Workshop 1B Classroom discussions on sustainability issues

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Agenda

• Group discussions about two classroom-transcripts

• Some research findings relating to chapter 14: *Classroom discussions: Students’ learning in argumentation about ethical and political aspects of sustainability issues* (KARIN RUDSBERG AND JOHAN ÖHMAN)
If democracy is a prioritised value...

- **Fact-based**
- **Normative**
- **Pluralistic**

ESE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESE-tradition</th>
<th>Fact-Value relation</th>
<th>Democratic process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fact-based</td>
<td>Facts</td>
<td>After</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative</td>
<td>Fact $\rightarrow$ Values</td>
<td>Before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pluralistic</td>
<td>$\updownarrow$ Facts $\leftrightarrow$ Values $\uparrow$</td>
<td>In</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Öhman, 2008)
Figure 14.1 Toulmin’s argument pattern
Source: (Toulmin 1958/2003)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-YPPQztuOY
Questions

• *What are students learning when participating in discussions?*

• *What is the role of knowledge?*

• *How do students influence each other during discussions?*

• *What is the role of the teacher in discussion?*
Studies of student discussions
How are teachers acting during student discussions?

What are students learning when participating in discussions?

How are students influencing each other during discussions?

What is the role of knowledge during discussion?

How are young people discussing sustainability issues in social media?
How are students influencing each other during discussions?

• **Background:** The shift from teacher lead to student centred approaches

• **Purpose:** To investigate and clarify the constitution of knowledge in student discussions (process and content)

• **Empirical material:** Ten week thematic project on climate change in Swedish upper secondary school with a pronounced sustainability approach. Video-recorded student discussions in examining group seminars (2 x 90 min) (Transcript 1)

• **Methods:** Epistemological Moves Analysis (EMA) and pragmatic discourse analysis
Understanding the difficulties of international climate change agreements

Global

Political power

Local

Global

Economy

Local
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Epistemological move</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confirming move</td>
<td>A direct confirmation of somebody’s statement</td>
<td>“Yes, exactly as you say, you don’t want to lose your power“;</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I think it is very interesting what you say…”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mutual agreement move</td>
<td>A statement is developed by a second person and the first person confirms that this development is in line with his or her view</td>
<td>“Yes, exactly…”</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Absolutely…”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfilling move</td>
<td>A statement that brings another person’s unfinished statement to completion</td>
<td>“… one-way trade between west and… north and south“;</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“… have to listen to that country”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying move</td>
<td>A question that clarifies a certain description and makes it more precise</td>
<td>“You mean that all countries would be self-supporting?”</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical generative move</td>
<td>A question that makes the participants reconsider and deepens the discussion</td>
<td>”But, is there really a sustainable way of development if we have the current economical system?”</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counter-argument move</td>
<td>A statement that questions another person’s statement</td>
<td>“I question some parts of this, because I think that…”</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>
Conclusions

• Students establish complex and insightful knowledge: participatory approaches can facilitate advanced learning processes and discussions are an important part of those processes.

• There is the risk that governing processes within peer discussions make the discussions very consensus oriented. Ideological conflicts between students are hidden. Thus, knowledge does not necessarily become more diverse.
How are teachers acting during student discussions?


- **Purpose:** To analyse the functions of teachers’ actions in relation to students’ meaning-making

- **Empirical material:** Video-recorded of an environmental ethical exercise discussions in (90 min) in a Swedish upper secondary school (Transcript 2)

- **Method:** Epistemological Moves Analysis (EMA)
# Identified teacher moves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move</th>
<th>Function</th>
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| **Generalising move** | *Generative function:* The teacher reformulates, introducing general concepts.  
                        | Students create generalisations              |
| **Specifying move**  | The teacher points to what the student ought to focus.  
                        | Student specify his/her statement            |
| **Comparative move** | *Evaluative function:* The teacher adds new positions and/or perspectives.  
                        | Students compare and evaluate different alternatives |
| **Testing move**     | The teacher asks for the validity in different circumstances.  
                        | Student test the prerequisites of statement  |
Conclusions

Teachers’ active participation in students’ discussions of sustainability may be important for two reasons:

**Quality** – to deepen and nuance the students’ standpoints

**Diversity** – to challenge the common view and allow for alternative possibilities and views
Our studies have shown:

• that students can learn to **formulate an argument** and gradually make it **clearer, deeper and more complex** by participating in discussions.

• that **knowledge plays a crucial role** in these discussions and that students can learn how to **use their knowledge in social practice**, connect their knowledge to **value judgements** in an argument and **contextualise** their knowledge relation to an important question.

• that students’ **learning progress** is strongly connected to the **interaction with peers** when they respond to, develop and criticise other students’ arguments in their own argumentation.
Didactic challenges:

- Sustainable development tends to become a *harmony* concept rather than a *conflict* concept
- Discussions tends to be very consensus-oriented
- Difficult to stage “real” discussion
- Forcing students to take sides
- How to respond to ”alternative facts”?
- Are all opinions acceptable?
- Reproduce prevailing power relations

(see Öhman & Öhman 2013)