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Reconceptualizing conflict:
An investigation of student teachers' understandings of conflict and conflict handling before and after mandatory training

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Abstract

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Aims: The goal of this study is to describe and analyze student teachers' conceptualizations of conflict and conflict handling before and after they participate in mandatory training. Special attention is given to the extent to which student teachers' conceptualizations correspond with and diverge from theories about conflict and learning. The study seeks to make this correspondence visible so that they it may be employed as a pedagogical aid. The study also employs student teachers' discussions of and reflections on their learning in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in the ways in which they have been educated to understand and handle conflicts.

Theory: The study employs theoretical perspectives on conflict and development (Valsiner & Cairns, 1995); social interdependence theory (Johnson & Johnson, 2009); and the *Ideal System of Conflict Resolution* (Cohen, 2005) to investigate how educational actors can utilize conflicts to promote personal, social, and intellectual development.

Method: Data was gathered and analyzed via a phenomenographic protocol complemented by case studies.

Results: The study yielded an outcome space containing six conceptualizations of the roles that participants described teachers playing in school-based conflicts including *arbitrating, asserting, informing, stimulating*, *guiding,* and *reflecting*. Analysis of the changes in participants' conceptualizations over time demonstrated that most participants abandoned the conceptualizations of arbitrating and asserting after completing the course. Additionally, the majority of participants portrayed more nuanced understandings of stimulating, guiding, and reflecting as constructive conflict handling strategies. Three case studies are also employed to analyze and present interview data. These cases highlight the ways in which student teachers' backgrounds and approaches to conflict influenced their learning. The case studies depict a divergence between what was offered in the course and what participants felt they needed in order to develop practical skills. This discrepancy points to a number of ways in which mandatory conflict handling courses may be (re)designed to better address student teachers' expectations and foster their learning.

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Contents

Introduction

Background

The Swedish Ministry of Education amended the Higher Education Ordinance in 2010, requiring all student teachers to receive conflict handling training prior to graduation (SFS 2010:541). However, the legislation did not specify the content or format of this training, allowing universities to designate responsible departments and formulate learning outcomes as they see fit. At the university in western Sweden where the present study took place, conflict handling is addressed in a 7.5 unit course administered by the department of sociology and work science with assistance from lecturers and seminar leaders from six additional departments. Students training to become lower and upper secondary school teachers take this course[1] during their first year of study after completing two educational modules and a two-week period of practical observation. This same group of students is required to complete a follow-up course during their fifth year of training.

Nonetheless, this two-course format is the exception rather than the rule. This is illustrated by the fact that students enrolled in three, parallel teaching programs at the same university are only required to complete one course addressing conflict handling at some point during their training. In addition, the content of the courses that student teachers take seems to be contested. Over the last two years, I have conducted two studies about the course where I have observed differences in the ways in which conflict is defined, characterized, and exemplified by lecturers and seminar leaders administering the course to students enrolled in various teaching programs. Such differences in the ways in which student teachers at this university are trained to understand and handle conflicts raise compelling questions about the affects of course formatting and content on student learning. These questions serve as the point of departure for the following study.

Aims

The goal of this study is to describe and analyze student teachers' conceptualizations of conflict and conflict handling before and after they participate in mandatory training. Special attention is given to the extent to which student teachers' conceptualizations correspond with and diverge from theories about conflict and learning. The study seeks to make this correspondence visible so that they it may be employed as a pedagogical aid. The study also employs student teachers' discussions of and reflections on their learning in order to identify strengths and weaknesses in the ways in which they have been educated to understand and handle conflicts.

Research Questions

1: How do student teachers conceptualize conflict and conflict handling before and after their mandatory training?

2: How do student teachers describe the relationship between conflict and learning before and after their mandatory training?

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[1] Technically, the course is administered as two courses, one for students enrolled in the lower secondary teaching program and one for students enrolled in the upper secondary teaching program. However, since the courses are run simultaneously, requiring students to attend the same lectures and complete the same assignments, both courses are referred to as a single entity throughout the study.

3: How do student teachers experience the conflict handling course with respect to their own learning?

Significance

What is the significance of this research? Specifically, why explore pre-service training in Sweden? Why focus on student teachers? Why investigate these, particular, questions and why employ phenomenography and case studies to do it? Pre-service teacher education in Sweden is interesting because of the ways in which conflict has been previously addressed. While student teachers have been educated in conflict resolution, nonviolence education, and, more recently, constructive conflict handling to varying extents for years (Hakvoort, 2010a), these topics have been built into ostensibly related courses devoted to the school's guiding documents and democratic mission. Moreover, when these topics were addressed, they were not, necessarily, used to analyze the ways in which conflict could promote and/or diminish learning. Needless to say, the introduction of a new, mandatory conflict handling course may help bring together theories of conflict, conflict handling, and learning in new and pedagogically significant ways.

Student teachers are interesting because they are in the process of transitioning between attending schools as students and working in schools as educators. This transition is an ideal time to question student teachers about their experiences and expectations (See, for example, Kokotsaki, 2012, pp. 133-134). Such research can be used by teacher educators to design courses that student teachers find useful and informative. Moreover, research that elucidates student teachers' understandings of target phenomena in existing courses can be used by teacher educators retrospectively to help determine if students acquired the knowledge and skills outlined in course plans.

In terms of the research questions, research question 1 is important because the phenomenon of conflict and conflict handling is contested. As a result, it is advantageous to shed light on the boundaries and characteristics of this phenomenon through the eyes of the group of learners who are now being trained to understand it. Research question 2 is significant because the course under investigation takes the position that conflicts are opportunities for learning. As a result, it is valuable to explore the ways in which student teachers describe conflicts as both opportunities and impediments to learning before and after they complete the course. Research question 3 is consequential because it addresses the ways in which participants describe the course in relationship to their own learning and provides opportunities to explore the activities and approaches they found most useful.

Moving on to methodology, phenomenography is an apt approach for this study because it is designed for the investigation of a phenomenon in addition to the qualitatively distinct ways in which learners describe and, by extension, understand it[2]. These goals are difficult to accomplish via quantitative methodologies because they require the generation of in-depth data from a limited research population. Moreover, they are challenging to achieve through alternative qualitative methodologies, such as ethnography or participant observation, because these conceptions are not observable per se.

It is important to note that phenomenographic researchers do not endeavor to undercover the ways in which learners understand a stable, pre-defined phenomenon. Instead,

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[2] I would like to acknowledge from the outset that I believe there is a disjunction between what individuals say they understand and their cognitive comprehension (Säljö, 1996). Consequently, I'm not interested in what goes on inside my participants' heads. However, I am interested in the ways in which participants describe the target phenomenon as well as what they have to say about the processes of understanding it. I contend that although descriptions provided by participants do not constitute a comprehensive account of their understandings, they do shed light on the ways in which participants make sense of a phenomenon understand specific circumstances in relationship to a particular context.

researchers study learners' experiences in order to reach a better understanding of those experiences as well as the phenomenon itself which are inextricably linked and constantly changing (Marton & Booth, 1997). This is the "non-dualistic ontology" embraced by phenomenographic researchers (Åkerlind, 2012, p. 116) which allows for the investigation of the ways in which learners actively participate in the process of apprehension in addition to the ways in which they come to understand the same phenomenon differently.

The study also employs case studies to investigate the ways in which three participants experience the conflict handling course with respect to their own learning. These case studies are not phenomenographic and should not be evaluated according to phenomenographic standards for validity and reliability[3]. However, they serve as a complementary methodology that helps to elucidate how and why participants develop and arrive at particular understandings of the target phenomenon. Moreover, case studies help to answer one of the quintessential questions in phenomenographic research, "Why are some people better at learning than others?" (Marton, 1994, p. 4424). Although phenomenographic investigations and case studies cannot shed light on participants' cognitive functioning,[4] they can highlight the ways in which participants describe and reflect upon learning processes. Finally, the inclusion of case studies addresses a criticism raised by Säljö (1996) who contends that, "Phenomenographers alienate individuals from their own utterances by reducing these into statements and by systematically disregarding the contexts in which they were uttered…" (p. 25). I think this is a fair statement and I attempt to address it by employing case studies as an interpretative framework for my phenomenographic findings.

Literature Review

Literature Selection

Before beginning the literature review, it is important to note how and why I selected this literature. Beginning with how, I selected the conflict literature based, in part, on knowledge that I acquired while earning a master's degree in global studies specializing in conflict resolution in 2011 and, in part, on my continued reading of literature pertaining to conflict *and* education. I primarily selected the phenomenography literature based on texts assigned during a master's level phenomenography course that I completed in 2012. However, I found it necessary to select additional literature in order to critically reflect on the ways in which phenomenography is applied as well as to represent empirical studies pertaining to student teachers' learning of various phenomena.

My reasons for selecting these, particular, texts are threefold. First, I sought to situate the present study among the consequential ideas and theories that preceded it. To this end, I selected research that is not only well referenced but thought-provoking and, at times, controversial. I believe that by engaging with these influential arguments, my research contribution is strengthened. Second, I sought to review previous literature analytically in order to highlight the assumptions and ideas that guided the authors' work in addition to the assumptions and ideas that I sought to problematize and build upon. Finally, I put together the literature review in order to frame arguments made in the study. In terms of conflict, I employ the literature to argue that although most people view conflicts as negative social interactions, conflict situations can be positive opportunities for learning and development when viewed

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[3] See Åkerlind (2012) for a discussion of these standards.
[4] See Lyons & Languis (1985) for a discussion of the ways in which neuroscience has been experimentally incorporated into pre-service teacher training in order to "prepare prospective teachers to…effectively diagnose and attend to" their own "learning needs" as well as those of their students (p. 127).

and handled in various ways. In terms of phenomenography, I review three studies in order to highlight the ways in which this learner-centered approach may be employed to investigate conflict. I also use these studies to situate my own research in the context of empirical investigations of similar research populations, namely student teachers.

Conflict and Conflict Handling

Although there are few theories that address the causes and consequences of *school-based conflict*, there is a plethora of general conflict theory created by political scientists, sociologists, and psychologists to explain this inevitable social phenomenon. Developmental psychologists Shantz & Hartup (1992) define conflicts as disagreements or oppositions that occur both between and within individuals. Social conflicts can be divided into interpersonal conflicts or disparities between individuals and intergroup conflicts which consist of oppositions within or between groups. Internal conflicts are regarded as intrapersonal and occur when "one learns (or experiences) something that is contradictory to one's existing expectations or beliefs" (Shantz & Hartup, 1992, p. 1). While some conflicts are "fleeting and forgettable," others are "highly memorable and have long term effects" (Shantz & Hartup, 1992, p. 1). Whatever the experience, Shantz & Hartup (1992) contend that conflicts are "part and parcel of everyday living (and thus) must be regarded as intrinsic to the human condition" (p.1).

Psychologists Valsiner & Cairns (1992) distinguish between "good conflicts" and "bad conflicts." They define good conflicts as "an oppositional relationship(s) between two parts of a developing system that leads to novel states of that system," and bad conflict(s) as "clash(es) or war(s) of exclusively competing opposites that devastate each other, thus leading to the extinction of the whole in which they are parts" (Valsiner & Cairns, 1992, p. 32). This distinction has far reaching consequences for the ways in which conflicts are characterized and handled. While good conflicts allow for coexistence and development, bad conflicts necessarily entail opposition and destruction. Although conflicts can be orientated towards either end of the spectrum, it seems that most people perceive conflicts as not only bad (Valsiner & Cairns, 1992, pp. 19-20) but "profoundly negative" (Bodine & Crawford, 1998, p. 35) thereby precluding the possibility of conflict as an opportunity for learning.

Galtung, a peace theorist, maintains that "fully articulated" conflicts are discords that consist of three elements: behaviors, attitudes, and contradictions (1996, p. 73; See Figure 2.1). Galtung argues that of these elements only behaviors can be perceived and identified while attitudes and contradictions are less obvious, existing in the minds of actors (1996, p. 72). Therefore, attitudes and contradictions tend to be more difficult than behaviors to understand and manage. Nevertheless, Galtung contends that awareness is the most important step towards pro-social conflict handling (1996, p. 74). In fact, if one combines the writings of Shantz & Hartup (1992), Valsiner & Cairns (1992), and Galtung (1996), it appears that awareness and a positive orientation towards conflicts and the actors that precipitate them are prerequisites of constructive conflict handling.

Behaviors

Above the Surface

Below the Surface
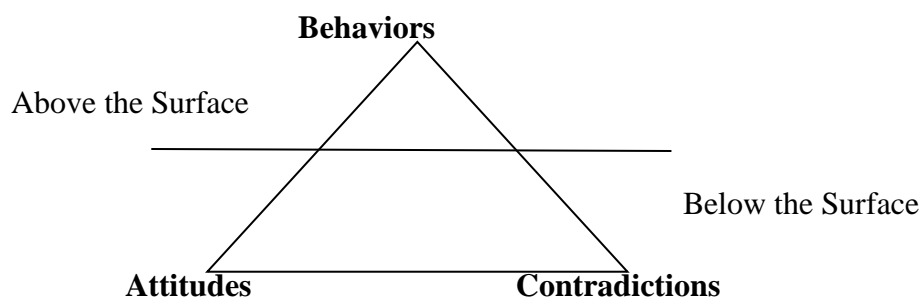
Attitudes   **Contradictions**

Figure 1. *Conflict Triangle (Galtung, 1996)*

Shantz & Hartup (1992), Valsiner & Cairns (1992), and Galtung (1996) do not offer insights into the ways in which conflicts are experienced and handled in educational settings necessitating examination of contributions made by Johnson & Johnson (2009), Coleman & Deutsch (2001), and Bickmore (2011). Johnson & Johnson (2009) confirm that conflicts occur frequently in schools and argue that these conflicts are predicated upon social interdependence[5], a theory that parallels and reinforces Valsiner & Cairns distinction between "good" and "bad" conflict (1992, p. 32). Johnson & Johnson (2009) argue that conflicts occur in social systems where individual actions and goals necessarily affect the actions and goals of others. By extension, if conflicts are framed as mutual problems and handled through cooperative efforts, they yield constructive results (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). However, conflicts become destructive when they are framed competitively and conflict actors seek to win by imposing mutually exclusive solutions on perceived adversaries (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Unlike Valsiner & Cairns (1992), Johnson & Johnson (2009) do not see destructive conflicts resulting in the extinction of social systems. Instead, Johnson & Johnson (2009) maintain that destructive conflicts, based on negative social interdependence, impede the realization of goals such learning and development.

Social interdependence theory has far-reaching implications for educational settings. On the one hand, it illustrates how a teacher's instructional efforts may be blocked or prevented by a student's disinterest or rebellion. Indeed, if teachers and students view each other as competitors, they are unlikely to effectively achieve their goals. On the other hand, it points toward cooperation as a means for framing disagreements and incompatibilities as opportunities for social and intellectual development. However, the idea of cooperation in educational contexts becomes problematic when teachers view and assert themselves as indisputable authorities both of their subjects and appropriate social behaviors. This point of view makes it difficult for teachers to understand how they can maintain their authority and work with their students cooperatively.

Coleman and Deutsch (2001) also contend that the actions and goals of educational actors are necessarily interdependent, but they take this argument one step further by arguing that schools are a unique social system and this uniqueness contributes to distinctive, school-based conflicts. Accordingly, destructive conflicts occur at school because it is a stressful, competitive environment where teachers are not provided with adequate support and training in conflict handling and students are not afforded sufficient opportunities for cooperative interaction (Coleman and Deutsch, 2001). Coleman and Deutsch's writings indicate the need to examine particular issues such as lack of resources and training in tandem with social structures that promote asymmetrical power, differing needs and interests, and lack of choice within a social setting that displays unique characteristics.

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[5] Social interdependence theory was originally posited by Deutsch (1949) and further developed and deployed by Johnson & Johnson.

Coleman and Deutsch's uniqueness argument has important implications for pre-service courses in conflict handling. That is, if school-based conflicts are unique, teacher trainers should not present general conflict theories to student teachers and expect these students to apply them effectively in their future teaching practices. For better or for worse, grand sociological theories that do not specifically address the unique conflict catalysts and outcomes produced in educational contexts cannot prepare student teachers to prevent and handle school-based conflicts constructively. However, these theories can be used to address *conflicts that occur in schools* which are different from *school-based conflicts* because they could happen anywhere and have little bearing on the unique expectations, demands, and dynamics associated with teaching and learning, high student to teacher ratios, etc. This distinction becomes important when student teachers are not taught to differentiate between conflicts that occur in schools and school-based conflicts and are not given the tools they need to prevent, address, and handle different kinds of conflicts effectively.

If there is a distinction between conflicts that occur in schools and school-based conflicts, what are typical examples? While examples of conflicts that occur in school are synonymous with examples of conflicts that occur anywhere including disagreements and misunderstandings, examples of typical school-based conflicts are more difficult to pin down. Whereas some authors focus on violent conflicts, such as physical aggression and psychological harm (Bodine & Crawford, 1998), others examine conflicts caused by educational systems that privilege competition over cooperation (Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Coleman & Deutsch, 2001). Still others point to social-psychological disparities or socio-cognitive conflicts they view as necessary vehicles for intellectual development (Graff, 1993), an argument theoretically grounded in the writings of Piaget and his model of equilibration (Chapman & McBride, 1992, pp. 38-42).

While none of the preceding examples are tremendously controversial, one example of school-based conflict cited by several researchers and practitioners including Franklin, Harris, & Allen-Meares (2008) has recently become the subject of scrutiny and debate. This controversial example of school-based conflict is bullying. Bickmore (2011) contends that schools regularly focus on bullying as the quintessential example of school-based conflict and, as a result, deploy antibullying programming as a means for addressing it. According to Bickmore, these programs impede education for peacebuilding because they "often allocate more resources to surveillance and control than to facilitation of healthy relationships" (2011, p. 1). In Bickmore's (2011) analysis, gross rule violations, in general, and bullying, in particular, should not be the focus of conflict resolution programming.

Bickmore's arguments have far reaching implications for the ways in which conflict, in general, and school-based conflict, in particular, are defined and presented in pre-service teacher training. If the terms *conflict* and *violence* are employed synonymously, emphasis is placed upon the prevention of aggressive acts such as bullying, sexual assault, and physical altercation. Conversely, if conflict is viewed as an opportunity for learning, emphasis is placed upon the creation of classroom climates where students and teachers feel empowered to embrace and learn from social incompatibilities (Bickmore, 2011). While there is no clear consensus on how conflict should be defined and presented, the latter view of conflict is, arguably, more consistent with Swedish curricula which underscores the importance of teaching students how to express their opinions while respecting the self-worth and integrity of others (SKOLFS 2011:144). This study investigates whether student teachers agree with this conceptualization of conflict and feel prepared to embrace conflicts as opportunities for learning.

The idea that conflicts are opportunities for learning also has to do with the ways in which conflicts are handled. Cohen (2005) maintains that although no two school-based conflicts are identical (p. 13); these conflicts can be handled in four distinct ways (See

Figure 2.2). According to Cohen, the first and most ideal approach is prevention which is represented by, "conflicts that never occur because of a supportive school environment," (2005, p. 35). Hakvoort (2010b) complements the first level of Cohen's pyramid by reframing it as *preparation*. Viewed in this way, the first level is not simply about averting conflict but nurturing respectful relationships that provide a solid foundation for successful conflict handling (p. 162). Cohen's second level entails negotiation as represented by, "conflicts that (principal actors) resolve (themselves) by negotiating with each other," (2005, p. 35). Negotiation is, arguably, only a viable option when actors have sufficiently prepared for incompatibilities by building respectful relationship and acquiring applicable skills.

The third approach is represented by, "conflicts that are mediated" by a third party such a peer or a teacher (Cohen, 2005, p. 35). Much like negotiation, respect is an important precondition for mediation since the mediator does not impose a solution. Instead, mediators help actors communicate more effectively and explore possible ways to handle the situation. Consequently, mediation is a skill that must be learned and developed. The fourth and least optimal approach is arbitration which is represented by conflicts that are stopped by someone in a position of authority such as a teacher, principal, or police officer. The person who stops the conflict is typically responsible for determining culpability and allocating punishment. Arbitration can be employed by actors who do not respect each other but seldom leads to mutually beneficial outcomes. This is because arbitrators may ignore the actors' interests and needs in order to promote their own or their institutions' agendas (Cohen, 2005, p. 30). Furthermore, arbitration regularly generates emotional responses that both escalate the conflict further and yields additional conflict situations. This occurs because arbitration rarely addresses the underlying causes and consequences of situations that necessitate the intervention of authorities.

Figure 2. *Pyramid of School-based Conflict Handling (based on Cohen, 2005, p. 35)*

Cohen's pyramid is interesting in the context of preparing student teachers to embrace conflicts as opportunities for learning for several reasons. First, it points to prevention/preparation as the most optimal approach to school-based conflict. This is the first level of Cohen's pyramid because it takes the most time and energy and lays the foundation for negotiation and mediation but not, necessarily, arbitration as discussed above. Second, Cohen's pyramid places negotiation as the second most optimal approach which points to the role teachers must play in empowering their students to address conflicts themselves. This level should caution teachers against taking over their students' conflicts. After all, if a teacher assumes responsibility for conflict handling, students are less likely to learn from these conflicts and develop the necessary social skills they need to effectively handle similar situations in the future. Third, Cohen's pyramid employs the term mediation to underscore the importance of teachers inquiring and advising students engaged in conflict rather than taking

over those conflicts by determining blame and allocating punishment. This is a departure from the role traditionally employed by teachers who assert their authority in order to put an end to classroom conflicts.

However, Cohen primarily focuses on interpersonal conflict (2005, p. 12), necessitating examination of learning via intrapersonal conflict. Graff (1993) highlights the ways in which student engagement in intellectual conflicts stimulates higher levels of learning. He argues that education is a process of socialization in which students learn about "the discussions and debates of an intellectual community" (Graff, 1993, p. 85). Graff contends that when teachers present unified ideas without mention of the "conflicts, contradictions, and struggles" (1993, p. 79) that necessarily contributed to their creation, students are not afforded a reasonable opportunity to understand them. While some students are able to successfully engage with unified ideas, most become bored or alienated. However, when teachers teach the conflicts, students are not only in a better position to see these ideas as personally meaningful but to join the academic discussion surrounding them. Graff (1993) asserts that conflict is essential to learning because the creation of knowledge is a "debate, not a monologue" (p. 8). It is important to note that although Graff (1993) is primarily concerned with intellectual conflict, he does not see conflicts that occur in the mind as divorced from conflicts that occur between individuals and groups. Instead, Graff (1993) finds these conflicts both inextricably linked and mutually constitutive.

While Cohen and Graff clarify how school-based the connections between certain conflict handling strategies and learning, the question remains as to how student teachers can be effectively trained to anticipate and embrace conflicts as educational tools. Despite the far reaching implications of this question, there is a dearth of academic research pertaining to pre-service teacher training *and* conflict handling. This is puzzling since there is an immense amount of research on how students learn to teach (See, for example, Feiman-Nemser, 2008), as well as effective methods to instruct student teachers in classroom management (O'Neil & Stephenson, 2012), the promotion of social justice (Grant & Agosto, 2008), and the provision of democratic values (Robertson, 2008). There is also an abundance of research concerning the ways in which practicing teachers can incorporate various conflict resolution approaches into their instructional repertoire (See, for example, Bodine & Crawford, 1998). Although this research is stimulating, it does not address how student teachers can or should be trained to understand the causes and consequences of school-based conflict or the vital role that conflict handling plays in promoting learning because these approaches are dissimilar.

The distinction between classroom management, social justice, democratic values, and conflict handling becomes clearer upon reexamination of Cohen's pyramid (Figure 2.2). Classroom management is concerned with the prevention and the arbitration of conflict, but rarely takes up negotiation and mediation. Likewise, the promotion of social justice and democratic values is aligned with the prevention of and preparation for conflicts but not, necessarily, with negotiation, mediation, or arbitration. Education for conflict handling, however, tends to focus on negotiation and mediation, levels two and three of Cohen's pyramid. Since these programs and approaches are different, they cannot be considered interchangeable. In other words, if student teachers are trained in principles of social justice, they cannot be considered ready to instruct students on effective strategies for negotiation and mediation. Unfortunately, this distinction is rarely stipulated in the literature, making it difficult to recognize conflict education as a distinct approach and learning tool.

The limited research that does tackle pre-service conflict handling training does not offer detailed descriptions of how these skills can be effectively taught in pre-service programs. Yssel, Beilke, Church, & Zimmerman's (2001) exploration of conflict resolution in teacher education is a case in point. Yssel et al. (2001) maintain that effective pre-service

conflict resolution programs must include three key components. First, these programs must provide theoretical knowledge emphasizing the "causes, kinds, and dynamics of conflict" (Yssel et al., 2001, p. 303). Second, these programs must supplement theoretical knowledge with opportunities for self-exploration. Specifically, student teachers should "explore their attitudes about conflict, the ways they have learned to deal with conflicts, and how they react to a variety of (conflict) situations" (Yssel et al., 2001, p. 303). Finally, these programs must solidify this knowledge with ample opportunities for "simulated practice" (Yssel et al., 2001, p. 303). That is, student teachers must experience authentic classroom conflicts so that they may apply and explore a variety of conflict handling strategies.

Yssel et al.'s (2001) advocacy is insightful, but they do not go beyond these general descriptions of theory, practice, and reflection to explain the ways in which they can be incorporated into pre-service training. This is problematic since most teacher trainers would agree that theory, practice, and reflection are important, but they may not agree about the features and characteristics of these components. As a result, it is not productive to explore whether courses contained theory, practice, and reflection, a cursory reading of the course plan reveals that it does but, instead, to explore student teachers' discussions of the nature and efficacy of the theoretical knowledge presented, the content and effects of self-reflection activities, and the role of simulated practice in developing students' conceptions of conflict. In fact, by questioning and critiquing these components, I will start to clarify the role and importance of theory, reflection, and practice in the promotion of student teachers' learning as stated by the participants.

Informative Phenomenographic Studies

There is a paucity of phenomenographic studies investigating the ways in which student teachers conceptualize conflict. However, there are three notable studies that address the ways in which student teachers develop an understanding of teaching, in general, and educational phenomena, in particular. These studies are described below with reference to how they informed the design and facilitation of the present project.

The first informative study was conducted by Wood (2000) and documents the experiences of 27 student teachers enrolled in a 1-year postgraduate teacher training program in the United Kingdom. Specifically, Wood (2000) investigates the ways in which the student teachers' understandings of teaching changed over the duration of the program. The results of the study demonstrate that student teachers developed more complex understandings of teaching over time but, more importantly, the study "shed light on the factors influencing this development" (Wood, 2000, p. 75). Wood argues that the most basic way in which student teachers understand teaching places emphasis on "the teacher, not the learner, as the agent of teaching" (2000, p. 83). As student teachers deepen their understanding, they move away from this conception and towards one of teaching as an act in which the teacher "prepar(es) students to use knowledge" (Wood, 2000, p. 83). Finally, Wood contends that the most complex way that student teachers view teaching concerns the object of teaching where a teacher "prepar(es) students to understand and to be aware of their own thinking and learning" (2000, p. 84).

Wood's study influenced the present project in terms of methodology and content. Beginning with methodology, Wood (2000) employs "case studies of student teachers' learning which relate the interventions of the programme to changes in their understandings" (p. 82). Although this is not a typical use of phenomenographic data, it serves a complementary methodological approach which provides context to conceptualizations presented in the outcome space. In the present study, case studies are used in a similar manner to investigate participants' experiences of the conflict handling course as

well as the ways in which they describe the course as changing their conflict conceptualizations over time, a task that I believe could not be accomplished through the presentation and analysis of an outcome space alone.

In terms of content, Wood's focus on agent, act, and object provides an interesting inroads to the ways in which student teachers' statements may be categorized. That is, Wood makes a compelling case that student teachers will discuss a phenomenon in relationship to the individuals responsible for introducing and handling the phenomenon, the ways in which a phenomenon can be handled, and the reasons why it is handled in certain ways. Although I do not organize the outcome space explicitly according to these categories, I do incorporate student teacher awareness of agent, act, and object implicitly into each category of description as discussed below.

The second informative study is also longitudinal and was conducted by Samuelsson, Johansson, Davidsson, & Fors (2000). The study explores the ways in which student teachers understand preschool children's questions about life. Much like Wood, Samuelsson et al. (2000) investigate the affects of a pedagogical intervention incorporated into the participants' pre-service training. In this case, participants were introduced to "a phenomenographically oriented pedagogy" (Samuelsson et al., 2000, p. 59) intended to help them develop their understanding of existential questioning in the preschool setting. Ultimately, the study sought to demonstrate that participating student teachers "found that their roles and the questions were a tool for helping children develop their thinking and understand the world around them" (Samuelsson et al., 2000, p. 5).

This study is relevant to the present project for two reasons. First, it outlined connections between participants' understandings of a phenomenon as described during interviews, the pedagogical implications of those understandings, and the ways in which the phenomenon could, potentially promote or detract from the development of participants' knowledge. Samuelsson et al. (2000) explain that these connections are made possible by a phenomenographic approach to learning which views learning as "a question of how someone experiences, sees or makes sense of the world" (p. 7). It is important to note that phenomenographic learning, in this sense, neither constitutes a knowledge claim about what can and should be learned nor sheds light on the cognitive processes of learning. Rather it constitutes an investigation of the ways in which groups of learners discuss the development of their knowledge. By extension, this has pedagogical implications for the ways in which educational content is presented in teacher education.

Second, Samuelsson et al. (2000) point to the importance of "meta-cognition" as a source of learning (p. 18). Samuelsson et al. explain that meta-cognition is an approach to learning in which students' ways of experiencing a phenomenon are made visible to them (2000, p. 8). Although previous studies have investigated meta-cognition and children's learning, this study found a strong connection between meta-cognition and learning among adults (Samuelsson et al., 2000, p. 18). Based on these findings, I incorporated questions into both interview guides which stimulated participants to reflect upon the ways in which they arrived at their knowledge of conflict and conflict handling before taking the course as well as the ways in which the course influenced their learning. However, I did not employ these questions to create a "psychotherapeutic experience" (Richardson, 1999, p. 69) for interview participants. Richardson (1999) has criticized Marton and Booth (1997) on ethical and political grounds for their advocacy of interview techniques designed to "break down or bypass the interviewee's defense structures of denial and resistance" (Richardson, 1999, p. 69; Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 130). This was not my intention in the present study. Instead, I prompted participants to reflect on the sources and implications of their knowledge in order to

reveal both their understandings of the phenomenon and, to the extent it is possible in an interview, how they arrived at those understandings.[6]

The third informative study was conducted by Kokotsaki (2012) who investigated student teachers' conceptions of creativity in music education. Kokatsaki accomplished this by interviewing 17 student teachers training to teach music education in primary schools. Koktsaki (2012) found that although all participants described musical education as valuable (p. 138), "some student teachers held richer conceptions than others" (p. 142). Kokotsaki (2012) stipulates that richer conceptions had three common features including "articulate and detailed answers," enthusiasm and engagement, and focus on the process of learning rather than the task at hand (p. 142). Conversely, student teachers holding more limited conceptions had four common features including an absence of "cross curricular links," the role of deliberative creative choices, misconceptions about creativity and the creative process, and focus on students as learners rather than teachers as educators (Kokotsaki, 2012, pp. 142-143).

Kokotsaki's (2012) study is relevant to the present project for two reasons. First, although many phenomenographic researchers identify richer and weaker conceptualizations of a phenomenon and use these distinctions to justify the hierarchical arrangement of their findings in an outcome space, This provides a necessary clarification of the ways in which interview data can be categorized and organized. Although I find Kokotsaki's definitive representations of *desirable* and *undesirable* student teachers' conceptualizations detrimental to her study, I appreciate the clarification she provides. As a result, I will not focus the on the identification of rich and weak understandings of conflict but I will clarify the ways in I deemed certain conceptualizations more nuanced as well as the ways in which these conceptualizations employ and build upon less nuanced conceptualizations.

Second, the study points to the critical features of conceptualizations of musical creativity and the ways in which these conceptualizations promote and/or diminish learning. As a result, Koktsaki (2012) contends learning is more strongly associated with a positive attitude towards the phenomenon (p. 142). I was immediately struck by the association between attitude and learning not only because I agree that an association exists but because strong attitudes of dread, fear, and disdain are regularly associated with conflicts. As a result, I paid close attention to the didactic implications of negative and positive portrayals of school-based conflict in the present study.

Methodology

Participant Recruitment

Participants were recruited rather than sampled. Consequently, I attended the first meeting of the conflict handling course, provided a brief introduction to the study, and asked for volunteers. This recruitment approach meant that participants were willing and able to contribute to the study but neither represented nor "exhaust(ed) the range of learners present" (Booth, 1997, p. 138) in the target population.[7] Ultimately, eleven out of a possible 175 student teachers volunteered to participate in Interview 1. One participant withdrew after this interview, leaving ten student teachers who participated in both interviews.

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[6] I did this by asking questions designed to promote participant reflectivity during both interviews (See Appendixes B and C) in addition to asking follow-up questions such as, "Why do you say that?" "Where do you think your ideas come from?" "Can you explain what you mean by…?"

[7] This means that study findings cannot be generalized to all student teachers in Sweden but may inform future studies of student teachers' conflict conceptualizations.

Table 1. *Participant Information*

Name[8]	Teacher Training Program	Subjects	Previous Teaching Experience
1. Mattias	lower secondary	languages and home economics	experience as a substitute teacher
2. Martin	upper secondary	languages and physical education	experience as a substitute teacher
3. Emma	upper secondary	natural science and mathematics	experience as a substitute teacher
4. Klara	upper secondary	languages	none
5. Jonas	upper secondary	languages	none
6. Filip	upper secondary	mathematics and natural science	experience as a substitute teacher
7. Anton	upper secondary	natural sciences and mathematics	experience as a teacher
8. Annika	upper secondary	natural sciences and mathematics	none
9. Hugo	upper secondary	natural sciences and mathematics	none
10. Robert	upper secondary	languages	none

In terms of the demographic distributions of the participants, three of the participants were female and seven were male.[9] One of the participants was enrolled in the lower secondary teaching program while the remaining nine were enrolled in the upper secondary program.[10] Eight participants were training to teach languages, six were training to teach natural sciences, five participants were training to teach mathematics, one was training to teach physical education, and one participant was training to teach home economics. With regard to previous teaching experience, four participants had worked as substitute teachers, and one participant had worked as a teacher for approximately three years (See Table 3.1).

Data Collection

Data was collected via semi-structured interviews (Bryman, 2008, p. 438) designed to aid participants in reflecting on their knowledge and experiences of the phenomenon in question. As a result, participants engaged in a process of discovery as they responded to probing questions about conflict and conflict handling. These questions were designed not only to reveal participant knowledge but uncover the ways in which participants arrived at that knowledge. Moreover, I took steps to ensure that interviews were both *open* and *deep*. Interviews were *open* in the sense that they roughly followed an interview guide (Appendix B and C), and created space for both the participant and me to explore "unexpected lines of reasoning that (could) lead to fruitful new reflections" (Booth, 1997, p.

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[8] All names are pseudonyms and do not, necessarily, correspond with the gender of the participant. However, the gender distribution was maintained at the group level.
[9] There were 91 females 84 males enrolled in the course overall.
[10] 147 students were enrolled in the upper secondary program and 28 in the lower secondary program.

138). Interviews were *deep* in the sense that "particular lines of discussion (were) followed until they (were) exhausted and the (participant and I had) come to a state of mutual understanding" (Booth, 1997, p. 138). The goal of this interview process was the generation of data that adequately captured the ways in which participants experienced the phenomenon in question (Wright, Murray & Geale, 2007, p. 461).

Each participant was interviewed twice over the course of the study for a total of twenty interviews. All interviews occurred face-to-face in English[11] and lasted approximately forty-five minutes. The first set of interviews, designated *pre-instruction interviews*, were conducted during the first two weeks of the course, before participants began the conflict handling module, while the second set of interviews or *post-instructions interviews* occurred one to four weeks after students submitted their final examinations. Recorded data included 07 hours, 02 minutes, and 30 seconds of audio for the *pre-instruction* interviews, and 11 hours, 28 minutes, and 59 seconds of audio for the *post-instruction* interviews totalling 18 hours, 31 minutes, and 29 seconds of audio recorded data. Each participant's post-instruction interview was longer in duration than his or her pre-instruction interview. This indicated that participants had more to say about conflict after taking the course and were willing and able to speak about their conceptualizations for longer periods of time.

Although interview transcripts constitute the primary data source for the study, I collected and employed other data for the purposes of triangulation (Bryman, 2008, p. 700)[12]. To this end, I compared my findings with those derived from a pilot study I conducted with five participants in May 2012. I also confirmed study findings by comparing them to my own observations of course lectures and seminars as well as data I had previously collected from lecturers and seminar leaders facilitating the mandatory conflict handling course from December 2011 to January 2012. Additionally, I triangulated conceptualizations present in the study with conceptualizations described by students enrolled in a bachelor's level conflict resolution course that I taught from March through June 2013.

Data Analysis

According to Hasselgren and Beach (1997) there are numerous ways of "doing phenomenography" (p. 191). As a result, it is necessary to explicitly account for the ways in which a study is conducted as well as why particular methodological decisions were made. These accounting procedures help to address the need for "methodological reflexivity among phenomenographers" (Hasselgren & Beach, 1997, p. 199). In the present study, I recorded all interviews with a digital voice recorder and transcribed them verbatim using a focused transcription protocol called the Dressler and Kruez Transcription System (Dressler & Kreuz, 2000; See Appendix D). This protocol provides standardized notations for the transcription of intonation, emphasis, paralinguistic behavior, etc. and allowed me to document both what the participants said and, to a limited extent, the ways in which they said it. By extension, this helped ensure the transferability of study findings.[13] The transcription of all twenty interviews yielded 121,826 words or 303 pages.

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[11] All participants agreed to speak Swedish when they felt they could not express themselves in English.
[12] According to Bryman (2008), "Triangulation entails using more than one method or source of data in the study of social phenomena" (p. 379).
[13] Bryman (2008) defines transferability as the extent to which research findings can be applied to or employed in alternative contexts (p. 378). Qualitative researchers promote transferability by providing *thick* or detailed descriptions of their data (Bryman, 2008, p. 378).

I analyzed interview transcripts which constituted the *pool of meaning* (Åkerlind, 2012, p.120)[14] through recursive readings aimed at uncovering recurrent themes in addition to similarities and differences in data provided by participants. I organized the data into *categories of description* (Marton & Booth, 1997, pp. 124-128) which captured six qualitatively distinct ways in which participants understood conflict and conflict handling before and after their mandatory training. The goal of this analysis was to employ a second order perspective (Marton & Booth, 1997, pp. 117-121) which helped me to understand the ideas present in the interviews "on their own terms" (Hasselgren, 1981, p. 49) rather than in ways predetermined before the study. Since the goal of this analytical process is the identification of variation present in statements made by individual members of a group of learners, it yielded both "individual and collective levels of description" (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 124). In other words, the categories of description identified in the study are representative of conceptualizations described by study participants in general. However, none of the categories are derived from interview data generated by a single individual.

Once I determined the categories of description, I arranged them into an *outcome space* (Marton & Booth, 1997) which elucidates the relationships between qualitatively distinct ways of understanding the target phenomenon (Åkerlind, 2012, p. 116). These relationships constitute the *structure*[15] of the phenomenon as described by my participants. According to Åkerlind (2012), this structure, "provides a way of looking at collective human experience…holistically, despite the fact that the same phenomena may be perceived differently by different people under different circumstances" (p. 116). Indeed, it is the exposition of the ways in which participants understand the roles that educational actors play in school-based conflict and conflict handling as well as the structural relationships between those understandings which provided the data I needed to address my research aims.

The longitudinal nature of the study allowed me to contextualize results presented in the outcome space with three case studies. This is unusual in phenomenographic studies but not unprecedented. In fact, case studies have been used by Wood (2000), Koballa, Bradbury, Glynn & Deaton (2008), and Trigwell & Prosser (2009) and other phenomenographic researchers to better understand and triangulate their respective findings. Moreover, the case studies presented below are essential to mapping the participants' *relevance structures* or their "experience(s) of what the situation calls for, what it demands" (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 143). The learner's relevance structure helps them become focally aware of certain elements of a learning task as well as to approach these elements in various ways. As a result, these case studies provided the data I needed to address my research questions in general and research question 3 in particular.

The presentation of case studies may appear contradictory to the commonly cited aim of phenomenographic research to "explore the range of meanings within a sample group, as a group, not the range of meanings for each individual within the group" (Åkerlind, 2012, p. 117). According to Åkerlind (2012), "this means that no one interview transcript…can be understood in isolation from the others" (p. 117). However, transcripts can be analyzed and presented as single units when those units are understood in the *context* of the group. As a result, I present two case studies which are "extreme or unique case(s)" (Bryman, 2008, p. 55) and one case study which is "representative or typical" (Bryman, 2008, p. 56) of

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[14] Åkerlind (2012) defines a *pool of meaning* as, "all of the material that has been collected" (p. 120). In the present study, the pool of meaning consisted of 303 pages of interview transcripts collected during the pre- and post- instruction interviews.

[15] Although I discuss the *structure* of the phenomenon here, I elected not to explicitly elaborate on the *referential* and *structural* frameworks present in each category of description for two reasons. First, as identified by Harris (2011), discussions of these components in existing literature are contradictory and reflect endemic misunderstandings of their meaning and application. Second, I believe that such an elaboration would not make a significant contribution to the exposition of the conceptualizations presented in the study.

the group as a whole. These case studies allow me to highlight and explore the characteristic features of participants' conceptualizations in addition to the ways in which they differ.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics are always of primary concern when working with human research subjects. As a result, the study was conducted according to the ethical guidelines established by the Swedish Research Council (2013). Specifically, I did my utmost to ensure informed consent throughout the study and asked permission from three of the participants to include them as case studies. I also informed participants that their involvement was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. I maintained participant anonymity by withholding information that may identify the participants in research publications including the participants' names and the specific subjects they are training to teach. Lastly, I provided participants with updates of the study via email as well as opportunities to review and comment upon my findings before publication.[16]

Results

Pre-instruction Conceptualizations

Since I conducted two separate interviews, I elected to analyze each interview separately. This allowed me to determine the qualitatively distinct ways in which participants conceptualized conflict before and after taking the course as well as the "development of the students' ways of apprehending" (Hasselgren, 1981, p. 47) as a plausible result of a pedagogical intervention. Subsequently, I identified categories of description that were unique to each set of interviews as well as categories of description that existed in both sets.[17]

These categories of description are listed below and are derived from the participants' focus of awareness. In this study, the focus of awareness was determined to be the ways in which participants understood themselves handling the various conflict situations they believed that would encounter in their future teaching practices. However, each category of description also reflects participants' understandings of the individuals who typically initiate various conflict situations (the agent), the ways in which these individuals conduct themselves (the act), and the ways in which these situations affect learning (the object).

Category 1, *Arbitrating*

According to statements in this category, conflicts are negative, unnecessary, and counter-productive, a description consistent with Valsiner & Cairns' (1992) characterization of "bad conflicts" (p. 32). Moreover, conflicts are interpersonal (between two people) or intergroup (within a group or between groups) but not intrapersonal (internal or cognitive). Students create conflicts out of malice or aggression and teachers put a definitive end to conflicts by stopping inappropriate behaviors, determining blame, and allocating punishment. The goal of conflict resolution is to dispose of situations that prevent instruction and student engagement. Quotations representing this category include:

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[16] Few participants provided feedback. However, I did my best to incorporate all of the comments and suggestions that I received into this thesis.

[17] See Boulton-Lewis, Wilss & Lewis (2001) for a longitudinal study that was analyzed and presented in a similar fashion.

Emma, Interview 1: (When I did my practice period, the teacher) told me about one class that had a lot of conflicts. There was fighting among the students and some were actually mistreating a teacher who is in a wheelchair, and I also heard that a year ago there was a fight with…What do you call it? ...Brass knuckles. I'm afraid of these conflicts because I don't know how to stop them.

Filip, Interview 1: I think there are so many levels of conflicts…It could be all out brawls during the lunch breaks and there's like what's in every school today; there's bullying. That happens on all levels. It can be physical and psychological. It can be everything. But there is a wide range. Conflict is everything that happens between two or more students in school…that creates a bad environment. And it's a teacher's responsibility to resolve these situations.

Category 2, *Asserting*

Statements categorized here indicate that conflicts remain unnecessary and counter-productive. Students initiate these conflicts when they show a negative attitude toward learning, the completion of their assignments, and/or school rules. This negative attitude creates a contradiction in the mind of the teacher, who believes learning is important, assignments are necessary, and school rules must be followed. Often the teacher views students' disinterest or rebellion as a challenge to his or her authority creating a competitive relationship between teacher and student based on negative social interdependence (Johnson & Johnson 2009). The teacher addresses these situations by asserting his or her authority. The goal of conflict resolution is for teachers to dispose of student attitudes and behaviors that threaten learning. This is a more nuanced understanding of conflict than Category 1 because it acknowledges a wider variety of conflict elements including attitudes and contradictions. Moreover, Category 2 does not necessarily originate from rule violations. As a result, there is no clear protocol for addressing these conflicts and participants described discomfort and indecision about what they would do. Finally, these conflict situations impede but do not, necessarily, prevent student learning. Representative quotations include:

Jonas, Interview 1: It could count as a conflict if a pupil isn't working in the classroom, doing something else. And since I am the teacher I say, "Hey, you have to work on my lesson." And he says, "Well, I have my rights, and I don't want to." Or something like that. What can I do? I can force him I guess.

Anton, Interview 1: The conflicts I've seen are mostly about students not wanting to do what they have to do. And they try to get away from what they have to do by making it part of a conflict. So then it's not their responsibility anymore …And when I've confronted students about this they make it something to argue about and basically ignore the problem behind it that they didn't do their work.

Category 3, *Informing*

Conflicts are said to occur because students lack knowledge and experience of the world. Teachers resolve these conflicts by informing students about the ways in which the world works. The goal of conflict handling is to teach students about rules and social norms of which the teacher is described as the definitive authority. This category represents a more developed understanding of conflict because it acknowledges the relationship between conflict and development and denotes awareness that conflicts can be identified and handled before they escalate into educational obstacles. Quotations representing this category include:

Mattias, Interview 1: It's hard because children, they say stuff, and I know they don't always mean it or even understand it…but it's a way of expressing...I've been thinking about how to try to...capture what they want to say and make something productive out of it. That's what I want to do in the school…I want to enlighten my students about how shit really works in life.

Robert, Interview 1: As a teacher, it's all about getting down to the level of the students. You can't speak to students the way you speak to adults. Students don't understand because they don't know…how the world works. You have to teach them. I mean, that's part of education. Students need to learn common sense.

Category 4, *Stimulating*

Statements in this category suggest that conflicts occur in the minds of students when they "learn (or experience) something that is contradictory to (their) existing expectations or beliefs" (Shantz & Hartup, 1992, p. 1). This mental conflict may presuppose or influence social conflict, but the connection between these conflict categories is unclear. What is clear is that the teacher initiates conflict by providing new information to his or her students and, to a certain extent, guide students in apprehending that knowledge. The goal of cognitive conflict is for students to question their preexisting understandings in order to understand new ideas. This category of description represents a more nuanced comprehension of conflict than preceding categories because it presupposes that conflict is not only conducive but indispensible to learning. Quotations representing this category include:

Annika, Interview 1: I think (conflict is) sometimes a part of learning. (Students) can have an inner conflict if (they) learn something that's not compatible with (their) previous knowledge, and (they) can't really accept both ideas. I think I'm supposed to introduce these ideas and help them understand them.

Hugo, Interview 1: (Students have) mental conflicts. Like when they encounter a problem they need to adapt a new way of thinking. They battle with the problem and hopefully, with some help, they reach some kind of understanding. It's my job to help them.

Category 5, *Guiding*

According to statements in this category, students can transcend conflict situations in order to reach a better understanding of their own values, needs, and opinions. Teachers guide and advise students in this process by encouraging respectful disagreement with the goal of promoting student self-awareness, maturity, and personal responsibility. This is a more nuanced conceptualization because the focus has shifted away from teachers as initiators of intrapersonal conflict and towards an understanding that teachers can help their students understand and learn from interpersonal and inter-group conflicts. Representative quotations include:

Klara, Interview 1: In a classroom where there are lots of different types of people, I think there could be some differences in opinions and some of those differences could be close to heart. I think as a 16 to 18 year old, it could be kind of difficult to cope with another person having such a different point of view. So that could cause some disturbance. But I do think that type of conflict is a good thing because…if a student questions her values and she has to prove them to herself and other people, I think she grows up a bit. She becomes more certain or

perhaps she changes her mind, but she grows. So I think, as a teacher, I need to help my students turn these situations into something good.

Jonas, interview 1: (Conflicts can promote) social learning. I mean, school…if it was just about learning subjects, then everyone could study on their own but it's also a social learning spot to become a member of society. So I think…it's necessary for students to…experience some conflicts in schools because they will grow as people. And I think that I need to help my students do this. I'm just not sure how yet. <<laughter>>

Post-instruction Conceptualizations

The majority of participants stopped describing conceptualizations of conflict as arbitrating and asserting during the post-instruction interview. As a result, these categories are not elaborated below. Moreover, participants provided more nuanced descriptions of stimulating and guiding which demonstrated their understandings of the relationships between conflict, conflict handling, and learning. These understandings are described below in relation to previous conceptualizations and are exemplified with representative quotations. Finally, a sixth category of description emerged during Interview 2 which indicated an understanding of the ways in which reflecting on conflicts will help in their professional development. This category is also described and exemplified below.

Category 4, *Stimulating*

Conflicts are described as initiated by teachers in order to facilitate student interest and subject learning. Specifically, teachers present conflicts in the ways in which subject knowledge is produced and deployed. Students reach a better understanding of subject content by engaging with these conflicts. This category represents a shift away from a conceptualization of intrapersonal conflict described in Interview 1 because it focuses on conflict as an opportunity to learn particular ideas and competencies specified in the curricula. Moreover, it represents an alternative way of handling student disinterest which participants previously explained that they would handle by asserting their authority. Quotations representing this category include:

Hugo, Interview 2: I will encounter those intellectual struggles...like, traditionally, girls feel insecure about math and these struggles can be tough on them but it seems like, lately, studies have shown that girls have no less ability to learn math than boys so this anxiety is probably something that is created by society and I hope I can do something to get rid of that.

Robert, Interview 2: If you (teach) anything…you can…talk about what actually happened and why it happened because that's a conflict itself. So, for example, (if you're teaching English,) you could read about Oscar Wilde…He was incarcerated because he was gay, and you could bring that up. You can always integrate things into your teaching…It makes the subject more interesting, absolutely.

Category 5, *Guiding*

Statements classified here indicate that conflicts are a legitimate outcome of interactions between individuals (Cohen, 2005, p. 12). Students create social conflicts when

they have difficulty interacting with others, and the teacher guides them in the process of understanding and working with others. The goal of conflict handling is the promotion of democratic values such as respect, empathy, and solidarity. This is a more nuanced understanding of guiding because it focuses on the roles that teachers play in helping their students develop particular competencies and elucidates a relationship between conflict handling and the achievement of the school's democratic mission. Quotations representing this category include:

> **Martin, Interview 2:** Conflict helps students learn stuff that is important for their social development. They learn to understand other people better and that's important. I have to teach subjects but I also have to help my students develop…socially. I think they call that the double mission.

> **Emma, Interview 2:** We have discussed...the different purposes of dealing with conflicts in schools and it's not just to get rid of them. It's also to teach democratic values, that everyone's opinion should be heard, and that you have to respect each other and I think that when you are forced to deal with conflicts, you have to try to understand the person you are having a conflict with and I think that practice in that area will generally make you better at dealing with people.

Category 6, *Reflecting*

Statements in this category indicate teachers can learn from conflict situations through reflection which helps them to develop professional skills and competencies. This is the most nuanced conceptualization because it acknowledges that teachers can also learn from conflict and conflict handling and points to the active role they must play in their professional development. Moreover, these conceptualizations no longer describe students as initiating conflict out of malice, insubordination, or ignorance. Instead, school-based conflicts are viewed as natural and inevitable situations and, when handling effectively, they are opportunities for the learning and development of all affected actors. Representative quotations include:

> **Klara, Interview 2:** The first major conflict in the school environment I have to handle; I think I will do really badly. I think I will screw up, but then I might remember, "Oh wait, what did I do wrong?" And look through my old textbooks or just think about what I learned and be like, "Yeah! (A lecturer) mentioned something about a professional layer and perhaps I didn't have one there so I got insulted instead of analyzing the situation." So I think…(this course is) not a quick fix. I think I have a lot of learning left to do.

> **Jonas, Interview 2**: I (now) feel a little bit more prepared (to handle conflicts) and, also, a little bit less prepared. (The course) got me to realize how much there is, but I think the first step is to learn how much there is and then how to deal with it and the rest comes when…I start working… Now I know how little I know and how much I still need to learn by working with actual conflicts.

Outcome Space

The outcome space produced in this study "represents all possible ways of experiencing the phenomenon in question, at (a) particular point in time, for the population represented by (study participants)" (Åkerlind, 2012, p. 116). In this case, data from each set

of interviews were combined into a single outcome space highlighting the qualitatively distinct ways in which participants understood school-based conflict and conflict handling before and after their mandatory training.

The outcome space is arranged hierarchically "in relation to a given criterion" (Marton, 1994, p. 4426). The criterion employed below is the relationship between conflict and learning. As a result, categories of description that preclude the possibility of a conflict situations yielding opportunities for learning are deemed least nuanced and placed at the bottom of the hierarchy which begins with Category 1. While categories of description that explicitly associate conflict and learning are placed at the top which culminates in Category 6. Moreover, categories of description that describe students as passive recipients of learning are deemed less nuanced while categories of description that describe multiple actors as actively engaged in conflict and learning are deemed more nuanced.

Table 2. *Outcome Space*

	Focus of Awareness	Students' Role	Teacher's Role	Conflict and Learning
1	*Arbitrating*	Students initiate conflicts out of malice and/or aggression.	The teacher resolves conflicts by stopping them, determining blame, and allocating punishment.	Conflicts are obstacles to learning that disrupt and/or impede instruction.
2	*Asserting*	Students are not motivated to study and/or refuse to complete their assignments.	The teacher asserts his or her authority in order to address student insubordination.	Conflicts are obstacles to learning because students are unwilling to work.
3	*Informing*	Students initiate conflicts because they have not yet learned how the world works.	The teacher resolves conflicts by informing students about proper social conduct.	Conflicts are opportunities for students to learn rules and social norms.
4	*Stimulating*	Students experience conflict when they do not understand or are unmotivated to understand new concepts or ideas.	The teacher challenges students to question their pre-existing knowledge and understandings.	Conflicts help students comprehend and/or appreciate new ideas and subject content.
5	*Guiding*	Students initiate conflicts because they have different points of view and/or they disagree with others.	The teacher responds by creating space for the expression of difference as well as instructing students on strategies that promote respect and empathy.	Conflicts are opportunities for students to learn democratic values and develop as individuals.
6	*Reflecting*	Students engage in various kinds of conflict.	The teacher transcends conflict situations through retrospective reflection.	Conflict is an opportunity for the teacher to develop professional skills and competencies.

Changes in Participants' Conceptualizations

As previously stated, the principal reason for analyzing the interviews separately was to highlight the ways in which participants' conceptualizations changed over time. The following tables indicate which conceptualizations were described by each participant before and after completing the course and further elucidate these conceptual shifts. Overall, the tables indicate that the majority of participants described conflict as obstacles to learning in the pre-instruction interview and opportunities to learning in the post-instruction interview. Specifically, the majority of participants described conflict handling in terms of arbitrating, asserting, and informing prior to taking the conflict course but focused more on stimulating, guiding, and reflecting after course completion.

Table 3. *Participant Conceptualizations in the Pre-instruction Interview*[18]

Name	Category 1, *Arbitrating*	Category 2, *Asserting*	Category 3, *Informing*	Category 4, *Stimulating*	Category 5, *Guiding*	Category 6, *Reflecting*
1. Mattias	X		X		X	
2. Martin	X		X			
3. Emma	X	X	X			
4. Klara				X	X	X
5. Jonas		X	X		X	
6. Filip	X	X	X			
7. Anton		X	X			
8. Annika		X	X	X		
9. Hugo	X		X	X		
10. Robert	X	X	X			
Total	**6**	**6**	**9**	**3**	**3**	**1**

Table 4. *Participant Conceptualizations in the Post-instruction Interview*

Name	Category 1, *Arbitrating*	Category 2, *Asserting*	Category 3, *Informing*	Category 4, *Stimulating*	Category 5, *Guiding*	Category 6, *Reflecting*
1. Mattias			X		X	X
2. Martin		X	X		X	
3. Emma				X	X	X
4. Klara				X	X	X
5. Jonas				X	X	X
6. Filip			X		X	X
7. Anton		X	X			
8. Annika			X	X	X	
9. Hugo				X	X	
10. Robert			X	X	X	X
Total	**0**	**2**	**6**	**6**	**9**	**6**

Case Studies

The changes in participants' conceptualizations provide stimulating data for discussion, but they are incomplete in the sense that they do not indicate why and how these

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[18] An "X" indicates that the participant made 1 or more statements coded under a particular category during the interview.

conceptualizations developed. As a result, I have elected to triangulate my findings with case studies which helped me to gain "a broader understanding" (Trigwell & Prosser, 2009, p. 330) of study data in general and the ways in which participants experienced the conflict handling course with respect to their own learning in particular.

The first case study concerns Klara, the student teacher who started and ended the course with the most nuanced conceptualizations of conflict and conflict handling. The second case study is about Filip, a student teacher whose conceptualizations were in line with those held by the majority of participants in Interviews 1 and 2. The third case study concerns Anton, the student teacher whose conceptualizations appear to be unchanged by the course. These three participants were selected for case studies both because they are interesting and because they are representative of qualitatively distinct outlooks on the phenomenon of conflict and conflict handling. As a result, these case studies may be employed by teacher educators to create educational situations that help all three categories of student learn and develop.

Who are the participants behind the case studies? Klara is studying to become an upper secondary language teacher. Her mother is also a teacher and Klara regularly visited her mother's classroom during her childhood and adolescence. When asked, during Interview 1, why she decided to become a teacher, Klara stated:

> I worked at offices before and when you sit at a desk and answer angry customers, you start to wonder if you're really helping anyone. And, since my mother is a teacher, that's really close at hand. And, yeah, I wanted to do something that actually mattered and something that was a bit stimulating for the brain so I thought...I don't need no money, I can be a teacher. <<laughter>>

Klara's response is unique because it reveals extended engagement in her mother's teaching practice. While Jonas also mentioned that he had a parent who was a teacher, Klara was the only participant who indicated that she regularly visited her parent's classrooms and participated in critical discussions with her parent about teaching and learning. In fact, Klara made extensive reference to her mother's teaching experiences throughout both interviews which portrayed her mother as a role model and mentor.

During Interview 1, Klara was asked what she hoped to get out of the conflict handling course. She responded:

> (I hope to learn) some methods, words, and tools to deal with conflicts and, perhaps this will sound a bit pretentious, but I hope that I somehow will grow as a human being. That I will be able to not only be a more successful teacher but also a more successful human being.

Once again, Klara's answer is exceptional among participants. While many participants discussed how they became better people as a result of taking the course during Interview 2, few identified personal development as course expectation during Interview 1.

All participants were asked to discuss three potential conflict scenarios during Interviews 1 and 2, respectively. During Interview 1, Klara was presented with a situation in which two students did not seem to get along. Klara was asked if she thought this situation was a conflict and responded:

> Yeah, between the two of them and, ultimately, the whole classroom. It's rather obvious when two students don't get along and it hurts the classroom climate quite a bit. And, I think, to be able to teach…you need to trust that the group is

capable of solving the problems you throw at them. Sometimes they need group work or just an open discussion in the classroom and, when there's hostility, it's kinda hard to do that…It's important to know that as a teacher you are not responsible for your students' social lives but, still, you have to get them to a point where they can at least say hi to each other in the morning and know that it's not an immediate threat to be in the same room (with someone they don't like).

There are many interesting features of Klara's answer. It is clear that Klara already sees herself functioning as a mediator and conflict educator in her future teaching practice. Consequently, Klara does not respond to the scenario by describing how she would arbitrate the situation, nor does she see conflict as divorced from classroom learning. Klara's statements are especially interesting in comparison to those made by her fellow participants who tended to focus on the scenario itself rather than the ways it can diminish and/or promote learning. In phenomenographic terms, Klara's focal awareness of the object of learning represents a more nuanced understanding of the target phenomenon.

Klara was asked about her opinions of the course during Interview 2. She said:

For the most part, I thought it was extremely interesting and one of those courses you feel like you become a better person by taking it. But, sometimes, I questioned whether…some lectures we had and some workshops were extremely giving, but I feel like…(they made me) a better girlfriend or a better daughter or a better friend but not a better teacher.

Unlike previous statements, Klara's discussion of the course is representative of evaluations made by fellow participants. While most participants found the course stimulating and useful, virtually every participant had mixed feeling about the course's content and delivery. Here Klara indicates that she wanted to learn less about the causes and consequences of conflict in general and more about the ways in which conflict occurs and can be handled in schools. Consequently, Klara points out that the relevance structure she brought with her to the course was not adequately addressed and, as a result, learning opportunities were missed.

I asked Klara to define the term conflict during Interview 2. Klara responded:

I remember the last time I talked to you. I think I said conflict is a disagreement. And, well, it could be a disagreement, but now…I have a bit more of a vague explanation. Basically, one or more of your needs or ambitions or wants are blocked and…it makes you feel something or…you want something and it doesn't happen. And then you can choose to let it go or you can pursue that want. And, well, the other person or thing involved in the conflict doesn't have to be aware. Like, it could be a conflict if I want my boyfriend to do the dishes because he hasn't done them, but he could be totally oblivious to the fact that I'm upset. So it doesn't have to be a disagreement.

Klara's answer is distinctive among participants because it illustrates how Klara has employed reflection or, to borrow a phrase from Samuelsson et al. (2000), "meta-cognition" to develop a more nuanced understanding of conflict. That is, she has consciously engaged with the conflict definition she provided in Interview 1 in order to better understand what conflict means and the ways in which it can be handled. Klara may feel as though she has left the course with a more vague understanding of conflict, but this ambiguity is, arguably, a critical step in her conceptual development.

When Klara was asked to reflect on the factors that contributed to her learning during Interview 2, she said:

> Mostly the workshops and lectures. I don't think it's because they were better than the literature or better than the seminars. It's just I learn things better under those kinds of circumstances. But I'm glad we had everything. I know that some people didn't like the lectures or workshops at all. They found them a bit uncomfortable, but I thought they were good.

Here Klara presents an evaluation of the course that reveals an awareness of the ways in which she learns. She is also aware that her classmates do not learn in the same ways, and that the course did not address their needs and interests. Surprisingly, Klara does not describe the role she actively played in her own learning. Nonetheless answers to previous interview questions show that she not only critically reflected upon the course content, but she attempted to apply that content to her own life. Indeed, out of all of the participants, Klara demonstrated the highest levels of reflection which, arguably, helped her achieve some of the most nuanced understandings of conflict and conflict handling.

The second participant selected for a case study is Filip. He is also studying to become an upper secondary teacher and will teach mathematics and natural sciences. Prior to enrolling in the teacher training program, he worked as a substitute teacher for one year. When asked, during Interview 1, why he decided to become a teacher, Filip said:

> I first studied at (another university), but I didn't feel like it was for me. I actually did pretty well in the classes, but when I came into contact with the people I would work with in the future I thought, "Nah!" <<laughter>>… (I decided to teach because) that was the first work I got. Actually, I had one job offer at (a telecommunications company)…but I didn't really feel like wearing a suit all day. I thought that the year I had as a substitute teacher was the most fun I had ever had in my life and I felt emotionally connected to all of the students.

Filip's answer is typical of answers provided by participants for two reasons. First, four other participants (Mattias, Martin, Annika, and Hugo) stated that they wanted to pursue other careers after graduating from upper secondary school. All five of these participants seemed to have entered teaching on accident after working elsewhere or re-evaluating personal priorities. Second, Filip is one of four participants including Mattias, Martin, and Emma with experience as a substitute teacher. These participants all cited this experience as an important factor in their decision to enroll in the teacher education program. Moreover, these participants referred to this experience as a major component of the relevance structure they employed to understand course content.

Like Klara, Filip was asked what he hoped to get out of the course during Interview 1. He responded:

> The obvious…to be better at handling conflicts and seeing conflicts. Like being able to spot them early and do something before they flourish and become this huge thing that you have to handle. And…yep, that's…I think that's quite a big thing to try and learn. Yeah, I think that's my goal.

Once again, Filip's reply is typical of the answers provided by the majority of participants. Specifically, Filip focuses on conflicts initiated by students and handled by teachers. Filip makes no reference the ways in which he will teach his students to handle conflict themselves,

nor does he refer to the ways in which he may contribute to or initiate conflict. Moreover, Filip does not anticipate how the course may change him either as a person or as a teacher.

Filip responded to the potential conflict scenario about two students who do not seem to get along with the following:

> It's a conflict but…it's a passive conflict. I don't really know if it's that important to solve because (students) won't get along with everyone (they) meet in life. But…then…(I will) probably have to monitor them in a way because it can evolve into something bigger like bullying and brawls, but, on that passive level, it's not…the type of conflict that I need to solve.

Filip's answer is interesting because he does not see how this situation would demand a teacher's intervention or guidance. Instead, he thinks that the situation should be monitored and addressed by the teacher when it escalates. This is potentially problematic since violent conflicts such as bullying and physical fighting, necessitate arbitration and provide limited opportunities for participant learning. Nonetheless, the idea that a teacher should only intervene in violent conflicts between students was commonly held among participants during Interview 1.

When Filip was asked about his opinions of the conflict handling course during Interview 2, he stated:

> I think it was really interesting because…not really the theoretical parts, but the seminars were really great and the workshops…they didn't tie too much to the subject and I didn't really learn anything about the subject, but I did learn loads of stuff about myself and how I handle conflicts and I think that's really good.

Again Filip echoes Klara's sentiment that the course helped him to become a better person but not, necessarily, a better teacher. It appears that both Filip and Klara believe that school-based conflict is somehow unique and should be addressed as such in the course.

The third case study concerns Anton who is studying to become an upper secondary natural science and mathematics teacher. Anton is the only participant with previous teaching experience and the only participant who teaches part time while participating in pre-service training. When asked why he decided to enroll in the teaching program, Anton stated, "Because I have to have the license and I want the license because I want to keep teaching and I want to keep teaching because it's fun." The license to which Anton refers is the teaching license that all Swedish teachers must hold by December 1, 2013 (SFS 2011:326). This license became mandatory in 2011, forcing many teachers to supplement their previous university coursework with pedagogical training. Anton's view that teaching is fun needs clarification. Throughout both interviews Anton demonstrated highly developed knowledge of the natural sciences and mathematics both of which he thoroughly enjoyed. However, it was unclear if Anton enjoyed *teaching* students these subjects.

Anton responded to the potential conflict scenario of two students who do not get along, with the following:

> Because they obviously don't agree, then it must be a conflict between them. In one way or another, it doesn't have to be big; it can be that they are girls, and they refuse to talk to each other because they don't like each other. Or, "you posted something on Facebook so I'm not talking to you for six weeks," for example. Then it's a really strange conflict and I don't know how to handle it, but actually, I wouldn't care that much.

This lack of caring is representative of the ways in which Anton characterized student-initiated conflicts during both interviews. Anton appeared to view such conflicts as distractions from his lessons or symptoms of student laziness, and, as a result, Anton consistently disregarded these conflicts as opportunities to learn either natural sciences or mathematics.

Furthermore, Anton could not see how conflict and conflict handling can serve as an opportunity to develop democratic values and competencies. This is because, in his view, democracy is predicated upon knowledge but not, necessarily, upon the ways in which individuals construct and apply that knowledge. Anton illustrated this point in Interview 2 when he stated, "Knowledge is power, so it's not believing what everyone says and actually understanding the information they are giving. It's access to knowledge and understanding the knowledge that are democratic values." Anton's conceptualization of democracy is unique among participants and underscores his belief that effective democratic participation is based upon an ability to discern fact from fiction.

During Interview 2, Anton described the conflict handling course as follows:

> Way too academic…Most of the lectures…I didn't feel that they had a connection to practical use or practical knowledge in the school environment. It was more, "This is how society looks and works and blah, blah, blah." And I think, "Okay but I'm teaching kids between the ages of fifteen and eighteen. What's interesting to know about THAT?" But they talked about adults and day care and I just didn't care. I really didn't. It's IRRELEVANT!

Anton's answer mirrors those provided by the majority of the participants who viewed many of the examples presented by those teaching the course as disconnected from their work as secondary school teachers.

I asked Anton about the conflicts he now anticipated in his teaching practice during Interview 2. He stated:

> Way too many. I would say that most of the conflicts between teachers and students are pretty stupid. Mostly because…the students don't know what they want. They just have a sense of…it's not what they expected. If you go back to…what is their interest…they actually don't know. So the conflict itself, most of the time, is about why they have to do stuff.

Again, Anton focuses on student-initiated conflicts that he finds irrational and counter-productive. Anton does not discuss the ways in which he may contribute to these conflicts nor does he consider how these conflicts may serve as opportunities for learning. Moreover, Anton's characterization of conflict as initiated by unmotivated students is consistent with the conflict conceptualizations he expressed during Interview 1. The consistency between Anton's statements in both interviews calls his conceptual development into question.

I asked Anton to reflect on the course's learning outcomes during Interview 2. Specifically I asked Anton about the following learning outcome: "After completing the course, the student will be able to demonstrate the ability to use his or her knowledge of conflict handling to create a learning situation." Anton responded that this learning outcome was "administrative bullshit. It's a nonsense sentence" and elaborated his understanding with the following, "How am I supposed to use conflict handling to create learning? I use conflict handling to make sure that conflict doesn't INTERFERE with the learning in my classroom."

This statement is highly unique among participants, the rest of whom agreed, in Interview 2, that conflict was an opportunity to learn something. Anton's definitive

declaration that conflict interferes with learning coupled with his conceptualization that conflict occurs because students are unmotivated, made it untenable to categorize the statements he made during the post-instruction interview under Categories 4, 5, or 6. Furthermore, Anton's unwavering conceptualization of conflict and conflict handling indicate he has not changed the ways in which he experiences conflict (Booth, 1997, p. 137) and thus has not learned in a phenomenographic sense. This conclusion is underscored by the following statement made by Anton during Interview 2, "There's not such a big difference between what I did before and what I do now. I've always done things like this."

Discussion

Conceptual Development

In the introduction, I posed the question, how do student teachers conceptualize conflict and conflict handling before and after their mandatory training?[19] Based on the results presented above, the study showed that the majority of participants held qualitatively distinct conceptualizations during the pre- and post-instruction interviews. Specifically, most participants portrayed conflicts as a "bad" (Valsiner & Cairns, 1992) social situation predicated upon "negative social interdependence" (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Participants believed that conflicts were a zero sum game in which one individual or group wins and one individual or group loses (Cohen, 2005, p. 21). Most participants explained that they were worried that if they lost conflict situations in their classrooms, they would forfeit the respect and obedience of their students. Participants described conflict resolution as a means for teachers to maintain order by arbitrating, asserting, and informing. The most typical examples provided of these conflict situations were physical fights perpetrated by male students and psychological violence or bullying carried out by female students.

However, during the post-instruction interview, the majority of participants no longer portrayed a teacher's conflict handling role as arbitrating and asserting. Although, participants continued to describe how teachers handle conflicts by informing their students about social norms, they focused more on the teacher's conflict handling role as stimulating, guiding, and reflecting. Consequently, most participants now described conflicts as "good" (Valsiner & Cairns, 1992) situations that serve as opportunities for students to develop social skills and learn subject content. Additionally, the majority of participants stated that the ways in which they stimulated and handled conflicts in their classrooms would help them develop professional skills and competencies. These conceptualizations emphasized that conflicts can co-opted as constructive opportunities for learning depending on how they are framed and handled.

In reference to the conflict literature, it seems that conceptualizations present during the pre-instruction interview are consistent with Cohen's statement that the teachers tend to focus on prevention and arbitration when discussing and handling school-based conflicts. One of the underlying assumptions that supports this conceptualization is the idea that there is (and perhaps should be) a rigid, authoritarian relationship between the grown-up, educated teacher and the childish, uneducated student. This assumption is used to justify the teacher's central role. Conversely, conceptualizations employed in the post-instruction interview are more consistent with Cohen's descriptions of negotiation and mediation which

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[19] This question assumes that *how* a student teacher anticipates handling conflicts is "a manifestation of (his or her) holistic understanding of *what* (conflict) is" (Wright, Murray & Geale, 2007, p. 458). This relationship allows me to clarify the target phenomenon of school-based conflict, in part, by identifying the ways in which participants expect to handle conflict situations and, by extension, what these handling strategies imply about participants' conflict understandings.

emphasize the ways in which students and teachers work cooperatively to achieve educational goals. These statements also reflect the existence and validity of multiple perspectives and do not place higher value on the perspective of the teacher over the perspectives of the students. Viewed in this way, the vast majority of participants underwent a conceptual shift between Interviews 1 and 2. Statements provided by Filip and included above under *Case Studies* serve as an illustrative example of this shift.

However, the results of the study do not indicate that such a shift occurred in conceptualizations described by all participants. In fact, Klara and Anton were notable exceptions. Klara portrayed a nuanced and well-developed understanding of conflict and conflict handling during Interview 1. Specifically, Klara focused on stimulating, guiding, and reflecting as beneficial conflict handling strategies. In fact, it is difficult to see a conceptual shift between Interview 1 and Interview 2 because Klara described the same conflict handling strategies in both interviews. However, Klara did portray more nuanced understandings of how and why teachers employ these strategies during Interview 2. Indeed, based on the data presented in the case studies, I would argue that Klara's understandings of stimulating, guiding, and reflecting developed considerably as a result of the ways in which she approached activities, literature, and assignments presented during the conflict handling course.

Conversely, Anton did not describe a shift in his conceptualization of conflict and conflict handling between Interviews 1 and 2. In both interviews, Anton maintained that the majority of the conflicts he had experienced during three years of teaching were initiated by unmotivated students who were unwilling to complete their assignments. Anton stated that his role as a teacher was to present subject content, but he did not indicate that he should investigate cases in which his students either did not understand the content or were unable to complete their assignments. Moreover, Anton stated that conflict was an obstacle to learning anything in a classroom including democratic values and competencies.[20] As previously stated, Anton's conceptualization of conflict as student-initiated obstacles to learning made it untenable to code his statements under the categories of stimulating, guiding, and reflecting. However, this situation was not entirely of Anton's creation. As he points out, the course did not appeal to his needs and interests and, thus, did not persuade him to view conflicts differently.

It is interesting to note that the outcome space produced in the study captured the ways in which participants understood conflict before and after participating in mandatory training. However, the outcome space does not capture *all* of the ways in which this phenomenon could be experienced by student teachers. As a result, conceptualizations of conflict handling as *engaging*[21], *collaborating*, and *role modeling* are absent and worth exploration. Beginning with engaging, none of the participants discussed how classroom organization and management could precipitate and/or diminish conflict. This is somewhat surprising since all teachers must develop organizational strategies to facilitate learning including how they will physically arrange their classrooms and promote and/or suppress student interaction. Although these strategies may vary by subject, they are of universal relevance to the teaching profession.

Moving to collaborating, none of the participants discussed the ways in which they could include their students in designing and evaluating educational activities. Collaboration between students and teachers is not only an excellent means of promoting

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[20] Anton was the only participant who did not describe conflict situations as opportunities for students to learn social skills and democratic values during Interview 2.

[21] *Facilitating* is, arguably, a more appropriate term to describe the ways in which teachers organize their classrooms and activities to promote student engagement with conflict. However, *engaging* is used here because *facilitating* is more or less synonymous with *stimulating*, a conceptualization described in the outcome space.

positive social interdependence (Johnson & Johnson, 2009); it is mandated in the new Swedish curriculum (SKOLFS 2011:144). Considering participants had recently completed a course on the new Swedish curriculum, I found it strange that they did not discuss it. Of course, it is plausible that they would have discussed student/ teacher collaboration if I had asked them about it directly. I did not.

Concluding with role modeling, I found it very puzzling that no participant critically engaged with the ways in which he or she may contribute to school-based conflict as teachers. There seemed to be an implicit belief that teachers are conflict managers but not conflict initiators. The only exception to this being when a teacher challenges his or her students to question their pre-existing knowledge and perspectives. This focus on students as the group primarily responsible for conflict does not acknowledge that teachers regularly contribute to conflict situations. This is problematic because if teachers are not aware of the roles they play in contributing to conflict, they may find it difficult to accept the inevitability of these situations. After all, "Conflict is…the legitimate outcome of interactions between even the most well-meaning individuals" (Cohen, 2005, p. 12), and teachers are no exception. Moreover, teachers that do not recognize their conflict contributions may find it challenging to serve as conflict role models. This requires teachers to consciously model conflict handling strategies in front of their students.

Conflict and Learning

The second question explored in the study is: how do student teachers describe the relationship between conflict and learning before and after their mandatory training? All ten participants agreed that conflict could be an obstacle to learning especially when it disrupts classroom activities and escalates into psychological and physical violence. Participants maintained that such conflicts create a bad classroom atmosphere that impedes students' abilities to concrete on classroom content. As Klara aptly commented during Interview 2, "If you have a conflict that has escalated to the point where the students throw knives at each other, it's kind of hard to talk about August Strindberg." Subsequently, all participants said that a teacher is responsible for stopping violent conflict behaviors. This conceptualization is consistent with the conflict literature. According to Cohen (2005), once a conflict has crossed the threshold between mediation and arbitration, it has simultaneously crossed the threshold between a learning opportunity and a learning obstacle.

During Interview 1, the majority of participants also described conflicts that they would handle by asserting their authority and/or informing their students about the ways which the world works. Participants maintained that conflicts that require asserting or obstacles to learning because they are initiated by students who are uninterested or unwilling to complete their assignments. According to participants, student disinterest and insubordination not only prevent particular students from learning subject content but create a bad atmosphere in the class overall. Subsequently, the participants described situations in which they would be forced to assert their authority in order to quell student disobedience which they believed to be contagious. These situations revealed participant understandings of conflict as occurring between "exclusively competing opposites" (Valsiner & Cairns, 1992, p. 32) of which they described teachers as forming one group and students the other.

In terms of informing, participants described conflict situations as inevitable because their students would be ignorant and/or immature. Subsequently, participants stated that they would address these conflicts by telling their students how the world really works. Participants maintained that handling conflicts in this way would help their students develop common sense. Although the notion of informing as a handling strategy implies that conflicts are learning situations, it assumes that teachers know best and are in a position to convey this

knowledge to their students. This understanding of learning is based on the transmittal model and "assumes that the student's brain is like an empty container into which the (teacher) pours knowledge" (King, 1993, p. 30). Here students are not only considered passive in their own learning, but teachers are considered omniscient. I find this troubling not only because this notion of learning in deeply flawed but because it confuses knowledge and opinion. Specifically, teachers may have opinions about how the world works and how students should conduct themselves but these opinions do not constitute fact or truth. While I believe teachers should guide their students in understanding the world around them, this should be predicated upon the idea that students are active in their own learning and possess knowledge and insights that are no lesser than the opinions of their teachers.

      While six out of ten participants continued to describe a teacher's conflict handling role as informing during Interview 2, the notion that conflict could promote some form of learning, beyond proper social conduct, was a red thread throughout the majority of their statements. However, while nine out of ten participants described conflicts as opportunities to learn something, they did not agree on *what* could be learned and *who* could learn it. As a result, nine out of ten participants argued that conflict was an opportunity for students to learn democratic values and develop a sense of themselves, six out of ten participants added subject content to the list of student learning opportunities, while six out of ten participants described ways in which teachers could develop professionally by engaging with conflicts.

      It may not be surprising that so many participants discussed conflicts as opportunities for learning during Interview 2, especially since this was a learning outcome in the conflict handling course. However, it may be surprising that more participants did not describe conflicts as opportunities for subject learning. There are several explanations for this. First, most participants saw conflicts as principally initiated by students. According to participants, these conflicts could occur at anytime and center on virtually any issue. The spontaneous nature of student-initiated conflict made it difficult for many participants to see how these conflicts could help students learn specific subject content.

      In the cases in which participants stated that conflict was an opportunity for subject learning, participants described two prerequisites. The first prerequisite was that the conflict was presented by the teacher as a learning exercise and took up controversies in their subjects. Several participants training to become natural science teachers discussed how they could introduce conflicts about stem cell research, climate change, and sexual identity to facilitate student learning. The second prerequisite for subject learning was that the conflict was cognitive in nature. That is, several participants could see how a student could be confronted with new ideas in their subjects that conflicted with the students' previous knowledge. By engaging with these cognitive and/or epistemological conflicts, participants maintained that their students would develop more nuanced understandings of subject content. However, no participant discussed how interpersonal and intergroup conflicts could facilitate students' subject learning. This is somewhat puzzling since, according to Graff (1993), the boundaries between interpersonal, intergroup, and intrapersonal conflicts are indistinct and, as a result, these conflicts presuppose and necessarily involve each other. That is, conflicts in the mind often play out between individuals and vice versa.

      Six participants conceptualized conflict as an opportunity for teachers to learn and development professionally. This serves as the most nuanced conceptualization of the target phenomenon because it assumes that students are not the only potential learners in conflict situations. Indeed, this conceptualization serves as a critical departure from the idea that only students learn in a classroom and reinforces the notion that all actors have the potential to gain knowledge and develop skills, including teachers. This conceptualization

reveals student teachers' understandings of classroom learning as active, dynamic, and multi-directional.

Course Facilitated Learning

The third research question explored in the present study is: how do student teachers experience the conflict handling course with respect to their own learning? All participants stated that they were glad to have taken the conflict handling course and that they believed that had learned *something* as a result of taking it. However, all of the participants believed that they could have learned more if the course had been organized and presented differently. Specifically, all of the participants commented that they learned a great deal of theory, but they felt that the course fell short of providing them with the practical skills they needed to handle conflicts constructively in their future teaching practices. Participants provided two reasons for this. First, participants believed that it is difficult, if not impossible, to develop practical skills by participating in university lectures, seminars, and workshops. Klara succinctly captured this sentiment during Interview 2 when she stated, "The best way to learn to handle a conflict in the school environment is to handle a conflict in the school environment." According to participants, the only ways in which this could have occurred was if participants were teaching part-time while taking the course, which was the case for Anton, or the course was connected to a mandatory practice period. Indeed, the majority of participants stated that they were looking forward to their next practice period during which they planned to test their newly acquired knowledge about conflict and conflict handling.

The second explanation provided by participants was that the theories and examples provided in the course were too general and did not elucidate the ways in which conflicts occur and can be handled in educational contexts. In phenomenographic terms, most participants argued that the course did not correspond with or adequately develop their *relevance structures* defined as the "experience of what the situation calls for, what it demands" (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 143). Consequently, participants entered the course with experiences and expectations of conflict *and* schooling but were presented with theories and examples of conflict in general. This meant that participants were left to make sense of course content in terms of their relevance structures by themselves. Participants who were successful in doing this developed highly-nuanced conceptualizations of conflict while those who were less successful found parts of the course irrelevant and, in some cases, counter-productive to their learning.

This situation can be addressed by teacher educators if they make connections between general conflict theories and school-based conflicts. According to my observations and statements made by participants, the vast majority of teacher educators associated with the conflict handling course presented theories and examples of conflicts outside of schools among family members, in nursing homes, and on the street. While many participants stated that these theories and examples helped them to become better people, they did not believe that these theories and examples would help them to become better teachers. This is because participants saw their future teaching role as fundamentally different from the roles they play with family members, friends, and strangers. Several participants found this disjunction frustrating because they wanted to learn more about how and why conflicts occur in schools rather than how and why conflicts occur elsewhere.

This is not to say that the course prevented or even diminished student learning. The shift in the ways in which a majority of participants conceptualized conflict before and after completing the course attests to the significance the course played in the development of their understandings. According to participants, lecturers and seminar leaders affected their learning in two ways. First, they challenged participants to reconsider their personal

assumptions of the inherently negative nature of conflict. This is important because these pejorative assumptions made it difficult for participants to conceive of ways in which conflicts could be co-opted as opportunities for learning.

Second, as described by participants, teacher educators stimulated participants to critically reflect upon the complexity of conflict and they ways in which they contribute to conflicts in their personal lives. This reflection allowed participants to appreciate how every conflict is different and that conflicts could be handled in a variety of creative ways. While many participants left the course feeling ill-prepared to handle conflicts constructively, their acknowledgement of the multifaceted nature of conflict was, arguably, a critical step in their conceptual development. The next step is for participants' to reflect upon conflict in their future professional practices. Participants maintained that this was not adequately addressed in this course, but I believe it may serve as a fruitful starting point for the follow-up course that students will take prior to graduation.

Phenomenographic Reflections

Although the study utilized phenomenography to reveal participant conceptualizations of conflict, it is important to note how the study differed from and even challenged the ways in which this methodology is typically applied. Beginning with the differences, phenomenographic researchers tend to take up learning that is initiated and framed by a teacher and experienced by a student or group of students. While this approach makes sense, it may not help explain how learners experience self-initiated and/or spontaneous situations such as conflicts. In other words, a teacher may have an idea of how to present a concept in mathematics and probably has the opportunity to plan his or her lesson. However, this is not the case when it comes to conflict. Conflicts happen unexpectedly among anyone, anywhere and, although, the causes and consequences are loosely predictable, conflict situations are sufficiently complex as to constitute new experiences each time they occur (Cohen, 2005). This means that learners may describe conflicts as negative and destructive in some cases and positive, opportunities for learning and development in others. While these conceptualizations are diametrically opposed, they are simultaneously valid.

However, the spontaneity and complexity of conflict development and escalation do not impede a researcher's ability to map this phenomenon for two reasons. First, phenomenography is concerned with the ways in which learners understand the world and the learning objects they encounter within it. This orientation towards the diverse understandings of the learner allows for high levels of complexity and assumes that learning is socially constructed rather than fixed or constant (Wright, Murray & Geale, 2007, p. 459; Åkerlind, 2012, p. 116). As a result, phenomenographers do not attend to truth or reality but perceptions as manifested in the ways in which a group of learners describe their understandings of and approaches to various phenomena.

Second, phenomenography goes beyond the realm of phenomenology to ask, "'What are the critical aspects of the ways of experiencing the world that make people able to handle it in more or less efficient ways?'" (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 117). This focus on the critical aspects of a phenomenon and the ways in which learners develop more nuanced understandings of those critical aspects allow phenomenographic researchers to explore how the phenomenon can be learned in more meaningful ways. The present study attempted to do just that by elucidating the critical features of qualitatively distinct conceptualizations of conflict and conflict in terms of learning as well as the ways in which participants developed more nuanced understandings of the phenomenon after completing their mandatory training.

Moving on to the ways in which I challenged widely held understandings of phenomenography in the present study, I contend that I critically engaged with

phenomenography in two ways. First, I analyzed the distinction between implicit and explicit learning. Marton & Booth (1997) provide credible evidence for deep learning that results from conscious awareness and reflection, but they do not account for the seemingly unconscious or implicit learning that many researchers have investigated (See, for example, Sadler, 1997) and countless learners have experienced. This is problematic since Marton & Booth (1997) contend that they are mapping learning in its entirety rather than the learning that occurs through deliberate awareness and reflection.

This problem is exacerbated when Marton & Booth (1997) posit that the one of the highest levels of learning changes the learner as a person (p. 38). While this argument resonates with most participants' experiences in the present study, it falls short of explaining how and why implicit learning occurs. Indeed, this study uncovered implicit conflict learning in virtually all participants but, because phenomenography does not provide tools for outlining such learning, the most I could say is that something fundamental shifted in the participants, but the participants were unaware of the events and understandings that precipitated this shift. This happened most clearly in the case of Klara who stated that she felt as though she had become a better girl friend and a better daughter as a result of taking the course, but she could not elaborate on how or why this occurred.

Second, I challenged the typical methodological approach (See Åkerlind, 2012) to phenomenography as combining all collected data in order to identify categories of description contained therein. Consequently, the vast majority of phenomenographic studies chart participant learning of a single phenomenon at a particular point in time. While longitudinal phenomenographic studies have been conducted, these studies chart participant learning of a particular phenomenon by analyzing collected data as a whole and creating a single outcome space (Wood, 2000; Samuelsson et al., 2000)[22]. Given the data collected in the pre-instruction and post instruction interviews, this was not the best representation of the participants' understandings of the target phenomenon. As a result, I differentiated my data into two interview events and analyzed these events separately. This allowed me to identify conceptualizations unique to each interview as well as to demonstrate how participants' conceptualizations had shifted over time. I believe this shift would have been obscured if I constructed the outcome space using both interview events simultaneously. Moreover, the ways in which I analyzed and presented my data helped me to critically question the value of pooling data and constructing a single outcome space simply because this is how phenomenographic studies are typically done. This begs the question of whether or not phenomenographic researchers are impeding their studies by unreflexively emulating the status quo.[23]

Conclusion

Limitations

The present study is limited in three ways. First, I did not employ inter-judge reliability to check the consistency of my data interpretations. Although Åkerlind (2012) contends that reliability checks are uncommon in phenomenographic studies (p. 125), it is my experience that when phenomenographic researchers conduct reliability checks they do so by providing their interview transcripts to colleagues and asking these colleagues to independently identify categories of description and/or find quotations within the data that are

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[22] As discussed above, the study conducted by Boulton-Lewis, Wilss & Lewis (2001) is a notable exception.

[23] See Hasselgren & Beach (1997) for a discussion of the importance of reflexivity in the conduct of phenomenographic studies

consistent with categories already identified (See, for example, Hasselgren, 1981, p. 47). Although I was able to present and discuss my findings with experts in the fields of conflict and phenomenography on two separate occasions respectively, I was unable to find someone willing and able to analyze my transcripts in their entirety. As a result, it is unclear whether a co-judge would organize and interpret my data in the same ways. However, I attempted to address the absence of this, particular, reliability check by providing information about how I arrived at my categories, describing each category in relationship to the data and existing literature, and providing illustrative examples (Åkerlind, 2012, p. 125).

The second limitation is the way in which I achieved a second order perspective of my data. Marton & Booth (1997) suggest that researchers accomplish a second order perspective by "bracketing" their previous knowledge and experiences of the target phenomenon during data collection and analysis (p. 119). Marton & Booth (1997) stipulate that this helps the researcher to suspend judgment in order to represent participants' experiences of the world (p. 119) rather than the researchers' interpretations of how the world should be experienced. Although bracketing is rarely mentioned in empirical studies, it does appear (See, for example, Wright, Murray & Geale, 2007, p. 462) and because I deliberately elected not to bracket my own knowledge and experiences, it merits brief discussion.

I did not attempt to bracket my own knowledge of conflict and conflict handling for three reasons. First, it is unclear, at least from Marton & Booth's (1997, p. 119) discussion of bracketing, how it is achieved. Without recourse to practical directions or criteria, I found it untenable to bracket my knowledge. Second, in my experience, the vast majority of phenomenographic studies are conducted by experts in the investigated phenomenon. This is no coincidence. In order to elicit, critically analyze, arrange, and discuss participant conceptualizations, it is vitally important that the researcher has knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation and, more importantly, knows how to deploy that knowledge. Third, I believe that a researcher can effectively gather and analyze data without resorting to conceptual amnesia. I attempted to achieve this in the present study by trying to understand how and why participants' conceptualizations made sense to them, questioning my own knowledge and beliefs about conflict, and placing a higher value on participants' conceptualizations than my own.

The third limitation is that the categories of descriptions do not represent all conflict situations or conflict handling strategies elaborated by participants. Considering the amount of data I collected and the complexity of the conflict situations described, I elected to exclude participants' discussions of the professional conflicts they anticipating having with colleagues and parents in addition to the personal conflicts they anticipated having with family and friends. This is because these conflicts were often mentioned in passing and, consequently, were not clearly explained by participants. Moreover, none of the participants explicitly connected these conflicts with learning. As a result, I deemed these conflict situations and the ways in which participants anticipated handling them as outside the purview of my research questions.

Implications

The implications of this study are three-fold. First, participants' conceptual shifts as demonstrated in the pre- and post-instruction interviews imply that they entered the course with predominantly negative understandings of conflict as unnecessary and harmful and left the course with predominantly positive understandings of conflict as not only helpful but necessary to learning. This conceptual shift was achieved by participants who questioned and reflected upon their own experiences and understandings of conflict in schools as well as

the virtually infinite number of ways in which conflicts can be framed and handled by educational actors.

Second, descriptions of the relationships between conflict and learning imply that violent conflicts as well as conflicts based on negative student attitudes and willful insubordination are obstacles to learning because they create a negative classroom environment in which students do not feel safe to meaningfully attend to subject content. However, during Interview 2, most participants described how conflicts can stimulate and promote various kinds of learning. Specifically, participants stated that interpersonal and intergroup conflicts helped students to develop social skills, democratic values and competencies, as well as a sense of themselves and their own perspectives and beliefs. Moreover, participants described how teachers stimulate conflicts about the controversies within various knowledge domains in order to increase student interest in and understanding of subject content. Finally, participants portrayed all conflicts as opportunities for teachers to employ and develop professional skills. Consequently, the majority of participants believed that they would experience difficulties in stimulating and guiding their students in school-based conflict situations. However, these participants stated that if they reflected upon these situations retrospectively they would become better at teaching in general and conflict handling in particular.

Third, because the study highlighted several critical features of participant's conceptualizations of conflict in the context of their training, data can be utilized by teacher educators promote student learning in mandatory conflict handling courses. According to participants, teacher educators should direct their attention to the causes and consequences of school-based conflict. These are the conflicts that participants wanted to discuss and felt a need to reflect upon. Second, participants stated that they wanted to develop practical strategies for constructive conflict handling. As a result, teacher educators should reflect upon the ways in which they can better incorporate practical training into their courses. This is a challenging proposition but, according to participants, it can be achieved if conflict handling courses are associated with mandatory practice periods.

Recommendations for Future Research

Study findings can be validated and extended in two ways. First, findings can be confirmed through the facilitation of a quantitative instrument such as a questionnaire. This questionnaire could employ the knowledge claims outlined in the present study to investigate the relationship between variables such as gender, education, and previous teaching experience, and distinct conflict conceptualizations. A quantitative study of this nature would provide the necessary tools to capture the educationally critical aspects of the phenomenon as understood by student teachers' across Sweden before and after their mandatory training. This would provide information into relevant and irrelevant knowledge in this domain in addition to the critical features that must be addressed and elucidated in pre-service teacher training. Second, study findings may be validated and extended through the investigation of the cognitive connections between various conflict handling strategies described by participants and ways in which individuals learn. As previously stated, cognitive functioning cannot be explored phenomenographically may be investigated experimentally using the procedures developed and deployed by Lyons & Languis (1985) and subsequent researchers investigating psychological and neurological functioning.

Closing Remarks

Needless to say, this study did not definitively elucidate the boundaries and characteristics of school-based conflict and conflict handling as conceptualized by student teachers. Nor did the study point to authoritative ways in which mandatory conflict courses may be (re)designed to better promote learning. But that wasn't the point. The goal of the project was the exploration of school-based conflict and the ways in which future teachers can be trained to embrace them. As the study showed, this requires student teachers to reconceptualize conflicts as learning opportunities rather than obstacles and to reflect upon the infinite number of ways that conflicts can be handled positively in educational contexts. This reconceptualization of conflict may not produce nonviolent, educational leaders, but it will initiate a critically important process of understanding and exploration. Imagine what would happen if every Swedish teacher were trained to conceptualize conflicts as positive opportunities for learning and development. The educational system would never be the same again.

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Appendix 1, Course Plan

Responsible Department

Sociology and Work Science

Contents

The course is based on social relations and inequality and how it affects people and groups in different conditions in the community and school. This is illustrated by various perspectives related to class, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality. The course covers topics such as leadership, group dynamics, and conflict handling. These themes are problematized and made concrete in relation to educational leadership and the diversity of individual circumstances that are represented in the school. Different explanations of conflict and why some students have difficulties in school are related to a social, group, and individual perspective. Basic questions about professional ethics and professional approaches are discussed. The course includes theoretical and analytical elements, and practical application in the form of group exercises and independent work. Emphasis is placed on communication and generic skills.

Learning Outcomes

The overall goal is that students will gain knowledge, problematize, and communicate an understanding of social relations, conflict handling, and leadership in relation to the teaching profession. After completing the course, students should be able to:

Knowledge and understanding

- Explain and problematize different perspectives on social relations and inequalities related to class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and human rights;
- Present and discuss different perspectives on group dynamics, leadership, and conflict handling;
- Explain the concepts of normality, deviation, differentiation, and categorization and analyze the impact of these social phenomena;

Skills and abilities

- Demonstrate the ability to relate perspectives on social relationships, group dynamics, and conflicts presented in the course in relation to selected pedagogical approaches;
- Demonstrate the ability to use their knowledge of conflict handling to create a learning situation;
- Demonstrate the ability, both orally and in writing, to explain and critically discuss established theories and approaches to leadership, group dynamics, and conflicts in school;

Judgment and approach

- Demonstrate the ability to reflect on the meaning of professional ethics and the school's responsibility for students' development and learning;
- Demonstrate the ability to identify their need for further knowledge to develop their skills in the field of education.

Assessment

Students are assessed according to (1) compulsory attendance and active participation in three seminars and three workshops, (2) the oral presentation of a group assignment, and (3) completion of an individual written examination. Mandatory attendance is assessed on a pass/fail basis. The group assignment is equivalent to 2.5 credits and is also a pass/fail assignment. The written examination is equivalent to 5 credits. Students may earn a pass, pass with distinction, or fail on the written examination. In order to earn the grade of pass with distinction in the course, students must pass at least 5 out of 7.5 credits.

Appendix 2, Pre-instruction Interview Guide

Purpose

The purpose of this interview is to find out how student teachers enrolled in the mandatory course, conceptualize school-based conflict and conflict handling *prior to* receiving formal instruction on this theme.

Structure

Interviews will be administered in two parts. In the first part, participants will answer questions about their academic and professional backgrounds. In the second part, participants will answer questions about how they conceptualize conflict and what they hope to learn in the course. Interviews will last approximately 45 minutes.

Ethical Considerations

The identities of participants will remain anonymous. Moreover, participation in the study is voluntary and participants may withdraw at any time.

Part 1, Background Questions

1. Which subjects will you teach? Which grade level(s) will you teach?
2. Prior to enrolling in the teacher training program, have you ever worked in schools before? If yes, in what capacity?
3. Have you ever taken courses in conflict and conflict handling? If yes, which courses and where?
4. Do you have any other contact or relationships will schools outside of the teacher training program? For example, do you have relative or children who attend school? Do you have parents, relatives, and/or friends who work as teachers?
5. Why did you choose to enroll in the teacher training program?

Part 2, Core questions Section 1: Conflict and the Mandatory Course (Accessing the Phenomenon)

6. In your opinion, what is this course about?
7. Why are you taking this course? Would you take this course if it was not mandatory?
8. What comes to mind when you think of the word *conflict*?
9. What sorts of conflicts do you think you will encounter as a teacher?
10. Did you encounter any conflicts during your first practice period? If yes, what happened? How were these conflicts handled?

11. Do you feel prepared to handle similar conflicts constructively? Why or why not?

Section 2: School-based Conflict Scenarios (Exploring the Phenomenon)

I will give you a series of scenarios which may or may not be conflicts. I would like you to tell me if you think each scenario is a conflict. If you think a scenario is a conflict, I would also like you to tell me why. If you think a scenario is not a conflict, I would like you to tell me how it could become a conflict. Finally, I am interested in your opinions about responsibility. Specifically, who is responsible for addressing each scenario?
    A. You have a student in your class who does not speak Swedish or English.
    B. You have two students who do not seem to get along with each other.
    C. You disagree with some of the rules you are asked to enforce in your classroom.

Section 3: Conflict and Learning (Exploring the Phenomenon in Relation to Learning)

12. Do you think school-based conflicts are unique? Do you encounter the same kinds of conflicts outside of school?
13. What role does conflict play in education? (Does it get in the way? Is it an opportunity for leaning?)
14. How did you develop your opinions about conflict and education? (Personal experience as a student? Comments made by others? Media portrayal?)
15. Do you think that all student teachers should take courses in conflict and conflict handling? Why or why not?
16. What do you hope to get out of this course?

Section 4: Closure

17. Is there anything else that you would like to add?
18. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix 3, Post-instruction Interview Guide
Purpose

The purpose of this interview is to find out how student teachers enrolled in the mandatory course, conceptualize school-based conflict. The interview will be administered after students complete the theme on conflict handling and have submitted their final examinations.

Structure

Interviews will be conducted face-to-face and will last approximately 45 minutes. The interview will consist of twenty questions divided into five sections. The sections are designed to provide context and access to the phenomenon of school-based conflict. The sections also help to explore the phenomenon and uncover ways in which the participants understand the phenomenon. I will ask clarifying questions throughout the interview and encourage participants to do the same.

Ethical Considerations

The identities of participants will remain anonymous. Moreover, participation in the study is voluntary and participant may withdraw at any time.

Section 1, Background Questions (Providing Context for the Phenomenon)

1. What did you think of this course overall?
2. Did you attend all of lectures, seminars, and workshops? If no, which didn't you attend? Why didn't you attend them?
3. What (if anything) do you think you learned in this course?
4. What contributed to your learning? (Lectures? Seminars? Workshops? Literature? Course work? Independent reflection and study?)
5. Did you find any of the lectures, seminars, workshops, coursework, or literature confusing or counter-productive to your learning? If yes, which ones? Why did you find them confusing or counter-productive?
6. Aside from this course, where do you think your knowledge of conflict and school-based conflict comes from?

Section 2, Conflict, School-based Conflict, and Uniqueness (Accessing the Phenomenon)

7. Now that you have taken the course, what is your definition of conflict? How about your definition of *school-based* conflict? Is it different in any way?
8. What sorts of conflicts do you think you will encounter as a teacher?
9. Do you feel prepared to handle these conflicts constructively? Why or why not?
10. Have you encountered these conflicts outside of schools? If no, why do you think that is? If yes, do you feel as though you could handle them in the same way that you would handle them as a teacher?

Section 3, School-Based Conflict Scenarios (Exploring the Phenomenon, part 1)

I will give you a series of scenarios which may or may not be conflicts. I would like you to tell me if you think each scenario is a conflict then I will ask you a series of follow-up questions to help me gain a better understanding of your conceptualizations of conflict in general and the scenario in particular:

    A. It is five weeks into a new term and the principal/ headmaster has added five students to one of your classes.
    B. You suspect that a group of students has cheated on an exam.
    C. One of your students says that you are a "bad teacher" in front of the rest of the class.

Section 4, Learning Outcomes (Exploring the Phenomenon, part 2)

11. In the section entitled, "Knowledge and Understanding," it says that after completing the course, you will be able to "present and discuss different perspectives on group dynamics, leadership, and conflict handling." Do you feel as though you can do this? Why or why not?
12. Which perspectives on conflict handling did you find useful? Why? Did you find any perspective problematic? Why or why not?
13. Do you feel as though you can use these perspectives in your future teaching practice? Why or why not?

14. In the section "Skills and Abilities," it says that after completing the course you will be able to "demonstrate the ability to use their knowledge of conflict handling to create a learning situation." Do you feel as though you can do this? Why or why not?

15. What, if anything, makes a conflict a learning situation?

16. What, if anything, makes a conflict an obstacle to learning?

17. In the section, "Judgment and Approach," is says that after completing this course you will be able to "demonstrate the ability to identify your need for further knowledge to develop your skills in the field of education." What does this mean to you?

18. Do you feel as though you will need further knowledge in relation to conflict and conflict handling? If yes, what sorts of knowledge/ training do you think you will need?

Section 5, Closure

19. Is there anything else that you would like to add that I haven't asked you about?

20. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix 4, Dressler & Kruez Transcription System

?	= Rising intonation at the end of a sentence
.	= Falling intonation at the end of a sentence
/ \	= Rising and falling intonation within the text
,	= Continuing intonation (like a list)
CAPS	= Stress or emphasis in the text
(0.5)	= Pause in tenths of a second
…	= Short untimed pause
< >	= Talk spoken slowly
> <	= Talk spoken rapidly
:	= Lengthened syllable
-	= Word cutoff (abrupt self-termination)
=	= Latched talk (no gap between two speakers
[ ]	= Overlap speech
{ }	= Backchannel talk (someone who is not being transcribed)
º º	= Spoken softly
ITALICS	= Spoken loudly
H	= Audible breath
.h	= Inward breath
h	= Outward breath
<< >>	= Paralinguistic behavior
( )	= Minor change made by the author/researcher*

*This symbol was originally employed in the transcription system to denote unclear or unintelligible speech. However, the author of the present study elected to use the symbol in an alternative way. This alteration is consistent with recommendations made by Dressler & Kruez (2000, p. 29).