, esteem, and being politically free with one another ([20], p. 77).*

Kahn has argued that eco-pedagogy in the long run will promote an ideal of education (in the form of danning/Bildung/Paideia) that will foster "a world of philosophers" ([20], p. 58). Hence, there is a link between what we can call the ideas of education for sustainable development as suggested by the referred philosophers and researchers, and the Dialogos approach to practical philosophy, which will be explained in the following.

1.3 Philosophizing the Dialogos way – a wisdom-oriented pedagogy

The Dialogos approach to pedagogical philosophical practice was initially developed by Guro Hansen Helskog from the mid-1990's on (see [3]). It involves encouraging people to begin formulating their life philosophies, and it invites people to analyze important topics through dialogical thinking and collaboration. Like other philosophical practices, as depicted for instance in Weiss' anthology "The Socratic Handbook" [21], the Dialogos approach is oriented towards developing wisdom. What characterizes the Dialogos approach is, among other things, the following (see [3]):

1. It is mainly developed for pedagogical philosophical and dialogical work in groups.

2. It has *will to wisdom*, which extends Frankl's *will to meaning* [22], as a core idea and intends what philosophy literally means, namely philo-sophia - the love of wisdom.

3. It focuses on long term open-ended processes that gradually will lead to personal growth and expansion of consciousness and wisdom in multiple dimensions and directions: Existential-emotional, relational-communicative, cultural-historical, practical-ethical, critical-analytical and spiritual-ideal.

4. A Dialogos process might include or be inspired by a variety of different philosophical exercise- and dialog formats, such as Philosophy for Children (P4C)-inspired philosophizing [23], Socratic dialog-inspired philosophizing [24–26], contemplative philosophy [27], Daimonic Dialogs [28], Oscar Brenifier-inspired philosophizing [29], or comparative experiential dialogs [3].

5. However, regardless of the dialog format, the essence of philosophizing the Dialogos Way is the profound encounter between participants when engaging in *heart to heart dialogs* with each other about shared subject matter. Hence, the fostering of dialogical relationships *between* students or participants is essential. This requires that teachers have an open "I-Thou" attitude towards the students, to use the expression of Buber [30].

As described in Helskog [3], subject matter can be part of traditional school subjects and academic disciplines, and by connecting the content to personal life and vice versa, the edifying process is enhanced. When working with the topic sustainable development, questions concerning one's personal responsibility, and the limitations of this, could for instance be extracted, formulated, argued and reflected upon.

By this, connections are made between content and concept, the personal and the global, the concrete and the abstract, and the private and the public, while students can gradually see how their lives are intertwined in complex social, cultural and historical structures. Thus, aspects of participants' personal lives can be connected with the content of school subjects in profound ways.

1.3.1 Basic attitudes and skills of the teacher as a dialog facilitator

When the Dialogos approach is practiced in classroom, the role of the teacher will be

> *"that of a facilitator of collaborative thinking through dialogue, rather than that of a transmitter of pre-existing knowledge. Questioning content and exploring different perspectives is here more important than reaching final answers and conclusions. Rather, both the students and the teacher are left in the open, free to integrate divergent perspectives into more unified stances" ([3], p. 2).*

In short, a teacher's main task in this form of pedagogy is to pose questions rather than giving answers. This requires an open-minded attitude not only towards the students, but also towards the content. The role of the students is to act as collaborative "wisdom searchers", so to speak. Together with the teacher as a questioning guide, they openly, reflectively and dialogically explore topics from multiple perspectives together with their classmates. Since the dialog process itself is open in the sense that no one can predict its outcomes and results in advance, the teacher must not guide the students in a specific direction or have a hidden educational agenda that would only be known by him or her (see [3, 4].

As emphasized by [3] this form of philosophical and dialogical pedagogy cannot and should not substitute traditional forms of teaching. Rather, it should be a supplement to, or better, an *integrated aspect of* traditional disciplinary lectures and discussions, literature studies and written assignments. Instead of thinking in terms of learning outcomes and aims, the teacher acknowledges that he or she can only prepare an educational framework or setting, so that the long-term Dialogos process will eventually result in self-formation and the development of certain skills and insights. However, as it is with other educational settings, there is never a guarantee that this really will take place. For example the insight that we all are a part of nature and that we all need to take part if we are to promote sustainable development on this planet, is to be *gained* by the students and cannot be *given* by the teacher. This brings us to the topic which constitutes the content of our example in this article, namely education for sustainable development.

The Dialogos approach can be understood as an eclectic approach when it comes to dialog formats [3]. That is, it makes use of different dialog formats in order to promote a development process towards self-formation with the participants. Thus, having insight in- and experience with a wide range of dialog models or formats is an advantage, in order to be able to choose between them, pick from them, or combine them.

However, essential to the Dialogos approach is reflection upon personal experiences. For this reason, dialogs inspired by the Socratic dialog (SD) approach has a special standing in philosophizing the Dialogos Way. The Dialogos process with the teachers involved in this project began with such dialogs.

1.3.2 Dialog format: Socratic dialog (SD)

The Socratic Dialog format was initially developed by Nelson [24] and Heckman [25]. A "proper" Socratic Dialog takes at least a day, preferably three days to a week, working on only one question. A 1,5–2 hour philosophical dialog is of course much more superficial, yet in a Dialogos process, even a mini-Socratic Dialogs have proven to have great impact on participants. A Socratic Dialog (SD) has the following features and facilitation principles, in comparison to a SD inspired dialog in a Dialogos process:

1. The facilitator has prepared a question beforehand, also reading philosophical literature is an advantage, some that gives multiple and contradictory perspectives on the topic chosen. In this way the teacher becomes more able to recognize when the perspectives in line with the literature are actualized by participants. As a consequence, it is easier for the teacher to facilitate the dialog from there. In a short SD-inspired dialog based on questions that are formulated on the spot, such preparations in advance are of course not possible. However, the advantage with questions that are formulated on the spot, is that students have an ownership of the question. The dialog becomes more of an open dialog in which the facilitator has no choice but to let go of his or her preconceptions of the topic under investigation, and be open to the participants.

2. The participants formulate an example drawn from their own personal lives, formulated in accordance with the following instructions:

   a. It should be a concrete example that has happened once upon a time

   b. It should have a beginning and an end

   c. It should be emotionally closed

3. Examples are told, and one example is chosen to be explored more deeply

4. The example giver is asked questions on the details of the example by the other group members

5. The group members philosophize more generally upon the example. This is where Heckman's six pedagogical measures become important [25]. They are as follows:

Measure 1: Content impartiality: The facilitator should not influence the content of the dialog, for instance by posing rhetorical questions.

Measure 2: Working from the concrete by constantly guiding students to stay on the concrete example and investigating the student's experience.

Measure 3: Expressing thoughts clearly and focusing on understanding the thoughts of the other.

Measure 4: Focus on the current question by keeping the group on track to clarify the question fully and ensure that the group is aware what question is being discussed.

Measure 5: Striving for consensus by seeking out what reasons we have for our statements, while at the same time knowing that consensus has a provisional character.

Measure 6: Facilitator interventions should seek to protect the dialog from unguided discussion, focus on observing the dialog, ensure that significant questions are tackled and take up fruitful contributions.

The work of the facilitator of a SD is to patiently assist the students in their effort to reach insights. In the process, Heckman advises facilitators to use a blackboard to have precisely formulated thoughts in view. When closing the SD, there should be a meta-dialog afterwards to close the experience for students.

1.3.3 Dialog format: Philo Café

Another dialog format that was used in the following study is the so-called Philo Café (see i.e. ([21], p. 323f)). It was mainly developed by Marc Sautet in the early 1990's in Paris where he frequently held philosophical dialogs in coffee houses, often with up to 100 participants ([21], p. 323f). In the following, this dialog format is presented in a more descriptive way, so that other teachers can eventually try it out in their classrooms:

- **Group size**: A Philo Café can be done in groups between 5–100 people.

- **Seating arrangement**: If the group size allows for it, it is recommended to sit in a circle.

- **No philosophical pre-knowledge required**: The participants do not need any philosophical pre-knowledge, they are supposed to philosophize based on their own life experience and their personal thoughts.

- **Purpose**: The main purpose is to learn about other people's thoughts, experiences and perspectives on a specific topic in order to get a deeper understanding of the latter. Therefore, there are no wrong ideas or perspectives in such a dialog, since each individual perspective contributes to a bigger picture about the topic under investigation.

- **Choosing the topic**: The topic of a Philo Cafè can be chosen in advance by the dialog facilitator or it can be decided ad hoc by the participants.

- **Key-note speech**: Prior to the Philo Café it is possible to have a key-note speech in which the topic of the dialog is outlined. Based on that key-note, the participants can then further investigate the topic.

- **No specific steps in the dialog**: The dialog format as such represents an open dialog, that means that there are no specific steps or a certain structure that has to be followed. Everything that happens in such a dialog, happens more or less spontaneously, with the participants responding to each others' statements.

Since there are no predefined steps, the dialog process as such relies strongly on improvisation and none of the participants nor the facilitator would know in advance where they would end up in the dialog.

- **The facilitator's role**: The role of the dialog facilitator mainly is to remember the order of the participants who raised their hand to make a statement, to pose follow-up questions and to summarize every now and then what has been said in the course of the dialog so far. In a metaphorical sense the facilitator can be seen like a music DJ who mixes all the different tunes and sounds (that is, the statements of the participants) together to a meaningful whole.

- **A dialog, not a discussion**: When responding to each other's statements, the participants might be tempted to let the dialog go over into a discussion. This has to be avoided by the dialog facilitator, who in this case has to point out that different perspectives, opinions and views are important in order to get a deeper understanding of the topic and putting up arguments against each other would jeopardize this purpose.

- **Duration**: From our experience we can say that the ideal length of such a dialog might be about 1 hour, but it is up to each facilitator to sense when it is about time to round up.

- **No conclusion required**: Since the purpose of a Philo Cafè is to investigate a topic in order to get a deeper understanding of it, it can easily be that the dialog ends without a specific conclusion. And that is no problem, since finding a conclusion was not the purpose.

1.3.4 Dialog format: philosophy for children (P4C)

The third dialog format that was put into practice in the following study was the philosophy for children format (P4C) as developed by Lipman (see [23]). This dialog format consists of several steps, which are presented below and in a way, so that other teachers can try it out in their own classrooms too:

1. Sit in a circle together with your students.

2. The students read a philosophical text, often an excerpt of one of Lipma's novels. Here the students can read one sentence each, one after another.

3. The students have time to think and note associations that come to mind intuitively.

4. The students can pose a question, based on what they just read. Each question is written on the blackboard, with the name of the author behind it.

5. The students are given the chance to vote for as many questions as they like. The dialog starts with the question which received the most votes.

6. During the dialog, the students are asked to relate to what the former speaker said, for instance by saying "I agree with ... , because ...." or "I disagree with ....because ..."

7. The teacher leads the dialog by posing questions like "How does what you say now relate to what … (name of the student) said?", "What is the difference between what you just said and what he said a minute ago?"

8. The dialog goes on until there is no more time, or until the students have no more to say.

9. If the latter is the case, then the next question on the list is explored in the same way. If there is no more time, the dialog ends with a meta-reflection round where students express their thoughts about how the dialog went.

2. Project design and research methodology

The action inquiry research project discussed here was initiated due to inspiration from an earlier action inquiry research project designed by Helskog. The project had involved 13 secondary schools in a municipality in Norway [4]. After presentation and preparation meetings between Helskog and the upper secondary school's leader group during spring and summer 2019, the leader group decided that they want to develop a similar project in their upper secondary school consisting of around 100 teachers (teaching both vocational and academic programs) and 650 students, focusing on the new curriculum and the previously mentioned "value lift".

Thus, development of what we might call a value sensitive, attitude- and virtue-based practice was a core purpose of the project. With this in mind, we named the project "Value lift and the edifying mission of education".[1] Helskog asked the leader group for permission to include the other authors of this paper, Marcussen and Weiss, the first as a master student and the second as a research colleague and co-facilitator.

2.1 Collaborative action inquiry

Concretely, the project was planned as a series of action research cycles, while the content "emerged" as the project developed, so to speak, until interrupted by the COVID-19 outbreak and lockdowns. Three so-called pilot groups consisting of approximately 10 teachers were supposed to be given two full day training sessions each. First, they would start with a training session, then try out the Dialogos approach with their students as well as with groups of 10 teachers each during a 1,5 hour session, and then meet up for a new full day training session. This session would include the sharing of experiences as well as trying out new ways of philosophizing. In this way, the whole school would be involved in the project, even though not all participated in the direct training sessions. However, due to the corona situation, we only got started with the second pilot group before the project was put on hold. The project was rounded up with a half day online workshop with lecture in the last week of school, while deciding to continue the project at least one more year. The purpose is to let more teachers learn how to facilitate in-depth philosophical dialogs on sustainable development together with their students, using the Dialogos approach.

Being two researchers and a master student collaborating is a strength in itself, since it has been possible for us to discuss the project along the way. The whole

[1] In Norwegian: Verdiløft og skolens danningsoppdrag.

process can thus be compared to the developmental action inquiry of William Torbert and colleagues [31]. Torbert distinguishes between first-person action inquiry, second-person action inquiry and third-person action inquiry, also making distinctions between the subjective first-person voice, the intersubjective second-person voice and the objectivity-seeking third-person voice ([32], p. 240–246). Reason and Bradbury [33] argue that the best action research will engage all three strategies: First-person research is best when carried out together with colleagues who can give support and challenge. This may evolve into a second-person collaborative inquiry process, as in the mid phase of this project, where Marcussen was given the lead in analyzing the data as part of his master thesis. In this way he has provided a more "objective" third person view and voice in the research, which gives the research a different balance of voices than if Helskog and Weiss were to analyze the data and write out the research report alone. However, when writing this article, their voices have become stronger again, as the focus moved towards dialogic learning-and-teaching.

2.2 Data

The main method for including the participants in this investigation were so-called meta-reflections, which were made both orally, in terms of open dialogs, and in written form. Submitting the written meta-reflection notes was voluntary for the whole staff, but mandatory for the voluntary participating pilot group teachers. This set of data was supplemented by observation notes from Marcussen, who took part in the training in the pilot groups, in the teacher-facilitated workshops with other teachers, and also in philosophical dialogs with students, in addition to reflection logs from all three of the authors.

In the next section, excerpts from the first, and meta reflection notes from the first and second pilot group workshops in action inquiry research cycle 2, are used as examples or cases that are examined in order to find possible answers to the research question. Hence, this will only be one phase taken out of the wider context of the Dialogos process in this project.

For reasons of research ethics, the identities of the participating teachers and students were of course anonymized.

3. Philosophical dialog process and key results

The pilot group dialogs were facilitated respectively by Weiss and Helskog, while Marcussen took the role as a participating observer, together with 11 teachers. The teachers came from various subject backgrounds – among others agriculture, motor mechanics, science, social studies, curriculum for religions, philosophies of life and ethics, so-called special education, and Norwegian. We all sat in a circle around a meeting table, so that each participant could see the others.

3.1 Two pre-workshop sessions

The first dialogs that teachers experienced in this project, took place in two sessions prior to the first full day workshop. Around 100 teachers participated in these dialogs, which were carried out in small groups with 3–4 people. The purpose of these pre-workshop sessions was, among other things, to offer all the teachers of this school a first impression of philosophizing the Dialogos way and how philosophizing might contribute to dialogical learning-and-teaching in general. In the following empirical data from these first dialogs are presented in the form of meta-reflections.

3.1.1 Teachers' dialogs 1: Socratic dialog-inspired reflection upon the topics "love of neighbor/spirit of charity[2]" and "dedication"[3]

The first dialogs that teachers experienced in this project, took place in two sessions prior to the first full day workshop. The dialog formats used were derived from the Socratic Dialog format as described previously in "1.3.2. Dialogue format: Socratic dialogue (SD)". Around 100 teachers participated in these dialogs, which were carried out in small groups with 3–4 people and in which the values "love of neighbor/spirit of charity" and "dedication" were investigated. Both values were drawn from the paragraph of aims in the Norwegian Education Act (§1). These initial dialogs were important because the teachers experienced what it could mean to philosophize upon personal experiences in "heart-to-heart", and in "I-thou" relationships facilitated through dialog (see "1.3. Philosophizing the Dialogos Way - a wisdom-oriented pedagogy"). This was also reflected and confirmed in many of the meta-reflections from the teachers, which they delivered on hand-written, anonymous sheets right after the dialogs. For instance, one teacher said "it was nice to reflect together with others, to become more deeply acquainted with one's colleagues, to see which values they have, what their lives, their image of humanity and society is founded upon", while another wrote that "to share personal experiences with colleagues challenges and makes us more familiar with each other", and a third that "I have never talked so much like today. Inspiring to hear others' stories. I want to use more of this in workshops with my students." Also, being recognized by one's colleagues was important. For instance, one teacher expressed that "colleagues have shown interest for my stories and for what I said."

Some emphasized the role of dialogic inquiry in the overarching work related to the new curriculum reform, on claiming that he or she saw the importance of working with terms and values from the paragraph of aims in the Norwegian Education Act (§1), and to develop the ability "to personalize these terms in order to understand them." Moreover, one claimed the workshop had "showed that a common room for reflection is important, if we want to pull in the same direction.", another that "it is important to work with your own attitudes", and a third that "the way the reflections have been carried out, triggered an interpersonal process and gave a starting point for further reflections. I want more of that."

Some also claimed they had become inspired to take dialogical philosophizing into the classroom, "fostering dialogic reflection, showing that there is more than argumenting and discussing", and "to be creative, unafraid and transcending, so that the students can transcend themselves."

The reason why "love of neighbor/spirit of charity" and "dedication" have been chosen as the topics for these initial dialogs was because one can assume that these two values are essential for what Kahn called eco-pedagogy. And that form of pedagogy, in the long run, will promote an ideal of education in the sense of self-formation (in Norwegian *danning*, in German *Bildung*, and in Greek *Paideia*) that will foster "a world of philosophers" ([20], p. 58). Like these two values, also the themes "sustainable development" and "respect for nature" are part of the Educational Act. In the next sections, these will be in focus.

3.2 The first full day workshop

Since the teachers already had been introduced to the activity of philosophizing, based on personal examples inspired by the Socratic dialog approach in two

[2] "Nestekjærlighet" in Norwegian.

[3] "Engasjement" in Norwegian.

pre-workshop sessions, as described previously, Weiss and Helskog then planned the first full day workshop to be an introduction respectively to the Philo Café approach, and the P4C-approach. However, in order to connect general sustainable development issues to their own personal life experiences, the teachers were first asked to reflect upon whether and to what degree they had been teaching about sustainable development in their previous work as teachers. This was done because, as outlined in the introduction, connecting the personal and general, the concrete and the abstract, is essential to philosophizing the Dialogos way. This is also where edification towards wisdom can take place. The question that the teachers were asked to reflect upon read: *To what extent and in what ways did you consciously teach according to the value "respect for nature" in §1 in the Educational Act, and the interdisciplinary theme "sustainable development" in the overarching part of the curriculum in the work with your students?*

The teachers wrote their reflections on sheets of paper that were collected as data by us by the end of the day, but also shared orally in the group before we started the philosophical work. 11 out of 12 claimed to have worked with sustainable development issues previously. Several claimed to have included respect for nature in their lecturing. The agriculture teacher had taught biological diversity. The special education teacher had worked with garbage separation at school, and once while hiking, sustainability in general had been discussed. The social science teacher had compared multinational clothing-retail companies, while the Norwegian teacher wondered whether respecting and tolerating different students' boundaries can be a form of sustainability too.

The teachers were then introduced to an exercise from Dialogos [34] in which general philosophical questions were separated from empirical (fact based) questions and psychological questions. Based on this exercise as well as the examples drawn from their own teaching practice, the teachers formulated one question each. All questions were written on a flip chart paper, before the teachers voted for their favorite question, also giving reasons for their choice. The question "How can we save the planet?" was chosen for the first dialog, and the question "What is respect for nature?" for the second dialog.

3.2.1 Teachers' dialog 2: A Philo Café on "How can we save the planet?"

The dialog format used in this workshop in order to investigate the question "How can we save the planet?" was the so-called Philo Cafè, as described previously in section "1.3.3 Dialogue format: Philo Café". This dialog began with one teacher indicating that the question of how to save the planet is old, stemming at least from 1972 and the Brundtland report. The dialog moved forward through an interactive dance between Weiss' and Helskog's questions and facilitation-moves, and the joint thinking of the participants. For instance, if one teacher posed a stand, we would ask if somebody disagreed or had a different view. For instance, due to this, the dialog moved between the levels of global interconnectedness in the general, and personal responsibility in the individual. It also touched upon short-term consequences and long-term consequences for coming generations. Sometimes we also added a concept, such as "is this a paradigm shift?", based on what the teachers said. In order to make sure that everyone could follow the development of the dialog, we asked if somebody could repeat what was just said, or if someone could summarize the content of the dialog so far. The philosophical dialog ended with the comment that "Maybe we have to go back to our cave and eat roots and berries. We obviously can't have this much clothes and things – this is absolutely not sustainable", another adding that "It has to be emphasized that basic needs have to be fulfilled. That people have enough to eat and drink, and maybe education and so on, which is higher up in the hierarchy of needs." Weiss then posed the question: "Can we

achieve more quality of life without using and consuming resources?" One of the teachers then argued that "Quality of life is something within us, and independent from our living standard."

We then moved on to the next dialog, which was about the question "What is respect for nature?"

3.2.2 Teachers' dialog 3: What is respect for nature?

For this dialog, the teachers were briefly introduced to the Lipman-Sharp philosophy for children (P4C) dialog format, as described previously in "1.3.4. Dialogue format: Philosophy for children (P4C)". The dialog investigated the question "What is respect for nature?" and the teachers read a short text from Helskog [34] about 4-year old Vilgot who is reflecting upon nature when questioned by his mum. The teachers took roles reading the text in pairs, one being Vilgot, and one being the questioning mother. A conversation about what it means to be close to nature unfolds, based in the text and the question "What is respect for nature?" The dialog began with one of the teachers claiming that nature has to be handed over to the next generation in a better condition than it was, or at least in the same condition. Also, when you are hiking, you should leave nature in the same condition as you found it. Another one commented that what you do before going for a hike can also be taken into account, like taking the car to the mountain or using a non-reusable barbecue. The teachers then reflected about how humans cultivate nature and about the relation between nature and culture in general. One teacher stated that there is a difference between cultivated and non-cultivated nature. Another did not see a difference between nature and culture but claimed that culture rather is something we take out into nature, arguing that *"everything is nature"*. Another teacher slightly disagreed and tried to define the difference between culture and nature: *"The difference is to either let things happen, or form and cultivate them the way we want."* Helskog then asked if, seen from a moral perspective. i.e. *respect* for nature, is it right to cultivate nature? One participant stated that there is a relation between us taking care *of* nature and taking *from* it, while another continued: *"Some places should be touched by human hands, others shouldn't."* One of the participants gave a concrete example on that: She once had initiated a project in her neighborhood where they cleaned up the forest. After they cleaned up parts of it, it became more child-friendly and better to walk in. Another realized she had been inconsistent when as a teenager she did not want to watch the butchering of animals, but at the same time she was used to buying meat at the store. The dialog continued along these lines for around an hour, ending with arguments like: *"Nature strikes back. Nature is stronger."* and "*Nature is alive. Multi-drug-resistant bacteria are also life and they will come after us. Why shouldn't they have the right to do that, actually?"* One of the teachers said that the planet will try to find a balance, if something goes wrong. Helskog asked: "*So, nature is seeking balance?" "Yes, it will fix itself if something is hurt*", one replied. Another one added: *"Even after the apocalypse, nature will build itself up again."*

Responding to the guiding question, the group developed the following answers, as summarized on a flip chart paper by Helskog: "*What does it imply to show respect for nature?" It implies*

- to leave nature in the same condition as we found it
- to utilize nature without destroying it – to administer without overuse
- to see the whole picture in what we do

- to acknowledge that nature is alive
- to cultivate uncultivated nature
- to acknowledge that everything is nature
- to understand the forces of nature
- to act with humbleness and respect for natural laws

3.2.3 Further content of the workshop

The later part of this full day workshop included a philosophical exercise where values behind emotions and/or actions were analyzed, followed by a general reflection on the possibilities of taking what we had worked with into their own practice with students in the classroom, and also with their colleagues. Finally, the teachers wrote meta-reflection notes about their experiences of the day that were gathered by us as data, while also sharing their experiences orally. This is part of the Dialogos process because it encourages participants to put words and concepts to their experiences, thus bringing the reflection process one step further. Furthermore, it is likely helping participants to psychologically "close" the process, which can be quite demanding, as we shall see below.

3.2.4 Teachers' meta reflections after the 1st full day workshop

As shown in the dialog excerpts above, the teachers talked about multiple perspectives on saving the planet and respect for nature. Nevertheless it is interesting how little these teachers reflected about these topics in their meta reflection notes by the end of the day. A few did though; one teacher stated that the dialogs made her *"widen the perspective on sustainability"*, while another teacher wrote that it was "*interesting to see the whole picture".* A third teacher stated that it was challenging "*to work with such big topics, which otherwise often can be forgotten in a busy everyday work",* a fourth writing that it was *"an untidy topic that was tidily organized"* through the philosophical dialog. A fifth teacher emphasized the advantage of getting different perspectives and arguments from others, and that *"the challenge is to organize and to make a system, a summary with the main tendencies.*"

Even if there were few reflections on the topic, no teacher mentioned anything negative or voiced criticism. However, seven out of ten answered that they were insecure about their own competence, that it was challenging and new, or that they felt insecure in general. One teacher claimed to have felt physical distress, that his heart was beating, that he felt performance anxiety and that the whole thing was rather" *hovering in the air.*" Another said she had been on *"unsteady grounds"*. Three teachers were insecure or curious about how they could transform this into teaching or transfer it to others from the teaching staff. One asserted that it was *"challenging, but edifying"* and that he needed some time to digest it. However, several of the teachers stated that the workshop was relevant for them with regards to their further work with the ongoing curriculum reform, which also required that the teachers worked with values, as stated in the introduction.

Some meta-reflections pointed out the challenge of philosophical dialoguing being a rather open way of working. Some wanted clear structures with unambiguous answers and guidelines, because this is what they as well as their students are used to. One mentioned that even though the dialog was interesting, he/she got a bit stressed of the dialog being a bit "floating". Another teacher wrote: "*If I would*

do this in the class, there would be much frustration. I wouldn't have got any answers." A third teacher notes something similar: "*I am used to working with more structure*."

3.3 Teachers philosophizing with students - how did they experience it?

Marcussen accompanied one of the teachers as a philosophical dialog facilitator in two of the classes where she taught Norwegian language and literature - respectively an electronics class and an elite sports class. The students were 16–17 years old, the questions explored were "what is respect for nature?" and "what is sustainable development?", and the two sessions lasted for 1,5 hours each. Afterwards, the teacher had told Marcussen that she did not experience the dialogs with the students as successful. She thought they were characterized by teacher dominance and relatively little participation from the students. However, as we shall see, the meta reflection notes of the students revealed that their experience was quite the contrary. These are three examples:

- "We thought in a different way, and the answers were not concrete as in other subjects. Now we had to come up with something that could become an answer to a question without a conclusion".

- "I felt it was a nice and new way to learn: Not to rely on books and syllabus, but instead think to high and dig deep"

- "I felt that we all experienced a sparkle of light so that we might think differently about things we did not know much about before we started".

9 of 22 students described that they think differently after the dialog. Here are some examples:

- "I experienced to think and consider things to a larger extent than ever before"

- "I got to think in a way that I did not think I was able to"

- "I feel that I began thinking in a new way"

- "I got to think in a new way and develop new thoughts. That the brain was challenged in a new and creative way"

- "Learned to think more in depth, and pose more questions"

- "Got a deeper view"

- "Fun to go deeper into things"

- "That I thought more deeply about what somebody thinks or about what something means"

- "Go deeper into myself"

Several of the students expressed that their thoughts were "opened". One example is the expression that the dialog "opened up for all my thoughts", another that s/he "learned to be more open rather than jumping to conclusions".

Many noted that they have gotten new insights related to sustainability. One wrote: *"I got a new perspective on what sustainability is."* One said that his/her awareness on the topic was raised through the dialog, while two others stated that they could go deeper into the topic, or to see *"problems and topics differently, to see values and what is important."* Four students expressed excitement for the topic and that it was fascinating to investigate it in-depth, also that the topic was *"excellent"* and funny. Two students noted that they got new ideas on what sustainability can mean, and one that he/she got an in-depth look on how to live sustainably. Some noted that they have been inspired to put sustainability into practice more often. One student mentioned that during the conversation he/she has thought about "eco-conscious decisions", another stated that he/she got deeper insight on what it means to live sustainably. One got new ideas on how to act more sustainably, while another realized *"that there is much we do that is already sustainable even though we are not always aware of that."* Two students, however, stated that dialogs are not enough with regards to sustainability: *"... it is a waste of time to discuss this without doing anything"*. Another one stated: *"I think that we don't change anything by discussing this in two hours but still I leave the dialogue with more awareness."*

Students also expressed that it was difficult and strenuous to philosophize, however interesting to listen to and to explore and learn from the different views of others. One stated that he or she wanted to become better to see all sides of different issues, while others emphasized the importance of realizing that there are many ways of thinking and seeing.

3.4 Teachers meta-reflections after the 2nd full day workshop

After the second pilot group workshop with the same teachers some five weeks later, their meta-reflection notes show that the teachers were less stressed. Now none reported that they were insecure about their own competence. One wrote that he/she became more organized by letting students write meta reflection notes after sessions from time to time, something that she did not do in the beginning. Two mentioned that it had now become easier to use topics and methods from the Dialogos approach in their teaching. Another one was looking forward to trying out the exercises from this second full day workshop with the students, while another said he/she was inspired to read and learn more about philosophical dialog. Now, how can we interpret this development?

4. Discussion

A main feature of the dialogs presented in the previous section, was that the teachers brought their own experiences and more or less well-founded opinions into the philosophical dialogs. These opinions and experiences were investigated and sometimes also challenged by the perspectives and arguments of the others, and by the spontaneous questions of Weiss and Helskog. As a consequence, and contrary to learning content from books, the teachers could learn content from each other, and in this way raise their awareness on the investigated topics. This form of learning did not necessarily make the participants acquire factual knowledge, but it opened their minds and widened their horizons of understanding regarding the issues in focus, which in this case were related to sustainable development. In the present section, we will therefore discuss central features, in the form of attitudes and skills, that came to the fore in the outcomes of this project.

4.1 In-depth learning

As shown in the previous section, several students said that such dialogs gave them the chance to learn "to think more in depth," to get "a deeper view," "to go deeper into things," and "to go deeper into myself." Such quotes indicate what in general is known by the term *in-depth learning*. More particularly, the quotes can also be related to the previously mentioned philosopher Arne Næss and his conception of *deep* ecology. Furthermore, when Næss argues for awakening the openness to diversity in people ([16], p. 386), then this is what appears to have happened with the teachers as well as with the students. In the dialogs they were challenged to formulate and share their own point of views and understandings of a topic, listen to those of others. Through that they could further develop their own understanding, which can be seen as a key-aspect of in-depth learning. Furthermore, the meta-reflections of both the teachers and the students indicate that the dialogs helped them in becoming more open-minded and in general more aware of the topic. In this respect, the oral meta-reflections from the students can be mentioned, where two of them expressed that dialogic learning-and-teaching does clearly not foster sustainable development. In other words, these students claimed that thinking and talking alone does not lead to change. Here however, another student interjected that dialoguing and thinking together appears to be mandatory in order to raise awareness on such vital topics. Since only with a raised awareness, as this student claimed, people will be more motivated for change. Here again, Næss' argument for awakening the openness to diversity comes into account. And being able to support your students in learning to deal with today's cultural, philosophical and even scientific diversity - i.e. by means of this dialogical form of in-depth learning - appears to be an important skill of the teacher in the 21st century.

4.2 Improved self-confidence

Another important insight from this project was that many teachers, after the first workshop, commented that this way of working, that is, dialogic learning-and-teaching, felt difficult for them. Some even noted that they became anxious and on shaky ground. However, after the second workshop, the meta-reflection notes clearly indicated that the teachers from the pilot group felt less stressed. They gained more confidence in what they were doing - by doing it. And here we arrive at a crucial point when it comes to dialogic learning-and-teaching: It needs practice, it is not simply a technique that, once you understand it cognitively, you can apply it successfully. Rather, it is the experience that comes from participative dialogic practice which helps the teachers improve their dialog facilitation skills as well as develop the attitudes with which they can go into such dialogs. Instead of being anxious, they were much more self-confident when facilitating their second or third dialog. And though it is not a skill in the actual sense, but rather an attitude, improved self-confidence in their teaching practice seems to be a vital resource for today's teachers.

4.3 Active listening

With respect to the previous sentence, one teacher can be mentioned again, who first thought that the dialog she facilitated went rather bad. Only when taking a look at the meta-reflections from the students, she could see that the contrary was the case. Here, one should not underestimate the power of active listening, which forms an essential aspect in this approach to dialogic learning-and-teaching. Silence in a dialog does not mean that nothing is going on. Rather, it often indicates that

participants are going on deeper levels of reflection – something that seems to be confirmed in the meta-reflection notes from the students in this dialog.

Even though students listen to the teacher too when the latter is using a more traditional form of didactics, like when presenting facts and knowledge on a power-point. However, active listening as discussed here slightly differs from this form of listening. Active listening appears to happen more likely in conversations, i.e. in a dialog, rather than in speeches. And this difference appears to be decisive for the previously mentioned in-depth learning - active listening is prerequisite for this form of learning. Therefore, making one's students listen actively appears to be a necessary ability of teachers today.

4.4 Cultivating one's not-knowing

One could of course be critical towards this dialog-oriented approach and say that facts about the topic were hardly or not present at all in these Dialogos workshops on sustainable development. But here the absence of well-founded pre-knowledge on the topic with the participants appears to be decisive. Would they all have known all the facts, figures and theories about the topic, the chances would have been high that they would have just ended up in mere discussion, where each participant would have been concerned with defending his or her point of view. And this was not the case in these dialogs, rather – in reference to Socrates – the participants knew and acknowledged that they did not know, or only knew little, about the topic. In other words, having an awareness of not knowing everything about a topic, seems to constitute a vital attitude that is required by the participants of philosophical dialogs. *Not knowing* in a dialog keeps the learning process alive, since it fosters curiosity and wonderment.

As a consequence, one could even go so far and say that if the awareness of one's own not-knowing is a driving force in dialogic learning-and-teaching then this educational approach can also be used for other topics, and not only sustainable development. In this way, both the teacher and the students are cultivating their not-knowing - and in a complex and diversified world like ours, where one simply cannot know all, a cultivated attitudes not-knowing appears to be of central value. However, as already mentioned previously, dialogic learning-and-teaching should not replace traditional lecturing. Nevertheless, it appears to be a valuable and fruitful approach when education has to deal with phenomena and topics that cannot be put into "square-shaped boxes."

4.5 Togetherness

Furthermore, based on the reflection notes from this action inquiry project, one can come to the conclusion that dialog fosters the social relationships between the participating individuals. With the intention to investigate sustainable development issues together – with the emphasis on "together" – there never appeared to be the need for any participant to come up with the best argument or "winning" the conversation, as it would be in a discussion or a debate. Rather, because both the teachers as well as the students showed a certain curiosity in the topic, on the one hand, and because this curiosity was rooted in the fact that none of them possessed expert knowledge about this complex topic, on the other, they were willing to listen to the other points of view. And here another positive effect of this educational approach comes to the fore which can be formulated in the words of Richard Kahn ([20], p. 77), in which he states that caring, dialogical, and transformative relations would promote cooperation, democracy, and positive cultural values, as well as promote communication, esteem, and freedom in relation to each other. In other words,

knowing how to foster togetherness with the students appears to be an important skill of the teacher in order to promote what is called democratic citizenship.

4.6 Life philosophies

Another positive aspect of such a dialogic approach to learning-and-teaching might be the following: In the discipline of so-called philosophical practice one can find a key-assumption held by several practitioners, namely that each individual has his or her own philosophy of life – not in terms of an elaborated theory, but in terms of lived values and beliefs, expressed in feelings, attitudes and actions (see i.e. Lahav: [27]). In this respect Næss can be mentioned again who believed that one of the solutions to the world's ecological problems is to inspire people to formulate their life philosophies, i.e. about diversity and how things are connected ([18], p. 31). And when it comes to the dialog processes as described in the present article, then this seems to be what happened. Due to the dialogs, the participants became inspired to reflect and think about their own philosophies of life – or at least about a certain domain of their philosophy of life in terms of questions like "How do I relate to my surroundings, not only on a local but on a global level?", "What are the values that come to the fore in this reflection, that appear to be important to me, and how might I be able to practice them?" In one way or another all these questions – which for sure are only a few examples - seem to have been relevant and even investigated in the dialogs. It has to be mentioned though that working with one's own philosophy of life was not an explicit goal communicated to the participants. Nevertheless, investigating this kind of philosophy – especially in relation to sustainable development topics – appeared to have happened at least with some participants as the meta-reflection notes indicate. The ability that was fostered here is the ability of self-reflection and subsequent self-knowledge - an ability that was already held in veneration in old Greece (i.e. in the form of the Socratic "Know thyself").

4.7 Limitation

The obvious limitation of this study is that it focuses only on one project with rather small groups of teachers and students. It is thus not possible to generalize directly to other contexts. Regardless of the limitation, the study might serve as an inspiration for teacher practitioners who want to try out the Dialogos approach to philosophizing in their classroom, or for researchers who would like to study educational processes through Dialogos or similar approaches in action research in their own context. As such, the article describes the Dialogos approach and three dialog formats in such a way that teachers can try them out in their own classrooms.

As to further research, it would also be interesting to try out the Dialogos approach on a broader scale, nationally as well as internationally. The processes could be researched through quantitative methods as well as qualitative.

However, because this study is based on several years of similar action and practice-research (see for instance [4, 35, 36]), we are bold enough to claim that the Dialogos approach to philosophizing is a fruitful way to contribute to education not only for sustainable development, but more generally as an approach to dialogic learning-and-teaching.

5. Conclusion and final remark

The guiding question of this paper asks *how* training teachers in philosophizing the Dialogos Way might promote dialogic learning-and-teaching, and support

education for sustainable development. First, we presented theoretical and practical approaches on the topics of education for sustainable development and philosophizing the Dialogos Way. Here, we emphasized the importance of focusing both on the development of dialogical attitudes, knowledge of ways of philosophizing, as well as dialog facilitation skills. We argued that this form of pedagogy requires an open attitude not only towards the students, but also towards the content. The role of the students is to act as collaborative "wisdom searchers". Together with the teacher as a questioning guide, they openly, reflectively and dialogically explore topics from multiple perspectives together with their classmates (see [3, 4]. We then explained and described three dialog formats, namely the Socratic dialog (SD), Philo Café, and Philosophy for Children (P4C), all being used in the work with the teachers as described in section 3 and discussed in section 4. Based on the process description and discussion, we intended to show *how* teachers' attitudes and skills with regards to philosophizing the Dialogos as a way of promoting education for sustainable development can be practiced. And it appears to be through regular practice that philosophizing the Dialogos Way can contribute to the enhancement not only of skills, but also of important attitudes, insights and awareness needed for teachers and teacher students in the 21st Century.

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