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Recognition and equal educational opportunities

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Recognition and equal educational opportunities

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Abstract

This article discusses how recognition may contribute towards giving underprivileged groups and students, a voice in education. Traditional measures aimed at forwarding equal opportunities for all, like redistributing resources and improving objective conditions have had limited success. The inequality gap between privileged and underprivileged, rural and urban, indigenous and descendants of colonialists persists. The article argues that the importance of intersubjective conditions for equal access and opportunity in education have been underestimated in education and as a consequence one has missed out on the delicate balance between the social and education. In this regard recognition is not an end but a necessary step towards equal opportunities. However, instrumental approaches to recognition must be avoided as recognition is imperative to developing students' self-esteem and identity. Teachers must therefore comply with moral and ethical standards, thus safeguarding the dignity and rights of the individual student.

Keywords: education, recognition, justice, equity, indigenous, rural

Introduction

Equality in education raises questions concerning equality in rights, opportunity and resources. According to UNESCO's Convention against Discrimination in Education no person or group of persons can be deprived of access to education or limited to education of an inferior standard (UNESCO, 1960). Despite general support for the principles embodied in the convention there are differences in educational participation and outcome attributed to socioeconomic standing, geography, gender and ethnicity (OECD, 2018). In developed countries conditions for equity in education have improved and barriers have been reduced over the last decades without erasing the distinction between privileged and underprivileged students. In this article, I focus on intersubjective conditions concerning equity in education. The question I will pursue is how a focus on intersubjective conditions and recognition may contribute towards equity in education.

In an educational system aiming at education for all, concepts such as justice, equity and recognition are often heard. Lenient use of these concepts can leave them with less substance and reduce them to slogans in populist educational discourse. This article addresses issues of mutual recognition in the classroom and how recognition affects the teacher-student relationship. To be or not to be recognised is vital for your development of self and identity. Recognition is a necessary prerequisite for inclusion and citizenship.

Epistemic values and norms appreciated, expressed and assessed in national educational systems are being challenged daily across classrooms. This is especially true within communities and among minorities where conditions and ways of living differ from dominating and hegemonic lifestyles in a country. Research has brought to light an epistemic gap between national ambitions for education and local interests in rural areas as well as in areas dominated by ethnic minorities (e.g. Corbett, 2007; Kristiansen, 2015; Smith, Tuck and Wayne, 2019; Corbett and Gereluk, 2020). Many of these communities are found in the northern and arctic territories of USA, Canada and Scandinavia. Demographically, populations in these northern areas are today made up of indigenous people, descendants of colonialists and later migrants. Historically, indigenous people have had to fight a losing battle trying to protect their land, language and culture. Atrocities committed by colonialists have in later years been well documented, for instance by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). The commission documented in their report (TRC, 2015) what amounted to cultural genocide. Similar misdeeds have been committed by governments, church and colonialists all around the northern hemisphere. In Norway, school played a vital role in the "Norwegianisation" process of the Sámi and Kven populations. All teaching was done in Norwegian by Norwegian teachers, and Sámi and Kven language and culture were forbidden.

The documentation of committed misdeeds has brought forward heads of state in Canada, Australia and Norway formally apologising for the past wrongs caused by successive governments on the indigenous population. Even though the burden of colonialism persists, continuing to fragment communities, shatter life worlds and producing numerous examples of conflicting interests and misrecognition, we can also sense a genuine interest towards reconciliation (e.g. Markides and

Forsythe, 2018; Kramvik and Førde, 2020; Kukkanen, 2020; Koskinen, 2020). Norwegian and Swedish governments have, inspired by Canadian TRC, established truth-commissions. The purpose of the Norwegian commission is to lay the groundwork for the recognition of the experiences of the Sámi and Kvens (Norwegian Finns) during enforcement of this policy by the Norwegian authorities, and what consequences these experiences have had for them collectively and individually (Stortingets presidentsskap, 2018). The commission shall also propose measures to contribute to further reconciliation. The aim, as expressed in TRC, is not about re-establishing a conciliatory state, but to come to terms with events of the past in a manner that overcomes conflict and establishes a respectful and healthy relationship among people (TRC, 2015, p.7).

The commissions in Canada, Norway and Sweden lay the foundations for a shared understanding of how authorities and society treated indigenous populations and their culture. Today we witness how Sámi culture and language flourish in Scandinavia, especially among young people who discover and retake their Sámi heritage which has been concealed from them, not only by government and schools but also by their grandparents and parents. In Norway, young Sámi people attend language courses, use traditional Sámi clothing, revive and develop Sámi music and arts. Politically, Sámi interests have gained representation and recognition in governing political parties and government institutions. The Sámi people also have their own Parliament with elected delegates from all over the country.

If reconciliation is to progress and succeed, education will have to play an important part. This article is future-oriented and discusses under which circumstances recognition can contribute towards empowering indigenous populations as well as other underprivileged groups and let them have their just and legal place and voice in education. Educational intentions and policies are put to the test in classrooms and the daily interactions between teachers and students, and it is here the ideals of equality, inclusion, and citizenship are fulfilled.

Recognition, or misrecognition, contribute to shaping our identity. The popular assumption is that all identity positions deserve recognition, just as each person deserves dignity. In the first part of the article, I will account for objective and intersubjective conditions for equity before I position justice of recognition to distributive justice and discuss how they enhance equal educational opportunities for all, irrespective of ethnicity, gender or social and cultural background. Then I will take a closer look at recognition itself and discuss how and under which circumstances recognition enhance respect for intersubjective conditions concerning equity.

Objective and intersubjective conditions

In a just and fair educational system aiming at offering everybody educational opportunities according to their abilities, talents and interests, one must see that both objective and intersubjective conditions are sufficiently met. Objective conditions are threefold. First and foremost, there is a need for legislation that secures formal equality, by granting everybody equal judicial opportunities regardless of gender, religion, ethnicity, nationality, place of birth or socio-economic standing. The second requirement is equal opportunities to enable people to make use of their formal rights. This is for instance essential

infrastructure, educated teachers for all and teaching material providing everybody with equal opportunities to obtain a place in education. Thirdly, and closely linked to the second requirement, is a fair distribution of resources so that people may participate and compete on equal terms. John Rawls (1971) published his work of moral and political philosophy on how societies distribute fundamental rights and duties so that objective conditions are secured and promote equity and equal opportunities. Social and economic inequalities are acceptable only if they result in compensating benefits for all. One must act following the principle that best benefits the least advantaged members of society. Rawls' theories, combined with extensive research programs that documented inequality, yielded a strong and consistent opinion on the necessity for action and programs geared at overcoming inequalities of opportunity. Two of the best-known reports of this kind are the Coleman report (Coleman, 1966) in the United States and the Plowden report (Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967) in Great Britain. These reports revealed weaknesses in the educational systems themselves. More important, however, was how they indicated that underachieving students shared several negative properties and characteristics, such as low motivation for what school had to offer, poor efforts, poverty, low-educated parents and class background. Boys were worse off than girls and students from social and ethnic minorities were overrepresented among underachievers. Another shared denominator was that the reports recommended and instigated extensive programs to compensate for shortcomings and redistribute educational resources. These programs were set up to improve the educational outcome and were directed towards individual students as well as local communities, schools and cultural minorities differing from the hegemonic culture in the country. In the last decades there has been a widespread consensus among politicians—conservatives, liberals as well as social democrats—on both the research results and the necessity of policies of compensation and redistribution.

Intersubjective conditions are not as visible in the educational landscape as objective conditions. They comprise, for instance, the quality of relations, motivation, attitudes, abilities and opportunities to cooperate. Intersubjective conditions are not as easily measured and documented compared to objective conditions (Kristiansen, 2014, p.37). Basil Bernstein (1996, pp.6-7) argues that a just and fair educational system must institutionalize and guarantee three rights. The first is the *right of enhancement*, which implies the rights to personal, intellectual, social and material development, as well as a right to develop a critical understanding and new opportunities. The right of enhancement is a condition for confidence and works on the individual level. The second right is the *right to be included* and is a condition for the feeling of community (*communitas*) and works on the social level. To be included implies social, intellectual, personal and cultural inclusion, as well as the right to be different and autonomous. The third right is the *right to participate*, which not only implies the right of participation in discourses and practices, but also a right to participate in the construction, maintenance and change of society (e.g. the regulative discourse). Participation is a condition for civic practice and works on the political level.

Miranda Fricker (2007) addresses these matters when she explores epistemic injustice in terms of hermeneutical and testimonial injustice. Testimonial injustice is when someone lacks credibility as a result of stereotypical attitudes by the listener(s). These stereotypes may be connected to gender, class,

ethnicity, place or family. Teachers may for instance have low expectations of students from certain families or geographical areas. This kind of disparagement grounded in identity-based prejudices and implicit biases is an epistemic injustice which contributes to upholding inequality of opportunity. Hermeneutical injustice occurs when someone lacks the resources that are necessary to formulate important questions or for addressing them systematically. This may be material resources or opportunities to do so, but equally important are conceptual resources. Fricker (2007, p.150) uses an example where someone lacks the concept of sexual harassment, which prevents them from understanding or describing the situation when they are victims of such behaviour. In education, we will find illustrative examples when minority students are devalued because their background, culture or language are regarded as inferior. Another relevant example of epistemic injustice is when national curriculums with urban biases, offer little or no space for rural or indigenous culture and language. Thereby alienating rural and indigenous students, signalling to them that their heritage and lifeworld is not as important as those of hegemonic cultures and ways of living. Standardisation of curriculum, teaching and assessment defines what education is about, and standards emanate from somewhere. "This ethereal somewhere is always, it seems, an urban place, and its abstract, standardized knowledge is necessarily divorced from the multiplicity of rural contexts" (Corbett, 2007, p.273).

Justice and recognition

The inability of policies rooted in distributive justice to address inequity due to intersubjective conditions has provided a turn towards theories of recognition. Because education also comprises non-material resources like talent, interests and intellect, redistribution and compensation take us only part of the road towards equality. Governments can redistribute material resources, but talents are impossible to redistribute. You may choose to develop or not to develop a specific talent but cannot take part of that same talent and give it to someone else.

Axel Honneth (1995, 2003a, 2003b, 2007) has developed a theory of recognition where he argues that one needs to be recognised within three principal spheres of social interaction: love, respect and esteem. These correspond with the way Hegel divides society into family, state and civil society. According to Honneth (1995), the desire for recognition is fundamental to the individuals' self-realization and is the motivating force behind social development. It is important to be aware that Honneth's self-realization differs from that of Abraham Maslow (Madsen, 1981), who treats self-realization as an individual process by and for the individual. Honneth links self-realization to the intersubjective relation between the individual and society. Our relation to our self is not a question of an isolated ego that reflects over itself, but a part of us that is reflected in other people's reactions to our actions. One may act independently and freely, but our actions are assessed and judged by our community. Our self-realization is therefore an intersubjective relationship between us and our fellow citizens. If our self or our actions are not recognised by our fellow beings, there will be no self-realization. We may become vulnerable and our self-esteem may well be weakened. Absence of recognition could prevent the individual from developing a positive relation to oneself. In Honneth's three spheres the area of love (e.g. family) is fundamental. Through emotional support, the individual develops a basic self-confidence and a feeling of trust and security enabling people to enter intersubjective relations. Honneth uses the

family as an example, but the sphere is universal and crucial in empowering the individual to participate in society. The relations in this sphere “are constituted by strong emotional attachments among a small number of people” (Honneth, 1995, p.95). Learning communities like those we find in classrooms are examples of such relations. In the second sphere, the individual is constituted as a legal person with rights and duties which are due to everybody. Your status of recognition is linked to the institutionalization of the principle of legal equality, and you are regarded as a morally responsible individual. Recognition in this sphere is necessary to develop self-respect. The third sphere is that of esteem. In this sphere you are valued as a person, and your actions and contributions are valued by your fellow citizens, which implies that your distinct traits, talents and abilities are appreciated. Recognition in this sphere is necessary to develop self-esteem.

The three spheres of recognition share a long-term trajectory towards greater opportunities for a positive individuality: “with each newly emerging sphere of mutual recognition, another aspect of human subjectivity is revealed” (Honneth, 2003b, p.143).

Towards an intersubjective perspective

By merging Bernstein’s and Honneth’s theories we can demonstrate diagrammatically how they broaden analytical possibilities by incorporating objective and intersubjective conditions:

Sphere - Level	Achieve	“Field”	Rights	Condition	Orientation
1 Family	Love	Personal	Enhancement	Confidence	Subjective
2 State	Respect	Legal	Inclusion	Communitas	Objective
3 Civil society	Esteem	Solidarity	Participation	Civic discourse	Inter-subjective

Source: Honneth, 1995; Bernstein, 1996

Documenting facts and linking low-achieving students with certain characteristics and properties, the way educational research did in the sixties and seventies, does not necessarily bring us any closer to workable solutions. Bernstein (1996) criticizes this type of research, inspired by Coleman and Plowden, for only assessing the objective conditions for equal opportunities. The approach may also have been instrumental, and one might not necessarily have been critical enough when considering findings and conclusions. I do not mean critical in a suspicious way where one doubts the reliability of the actual results reported. There are good reasons to believe that poor performances in some cases are the outcome of poor efforts, talent or lack of educational resources. The critical aspect implies that we question whether or not there are aspects of the educational system that promote or prevent these characteristics from developing. Maybe the low-achieving students we observe in schools, do not display the same characteristics and properties if we are allowed to study them in other arenas: as youths pursuing their leisure activities and hobbies, whether these activities are music, athletics, computers, scouts etc. Then they may well stand out as concentrated, disciplined, patient, motivated and eager to pursue tasks and obligations. A pragmatic and instrumental approach focusing on aims and means may well reify students (Kristiansen, 2012, pp.45-54).

Explanations grounded in properties and characteristics must only be the first step in analysing underachievement. With the help of registered properties and characteristics, we can predict the educational outcome for students. Such predictions, however, are merely predictions and not truths. Among large numbers of students from educationally underprivileged groups, some individuals break with established patterns. We know little about these pattern breakers, except that they possess certain properties and characteristics that indicate risk of underachievement: boys, rural, poorly educated parents, etc. Instrumental approaches will not let us explain why some students with such characteristics succeed.

Maybe one has underestimated or missed out on the importance of recognition and the delicate balance between the social and education? Honneth and Bernstein have both developed complementary theories that offer us insight into these matters. Bernstein demonstrates how hegemonic groups dominate the educational system and deny groups representing alternative cultures space and recognition. Deborah Britzman (1998, pp.23-49) discusses the tension which arises between education and learning when the educator does not, or cannot, recognise the learner's logic. There is an ambivalent connection between education's expectations and life as the learner sees it. The learner may in turn develop strategies of *getting by* which are inconsequential to learning:

“(...) such familiar survival strategies as slipping between the cracks of attention, doing just enough so as not to draw attention to oneself, doing less than might be done, squeaking by, indeed making oneself disappear right before the teacher's eyes. These furtive movements might be thought of as the learner means to defend herself or himself against the demands of the educator or, more pertinently, against the demands of learning.”(Britzman, 1998, p.24)

Honneth is concerned with the importance of recognition and argues that alternatives to recognition are various forms of misrecognition and offences. Misrecognition can come in many forms: negative assessments, indifference, poor teaching, disparagement, disrespect etc. A grave form of misrecognition is to be made invisible. Those who are not seen learn that they are not as important or valuable as those who are seen. Misrecognition threatens your self-esteem, and to protect your image of self, you may apply various strategies. In addition to *getting by* you may project your failure on others, for instance, the teacher. Another strategy is to convince yourself that what school has to offer is unimportant, insignificant or meaningless. Misconduct, resistance and revolt may be a fourth strategy that you can choose. An inevitable outcome of this fourth strategy is that the otherwise invisible become visible. A fifth strategy is various forms of illness - somatic and mental - ranging from bodily pains to various degrees of depression. A sixth, and from the student's point of view final protective strategy, will be to leave school and become part of the dropout statistics. What all these strategies share is that they are not necessarily very productive or constructive, and they make the student responsible for the outcome, whatever this may be (Kristiansen, 2012, p.117-121; Kristiansen 2014, p.43). Schools individualize failure by attributing failure to inborn facilities or cultural deficits relayed by the family (Bernstein, 1996, p.11).

Recognition

To a large extent, we become what we are through others. Recognition or misrecognition shapes our identity. The popular assumption is that all identity positions deserve recognition, just as each person deserves dignity. Recognition is necessary if we are to develop a positive identity and self. Andrew Sayer (2005, pp.60-63) distinguishes between conditional and unconditional recognition. On matters concerning fundamental human rights and needs, recognition should be granted unconditional. Recognition concerning the behaviour, performance or traits of the individual must be warranted in terms of its qualities. One must distinguish legitimate claims of recognition from illegitimate, or one may well end up in a position where one recognises purely egotistic or narcissistic claims.

Still, one cannot deny that recognition is important not only for the individual but also in matters concerning justice and fairness. Recognition is the foundational assumption of the broad and manifold movement of multiculturalism. In the educational vocabulary recognition, along with concepts like participation and self-determination, has achieved such a sacrosanct position that questioning the nature or construction of recognition has become difficult. Attempts to critically analyse recognition may easily raise suspicion of misrecognition and bias towards underprivileged individuals and groups, from those who take recognition as an absolute and an indisputable normative good. Charles Bingham (2006) discusses the issue in an article on the debate surrounding the recognitive paradigm. He emphasizes that even if one discusses potential drawbacks and dangers with recognition, one has said nothing against recognition. "Claiming that many foods are dangerous does not prove that eating should be avoided." (*ibid.*, p.342). Bingham regards recognition as a challenging commitment.

Recognition is a social construction or arrangement between individuals or groups. Recognition or misrecognition say something about the quality of relations. But, so do many other concepts. What makes recognition different from related concepts like empathy, sympathy, pity or solidarity, which also may be used to characterise a relation? And how do such concepts intertwine with recognition?

A critical view on the intersubjective perspective of recognition

If redistribution misses out on intersubjective conditions, could recognition provide some answers? Honneth views lack of resources, poverty and low self-esteem as a result of misrecognition. He wants to subordinate justice of distribution to justice of recognition. Claims for recognition that are likely to enhance self-esteem and positive development of one's identity are therefore legitimate. This is a standpoint that Nancy Fraser (2003) criticizes. Her point being that Honneth's theory of recognition does not provide substantial criteria that warrant claims for recognition, and this lack of criteria makes it infeasible to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate claims. A claim for recognition that strengthens your identity, is not necessarily a claim that deserves recognition. Acknowledging that anybody has the right to seek recognition cannot mean that all ways of life, opinions, behaviour, or actions deserve or qualify for recognition. School bullies cannot be recognised for effective and appropriate bullying. According to Fraser (2003, p.38) claimants of recognition must show that they are denied the intersubjective conditions by institutionalized patterns of cultural value. The norm of participatory parity is the standard for warranting claims. Fraser takes a pragmatic stand and argues

that both distribution and recognition are necessary to secure participatory parity, which she regards as more important for justice than equal treatment or equal opportunities. Participatory participation requires redistribution as well as recognition.

Fraser's critique does not solve the basic problem concerning the absence of substantial criteria for warranting recognition. With recognition, we are faced with a normatively conditioned concept. If recognition is to have substance and credibility one cannot warrant claims with personal or egoistic arguments. Criteria must accordingly be independent of the agents' personal preferences. Recognition should therefore be ancillary to justice so that claims for recognition can be considered and warranted using universal principles of justice that everybody is compelled to agree on and accept (Kristiansen, 2014, p.62).

An underlying problem to the discussion of warranting claims for recognition is who is responsible for warranting them. Honneth (2003a, pp.54-55) states that privileged and underprivileged groups argue from different perspectives. Underprivileged groups use contextual arguments based on normative rationales that may be inconsistent and imply contradictions. Privileged groups, who have an interest in preserving status quo and thereby their privileged position, take their arguments from a more context-free universal and principal position. This point may be illustrated with a small example. Students who experience poor, uninspiring and demotivating teaching by a specific teacher, generally find it hard to get anywhere with their views. Colleagues of the teacher in question will not easily support students' claims, and school leaders will too often hesitate to take action, thus protecting poor teaching. Had the students instead wished to discuss general questions concerning the quality of learning and teaching, inspiration and motivation, their voice might have stood a better chance of being heard. Fraser's requisition that the claimants must warrant claims may favour culturally privileged groups because it requires that claimants master an elaborated and context-neutral language code (Bernstein, 1990). Students who do not master the appropriate codes can be said to be the victims of hermeneutical injustice.

Responsibility is closely linked to ability and capability. If you are not able to or capable of warranting your claims, does that mean that you either (a) have not been misrecognized or offended or (b) do not qualify for recognition? This would be the case for many students who due to their age and inexperience can lack both the ability and capability to warrant claims. Fraser's conditions for warranting claims may therefore seem inappropriate in an educational context. That does not mean that claims from students must not be investigated and warranted. A feeling of misrecognition or offence is in itself no evidence that actual misrecognition and offence has taken place. One must look into the reasons given for the claim. These reasons are not judged by whether they are empirically true or false, but whether they are suitable or not suitable for the situation. One must develop procedures enabling all parties involved a fair and just place in the process. Involving students in the process attribute positively to their cumulative acquisition of self-respect, self-esteem and self-confidence (Kristiansen, 2014, pp.65-69).

Teacher-student relationship

The teacher-student relationship is, apparently, a highly regulated relation through the laws, institutional regulations, traditions and custom. The teacher is regarded as superior in experience, knowledge and skills. Teachers are trained at treating relations with their students in a professional manner. The relationship stands out as a hierarchical relationship placing the teacher in a privileged position and the student as the underprivileged. This regulative perspective reveals a relation where certain forms of communication, discourses and actions are preferred and enhanced, thus limiting the social space for both teachers and students and thereby, again apparently, promoting a stable and predictable environment for learning activities.

One need not spend much time in a school before one can sense that there is more to a teacher-student relationship than the institutional amendments foresee. Teachers referring to somebody being *his* or *her* student, and likewise; students relating to a teacher as *his* or *her* teacher are not merely commenting on a relation. Teachers that speak of a student as *her* student also say something about the *quality* of the relationship, and that indicates that the relation to the student in question differs from relations to other students. The student is not just *any* student, and the teacher-student relationship is not merely an official relationship – a personal dimension has been added. The qualitative aspect of teacher-student relationships has a much more complicated geography than can be read out or coded from white-papers, instructions or pedagogical literature to be found in general teacher training programs. You may be trained in handling various types of relations, but that does not mean that you are sufficiently aware of the qualitative aspects of relations. Learning to relate adequately to qualitative aspects in relations is a lifelong process, and teacher education programs should pay more attention to this. Research (e.g. Avramides, Bayliss and Burden, 2000; Haugen, 2020) show that attitudes towards children and students with special needs can be developed and transformed during the time spent in teacher education and training. Results (Haugen, 2020) indicate a significant increase in positive attitudes and this increase is independent of students' age and gender.

The qualitative aspect requires that you also face the emotions involved. These emotions include the student's emotions as well as those of the teacher and involve aspects concerning commitment, responsibility, sensitivity and concern. Emotions are not captured in tabular form or easily outlined in pedagogical doctrines ready for memorizing. They include feelings such as desire, distress, sympathy, joy, sorrow, contempt, admiration, hope, pity, pessimism, optimism or cynicism to mention some, and may influence one's intellectual, moral and spiritual framework. Contrary to reason, emotions are subjective and bound to the individual who carries them and may foster and form reality as we see it. Emotions create a rift between the teacher and the student because, unlike knowledge and skills, they cannot be accurately tested, assessed or predicted. The teacher can never be sure that she fully understands the student – emotions make it impossible to *place oneself in the shoes of the other*.

Recognition and otherness

Teachers are obliged to see the individual student and enhance, promote and encourage students in their learning process. Recognition of students' efforts and struggle is readily handed out by teachers

in everyday encounters with their students. The conscientious teacher knows that the usual pat on the shoulder will fall short of meeting the needs of students who strive and achieve poor results from their efforts, and recognition resembling a polite gesture, compliment or feedback will not assert or enhance the student.

Sharon Todd (2003, pp.117-139) distinguishes between learning *about* the other and learning *from* the other. Learning about requires the acquisition of knowledge about the other to broaden our understanding, which then will be constituted by what we learn and what we know beforehand, or believe we know: other facts, theories and what we have learned from similar experiences. We adapt what we learn about the other to what we already know in order to further our understanding. But, in our eagerness to help or enlighten the other we might forget that this is our understanding and not the other's understanding. We believe we understand and overlook the possibility that that is exactly what we do and nothing more: we understand the other as a version of our self.

Learning *from* requires the ability to listen to the other and to open oneself to ambiguity, thus acknowledging our ignorance. The I must be attentive to the other's meaning and learn from difference. Listening emerges as a communicative relation:

“Teaching with ignorance implies a humility where each student's struggle is met as her own uniqueness that remains inaccessible to our system of meaning, theories and knowledge. It requires a trust in that what students say has meaning for them and acknowledges that their signification might signify differently for them than they do for us as listeners.” (Todd, 2003, p.137)

Listening is an action prior to recognition. Listening is not only about understanding; we also learn *from* the other. Provided that the teacher listens, the student may take her into new and unfamiliar contexts and ways of thinking, where the teacher is a stranger and the student more at home.

Encounters with people whose dignity and self-respect are threatened can bring forward feelings of empathy with them. Such encounters may also bring forward a feeling of guilt because we are in a privileged position and they are not. We recognise their misfortune, but there is not much help in passive empathy. As a professional, the teacher will let her student down if she does not act. “Passive empathy produces no action towards justice but situates the powerful Western eye / I as the judging subject, never called upon to cast her gaze at her own reflection” (Boler, 1999, p.161). Megan Boler's (1999, pp.155-161) critique of passive empathy may also apply to recognition which cannot be an end. Recognition must be followed by action; if not, neither empathy nor recognition will lead us anywhere or benefit the student. Passive recognition by the teacher may only serve to convince the student of the teacher's indifference and drive him further towards educational failure. Verbal recognition by the teacher may well prove worthless if her actions and attitude towards the student signals indifference and disrespect. “Adequate recognition therefore demands freely given acts as well as freely given words” (Sayer, 2005, p.56).

There is also another danger to be considered with regards to recognition in education. The teacher-student relation is asymmetric, with the teacher in the superior position as the recognizer while the

student is the recognizee. How can the teacher avoid dominating and how can the student avoid submission when recognition should serve justice and promote equity? How can we disclose inappropriate recognition leaving the student with no alternative but to accept the teacher's perhaps well-meant, but fallacious, recognition? Jessica Benjamin (1988) discusses how humans negotiate between the two poles of domination and submission. She views recognition as a lifelong struggle starting from birth, where the individual struggles for recognition and where the individual's sense of self is at stake. The key concept in such negotiations is *mutual* recognition; "The idea of mutual recognition is crucial to the intersubjective, it implies that we actually have a need to recognize the other as a separate person who is like us yet distinct" (ibid., p.23). The teacher cannot only mirror what she believes the student asserts but must respond in her indifferent way, thus reflecting her own subjectivity, which inevitably is different from that of the student. "Mutual recognition cannot be achieved through obedience, through identification with the other's power, or through repression. It requires, finally, contact with the other" (ibid., p.40). Mutual recognition between teacher and student is difficult for both parties due to their unequal positions. Adequate recognition must be freely given by subjects that are free to exercise autonomy. Hegel's master/slave dialectic illustrates this dilemma. "To be adequately recognized by the slave, the master would have to abolish the relation of domination and cease to be a master" (Sayer, 2005, p.56). If this is to happen in the classroom the teacher cannot rely on the formal authority assigned to her position as a teacher. Epistemic authority (Zagzebski, 2012) seems a more appropriate form of authority in learning environments. Epistemic authorities are regarded as reliable sources of knowledge and to quote Linda Zagzebski (2012, p.109): "(...) an epistemic authority is someone who does what I would do if I were more conscientious or better than I am at satisfying the aim of conscientiousness – getting the truth". A difference between the two forms of authority is that while formal authority is granted by superior powers (e.g. governments or electorate), the epistemic authority must be earned and deserved from our fellow citizens. It is a personal authority freely given by autonomous equals and builds on mutual trust and respect. Instead of the student being subject to fixed identities and norms offered by education, epistemic authority allows for space and opportunity for developing student creativity and autonomy (see Biesta, 2010, pp.11-27 for a similar argument). A teacher must be aware that students also are approached by alternative and competing epistemic authorities that are not necessarily supportive of the same values and norms. The teacher-student relationship requires a form of symmetry that allows negotiations between equals as concerns the matters being negotiated. The negotiations necessarily include feelings of empathy and solidarity where the parties respect the otherness of each other and pursue common ends. This relational quality cannot be prescribed in any instructions or general theories. A teacher-student relationship is an intersubjective relationship within an educational context that requires mutual attentiveness and ability to listen if one is to learn from the other.

Teacher's recognition - moral and ethical implications

Recognition or the lack of recognition has influence on the individual's identity and self. In childhood and adolescence, the family, peers and teachers are important recognizers. As a professional and expert, the teacher plays a significant role. She may be made responsible for the development of

students' identity and self in other ways than family and peers. The teacher represents society and is obliged to front specific values and norms. She is also expected to meet specific standards concerning knowledge of subjects, teaching and learning. Considering recognition's importance for the development of students' identity and self, teachers must also comply with moral and ethical standards, thus safeguarding the dignity and right to enhancement, inclusion and participation of the individual student. Equal opportunities for all include securing the objective and intersubjective conditions allowing all students to flourish. These conditions are not static but develop and are being refined in terms of content and rights along with the overall development of society. This implies that recognition must be part of a continuous discursive hermeneutical process where one, again and again, analyses those conditions to affirm equal opportunities for all according to their abilities and potential. This is not only a discourse limited to an intellectual and political elite but must also include local educational institutions, teachers, students and parents.

Teachers have a special responsibility for securing a viable and constructive discourse regarding matters of recognition. They need not only understand how recognition and misrecognition work but must be aware of their own important position as recognizer. It is also in their hands to differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate claims for recognition. This requires teachers who master the art of critical thinking and can carry out moral and ethical reasoning. Critical thinking is characterized by conditional doubt and implies an ability to examine reasons given for a claim or an opinion. The latter also includes one's own claims and opinions: *Because I have a claim or an opinion, does that imply that they are right or legitimate?* Knowledge is a necessary condition for such an ability to reflect on matters of this kind. Teachers must, for example, have knowledge concerning theories of recognition and principles of justice and fairness. But mere knowledge and skills are still insufficient as they may lead to an instrumental approach. Theories and principles of justice and fairness may be reduced to utilities and means for achieving objectives, whereby students are reified (Kristiansen, 2014, p.31-32). Avoiding the pitfalls of instrumentalism requires both will and wisdom on behalf of the teacher. This you can only partly be trained for and calls for educated teachers (Bildung). The educated teacher acts based on knowledge, insight and understanding. She is also committed by a set of moral principles addressing interpersonal relationships, which includes principles of justice, respect, freedom and truth (Opdal, 2000).

Conclusion

The moral and ethical concern must be weighed up against the stakes and risks involved on the one hand, and viable aims and outcome on the other. So, what is the purpose of education? Externally the aim is about supplying knowledgeable citizens who comply with society's future needs for engineers, doctors, nurses, bus drivers, plumbers, teachers and the like. Also, education is about mastering skills and acquiring knowledge which expands your horizon of understanding in such a way that you think and act differently. You may come to learn something you did not know you needed to learn or did not want to learn. Education affects the way you think and the way you perceive the world.

“Education surely develops a person’s awareness by enlarging, deepening and extending it. Its impact is cognitive, but it also transforms and regulates a person’s attitudes, emotions, wants and actions because all of these presuppose awareness and are impregnated with beliefs.” (Peters, 1981, p.33)

Education develops and changes your habitus. And education is not value-free or non-intentional. It makes the norms and values of society explicit. These values are not chosen by random but represent the values and norms of the hegemonic culture in society. However, the educational outcome cannot be accurately predicted – there is a thin line between success and failure as the dropout rates demonstrate. Students admittedly run a risk of not complying with standards and receiving poor assessments. Even success may sometimes come with a price greater than the efforts and hardships invested. You change, but to what? And what if your family and friends who knew you before, do not approve of whom you have become?

The individual student has little influence on what is taught and how it is taught. Education is compulsory for the first 10-13 years and takes place at a time of life when young people are vulnerable and in search of an identity. Teachers are given the overall responsibility for students’ personal and professional development, and the outcome will influence students and set the direction for a lifetime. Speaking more bluntly: Teachers are in fact setting out to redecorate and refurbish the inside of students’ heads in ways that will affect them for life. If you invite a stylist into your home to freshen it up, you expect to have a say on what to keep and what new to bring in. Many students, especially those struggling, too often have no such say; they are not given a voice in the classroom. Assuming that conditions are appropriate, recognition carries the potential of providing them with voice. For these students, recognition is not an end but a necessary step towards equal opportunities.

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