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Educating Judgment. Learning from the didactics of philosophy and sloyd

Educar el juicio. Aprendiendo de la didáctica de la filosofía y de las manualidades

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Abstract

Teachers in vocational education face two problems. (1) Learning involves the ability to transcend and modify learned knowledge to new circumstances. How should vocational education prepare students for future, unknown tasks? (2) Students should strive to produce work of good quality. How does vocational education help them develop their faculty of judgment to differentiate between better and worse quality? These two questions are tightly interwoven. The paper compares the didactics of philosophy and sloyd. Both developed independently, but their solutions to how one advances the capacity for reflective judgment are similar. Central to this capacity is not merely devising efficient means to work towards pre-existing aims, but to reflect in practice on what one's aim are and should be. This implies reflection on what future problems, as well as solutions to them, demand of us cognitively, socially and morally.

Key Words: philosophy for children; sloyd education; faculty of judgment; competence

Resumen

Profesores de la enseñanza vocacional se enfrentan con dos problemas. (1) El aprendizaje incluye la capacidad para modificar conocimientos adquiridos a nuevas circunstancias. ¿Cómo debería la educación vocacional preparar los estudiantes para futuras, todavía desconocidas tareas? (2) Los estudiantes deberían producir trabajos de buena calidad. ¿En qué modo les ayuda la educación vocacional a desarrollar su habilidad para distinguir entre mejor y peor calidad? Estas dos preguntas son fuertemente enlazadas. El artículo compara la didáctica de la filosofía con la didáctica de las manualidades. Las dos se han venido desarrollando independientemente, pero la similitud entre sus respectivas soluciones para fomentar el desarrollo de la capacidad de reflexión es significativa. Tal capacidad no se centra únicamente en idear modos eficaces para laborar hacia metas predefinidas, sino implica reflexionar en la práctica sobre la meta que uno tiene o debería tener. Esto implica asimismo reflexión sobre lo que futuros obstáculos y sus soluciones requieren de uno en términos cognitivos, sociales y morales.

Palabras clave: didáctica de la filosofía; didáctica de las manualidades; capacidad de reflexión; competencia

1. Introduction

Students in vocational education learn to produce services and products. The aim of this learning is not only to be able to repeat school-tasks, but to deliver similar services and products in future situations that are different from the ones in the student's vocational education. Teachers are thus challenged to teach their students in such a way that they learn to apply their knowledge and abilities to unknown circumstances. This is needed to respond to the labor market's demand for vocational professionals who are not only professional in their own trades, but also flexible to the changing demands of society and on the labor market. This demand of the labor market, as well as of earlier and present educational policy, appears somehow paradoxical: as a professional you should both be deeply familiar and situated in the trade's knowledge and you should be open and flexible, even to the extent of questioning and reinventing the professional knowledge itself.

Furthermore, the purpose in manufacturing things or delivering services is not only to realize the production in any possible way. When becoming professionals, students are asked to strive for good quality in their work. A student might have fulfilled the task of cutting someone's hair, serving salad or repairing a car, but the important question remains whether this was done in a good way, resulting in good quality. Vocational education should therefore help students develop their faculty of judgment, to differentiate between better and worse quality in their own and in other's work.

This raises two demanding questions for vocational education. (1) How should we prepare students for future, unknown tasks? (2) How do we help students develop their faculty of judgment to differentiate between better and worse quality? Throughout this article we argue that these two questions are tightly interwoven.

In the following, we examine these questions via a comparison of two didactical practices, the didactical school that developed methods for teaching philosophy for children and the didactics for sloyd-education[1]. This comparative study allows us to describe some central features of the educational processes that further the quality of student learning, independently of their particular content and the national context in which they have been developed.

These two schools developed theories and methods independently from each other, but came to similar solutions as to how to teach in a way that enables the student to transcend previous knowledge, and doing it in a good manner. Taking different points of departure, both came to focus on reflection as a central feature of teaching and learning. In doing this, they offer a concrete, methodological, but still theoretically insightful treatment of the recognition that thinking and reflecting as well as being in action and engaging in a practice cannot be seen as two distinct activities.

Using insights from Donald Schön's "The Reflective Practitioner" (1983) and virtue theory, we argue that both didactical fields offer examples of learning to reflect in practice and provide reasons for thinking that such reflection is an intellectual virtue. Central to this capacity for making reflective judgment is not merely devising efficient means to work towards pre-existing aims, but to reflect in practice on what one's aim are and should be. This implies reflection on what future problems, as well as solutions to them, demand of us technically, cognitively, socially and morally. In conclusion, we tie these insights to current debates on educating competences and using formative assessment to further the quality of student learning.

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1   Sloyd (Swedish: slöjd) is the education of manual skills gained in woodwork and handicraft.

2. How to teach thinking and producing? A presentation of didactic of philosophy and sloyd

Every field of knowledge is surrounded by some kind of public myth, which often leads to problematic stereotypical ideas and far too often stereotypical realities. For example, mathematics or technical subjects are often called hard subjects, while healthcare and art are called soft. Languages are discussed as necessary and useful, while sports are considered as fun. Similarly, philosophy and sloyd are connected with images that spontaneously make them appear the opposites of one another. Philosophy is seen as pure thinking about complex questions, which are hard to understand. Sloyd or craft is concrete, and produces real things. Philosophy is seen as a pure brain-activity, while sloyd is considered a purely bodily activity.

The first common task for anyone working within the didactics of philosophy and sloyd is to struggle against these stereotypes. In this article we concentrate on the insights and methods that Matthew Lipman (1922-2010) developed under the name Philosophy for Children (often P4C) and the sloyd-education that in the Nordic countries is academically grounded. In Finland it is e.g. possible to gain a PhD in sloyd-education. We will present and compare both didactical fields and finally discuss some important insights as to how these methods contribute to developing the faculty of judgment.

2.1. Philosophy for Children

We easily accept that it takes several years until a student learns to write, read and calculate. Compared to the amount of detailed didactical tools and methods for, as well as research on, teaching these abilities, it is interesting that the ability to think and reason, to question and argue is marginalised in the didactical discussion. Philosophy is not only faced with the public image of being complex and difficult. At the same time (school) education and curriculum-writers seem to assume that the ability to reason and question comes automatically with the other knowledge and skills a student obtain during the years spent in school. In the case philosophy is a subject in school at all, it is mainly for students in secondary school. It often only appears in more academically orientated programs and is not mandatory.

A noteworthy contribution to change this kind of thinking about philosophizing and critical thinking is found within the program Philosophy for Children (P4C). Philosophy for Children is a set of methods, games and discussions, aimed at improving the reasoning skills of kindergarten and school children. It was originally developed by American philosopher Matthew Lipman (1976, 2003, 2009), to remedy what he found to be poor thinking skills in his philosophy students. They were, he argued, not encouraged to philosophize themselves, but rather to gain knowledge about philosophy. A central insight in Lipman's work is therefore the distinction between knowledge *about* philosophy, the work and life of philosophers, philosophical theories etc., and the ability *to do* philosophy. Lipman wrote and published textbooks of his own in which central philosophical questions were raised without any links to the factual persons and circumstances in which they were discussed originally. The aim was to engage students in the question itself and not in historical facts about the life and time of certain persons (BØRRESEN & MALMHESTER 2004: 13).

> "[P]hilosophy for children is [...] about philosophical problems. These problems are not owned by specialists or by people with academic philosophical training, but are indispensable parts of every human life." (BØRRESEN & MALMHESTER, 2004: 13, *our translation.*)

P4C encompasses different didactical methods, and there is no one distinct structure for philosophical inquiries. However, a central place is held by the so-called *community of inquiry*. Here students, coached by the teacher, independently philosophize about questions they pose themselves. This can be a subject that is directly from the curriculum, or something else that the teacher or the students want to discuss more closely. The topic might be presented by a text, a video, a picture, a scene that just happened in the schoolyard or a visit to the local theatre. After some minutes that the students spend individually to formulate their own question concerning the topic, they are asked to agree upon one question that they want to discuss. Depending on the topic and the age of the students, the inquiry can be divided in different parts, with breaks for the individuals to reflect and formulate thoughts and questions. A central part of the whole inquiry is a closing meta-discussion about whether or not the initial question was answered, about the way it had been discussed and about what should be learned for the next inquiry together.

In these inquiries, the teacher and students work together towards something that could be described as the best answer to issues that, as Børresen and Malmhester say, "are obviously packed into problems and situations with which they are familiar."

> "The basic ethical question "How should we live?" is often formulated concretely, maybe in the manner: "Do I have to go to school today?", "Can't we go out and play?" or "Can't we do something fun?" This last question can in turn lead to questions such as "What kind of fun things can we do?", "What's really funny?", "What can 'fun' mean?" or "Is it good to (just) do what is funny?" (BØRRESEN & MALMHESTER, 2004: 13, *our translation.*)

The aim for the Community of Inquiry is the search for truth, understood in such a way that it contributes to develop the student's self-awareness and understanding of his/her existence in the world.

> "In such a community students encourage each other's imagination, they investigate what is possible, by listening to and assessing the critical arguments that come up, and by reflecting on the conclusions and their work together. [...] It also stimulates the individual independent thinking, the conceptual and linguistic development and the ability to provide arguments and judge different opinions." (BØRRESEN & MALMHESTER, 2004: 12, *our translation*).

A central question here is how to understand the thinking and reasoning skills, or the critical thinking, which these inquiries aim to develop. Often they are described as just a range of tools, as rational instruments or logical techniques that serve to reach a certain gaol that was defined in advance. Here thinking is conceived an instrument for solving problems or answering questions by calculating facts or balancing pros and cons against each other. This idea of instrumental rationality has been strongly criticised (see e.g. SCHÖN 1983), but is still a widespread point of view.

Besides this limited notion of critical thinking, there are also more encompassing notions of critical thinking (see ENNIS 1996, PAUL 2000). Ohlsson and Sigge, however, argue that the notion of critical thinking, when it is elaborated to incorporate all forms of good thinking easily becomes too vague to be usefully employed. Rather, they suggest that speaking of intellectual virtues is a more fruitful way of elaborating on the skills developed in the philosophical practice with children (OHLSSON & SIGGE 2013: 17-18). The emphasis on virtues also incorporates the recognition that certain demands and ideals are embodied in the practice. What is involved in thinking and reflection cannot, in other words, be separated from acknowledging that there are standards for thinking well.

This emphasis on the virtues of thinking, seeks to find a way of surpassing the "relativistic perspective" (DANIEL *et al.* 2002; 2004) that may often emerge on the way to more developed philosophical thinking. Daniel *et al.* distinguish three perspectives: the egocentric, the relativistic and the intersubjective. They argue that children participating in P4C usually stop at the second stage, or only partly reach the third stage after more training. At the relativistic stage, the children are capable of reflecting over problems, but not of questioning their own and others' opinions. Sigge and Ohlsson describe this as a *laissez-faire* view where everyone is considered to be right in their own way, or where there is no wrong or right in philosophical questions (OHLSSON & SIGGE 2013: 20).

The notion of virtues is central in responding to such relativistic views of thinking. It enables us to shift the perspective from conceptualizing the act of thinking as a simple instrument to the insight that the act of thinking has clear moral implications (cf. PAUL 2000). Thinking requires courage, e.g. to question notions that are generally accepted, or to think independently, to endure criticism and be capable of changing. Thinking also requires patience and perseverance to think carefully about a problem and to tolerate ambivalence and frustration (SCHAFFAR 2012). Thinking well also requires good judgment so that one is able to ponder the arguments to be considered. Ohlsson and Sigge stress that a central difficulty lies in the insight that the rules and principles that are governing such a weighing themselves rest on rules and principles that can and should be argued for and against (OHLSSON & SIGGE 2013: 25f). In this regard methods in philosophy for children also develop children's faculty of judgment, by enabling them to become better judges of what constitutes good judgment.

When we realize that we cannot have one certain foundation from which other principles of truth can be derived, we must learn to see problems and solutions in a different way. We need to take a position on them as individuals with a will and ability to influence others, not as people who mechanically try to calculate facts in the hope of arriving at the correct solution. When we approach the foundations of thinking in this manner, a moral dimension is revealed in the attitudes and dispositions of individual thinkers. Among such desirable attitudes, or virtues, Ohlsson and Sigge list, among others, the love of truth, intellectual honesty, skepticism, humility, courage and compassion (OHLSSON & SIGGE 2013, chapter 5).

In the didactics of philosophy, a leading insight is that thinking is not a contrast to actions or practice. Thinking or reflection is not to be conceived as an inner mental process (cf. KRONQVIST 2008, chapter 1 and 2, HERTZBERG 2007). It is neither a contrast to action, nor a preparation for future "real" actions, but a way of *being in action*. Learning to become better at reflection, or in critical thinking, is here centrally seen as a change in attitude, as the outcome of practicing a skill or training a new habit. In particular, it is a way of learning, by engaging in practice, what is a good way of posing a

question, as well as the ways in which different questions can and cannot be answered. By engaging in this practice, students discover that they have to take a stand in different questions. Every thought, argument, moment of reflection and decision is a concrete action in the process of discussion.

2.2. Sloyd education

Historically the curriculum of sloyd education shows a long tradition of teaching both social and cognitive skills as an internal part of the process of production itself (cf. FRÖBEL, DIESTERWEG, CYGNAEUS, see PELTONEN 2011, p. 314). The aim of sloyd-didactics is not only to trade different crafts and practical techniques to the students. Rather, sloyd requires both practical and reflective skills from the students. This reflection focuses both on the product and on the process. That is why Peltonen describes the core of sloyd as the conception of a production-process that not only accompanies, but also steers the situation of production (PELTONEN 2011: 320).

> "Sloyd is a practice within which the person's thoughts change from concerning simple conceptions about products and demands of the situation in relation to the tools used towards reasoning in advance about how one should approach the very act of production and what the conditions are for completing the act of production. The result of this act of production is a product and a conception of whether one masters the act of production." (PELTONEN 2011: 320, *our translation*)

Engaging in reflection about one's production is, in this sense, centrally not conceived as an additional task, but as integrated in the very act of production.

Lindström points out that teaching creative activities should encourage students to actively experiment, investigate and change circumstances, material, tools and techniques. Students develop a habit to formulate problems and to find new possibilities throughout their work (LINDSTRÖM 2007: 12). In the education of creative activities the manufacturing of a product is combined with observation, reflection and the training of sensitivity. Lindfors lists several abilities that are trained by the sloyd-education process; students learn to perceive, investigate, analyse, control, regulate, judge, choose, express, form, perform, communicate and to act socially (LINDFORS 1991: 84). Lindström adds that the process even involves courage and the will to take risks when students are faced with the need to reformulate the problem or to try new solutions. In some way, Lindström says, it is part of the nature of creative activity that experiment and risk taking not always leads to a satisfying result (LINDSTRÖM 2007: 12; LINDFORS 1991: 123f).

In a similar manner to the discussion about the didactics of philosophy, the skills that sloyd education generate can be understood in a simple instrumental sense, as practical tools aimed at solving a problem or need in a concrete situation. Sloyd educational theorists, however, often stress the moral and existential questions that are implied in the planning and manufacturing of things. Lindfors e.g. distinguishes between several levels of reflection that students have to take into account when practicing sloyd. On a technical level, students have to experience and reflect on their own concrete handcraft achievements: "Is the seam straight enough?" This reflection often implies an aesthetical judgment comparable to "Does the strand's color match with the rest of the fabric?" Further, students are confronted with economical questions: "This fabric would provide better cover, but it is more expensive. How could it be used more economically?" These

questions are in turn related to a political and environmental level of reflection: "Is it necessary to use new material, or can some used material be recycled? Who produces the material that we use, and under what conditions?" Students are working with and experiencing different cultural and traditional heritage: "What kind of weaving looms did earlier generations and other cultures use? How are different ways and tools for knotting linked together?" The social level comes to the fore when students plan and work together during the entire sloyd-process as a team or when they give each other a hand or share tips, but even when they plan to give their piece to somebody as a present (cf. LINDFORS 1991: 56).

Peltonen further deepens these aspects of reflection by bringing in a moral and existential level. In his article "The philosophical foundations of sloyd-education", he discusses four different philosophical questions and principles at work in sloyd-education. (1) Sloyd raises existential questions about our existence in the (material and spiritual) world, and about the way humans are able and compelled to use nature. (2) Sloyd-education facilitates a deeper understanding of the traditions and history of craft and tools, and raises questions about what characterizes a good practitioner in relation to the remaining and changing features of our history of habits and practices. (3) Sloyd facilitates the student's own maturation from a consumer of a certain content or product towards a producer of content. The important difference lies in the students' ability to verbally communicate the meta-theory that led them through the production. It enables the student to consciously discern different alternative solutions, to choose and to realize one distinct solution. (4) Finally Peltonen describes a pacteistic perspective in sloyd by drawing on Michel Serres' philosophy about the necessity of a contract between humans and nature. Before entering a concrete act of production the result or product should be evaluated with respect to the effects it will have on the material environment and with respect to the effects on the human and social conditions it creates or influences. (PELTONEN 2011: 322f).

In sloyd education, as in the education of creative activities as such, the concrete manufacturing of a product is embedded in distinct phases of planning, reflecting and evaluating both the product itself and the whole process (LINDFORS 1991, PELTONEN 2011). Different theories and production-processes might have slightly different descriptions of the process of manufacturing, but they share some general features. Lindfors lists three phases that are necessary in the student's sloyd process. (1) The process of design in which the general orientation about the task, the circumstances of the situation, the demand and possible ideas for a product are combined with the development of the structure, form and function. (2) The phase of planning the production, in which the student is asked to prepare the task by searching for further information that aids in reaching decisions about questions related to technique, details and construction. (3) The phase of production, which includes preparing the production-process, manufacturing the product and finishing the process. These three phases are seen as a constant circle of orientation, preparation, modification and realization towards the task of production. Each phase is in itself completed by a moment of evaluation and documentation, and the whole process of production is discussed in a meta-evaluation at the end (LINDFORS 1991: 90, 125).

3. What we can learn about the faculty of judgment from a comparison between the didactics of sloyd and philosophy?

We framed our considerations about how to educate the faculty of judgment with two questions. (1) How can vocational education help students develop their faculty of judgment, to ensure that they not only repeat the skills from their educational training, but transcend their knowledge and modify it to yet unknown situations? (2) How can students learn to differentiate between better and worse quality in their own and in other's work?

In the following we want to bring to the fore some similarities in the two contexts we examined to throw light on how students develop their faculty of judgment and how teachers can be of aid in this. Although seemingly distant from each other, the one concerned with, as it seems, pure reflection and the other with pure technique, this short introduction into their basic assumptions and methods already showed that neither the didactics of P4C nor the didactics of sloyd can be reduced to either gaining factual knowledge, applying knowledge or learning a technique.

Our main interest in the didactic of sloyd and philosophy, here, is the central notion given to learning to reflect in and on one's practice. Both didactical schools have developed methods for learning to reflect on one's thoughts and actions. In this respect, they contribute to the long history of ideas in which the division between theory and practice is critically discussed and questioned. We begin by discussing central features of this reflection in relation to Donald Schön's notion of reflection in practice. We submit, with Schön, that becoming good practitioners involves the ability not merely to devise means to realize previously established goals and to find solutions to problems or tasks that confront us. It also involves the ability to reflect on and articulate what the good goals are within our practices. However, we deepen this point by considering how such reflection depends on the shared understanding of a community of what is involved in a practice. We then go beyond Schön's account of reflection in action, by suggesting that thinking about what the problem is, or what is a good way of construing the situation, as a shared social practice, also raise moral questions. This is seen in the emphasis of intellectual virtues in P4C, and in the need to place one's reflections in an ethico-existential setting within sloyd.

3.1. Donald Schön on being a reflective practitioner

In *The Reflective Practitioner* Donald Schön introduces a fruitful analytical distinction between "knowing-in-action" and "reflecting-in-action" (SCHÖN 1983: 50-58). The first notion asks us to recall the know-how involved in mastering a practice. This is the sense in which doing something is not to be equated with blindly applying one's knowledge or a technique, but involves a form of seeing, a form of knowledge of *how* something is done that is often tacit. This also points to the ways in which knowledge, in the sense of know how, is embodied. The knowledge manifests itself in the way we react–seemingly without thinking–to unknown situations in an adequate way. The second notion rather calls on our ability to at different points articulate this tacit, intuitive, knowledge. Both these forms of reflection can be seen in our two examples.

The notion of knowing in action alerts us to the ways in which the knowledge sought in practicing a trade, is only available through training. It sits, as it were, in the skilled hands, in the familiarity with working with materials and tools that is gained through training, but also in the feeling of security after learning to pose one's question in a clear way. Certainly a person can be said to have some knowledge of what it is to sew a straight seam on a sewing machine, or hit a nail with a hammer, without having personal experience of doing it (cf. HAMLYN 1994, p. 218-219). Someone can be able to distinguish straight seams from uneven ones, and even know methods for keeping the fabric straight. Yet they may not be able to sew one themselves, because they are not used to the resistance provided by both fabric and sewing machine. Similarly someone might know that nails are used to fasten two pieces of wood, yet be unable to use a hammer to do it, not knowing how to allow the force of the hand to run through the hammer to the head of the nail. However, there are also cases in which the knowledge *that* "One should hold it like this and not like that" can only be obtained by engaging in the actual practice. Without doing it, one cannot even perceive the difference in how it should be held. In coming to master this technique, it is also clear that many of the initial considerations fall into the background, and thus become more tacit. One does not need to think about how to hold the hammer, rather the tool becomes an extension of one's body.

This notion of an embodied, tacit know-how, obtained through practice, is clear enough in the case of sloyd didactics. Nevertheless, it is also an aspect of philosophical practice. Learning to give voice to one's thought does not only involve a process of transmission, where something inner, a mental process, is turned into something outer, audible words and sentences. Giving voice to one's thoughts involves learning to use one's voice as an instrument, to say something without stumbling on the words, to speak slowly and clearly. Here, practice is usually needed to overcome the bodily discomfort associated with the nervousness, shame and fear of speaking in front of a group of people. It involves the embodied experience of taking a stand on an issue, sometimes even literally, revealing one's thoughts, and oneself in the action. It also involves presenting one's thoughts in an orderly way, as well as learning to speak in full sentences and framing one's sentences in a manner that makes the content of one's thought clear; "I don't think this is a good argument because …"Now, I take a stand on this…" "Now, I give an example of that…" Here there is no simple distinction between the form and content of one's thoughts. In giving them this form, one is able to see exactly what one's thoughts are.

The notion of knowing-in-action, shows how familiarity with a practice itself is a form of knowledge. Turning to "reflecting-in-action" points to ways in which this tacit knowledge can be transformed by finding ways of articulating it. Reflection for Schön is not just a means of finding solutions to pre-given problems. This again introduces an instrumental understanding of reflection, where reflection is conceived as a means to reaching certain aims. Rather Schön submits that good practitioners are not only problem solvers, but framers or setters of problems. Speaking about the significance of recognizing problem setting as a central characteristic of being professional, he writes,

> "although problem setting is a necessary condition for problem solving, it is not itself a technical problem. When we set the problem, we select what we will treat as the 'things' of the situation, we set the boundaries of our attention to it, and we impose upon it a coherence which allows us to say what is wrong and in what direction the situation needs to be changed. Problem setting is a process in which, interactively, we *name* the things to which we will attend and *frame* the context in which we will attend to them." (SCHÖN, 1983: 40)

This aspect of reflection is embedded in both didactical methods that let students constantly move between their doing and their reflection, at three stages of their action, *planning*, *reflecting in one's action*, and *evaluation*. For analytical purposes, we describe these features as part of three different stages. However, engaging in a practice involves an ongoing movement between them.

The first stage appears in the *initial* questions, "What is my problem?" "What is my plan?" "What do I want to do?" "How should I do it?" Both didactical schools stress the importance of initially carefully focusing on a systematic analysis of what actually is the question to discuss or the task to solve by a concrete production. The process starts with a separate phase in which students and teachers consciously discuss the starting point of the student's endeavor. Problem setting is an essential feature of the practice in which both didactics involve students. This answers to the insight that seeking out what the problem is, is essential to the method one chooses for solving it.

The second stage is the *ongoing* reflective endeavor of the philosophical inquiry or the sloyd process. This is characterized by questions such as, "What am I doing now?" "How does this contribute to doing what I planned?" Central to this stage is the realization that a failure to follow one's plan, may result in a failure to do what one was supposed to do. If one e.g. is about to make a shirt out of limited amount of fabric, one needs a plan for how to make the most of the material, but one also needs to take care to follow the plan. Otherwise, one may end up unable to make a shirt, for lack of useable material. Significantly, however, this reflection may also involve adjusting and at some points redefining one's plan to the present situation. This involves the constant redefinition of the problem and the challenges one faces, i.e. Schön's problem setting, when one receives more detailed knowledge of e.g. the material used and specific production-circumstances.

The final stage occurs in the assessment of what I have done, and whether I could have done something differently. "What did I do?" "Did I solve the problem?" "Did I formulate it in a good way?" Here, both P4C and sloyd-education emphasize the importance of meta-reflection *at the end* of each part of the process and at the end of the process as a whole. Even here the reflection is directed towards the process or discussion and towards the results of them. "Did we get an answer to our question", "Did I manufacture a good product?", "Precisely why or why not did the discussion and the production succeed?"

Both the didactics of philosophy and of sloyd formulate concrete methods that trade the knowledge of earlier generations but also provide a necessary distance and space to plan solutions, to constantly evaluate the process and the results, to think of alternative solutions, and to plan new steps. Significantly, this procedure has no given end and no given content. Every discussion and insight can be deepened further and every product can be improved in some way. It confronts students with the openness of future situations and develops their flexibility to adapt and to even question the traded knowledge, i.e. to transcend knowledge based on educated judgments.

These features of the reflective process develop the students' ability to make judgment in unknown situations in at least three ways. (1) They strengthen the ability to see different options and possibilities with which a concrete situation could be improved or a problem solved. This requires imagination, creativity and innovative thinking. (2) They further the ability to ponder the different demands that the concrete situation imposes on the product, service or argument. This requires sensitivity for the particularity of every situation. (3) They advance the ability to ponder what needs to be implemented of

one's own specific knowledge and skills. This requires a realistic estimation of one's own abilities and one's available resources. In this way both the didactics of philosophy and of sloyd ensure a constant challenge for the students to exceed, i.e. to transcend, their factual knowledge, their skills and routines in a certain action.

In these ways, both schools provide answers to how one can initiate, structure and maintain the learning process in such a way that the students are able to modify their knowledge in new circumstances. Yet, it is significant that what the students learn in doing this, on these accounts, is not a capacity or skill of its own, but something that comes with learning the practice, by becoming reflective practitioners. Every act of learning, as it were, involves the ability to transcend previous knowledge: the concept of learning itself implies this ability. In education, we differentiate clearly between *learning*—the person understands a certain content—and imitation—the person just repeats something without an understanding of their own (see e.g. KANT in LEHMANN 1979: 77). In these ways, learning as a concept implies the embodiment and transformation of knowledge into insights and abilities of our own. At the same time, we will see that knowledge also forms, changes and develops us as human beings.

3.2. Meta-reflection as a way of developing a shared understanding

At the meta-level of discussion, after a shared experience of engaging in an activity in philosophy and sloyd, several aspects of learning are made possible and apparent. The meta-reflection addresses the group and the collective processes. Both a philosophical discussion and the manufacturing of a product are joint endeavors, even though there are situations in which the individual students are asked to think of their own answer to a certain question or in situations where the students are working on their own with a product or parts of a shared product. The joint group situation also underlies the individual tasks, both on a seemingly superficial level and on an existential level.

Børresen & Malmhester touch on these two levels when they summarize the two main reasons to allow children to philosophize.

> "It's good and it's fun. The students discover the benefits when they notice that they can solve problems by thinking for themselves, and when their own experience is of value. Furthermore, such discoveries are often enjoyable: finding the absurd sides of an opportunity for example. Games and exercises are obviously fun as long as they last, but kids notice gradually that what they do is part of a larger context, too. They sometimes say that they learn to think better. They rarely think about all the fundamental and everyday concepts they constantly practice in different contexts. But this is finally what first and foremost helps to create and increase meaning for the children - both in school and in life in general." (BØRRESEN & MALMHESTER 2004: 20, *our translation*).

Experiencing themselves as part of a community, is here central to the students' learning. At its best this enables the existential experience of being welcomed in a group that on the one hand sets and develops frames for actions and behavior, and on the other hand welcomes them as individuals with voices of their own.

At a first glance these two aspects appear paradoxical or impossible. Nevertheless, the ability to develop a voice of one's own is essentially linked to a shared community with others (SCHAFFAR 2014). What might look like a group's power to limit a student's individuality, from

one perspective, can, from another perspective, be seen as the frame of criteria within which it is possible to speak of the individual's effort as being directed towards a possible product or an answer in the first place.

Consider this in relation to philosophizing. It is often stated that in philosophy there is no one correct answer. This can be said as an encouragement to students to dare to say what they think on an issue, without thinking that they will fail by giving the wrong answer. As we saw, such a statement often leads to a form of relativism in the initial stages of being introduced to philosophy. Yet, the point of this is not that anything the student says serves equally well as an answer to the question. Rather they offer their thoughts as a contribution to the joint endeavor of trying out what counts as a real answer to the question. Some students will always try to respond in an arbitrary, random, merely funny or meaningless way, but the onus is on the students, individually and in the group, to show why their thoughts can be seen as answering the question, and furthermore as providing a good answer to it. Thus they are asked to provide *convincing arguments*, not mere opinions.

The meta-reflection offers the opportunity to delve deeper into this issue. There one raises questions such as, "What did we learn?" "What did we agree and disagree upon" but also "Did we listen well?" and "Should we change something?" At this stage of meta-reflection it becomes obvious that a discussion is not possible if some people are never serious in what they say, if they are not able to explain and develop their thoughts. However, the discussion also fails if one does not take the time to listen to what people say, when they are serious. The group and the shared desire to understand an issue here act as a counterpart to random individual utterances. Such utterances should also not be taken as an expression of the individual's freedom of speech. If the others do not understand what the person is saying, it is not an act of speech, in the sense that others are asked to take it into account in their further discussion.

Similarly we can see the need of a community in the process of production. On the one hand, there is no one right expression in the context of creativity. On the other hand, as the hermeneutic tradition has shown, it is only in contact with the responses of others that it is possible to discuss the meaning of the work. A product can be more or less useful, beautiful or fitting to certain needs, but to judge whether it is requires a shared community that reflects on both the product itself and on the criteria used in judging it. The individual students are not able to define on their own what is understandable, useful, beautiful or serious, rather it is in relation to another, and to a shared community that such questions arise.

Reflection, and significantly self-reflection, is in that way, something that essentially happens in interaction with each other (NYMAN 2012). In these respects P4C and sloyd-education shares many of the features of reasoning about learning, that are seen in the move in educational theory from more behaviorist approaches which measure learning as a matter of stimulus and response, to seeing learning as socially and culturally constructed (cf. works of VYGOTSKY and DEWEY).

3.3. Reflection as intellectual virtue

The former considerations naturally lead us to the intellectual virtues that were central to the conception of P4C that we introduced. Engaging in the practice of philosophy and sloyd, both raise questions about what it means to do something, and do it well, as well as to who I am who is doing it. The meta-reflection serves as a scene for reaching a common understanding of what is being done, what the problem is and how to solve it. It provides the participants with a sense of assurance of being together in the world and carrying responsible for their actions in it. The meta-reflection also calls for the need to recognize *how* something should be done, carefully, attentively, creatively, imaginatively, honestly, and so on, with an ever-growing understanding of what it is that is being done. All these virtues conspire to a certain form of practical wisdom that

characterizes the person who knows how to do something well (cf. BIESTA 2010, HEILBRONN 2011, BENNETT 2012). By attending to the way something is being done, students in the meta-reflection are also faced with reflecting on questions directed towards themselves, their own efforts and their place in and responsibility for the shared experience. It is important to learn both to honestly evaluate their own work and their own effort in the whole process and to develop procedures for an honest evaluation of other's work. The aim of this meta-reflective discussion in both philosophy and sloyd is meant to lead to an improvement of the individual student, the teamwork and the concrete results/products.

Just as in the case of learning, the ability to go beyond, transcend and modify what one has been told and shown, learning what it is to do something well, is not anything we learn in addition to learning the particular practice. Rather it is something we learn *in* learning the practice. We learn what we should attend to, to be able to sew a straight seam, why it is important to be serious in making a contribution to a discussion, why we should take our time in some cases, and how to speed up the process in others. To some extent, it is possible to separate what it is to do something from doing it well. A slightly uneven seam still does the work of holding two pieces of fabric together, and its faults may not show on the outside. Thus, it may fulfill its purpose, although it does not stand an aesthetic judgment. However, there are also times were the failure to attend to one's work carefully, will lead to one not doing what one was supposed to in the first place. If a seam is so uneven that it runs outside the fabric, it will not fulfill its purpose, nor look good. In these cases we see how the notion of doing something well also comes into our understanding of *what* it is we are doing.

When discussing virtues, it is important to remark on a certain circularity in the argument. Aristotle, who is the major source of inspiration for modern versions of virtue theory (ANSCOMBE 1981, MACINTYRE 2007, on virtues in an educational context see KOTZEE 2013), noted that one already needs to be a virtuous person to recognize virtue. The virtuous person is "as it were a standard and measure" of what is virtuous. (ARISTOTLE 2000: 3.5.1113a29-33). This does not mean that the virtuous person can willfully decide on what the virtues are. Such a view, again, neglects the sense in which these activities are fundamentally couched within a social and interpersonal setting. It also neglects that someone who does not act virtuously would not be conceived as being virtuous. Remarking on this circularity, rather points to the need of understanding how what we perceive as good in a practice is internal to our understanding of that practice. The moral demands, as Lars Hertzberg notes in a different context, "are not imposed from outside but are internal to an agent's perception." (HERTZBERG 2011: 7).

The training in thinking that P4C promotes, e.g., presupposes an understanding of what constitutes good forms of reasoning that can only be acquired through this training, or through philosophical reflection taken more broadly. (Cf. DUNNE 1993: 293.) This creates difficulties in judging whether someone has learnt to be more reflective using any form of external standards (cf. CURREN and KOTZEE 2014). For this reason, there has been criticism of the research done on the positive contributions of P4C for being limited in its approach, as, "largely unsystematic reflections on the goals and practices of the practices" (REZNITSKAYA 2004: 4.) Yet, as Sigge and Ohlsson point out, the aim of studies with a qualitative approach "have been to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and processes [involved in the practice of P4C] rather than generalizable results." (OHLSSON & SIGGE 2013: 20, *our translation*). Even more, P4C was developed, precisely as a response to the need for ways of improving our sense of what constitutes good reasoning, or a reasonable position, given the limitations in establishing an external standard of what constitutes good thinking. To be able to judge a chain of reasoning as good, as it were, we need to develop into becoming more reasonable persons.

This involves, coming to see how the standards and demands we recognize in a practice are internal to our understanding of that practice.

This allows us to articulate two ways of thinking about what it is do something well, or to do it in a *good* way, which helps to consider what constitutes good quality. On the one hand, we may think of goodness as the means, which contribute to reaching certain aims. "Goodness" is then understood instrumentally, as relative to reaching one's aims in such an efficient and time-saving way as possible. It is then judged according to external standards, such as efficiency. On the other hand, we may think of "goodness" as a central aspect of the reflection about what one's aims are, what one seriously, honestly and imaginatively can think of as possible aims of different practices (BIESTA 2010). In this case the standard called upon is internal to one's understanding of these practices.

4. Conclusion

We began this article with the questions, "How should vocational education prepare students for future, yet unknown tasks?" and, "How does vocational education help students develop their faculty of judgment to differentiate between better and worse quality?" To clarify the possible aims of these questions, we compared two different didactical schools. Both are seemingly marginalized in the educational discussion, and, since they are easily considered as essentially different, they have not been discussed together before. We made this comparison very aware of the recent discussions about the notion of competence, which some educational theorists and policy-maker prefer to the notion of knowledge or *Bildung*, and the recent discussions about methods for formative assessment. In our conclusion we would like to address some issues raised by these two fields.

In today's language in vocational curricula, in policy documents and in educational theories the knowledge and abilities aimed at for learning how to answer future, unknown demands is often described with the term "competence". This concept is introduced to answer precisely the same challenge that we raised in this article. That is, the insight that having great knowledge (understood as facts) about a certain subject or being skilled to conduct a certain practical action is not sufficient to solve the problems that a person encounters in their (professional) life. In order to respond to new, unusual situations where results are not given in advance, people need to be able to work in ways that go beyond what they have learnt in their training (CEDEFOB 2010, KEEN 2003, ILLERIS 2013: 24f).

This notion of competence is meant in a broad sense, to overcome the simple idea of knowledge as cumulative. Yet, competence is often used and discussed in the literature in a way that invites us to think of it as a specific, separable skill or ability. One distinguishes e.g. between the basic key competences and the more specific competences that are necessary for certain tasks. This distinction itself suggests a cumulative picture of knowledge and learning (cf. ALLAIS 2014). Furthermore, it is unclear what problem the concept of competence is expected to solve. The motivation for introducing competence appears to be dissatisfaction with earlier central concepts, such as knowledge, qualification or *Bildung* (see e.g. ILLERIS 2013: 19f). Yet, a survey of the concerns motivating the earlier choices of concept shows a considerable similarity with the motivation for speaking about "competence".

The concept of knowledge, such as it was used by e.g. Aristotle, already held the significance now attributed to the concept of competence, namely, a knowledge that goes

far beyond the one-sided familiarity with the facts or know-how to perform skill-based actions. Aristotle distinguished between different aspects of knowledge (*episteme*, *techne*, *phronesis*, *doxa*, see ARISTOTLE 2000, and e.g. GUSTAVSSON 2000), but kept the notion of knowledge as the overarching concept. Similarly with the notion of *Bildung*. Thinkers of the Enlightenment and Romanticism (KANT, VON HUMBOLDT, SCHLEIERMACHER, FICHTE, ROUSSEAU etc.) attempted to transcend precisely the sort of narrow-mindedness in facts and actions that some people show after being, according to these philosophers, poorly educated and taught. The process of *Bildung*, they meant, had failed if these people were not able to act appropriately in unexpected situations. Acting "appropriately", here, is understood in the very broad sense that we tried to spell out in this discussion, including the profound moral implications of humanism (for an overview see e.g.: SCHAFFAR & ULJENS 2015, SILJANDER, KIVILÄ & SUTINEN 2012, THOMPSON 2009).

The question that "competence" is designed to answer, therefore, is no new question. Rather it touches on one of the central themes in the history of philosophy and several disciplines that emerged out of philosophy, such as education. In accordance with our previous argumentation, every theory of education in some way answers to the question about how learning enables the student to go beyond the original learning situation. They do so because this is a central characteristic of how we understand the concept of learning, as distinct from, say, repetition and imitation. For this reason, the ability in learning to go beyond the actual learning situation should not be conceived as yet another skill that we learn in addition to other specific skills or knowledge. Rather this ability is a fundamental aspect of human life, an enabling condition for the concept of learning.

The aim of introducing competence as a new concept, thus, appears to be to find a solution to an age-old problem in the philosophy of education. Our discussion was rather aimed at showing that it is not enough to introduce a new concept if we want to reach a better understanding of this problem. What is demanded is a greater transformation in how we conceptualize and learn to reflect on the issues at hand and a move away from the temptation to define new educational concepts.

The insight that making judgments, and reflecting on a practice cannot be conceptualized as a simple skill, technique or competence, reveals other similarities between philosophy and sloyd, since both practices situate us in a moral context. They alert us to moral questions that arise in the reflection of what kind of practice it is in which we are initially involved, how to engage in it in a good way, and who we become as practitioners. This allowed us to in part answer the question about how to judge the quality of what one does. A deepening understanding of the practice in which one is engaged, we argued, will involve a greater grasp of the standards inherent in it, and what it takes for the practitioner to meet these standards.

The comparison between sloyd and philosophy also shows significant similarities with methods for formative assessment. Wiliam Dylan (2011) e.g. formulates five strategies for improving the teacher's practice and the student's learning. These strategies stress several of the didactical aspects that we have mentioned and discussed. Thus they serve to summarize key features of our discussion. Formative assessment takes its starting point in methods that enable regular planning and evaluation. These methods are embedded in a group setting, which enables both self-reflection and evaluation, peer-feedback and evaluation and feedback by the teacher. Learning is fundamentally situated and conceptualized as a group endeavor where it is essential that the individual is seen

and sees him- or herself as an essentially active participant. The methods are finally conceptualized to make the process of success visible both for the student and the teacher. Dylan describes these features of learning and teaching methods without any concrete subject matter in mind. Our comparison between these two different subjects can be read as confirming the virtues of these methods situated in a concrete context.

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