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## **Practical and Theoretical Knowledge in Contrast: Teacher Educators' Discursive Positions**

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*Abstract: Higher education in general and teacher education in particular have been subjected to significant changes. As there are few studies examining how actors rhetorically position themselves within this context, the ambition of the paper is to study conversations between teacher educators related to norms and values in education. The aim of the paper is to study interpretative repertoires and subject positions that are constructed in conversations between teacher educators and to discuss these in relation to qualities in teacher education. The theoretical framework emanates from post-structuralist and social constructionist theories. The empirical material consists of group conversations with teacher educators. The findings reveal that the practical and theoretical appear to be in contrast, which in turn seem to affect education quality. Finally, implications of the findings are discussed, where a future diagonal diverse discourse, combining theoretical and practical knowledge, is argued for.*

### **Introduction**

During the last decades, higher education in general and teacher education in particular have been subjected to significant changes. Education policy discourses of teacher education tend to change towards a teacher training paradigm where notions of best practice and effective teaching are influential at the expense of teaching based on research (Beach & Bagley, 2013; Sjöberg, 2011; Stremmel, et. al, 2015). Changes in demands from students expecting to be served and rescued from difficulties are considered a consequence of neoliberal ideas influencing higher education, which both challenge and influence traditional education ideologies (Zimmerman Nilsson & Holmberg, 2014). Further, there are similarities in policy changes with a tendency towards a globalisation of a neoliberal educational policy paradigm (Beach, 2010; Goodson, 2008; Harford, 2010). These changes also imply a shift in pedagogy from the teacher to the student, as well as a different teacher role (Zimmerman Nilsson & Holmberg, 2014; Gilis, et. al, 2008; Peercy & Troyan, 2017). Tendencies such as these may threaten central aspects of professional knowledge (Riksaasen, 2002). Thus, there is a significant need for analyses of how teacher educators position themselves within this context of contemporary teacher education and what these positions suggest about professions education and professional knowledge. The aim of the paper is to study interpretative repertoires and subject positions that are constructed in conversations between teacher educators and to discuss these in relation to qualities in teacher education.

Professions are defined as consisting of both professional knowledge and scientific studies (Beach & Bagley, 2013). Further, they connect abstract theoretical knowledge to practical skills (Brante, 2010). However, in higher education, changes in policies have been influential concerning professionalism and professional identity. Policy changes in Sweden

imply an emphasis on practice-based teacher education where how to teach a certain teaching content effectively is focused at the expense of a teacher education based on research (Sjöberg, 2011). These changes are similar to changes in England (Gerwitz, 2002; Hilton & Tyler, 2017), in other European countries (Riksaasen, 2002; Garm & Karlsen, 2004; Goodson, 2008; Harford, 2010), and in the US (Apple, 2001; Zeichner, 2010). In a comparative teacher education policy analysis of England and Sweden (Beach & Bagley, 2013), changes in policy documents in both countries show that teacher education has become an arena for practical- rather than theoretical preparation, which implies that theoretical aspects have been marginalized. Such a close relation to the practical context means focusing on teacher behaviour, which implies disadvantages for developing thoughtful professional knowledge, given that know-how is emphasised rather than know-why (Beach & Bagley, 2013). This refers to Bernstein's (1999) concepts horizontal- and vertical discourse. The discourses describe two different approaches to university content, where an opposition between academic and practical knowledge becomes apparent. The horizontal discourse concerns everyday language and evolves around common sense knowledge. Instead of being constructed from scientific analysis, the horizontal knowledge discourse relates to certain practices. The vertical discourse is developed in specialised academic disciplines and has a conceptual structure. This discourse is both abstract and theoretical.

Stremmel et. al, (2015) focus on the essentialized discourse of teacher education. The authors challenge a prevailing hegemonic discourse in teacher education, implying a discourse of essentialization that underpins teacher education and as such, also teaching and learning. This essentialization implies an addiction to audit culture and education reforms that seems to aim at removing any uncertainties related to teaching and learning. It is argued for that teacher educators need to embrace a different narrative that implies assuming the complexity of both curricula and pedagogies, instead of dedicating to simplistic pedagogies. Accordingly, it is criticized that the notion of best practice is becoming more usual in defining professional expertise. Moreover, the concept practitioner is criticized, as it excludes important aspects of being a teacher. It is argued that pupils as well as their teachers are both researchers and theorists. Thus, teaching is considered far more than just doing, involving critical thinking on both existential and ontological issues. Their counter narrative aim at promoting a critical analysis of teaching and learning. The authors recommend a teacher education of critically, reflective, lived experience.

Concerning the teacher educator, Gilis et. al, (2008) claim that an emphasis on constructivistic perspectives in higher education has caused a shift in teaching focus from the teacher to the student, implying a different teacher role. Therefore, establishing a skills profile of student centered teachers is seen as significant, deriving from teachers in higher education. First, the student centered teacher acts professionally in relation to education, teaching and the student. This implies being prepared and focusing on improving and critically reflecting your teaching as well as to be involved in students' experiences of life, seeing them as equal partners. Second, the student centered teacher is didactically competent including design, delivery and quality checking. An operative learning environment is designed, students' learning activities are supported and teaching is adjusted both individually and in cooperation with colleagues. Third, the student active teacher is competent in his/her subject matter, implying knowing ones discipline as well as relating ones courses to curricula (Gilis, et. al, 2008). Similar to this, Shagrir (2015) is focusing professional conceptions that are significant for teacher educators when teaching. The teacher educator should support students' learning and establish relations. The teacher educator should also give students responsibilities and assist them in their development, as well as in their construction of professional identity. Furthermore, teacher educators should relate teaching theories to practices and vice versa.

Besides defining a different teacher role and professional conceptions of teacher educators, there is also a focus on effective and competent teacher educators. Ensor (2006) studies teaching structures as modalities that have the potential to educate effective practitioners. The first modality has a clear content that is relatively consistent and constitutes of a repertoire for the students to acquire. Students are provided with rules to discuss particular approaches related to certain concepts, to identify best practice. The second modality has less firm framing values, which implies that the course content is presented as a collection of resources for the students to choose from and use. In modality three, teacher educators model best practice in the classroom and support students to learn underlying principles from good examples. It is argued that modality three has the best potential to transform a privileged repertoire into classroom teaching where best practice is considered a desirable resource to be acquired to become an effective practitioner.

In addition to this, teacher educators' relation to research and teaching is addressed. Chetty & Luben, (2010) focus on perceptions of professional and organizational identity of teacher educators. The findings reveal that teacher educators experience research and teaching as each others' contrasts. Research activities are considered to aim at satisfying both institutional agendas and to secure research funding and publication, while the professional identity as a good teacher leads to lower status and the assumption that you do not belong to the research community. Further, dichotomies between teacher practice and research was found in a study concerning teacher educators' professional agency (Hökkä & Vähäsantanen, 2014). The teacher educators experienced agency in relation to their teacher identity construction but less agency in their research identity construction, where the latter was characterized by the lack of resources. Altogether, teaching and researching were regarded as two separate functions.

## **Theoretical Framework**

In order to analyse teacher educators' interpretative repertoires and subject positions, a theoretical framework deriving from social constructionist and poststructuralist theory was chosen, with discursive psychology and discourse theory as methodological approach (Burr, 1995; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Potter, 1996; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). The analysis is conducted by using discursive psychology (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Potter, 1996) and discourse theory (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Thus, the discourse concept both relates to a micro-sociological perspective, where teacher educators' verbal interactions and organisation of language are studied, and to a macro perspective, based on the notion of subject positions as produced by overarching social and institutional discourses. In discourse psychology, there is a sensitivity to various accounts about reality, as well as to different knowledge constructions (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Potter, 1996).

## **Methodology**

In this study, the methodology implies that knowledge is seen as continuously being constructed by the participants in group conversations. Discursive psychology emphasises rhetorical constructions and how language activities are made convincing in social settings. The analytical concepts primarily relevant to this study are; extremisation, minimisation, consensus, function and effect, and derives from Potter (1996). The analysis based on these concepts in this study aims at focusing rhetorical strategies used by the teacher educators in group conversations. The first three terms, extremisation, minimisation and consensus are

used in a micro perspective to analyse how rhetorical strategies are articulated. The last two concern a broader perspective where the researcher creates hypotheses about what function or effect a specific rhetorical strategy has.

### **Design**

The article is based on a study where the empirical material consists of group conversations with teacher educators from two universities in Sweden. The selection of participants derives from that the participant should have experience of and currently possess a position as a teacher educator in higher education. From these premises, eight teacher educators were selected, four from each university. Accordingly, all participants had experience of and currently possessed a position as a teacher educator in higher education. They were contacted and informed about the study by email and all accepted to participate. Group conversations at each university were conducted and video-documented. Each conversation lasted on average 1.5 hours. The conversations were initiated and led by a researcher and structured from three themes: teacher education, teachers and students, where the teachers chose which aspects to focus on. Hereby, the discursive agenda is made explicit, i.e. issues that teacher educators consider relevant to talk about.

### **Analysis**

At the beginning of the analysis, the video documentation was watched several times, which led to an overall picture of the content. Then, the conversations were transcribed verbatim. In this initial phase of the analysis, several questions were asked of the material: What function does a certain statement have and what effect does it have in the conversation? What rhetorical strategies are used to achieve a certain purpose? What is at stake in various conversations? These questions reveal problematic issues to analyse further. The analysis is essential to the study as it visualizes the rhetorical resources used by the teacher educators, which in turn form the basis for interpretative repertoires (Potter, 1996) where discursive positions are constructed. Within these repertoires, the teacher educators position themselves and others. The macro perspective, used in the second phase of the analysis, relates to discourse theory by Laclau & Mouffe (1985) and is used to illuminate and discuss different subject positions. In this study, discourses are understood as both constituted and constitutive. Thus, it is assumed that what is said is both controlled by established beliefs in society and, at the same time, continuously creates new conceptions and beliefs.

A central aspect throughout the analysis is variations in the empirical material, as these contribute to the pattern of interpretative repertoires that the teachers are drawing on. Thus, it is the rhetorical strategies of the teachers that has been categorized, not the teachers as persons. The author of this article has processed the empirical material individually, as well as together with a research colleague. More specifically, inter-coder reliability, to establish the validity of the analysis, was tested by the author and a research colleague based on the analysis of the data material. Only interpretative repertoires coded in the same way by both researchers were accepted as valid data for analysis. Hence, selected sequences in the results section represent prominent patterns of how the conversations were carried out, namely the rhetorical resources used by the teacher educators. The phases of analysis are described in table 1.

Analysis phase	Focus of analysis
1	The video documentation was watched several times and led to an overall picture of the content.
2	Several questions were asked of the empirical material that visualize rhetorical strategies used by the teacher educators.
3	Interpretative repertoires were focused.
4	Discursive positions within the interpretative repertoires were focused.
5	All data was re-read in order to verify repertoires and discursive positions. An Inter-coder reliability test was conducted.
6	A selection of data that represents the empirical material was made to be presented in the paper.

**Table 1. Focus of analysis**

In the sequences presented in the findings, three dots, ... indicates a short pause, citation marks ” ” indicate that the teacher educators are referring to what they have said to the students or what the students have said. Words in parenthesis ( ) clarify occurrences in the group and brackets [ ] clarify the subject that is addressed. Finally, /.../ indicates a part of the conversation not being included in the sequence. All participants have been given fictitious names.

## Findings

In the following, the findings are presented as three interpretative repertoires, the practically experienced-, the relational-, and the critically reflective teacher educator. Within these repertoires, the teachers rhetorically position themselves in different ways.

### Repertoire 1: The Practically Experienced Teacher Educator

#### *Position: The Teacher Educator as a Master of Practical Skills*

As a former school teacher, the teacher educator at teacher education teaches the students practical teaching methods from school, which is considered directly transferable from one context to another. The importance of doing the same with the students as you did with the pupils is emphasised.

*Angela: ... I use precisely everything I used with the children [as a schoolteacher]. It took ten years to learn and that stuff I use with the students and it works just as well ... [addressing Beatrice]... so I think that's why ... I feel that I, I know this. Beatrice: Yes, "you should do like this [referring to the students] ... because I have done this in different constellations ... " And in many situations that were not particularly successful that I do not wish that they get into ... but I know that there may well be ... but it does matter, that experience... Angela: After all it does, because then one can also show these parallel processes. "Now, this is what we're doing. You can also do this with the children" /.../ One must constantly demonstrate what to do. Beatrice: Be a kind of a model. Angela: Yes, a model.*

What is at stake here is to legitimize schoolteacher knowledge as directly transferable to teacher educator knowledge. The teachers use rhetorical strategies to emphasise the importance of this issue. First, Angela argues that she uses precisely everything that she used with the children, where the word *precisely* strenghtens and extremises her argument. Thus, all prior school teacher experiences are applicable when teaching students. She then strenghtens her argument even more by describing that it took a lot of years to learn. She summarizes her declaration by referring to herself as competent when she says ... *so I think*

*that's why ... I feel that I, I know this.* Beatrice confirms and shows consensus by saying “*Yes, you should do like this [referring to the students] ... because I have done this in different constellations*” ... Here, another argument is added into the conversation. The reason why you should tell your students to perform in a certain manner when it comes to teaching in the classroom is because the teacher educator has tried it herself. Thus, the methods recommended are tested and safe. Beatrice then shows some distance to her own competence by referring to experienced situations that did not turn out well. However, this is not further explained. Instead, she returns to the significance of the teacher educators’ own experience as a schoolteacher, the experience that matters. Angela confirms when saying: *After all it does, because then one can also show these parallel processes.* Here, parallel processes refers to using the same practical teaching methods with the students at teacher education as they used with the children at school. The importance of showing precise methods is further clarified when Angela says: *One must constantly demonstrate what to do.* By using the word *constantly*, she emphasises demonstrating as a method she uses frequently. Finally, *Beatrice says: Be a kind of a model. Angela: Yes, a model.* Consequently, Beatrice constructs their mutual teacher educator character as being a model, an expert with the ability to show the students exactly how to perform in the classroom.

Furthermore, within this repertoire, there is a distinct border between practical skills and scientific theoretical academic knowledge, as shown in the sequence below, where David reasons about himself as a teacher educator:

*David: This is a job that suits me, I think. There are more academic qualifications that I have to acquire, but in my role as a teacher [former schoolteacher] I think I fit very, very well. / ... / A teacher education is different from regular [academic] education, just as nursing education. I started working here because I had a wide subject knowledge and teaching skills. Since I have worked for such a long time as a [school] teacher, I know how to do that. A nurse who has worked for a long time can teach others. After all, it is not for certain that a researcher is better off to teach how to insert a syringe in an arm.*

Here, David is legitimizing himself as a competent teacher educator. First, he says that *This is a job that suits me, I think*, showing that in his opinion he is the man for the job. He then addresses that he needs to acquire some academic skills. However, this is not considered to be a problem, as he continues *but in my role as a teacher [former schoolteacher] I think I fit very, very well.* Here, David strengthens his argument by using the word *very* twice. Just as Angela claimed in the previous sequence, it is your extensive experience as a schoolteacher that makes you a successful teacher educator. To make his argument even stronger and to legitimize his competence further, he contrasts teacher education from other academic education by comparing it with nursing education. By saying: *A nurse who has worked for a long time can teach others*, he implies that a well-experienced schoolteacher can teach others. Finally, by using an analogy as a rhetorical strategy, he legitimises his own practical know-how, by still referring to a nurse. Thus, he clearly makes a distinction between useful practical knowledge and scientific knowledge, where the former is superior to the latter. He says: *After all, it is not for certain that a researcher is better off to teach how to insert a syringe in an arm.* The teacher’s arguments have a function to legitimize and emphasise his ability as a teacher educator. This implies diminishing the need of traditional academic scientific knowledge in favour of practically acquired classroom teaching skills for a teacher educator. This has the effect that the teacher first and foremost becomes a practitioner, showing the student useful teaching methods, how to perform.

**Position: The Teacher Educator Teaching Theoretical Knowledge**

There are also resistance in the rhetorical strategies within the practically experienced teacher educator repertoire, where the teacher educators emphasise the importance of teaching the students more than useful practical teaching skills and methods, that is theoretical knowledge. However, this is controversial, as shown in Eric's and David's reasoning:

*Eric: There are also the differences and similarities between ... like, this can be done directly with the children, but university education also means things that you should learn. David: Right. Eric: Everything is not directly transferrable. David: They [students] think that's hard, very hard. Eric: Right. (laughs) "What on earth do I need this for? I'll teach in primary school ". David: Yes, but our point is that you need a knowledge base anyway to know "Should I search in this or that direction?" Still, you have to understand in what area the phenomenon in question is situated. Eric: I think this is perhaps one of the most difficult issues about teacher education, which is a professions education, that everything is supposed to be useful directly, but that's not the way it is.*

What's at stake here is the conflict between the teacher educator's task teaching practical teaching skills directly useful in school and adopting to a wider assignment of teaching and learning within university education. The main argument used in the rhetorical strategies is to resist both students' opinions and a similar general notion about teacher education that everything taught should be directly useful at school. In addition, a distinct discrepancy between university education in general and teacher education in particular is critically addressed. First, Eric states that there is a difference between directly transferrable knowledge and knowledge that the student should learn. He argues that everything is not directly transferable. David affirms by relating to the students who have difficulties in understanding this difference. The issue is that he experiences a difference between teachers' and students' apprehensions when it comes to the necessity of knowing more, to have a broader and deeper knowledge base, than directly transferable practical skills. David sums it up by explaining the necessity of having a broader theoretical knowledge base. Finally, Eric describes this issue as the most difficult, namely his experience of the discrepancy between that everything in teacher education is supposed to be directly useful at school, and that deeper knowledge is needed as well.

**Repertoire 2: The Relational Teacher Educator**

**Position: The Teacher Educator as a Student Negotiator**

Within this way of positioning oneself as a teacher educator, leadership is negotiable and decisions are made together with the students. In the following sequence, group division is in focus.

*Fiona: Group division is really hard, as it can really arouse feelings and ... You see, I've had a great week... (everyone laughs). We were about to do this terrible group division and they [the students] were telling each other about their teaching. Then I said, now we are going to have a break. Me and Philip [teacher colleague] will start working and then present a group draft for you ... We were a little late because we did not agree on some students as he knew of some previous groups and they [the students] said that one group is currently not functioning, but we have had completely different experiences ... Anyway, we told them: Now we've been working on the basis of these principles, but we did not agree on some issues. Philip thought like this and I thought like that,*



*what do you think? And then we could meet, sort of, and I thought it was lovely that it could work out that way.*

What is at stake here is how to solve a problematic teacher task by asking the students to make the decision. The main rhetorical argument is to avoid an unpleasant situation for both teachers and students by negotiating. Initially, Fiona emphasises that group division is *really hard as it really can arouse feelings*, where the word *really* (used twice) extremises her statement. She then says *You see, I've had a great week... (everyone laughs). We were about to do this terrible group division...* She contrasts a great week against the terrible task to make group divisions where the word *terrible* extremises the problematic issue at hand. Next, she describes that she tells her students that she and her fellow teacher will produce a group division draft during the break. This rhetorical strategy minimises the teachers' agency, given that it is only a draft that will be presented after the break, and not a group division decision. After the break, she tells the students that she and Philip disagreed on some issues. Therefore, the decision is up to the students. Interestingly enough, instead of solving the disagreement between them as teachers and by finding a solution and a compromise, they delegate the decision to the students. Here, the main argument is that uncomfortable teacher decisions should be solved by turning them into student decisions. The relational teacher educator repertoire appears, which is constructed by the teacher's description of her interaction with the students. The teacher educator positions herself as a student negotiator, where an unpleasant situation with group division is avoided by an abdicated leadership where the students are to make the final decision instead of the teacher. This has the function of making the students responsible which in effect makes the final decision impossible to question for them.

**Position: The Teacher Educator as a Team-Member**

Here, the teacher educator as a team-member is addressed, as well as the individualistic subject matter expert.

*Hana: Something I appreciate and have experienced for some years is teacher teams, which makes .... When I started working here I was only teaching my subject, but I did not really know what happened before or after, levels of difficulties or general aims. But now I feel I'm a part of the entire education in a completely different way. Not only do you have a function with your subject, but you have a role in science progression etcetera. It's more fun to know your context, sort of. So, I like that. Gabriella: I very much agree with you on this teaching team issue./.../ Hmm... (affirmative) I have difficulties with the moody person who only sits in his or her room and doesn't want to be a part of a teacher team. It is the synergy effect I'm referring to.*

What is at stake here is legitimizing the teacher educator team-member at the expense of its opposite, the individualistic subject matter expert. Initially, the teacher educator states that she appreciates teacher teams. She further explains her argument, the reason for her appreciation, by contrasting her assignment as a teacher educator prior to the establishment of teacher teams. Being a teacher educator working on your own is described as a situation less desirable, as she says: *When I started working here I was only teaching my subject*, where the word *only* underlines the inadequate character of such an assignment and minimises the significance of the same. At that time, she says did not know more about teacher education than her course assignment, which constructs the individualistic teacher educator as less knowledgeable. She is contrasting the individualistic subject matter expert from the socially situated teacher educator in teacher teams. Gabriella strongly creates consensus by saying: *I*

*very much agree with you on this teaching team issue*, where the words *very much* extremise her affirmation. Finally, Gabriella describes the individualistic teacher further: *I have difficulties with the moody person who only sits in his or her room and doesn't want to be a part of a teacher team*. Not only is this teacher described as unsociable, but also as moody and inaccessible, preferring to be by oneself, having made an active decision not to participate in a teacher team. By describing the opposite, addressing a synergy effect from being socially situated, the loner is constructed as the undesired, the deviation from the norm. Thus, the individualistic teacher is contrasted against the teacher team member by Gabriella in third person mode, while Hana refers to herself. Altogether, what is uttered here has the function to emphasise the importance of the teacher educator being a socially situated teacher team member. The rhetorical strategy can be understood as a part of a repertoire of the relational teacher educator, specifically referring to the teacher as a team member.

### **Repertoire 3: The Critically Reflective Teacher Educator**

Within this repertoire, the teacher educators critically reflect upon their assignment, teacher role and competence.

#### ***Position: The Teacher Educator as a Reluctant Student Transformer***

In the following, Angela is questioning the way in which new students are treated in teacher education.

*Angela: This is a problem: In the part of teacher education where I work, it is particularly clear that they [the students] have a lot of experience. And so they begin the education and then it's just as if we undress them ... I'm thinking about these American, what are they called... combat movies, where they shave their hair and then take away all their clothes and then they get new ones ... then they know nothing, sort of ... so you have to fill them with new ... oh, sometimes I think that's the approach when they begin, that now you'll have to put away your teacher gown and become a researcher, and then they know nothing ... Oh, it's important to pay attention to their experiences ... they make analyses every day in the classroom as well ... It's not quite the same thing for the ones that have not yet been teaching but they've got their lives anyway. Fiona: But that's what I think, they also take off all their clothes, so you sort of have to remind them, "But open the closet ..." Angela: Yeah, right ... you've got a lot of different items there, use them ... well, that's how it is...*

What is at stake in this conversation is the teacher educators offering resistance towards the academic education's way of approaching new students, a way of handling things that the individual teacher seems to be forced to go through with. Strong arguments are used to make the inconvenience of the approach explicit. Initially, the teacher addresses a problem given her students' experiences and strengthens her argument by saying that it is *particularly clear that they [the students] have a lot of experience*, using the words *particularly* and *a lot* to extremise the extent of their experience. Then, an emotionally steeped analogy is used, emphasising the offensive character of having to convert students. Angela refers to American combat movies where the recruits get their hair shaved and their clothes removed to emphasise that the new students' prior experiences are worth nothing. She says: *then they know nothing* and repeats exactly the same phrase further on in the conversation, that extremises and underlines its significance for the issue at hand. The students are described as

stripped naked, as being deprived of their identity. This rhetorical construction minimises the legitimacy for such an approach. The main issue of the problem is then presented, namely that as a student: *you have to put away your teacher gown and become a researcher*. Accordingly, you have to subject to your assignment as a teacher educator and convert the students into a researcher identity, the accepted norm at the academy. Next, the teacher strongly objects against this way of approaching the students by stressing the significance of their experiences once more. Here, the argument is further articulated, given that students with no prior teacher experience are included, *they've got their lives anyway*. Thus, the teacher educator should pay attention to student experiences, made in the classroom or in general life. Fiona affirms, stressing that the students without prior teacher experience *also take off all their clothes*. Additionally, she confirms what the teacher educator should do, namely showing resistance towards the predominant academic culture. Finally, Angela acknowledges Fiona's statement as she says: *you've got a lot of different items there, use them ...*, a final argument for her advocated student approach. In order to be a student saver, one must be disobedient and encourage the students to use their experiences rather than converting them into researchers. In total, what is uttered in this sequence has the function to object against an academic approach to students. The rhetorical construction can be understood as a part of a repertoire of the critically reflective teacher educator, where the academic assignment is questioned. Consequently, what is advocated is a teacher educator building education on students' experiences from classroom and general life. The repertoire opens up for a teacher position as a reluctant student converter, given that the rhetorical strategy in use distinctly expresses resistance. Based on the rhetorical strategies, solely practical teacher training is preferable, rather than teacher education on scientific grounds with students as researchers.

***Position: The Teacher Educator as Less Competent than in Service Schoolteachers***

In the following, Hana emphasizes the competence of the in service school teacher. *Hana: Also, I think about the staff working here, when it comes to competence, there is a good mix between researchers and teachers working in the field right now [as school teachers]. However, sometimes I wish that more staff also worked at school at the same time in order to maintain that contact. So, these guest teachers that we engage, they are very important. Even though it has just been two years since I stopped working at school.... There is a lot, there are so many new things all the time... Gabriella: Hmm (affirmative) Hana: ...new school policy documents and stuff, and even if you can learn about them you can't incorporate them in the same way as if you use them in action. Gabriella: Right! Hana: ...and therefore, I think this is very, very important.*

What is at stake here is emphasising the importance of in-service teachers as guest lecturers in teacher education. Changes happen so fast in the "real world" that teacher education risks becoming out-of-date without them. The teacher says that there is a good mix between researchers and teachers working in the field at the university. This indicates that a combination between researchers and teachers is considered crucial for teacher education. Interestingly enough, this rhetorical strategy emphasises that you are either a researcher or a teacher, not a combination of both. As she continues, *sometimes I wish that more staff also worked at school* she expresses that the present situation is not altogether satisfactory. Therefore, she finds the guest teachers *very important*, extremised by the word *very*. She further describes her own knowledge and competence that have decreased during her two-year experience as a teacher educator. Here, her main argument is explicit, namely that her

own knowledge is out-of-date and less significant than had she still been a schoolteacher.

This rhetorical strategy minimizes her own competence compared to in-service teachers. By using *we*, she is creating consensus with Gabriella who also agrees. Thus, there is a vast of knowledge only possible for the in service teacher to obtain. The rhetorical strategy has the function to emphasise the importance of in service teachers as guest lecturers at teacher education by critically reflecting upon the competence of the teacher educator. It can be understood as a part of a critically reflective repertoire where the teacher educator problematizes her own knowledge, skills and competence and positions herself as less significant than in-service teachers.

## Discussion

The aim of the paper is to study interpretative repertoires and subject positions that are constructed in conversations between teacher educators and to discuss these in relation to qualities in teacher education. In the following sections, arguments including broader contexts than the study imply a generalization that may be considered as ambiguous. However, it is considered important to critically discuss the findings in a broader educational perspective. Teacher educators' rhetorical strategies have been analysed with analytical tools used within discursive psychology combined with discursive theory. The analysis gave rise to the main result, practical and theoretical knowledge in contrast, based on the analysis of rhetorical strategies in teacher educators' conversations. The discussion below is based on teacher educators' rhetorical strategies as interpretative repertoires and positions herein.

The *practically experienced teacher educator* rhetorically positions oneself as a master of practical skills, where practical and theoretical knowledge are constructed as each others' opposites. As directly transferable teaching skills are considered a preferable teaching base, the teacher educators do not need academic research based scientific knowledge. The researcher is questioned related to practical skills, where a well-experienced practitioner is considered superior. However, theoretical knowledge is also argued for, but rather as a marginalized contrast within the repertoire. The rhetorical strategies within the *critically reflective teacher educator* repertoire increase the antagonism between academic and practical knowledge, where the teacher educator as a reluctant student transformer is constructed as offended and distraught, being forced by the academy to transform beginner students into researchers. This is also evident when the teacher educator compares oneself with in-service teachers, where the former is positioned as less skilled. Even the *relational teacher educator*, positioned as a student negotiator, practices what one preaches when acting in accordance with the specific practical situation at hand, instead of assuming theoretical foundations of the same. Furthermore, *the teacher educator as a team member* includes the social group member and excludes the individual teacher, where the latter represents the subject matter expert occupied in individual advancement.

The main finding, practical and theoretical knowledge in contrast, closely refers to the horizontal discourse (Bernstein, 1999), with an emphasis on knowledge based on practical goals that are context bound and related to certain practices. There are similarities with the horizontal discourse and the teacher educators' descriptions of acting as a model who knows right from wrong, teaching how to perform in the classroom. This seems to remove any uncertainties related to teaching and learning, as well as to critical thinking which relates to Stremmel's et.al, (2015) essentialized discourse. Accordingly, the main result constitutes a combination of Bernstein's and Stremmel's discourses, forming the *horizontal essentialized discourse*. The horizontal essentialized discourse (Bernstein, 1999; Stremmel, et. al, 2015) appears to be in opposition with the theoretical and abstract vertical discourse (Bernstein,

1999) as advantages with practical skills are used to marginalize the importance of theoretical knowledge. Academic, theoretical knowledge should be kept at a proper distance rather than being integrated with practical knowledge and skills. Hence, practical know-how is emphasised at the expense of theoretical know-why, which could constrain the development of thoughtful professional knowledge (Beach & Bagley, 2013). Moreover, the complexity and unknowability of curricula and pedagogy in the counter narrative discourse (Stremmel, et. al 2015) is marginalized. In the counter narrative discourse, teaching is considered to involve critical thinking that promote a reconceptualization of teaching and learning.

Nevertheless, the presence of tendencies similar to the horizontal essentialized discourse (Bernstein, 1999; Stremmel, et. al, 2015) in the findings to the detriment of the vertical discourse (Bernstein, 1999) is in line with changes in policy documents aiming towards a teacher training paradigm (Apple, 2001; Beach & Bagley, 2013; Garm & Karlsen, 2004; Gerwitz, 2002; Goodson, 2008; Harford, 2010; Hilton & Tyler, 2017; Riksaasen, 2002; Sjöberg, 2011; Zeichner, 2010). Within such a disposition, teacher educators' discursive positions should be considered as expected in the prevailing system. More specifically, they appear as well-adjusted and in accordance with the effective, student-centered teacher educator (Ensor, 2006; Gilis et. al, 2008; Shagrir, 2015). Teacher educators' rhetorical strategies indicate that they model good practice useful in the classroom (Ensor, 2006) and are profoundly involved with students (Gilis et. al, 2008) assisting and establishing relations (Shagrir, 2015). However, being involved in critical reflections with the students (Gilis et. al, 2008) relating practice to theory and vice versa seem to be marginalized. Surprisingly enough, practical and theoretical knowledge are not considered as complementary but as each others' contrasts. Possible reasons for the horizontal essentialized discourse (Bernstein, 1999; Stremmel, et. al, 2015) and the vertical discourse (Bernstein, 1999) being in opposition are that teacher educators consider research and teaching as dichotomies, where the former is rather satisfying institutional agendas than individual (Chetty & Luben, 2008). Also, there could be less agency in teacher educators' research identity than in their teaching identity (Hökkä, 2014).

## Conclusions

In conclusion, teacher educators' discursive positions indicate that not only is teacher education aiming towards a training paradigm (Beach & Bagley, 2013), this is already existing and established. When addressing implications for future teacher education, placing the horizontal, essentialized discourse (Bernstein, 1999; Stremmel, et. al. 2015) as an opposite to the vertical discourse (Bernstein, 1999) by contrasting practical knowledge against theoretical, does not seem to be a favourable way of educating teachers of tomorrow who will work in practices probably more complex than the contemporary. Instead, efforts should be made to base teacher education on critical research inquiry at campus as well as at practicum. Then, a combination of theoretical and practical knowledge could create a synergy with the potential of developing teacher education to an arena for joint theoretical and practical knowledge development where both are just as important in order to educate tomorrow's teachers. Such an integration is desirable when considering teachers and children as both theorists and researchers (Stremmel, et. al, (2015). Altogether, contrasting the horizontal, essentialized discourse (Bernstein, 1999; Stremmel, et. al, 2015) against the vertical discourse (Bernstein, 1999) is inherent contradictory. Thus, it seems to be worth aiming for a diagonal diverse discourse, a combination of the extremes, making a complete integration of practical and theoretical knowledge possible.

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