

Conditional aspects of school-home conversations

Anne Dorthé Tveit

Agder University College,
Kristiansand, Norway

The focus of this study is the conditions in which conversations between school and home take place, and the discussion highlights questions such as the following: Are the participants sincere? Do the participants express the truth about the pupils' school facilities? How does pupil participating impact the conversation? The background for the study is that conversations between school and home should, according to laws and proposals, be characterized by dialogue (1995; 1998a; 1998b), and research results which show that dialogue in these conversations is quite frequently absent (Lidén, 1997; Nordahl, 2000; Nordahl & Sørli, 1996; Vestre, 1995). Dialogue is understood here as being communicative action as described by Habermas in *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984; , 1987). This theory is criticised, however, this is not commented upon in this paper. Certain conditional aspects are tied to the conversation if it is to be considered as communicative action, and the research question is therefore: "What characterizes the conversation between school and home, and how does the conversation coincide in communicative action?" Through studying the participants' everyday practices and comparing these with communicative action, one may acquire knowledge about how the conversation corresponds with/does not correspond with communicative action, and in this way get insight into the conditional aspects of school-home conversations.

Theoretical foundation

Habermas' theory of communicative action is the theoretical foundation for the study, and according to this theory, a conversation might be characterized by three types of actions, being instrumental, strategic and communicative action. In this particular study the conditional aspects of accomplishing dialogue or communicative action receive focus. The theory of communicative action outlines some ideal conditions which the participants in conversations are supposed to fulfil if they are to succeed in creating dialogue: (1) The participants are *oriented towards reaching understanding*, and make validity claims on one another; the actions must be (2) *true*, (3) *right* and (4) *truthful*. Lifeworld is not especially commented upon in the elaboration below, but functions as a horizon-forming context in the conversation, and subsequently, the conversation reproduces the participants' lifeworld. In the following the categories 1, 2 and 4 are further elaborated because these are relevant for this paper.

Oriented towards reaching understanding

According to the theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1984; 1987), one conditional aspect of achieving dialogue in a conversation is that the participants are oriented towards reaching understanding. One of the participants then presents his interpretation of the pupil's school situation. He allows the other participants to criticize his interpretation in order that he may alter his interpretations. The other participants then agree or disagree. The same principle applies to the other participants. The goal of this process is to reach consensus in a communicative action where no one single voice is privileged. Being oriented towards reaching understanding is one of two possible action orientations that the participants can choose in the conversation. In the other orientation the participants are oriented towards success and support for their own point of view. They then act strategically or instrumentally, and are unilaterally engaged in reaching a previously designed specific goal.

In the conversation between school and home a dialogue might be threatened by participants who act strategic and not communicative. Then the validity claim is effect and the claims true, right and truthful are set aside.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Anne Dorthé Tveit, email: anne.d.tveit@hia.no

True: The participants negotiate common understanding about subjects and facts

One conditional aspect of accomplishing dialogue in a conversation is to obtain common understanding about subjects and facts (the objective world). The common understanding should be *true* to fulfil the validity claim in the objective world; that is, what they in the conversation agree upon as true. This is a trans-subjective validity claim, but must have the same significance for arbitrary observers as for the participants themselves in order to be valid.

The participants in the conversation between school and home might obtain a common understanding regarding subjects and facts about the pupil's educational facilities by communicative action as described in point one, and in this paper the validity claim true is focused discussing issues like: Do the participants get a realistic picture of the pupil's school facilities? How does it affect the conversation to focus positive issues contra negative issues?

Truthful: The participants' authentic voice is presented

Another conditional claim to the conversation is that the participants' expressions should be truthful in order to be characterized as dialogue. The validity claim "truthful" applies if the participants express their authentic selves, their intentions, motives, thoughts, desires, feelings etc (the subjective world). This claim to the conversation might be threatened both by participants who are deliberately untruthful as well as by participants who are victims of self-delusion. This is dramaturgic action, as Goffman (1971) describes it in the preface, how the individual "present himself and his activity to others, the ways in which he guides and controls the impression they form of him, and the kinds of things that he may and may not do while sustaining his performance before them".

In the conversations between school and home the teacher, pupil and parent must express their authentic thoughts and feelings about the issues discussed if the conversation should be characterized as communicative action or dialogue. In this paper questions like these are discussed: Did you express your true opinion with regard to the topics that were discussed? Did you have goals with respect to the parent conference that you could not say out loud? Was there anything that you consciously chose not to bring up for discussion? Did you bring up anything with which you are not satisfied? How did your description of the pupil's situation influence by having the pupil present?

Did you think that there was something "smart" to say, something less "smart" within the various topics, for example, with regard to marks?

Methodology

Both observations and interviews are used to getting answers to the research question. The study is qualitative and rests within a critical tradition which Guba and Lincoln (2005) describe as historical realism with a virtuality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender values that have crystallized over time. That is, the findings presented are value-mediated, and cannot be regarded as "objective" findings. The units which are studied are *conversations* established to discuss school facilities for pupils with special educational needs, and they include a variety of discussions of learning problems, social disabilities, and/or emotional disabilities, future plans, etc.

Sample

The conversations studied took place at 7 lower secondary schools, one of these being a combined with primary school, and the methods used were observations (13) and interviews with teachers (10), pupils (11), and parents (10). Some of these have been recorded and transcribed, while in others the researcher has taken notes and written a summary immediately afterwards due to the fact that one or more of the participants did not want to be recorded (6 observations, 2 with parents, 1 parents and 1 pupil). Some of the observations and interviews are sets, meaning that the ones observed are also interviewed, while others are not. Additional it is presented results from 3 focus interviews in lower secondary schools, 6 teachers within general education in each group. Because of the low number of informants it is not emphasised if the results are from teachers in secondary/ primary schools or from special/general education. The results presented are sections from the interviews with teachers and parents.

Observations and interviews

The study employs both observations and interviews to study conditional aspects of conversations between school and home. The observations of the conversations might be regarded closely to an observation of first order. However, the observation is recorded and transcribed to text, and this excludes any non-verbal language. The interviews are produced in a dialogue between the informant and the researcher, and one purpose of the interview is to capture the informant's own perception within the scope of the study.

In this sense the interviews are explorative, and start directly with the following question: "Would you like to start and tell me about your feelings regarding the conversation?" Then the informant's answers and initiatives were followed up by open questions that were not leading and posed in informal language. This implies that each interview is different. The participants in the conversations are interviewed one at the time in order to make them talk freely.

The interview allows a picture of how the informants describe the conversation, and could be regarded as an observation of second order. However, the interview is not as open as usually is the case in an explorative interview, as the purpose of this study is to discuss conditional aspects in the conversation between school and home with the theory of communicative action used as background. Posing questions from this theory could be considered as an observation of third order, producing knowledge formed by the theory as it is operationalized by the theoretical categories. This might be considered to establish "a specific eye" or perspective on the social reality as Esmark, Bagge Laustsen and Åkerstøm Andersen (2005) describe it. Another "eye" such as systems theory, ethical theory, linguistic theory etc. would produce different forms of knowledge. The theory of communicative action is chosen because it is acknowledged, and seems relevant regarding conditional aspects in a conversation.

The theoretical position in this study might be regarded as being on the one side of a continuum where the researcher in the other outer limit has as a starting point to enter the arena for research as openly as possible, focusing on a theme in which the purpose is to generate theory from the empirical material, as described by Glasser and Strauss (1967). However, in an open approach as well, the researcher has some theoretical assumptions about the topic discussed and which is decisive for the questions posed in an interview, these being private assumptions and should also be elaborated. In this study grounded on the theory of communicative action, some of the researcher's prejudice is formed beforehand by studying the theory. However, the "theory-loaded" character (to borrow a concept from the philosopher of science Hanson (2002)) of some of the questions is in addition to an ambition of capturing the informants' perspectives as described above. The analysis of the conversations also has a "theory-loaded" view by using categories from the theory of communicative action, and decides what you see and what you do not see.

Validity

According to Kvale (2004) a theory can contribute to strengthening the validity in all parts of a study and, as illustrated above, the theory of communicative action has a major role in this study. A central concept from the theory "communicative action" is part of the research question; concepts from the theory are operationalized as a backdrop for the interview and used to analyze the observations in order to cover essential parts of the research question. The use of the "theory of communicative action" is also considered to strengthen the validity in the interpretation of the data by starting the interpretation process during the interview. It seems to make it easier to foresee actual questions as Kvale (2004) describes it. He argues that it could be problematic to wait to present theory into the project until the analysis stage because the interviews may lack relevant information. However, the chosen theory implies that the conditional aspects for accomplishing dialogue in the conversation between school and home are defined in a certain way and could cause the researcher to fail to see aspects not included in the theory as described above.

Results

If the conversation between school and home is to be considered a dialogue they must act communicatively and act according to the validity claims true, right and truthful. Below it is illustrated how some teachers act communicatively in order to obtain certain results, and then violate the condition for dialogue that you must act *communicatively*. It is also described how focus on positive issues, how the participants' sincerity and pupil participation might threaten the validity claims *true* and *truthful*. These validity claims are not separated in the discussion because in a conversation they are intertwined and therefore not distinguishable; according to Habermas, communicative utterances are always embedded in various world relations at the same time (Habermas, 1987, s120).

To focus the positive

To focus the positive about the pupils' education has been a mantra within education and especially within special education the last decenniums and several teachers seem to focus what is positive about the pupil's education as this teacher describes:

I don't always say what is bad... I try to focus on what they fix. Yet, the very obvious things I tell them, of course. In meetings I say: You know that and that and that. And what you don't know, I choose to be silent about. If there are really huge problems of concentration, of course, if it's really that obvious – then the parents will wonder if I.....I can tell the parents, though, if I tell them in a decent way. And they will accept.

When she is asked about what impact it has on the conversation not to talk about the negative:

That's the point. Of course I have to be negative sometimes. But when there is too much negative, I try not to mention all of it, just to prevent the bad feelings. Still I know it can be a problem. They think they know a whole lot, and when they start on secondary school/junior high, the circumstances are sort of different...Marks. No, I should not be negative. We must go on working, you know. They are good at that. Just think about what kind of a day they get if everything is negative. I don't fix that, but there is some kind of balance...Still they have to put up with some bad things, right? They shouldn't see the world through rose-coloured glasses. The parents know it's not like that, anyway...If there are bad feelings, I try to focus on what I think is important, and it's me, choosing the instances. If everything is negative – or most of it – it can't be very nice to get back home if your kid has been slaughtered. Certain things must be told, though. And I pick the most important – what I want to be changed, perhaps. Yes, it has to be that. I do wish a change. Things we are going to stress a bit more.

This teacher seems to focus the positive in order to take care of the mother and her boy. However she realizes that it might be a problem, and does not wish to give an idealized picture.

She does talk about negative issues, but then chooses the most important.

To focus positive subjects seems also to be appreciated by this mother, and to give the mother a new perspective:

... I didn't know it was that good. Even if I – you know, I have seen absence and sort of focused on that a bit. So I got this awful feeling, you know, when your shoulders are just sinking, kind of like that

To focus positive issues seem to imply that the mother in question gets her shoulders down, and it seems like these two teachers who participated in the conversation which the mother refers have succeeded with their strategy:

*...you go for the constructive, that makes the difference, right? That we are constructive and the parents constructive – And that, you will notice that on the pupils, right?
...And some of them may have been sent back home due to bad behaviour or they may have been expelled for a day because of their actions. So we notice the reactions, but we don't make a fuss out of it when it has happened. Even if we react.....Still this is something we believe in more and more, more generally, what makes you better? What makes you become a better person? We think most people will agree with us in focusing on the constructive.*

However, to focus the positive might give the parents, as several teachers also suggest, a misrepresented picture of the pupil, and this teacher describes the need also to know the limitations:

It has been a long way. They come from primary school/elementary school where they have been making progress, all the time – and then the distance to the others is suddenly very large – this they have not been told – or may be they didn't have the strength to hear it. We have also been through the

discussion of marks – why do we have them? – Where is your kid, but I feel that we still agree about what the kid knows. We agree about the limitations.

Several teachers describe that giving marks necessitates that teacher and parents discuss what the pupil is able to and not able to do regarding school subjects. The need to get a more realistic picture of the pupil is underlined by this teacher when she is taking both the perspective as a teacher and as a mother:

...I am not able to correct my daughter if her school does not tell me what she is doing there. Then there is no possibility for us doing our job. So what should the parents know about, I think?

By taking the perspective of the parents this teacher seems to realize that the parents seem to depend upon a realistic picture of the pupil to be able to help the pupil. As the teacher above describes it might blur the pupils school situation if the parents are told by the teacher that “she is improving” without referring to other pupils, the curriculum or other norms.

Truthfulness.

The majority of the parents seem to emphasize sincerity in the conversation, as this mother:

Don't you get my kind of humour? I just have to keep smiling, and by the way, I have got so used to it here that I have become immune. I am not shy either, you see. It's no use. I used to be, but when you know you are going to speak for the kids and keep going, you simply can't be shy and embarrassed and go on hiding, you see. I am very frank about things, may be too much, but I prefer to speak out and get over with it.

The mother seems to focus on her child and wish a straight forward conversation. She seems to give priority to sincerity and tones down how she presents herself to others, the impression that she forms on the teachers, and things that she may or may not do, to quote Goffman (1971). However, this is not the case for all parents; one father claims that the conversation might be constrained by the pupil's participation:

We do hold back a little, we do. It is not right to criticise a lot when he [the pupil] is here. There's a limit, I feel.

How pupil participation might impact the conversation is further elaborated under a heading below. When this teacher is asked if she is sincere when she is talking to a boy's mother, she answers:

No, I'm not quite sincere, I'm not. I guess I'm a bit psychological. Since I have this feeling of what I am supposed to say not to make the mother completely unhappy and devastated. I have worried so much when she is sad, and she seems never to get over with things. I am not anxious about her being mad at me, because I feel we communicate quite well. I experience trust from the mother...In a way I feel responsible for the way she feels about things. Still I don't think I restrain very much from doing things.

This teacher describes that she has good communication with the mother, but due to the mothers feelings she is not sincere in the conversation. Supposedly she describes that she might act in a way that maintains the mothers “face”, as Goffman (2004) describes it. And it seems like several of the teachers adjust the conversation in a certain way in order to take care of the parents:

It happens that I conceal things, yes. Postponing things. I think I will put it differently. I always try to be honest, but I'm not telling everything.

Another teacher describes that he might have different agendas in proportion to parents and pupil (even if he most of the time claims that he has an open communication between teacher pupil and parents):

Still it may happen, for instance, if it has to do with suspicion to acquaintances and spirits and stuff...Then we have a hidden agenda to him, since we think it's his best, and it's not impossible we have an agenda with the mother and the father and then with him.

The different agendas described above seem to be maintained because of pedagogical reasons. But sometimes the loyalty is the other way, and this teacher tells about how she protects the pupils from reactions at home:

It could be a dilemma, though, when you know that your parents, in your opinion, react very stupidly on information about unwanted behaviour, that you are a bit careful to forward it or perhaps you just gloss over it.

That is, different "byplays" might be formed among teacher, pupil and parents. Byplay is a concept borrowed from Goffman (1966, p. 181) and meaning "a non-inclusive engagement that is carried on simultaneously with the first but in a way carefully calculated not to interfere with it too openly". Supposedly the different byplays among teacher, pupil and parents make necessary certain calculations and might affect the conversation.

These two teachers seem to have opposite meaning regarding sincerity:

...as I have mentioned before, what is crucial to achieve the best results, is honesty. Don't gloss over things. And don't accuse anybody, but describe the situation.

That was one of my points, glossed reality. You know that the conference is becoming more pleasant and more ok for yourself if that reality is glossed a little, that is if you go hard at it...then you make trouble for yourself. That...that is regular rule, that is my opinion.

One of the teachers does not wish to "gloss over things" while the other takes the opposite stand. The latter teacher might have a similar view with the teacher above who claims that she is not sincere, but due to different reasons: She argues that she wants to take care of the mother while the teacher above argues that if you criticize harshly you might get in trouble yourself. Supposedly honesty and sincerity challenge the teacher both as a professional and as a person. As some teachers describe, it takes courage to be honest and it seems like honesty might be learnt from experience, like this teacher describes it:

...it's like, from a starting point, you want to be kind to the parents, but after a while you learn there are a lot of things, from suspicions to registering things that should have been different at home or with pupils, or it could be situations in your spare time...quite frankly to pupils or parents.

...if you want to be truthful, you need a bit of guts, and if you think you can pass on the truthfulness, the message without a hidden agenda, and without a specific target, but simply because you do it, if they are able to see that you do it of love to the kids or the pupils, simply because you wish them well. Then we have to face the truth, and we have reached far. But it's not easy...

The majority of the parents seem to appreciate sincerity, but enhance that what you say might be said in a *diplomatic way* or in a *decent way*. This is also enhanced by a teacher who quoted a parent: "This is the first time that we have felt happy after a parent-teacher meeting". And further:

...and that kid was not without hassles. Still there are problems, we never tried to conceal that, but it's important that you are conscious of not creating an atmosphere or expressing things in a way which only makes things worse.

This last quote might describe what several teachers and parents consider important: it is not only what you say, but how you say it. As Goffman (2004, p. 299) writes, to get bad news in a discrete way makes a conversation more human, and he characterizes this as one of the interaction-order's resources. And, as he states, in the situation you might be very grateful for such considerations. As illustrated above both parents and teacher seem to consider it important how the pupil's learning situation is described, but at the same time it might be useful to be reminded by Goffman: how gently or ungentle you are treated when you get the bad news, this does not affect the content of the news.

How does pupil participation affect the conversation?

Even if pupil's participation in the conversation between school and home is becoming more usual, this mother may describe a reaction that several recognize: *Gosh, is it possible, somehow?* A reaction that might tell that pupil participation is not obvious. However, the same mother says this about pupil's participation: *You must be completely honest, you must not beat about the bush; you must, sort of, stick to the point.*

Several parents and teachers claim that the pupil's participation makes no difference, they discuss the same, it does not affect the conversation, and honesty is often mentioned as desirable. However there are also both teachers and parents who claim that pupil participation influence the conversation, and this mother who comments upon a conversation where her son participated, probably describes a typical view:

...I was thinking for a moment that you get a little childish, if you see what I mean. ...Something hit me while I was sitting there. It's a good thing the daddy is not here, because then I think he would...It opened a bit like...But it was because he [the pupil] was there, for sure. It does something to the conversation, for sure. And it is important to let him talk – mother has to stand a little behind when he is asked – that is the way it should be though, I think. Yeah, it gets a bit tense, a sort of strained...role, I don't know – now we are to hear what he has to...something which just has to be done sort of? ...you gloss over it a bit – you talk about what is ok and not unpleasant - yeah, it's a little bit of that, I guess,...you don't want to him to be hurt, you know. You choose a careful point of view. Still, it's quite clear that something happens, since had I been there alone, it would have been straight to the point and blah, blah, blah. And then we go.

The mother describes a conversation which focuses the child, is adapted to the child, and that she as grown-up enters a strained, faked role in the conversation. Further she states that one takes up a careful position, and slightly glosses over things. When she is asked if she still think it was ok that her son was there she

describes the role as unpleasant, and is hesitant about his participation:

Well, I don't know – you probably noticed as well as me –it was a bit uncomfortable – but once we started to talk about things he manages – hobbies and things like that, he/had a good time, and then he talked.

Several of the teachers describe, similar to the mother above, that when the pupil participates in the conversation they focus and talk to the pupil and not the parents. One teacher names this conversation "play to the gallery" because the teacher and the pupil then, in front of the parents, repeat a conversation carried out beforehand. To use Goffmans (1971) theatrical metaphor: The teacher and pupil enter the stage and perform a rehearsed conversation while the parents become audience. This might violate the possibility to accomplish dialogue in the conversation between school and home as in a dialogue you reach consensus on the basis of communicative action among the participants who are present.

Pupil participation also has an impact on what you discuss. As the mother above says, you might talk about what is ok and not unpleasant. This agrees with this teacher:

...if things are getting a bit tricky at home, you know, it doesn't pop up when the pupil is there in person, it`s only when the parents are alone with us.

And these are further examples of what teachers and parents do not wish to discuss with the pupil present:

Specific family affairs, the pupil's accommodation to school subjects, death, diagnosis, teasing and anxiety in relation to other pupils, motivation, problems with alcohol and drugs, circumstances that make the pupil mad or uncommunicative, especially with regard to personal abilities, a pupil who has an extreme overweight, self-destruction, conflict matters.

Both teacher and parent seem to limit the themes in the conversation in order to *shield the pupil* as one of the teachers names it, but some teachers also describe what might be characterized as pedagogical reasons to why the pupil not always should participate:

...Circumstances where we have to make some rounds with parents in order to get rid of the focus on marks or subjects when we see that the pupil's schooldays is rather tough.

...Sometimes adults need to sit down and discuss matters by themselves, like self-destruction, before they start talking with their youngsters, since there are few young people who can profit from grown ups` insecurity.

...It is important that the pupil experiences that home and school are playing on the same team.

As illustrated some teachers and parents do not consider the conversation to be influence by pupil's participation while other consider that both the form and the content in the conversation are influenced. The variation of pupils' participation in the conversation might mirror these different views: In some conversations the pupil participates, in some they do not participate, and sometimes the pupil is asked to leave the conference towards the end of the conference because the teacher and parents wish to discuss certain subjects without the pupil being present. Several claims that pupil participation is considered every time.

To act strategic in a communicative way

When the professional and non-professional disagree, sometimes the teacher acts communicative in the conversation, but has another agenda. That is, acts strategic (Habermas, 1984) in order to influence the pupils and parents point of view in the long run apparently without having as goal to attempt to coordinate the different viewpoints, as this teacher describes:

I try to say a few words before I meet them half way. I take them seriously – like the incidence of fighting. I don't know if I dare to say it, but I know and observe quite a few things, but it does not always go home with the parents. So I meet them half way again and tell them I am ready for new observations, if you see....I can't just say "No". He does not go through it like that at school. If they perceive it like that, I am ready to meet them half way, then we make a deal about what to do

and agree about the circumstances and what to do next.....After having agreed about my observations. I do this, walk inside and tell them how I perceived the whole thing. I do that for a while, and if I am able to make the parents to understand what I want, we are through with it. If I don't succeed, I have to make some other efforts if they still worry.....

She is asked if she might confront the mother and answers: *Yes, I try a little, but I have also become acquainted with the parents so I know where to go to have my will.* And she describes this dilemma as professional: *In a way that's what I want, taking them seriously instead of rejecting them.* She describes dialogue as ideal for the conversation, and states further:

Making the parents commit themselves to what I want. I can stop also. I know I want it this or that way, but if the parents reject our discussions of what we can do, I am willing to throw in the towel for a while to see if it is getting better...Yes, I feel it is important that we have a dialogue for the kid's sake. I just don't follow my own chosen path, even if I believe in what I do...I achieve what I want then, anyway. It just takes a little more time. It sounds a bit flippant...but it is important to include the parents. I can't do everything the parents want me to, right. I can't, but in certain areas I can try. When it comes to assignments, to take one example, - if they think there are too many assignments, I can try to reduce them. It does not matter, right? Adjust the assignments to the pupil, right? There are a whole lot of things. It's important to me that they dare to confront me with things, call me when there are problems, not talking behind my back, not dealing with their neighbours instead of me.

To act strategic over a period of time is described by another teacher who considers a special class for a girl:

Then I think; well, we have to keep on for a while. We have to get to know each other a little, but next time you have to be somewhat sharper...They will have to get it in small dozes, it seems like the father already perceives some of it, but there are still miles to go.

Another teacher describes the end-product of a similar process, discussing a pupils future plan:

Now we are harvesting from the toilsome work we have had in order to agree about what we see – what kind of challenges we face, together with the parents, to take care of the pupil. It has been a long way.... We agree about the limitations. Nobody talked about the general subjects (allmennfag). Nobody mentioned what it meant to be "rødruss" (celebrating graduation after high school), and it was no coincidence. It has been toilsome work and a road we have followed together.

And she comments on a mother to a boy now finishing lower secondary school:

...she has been fantastic. She has moved borders, really. Also from being very sad about the problems as they were to reaching a next step when she says OK – what are we really able to do? After a while very reality oriented .Yet it has been a process.

In this sense the conversation might be an institutionalized conversation where people are being processed as Goffman (2004, s298) describes it, and as illustrated above, the processing includes the parents and not only the pupil who are the official focus.

Final remarks

According to the law the conversation in the parent teacher conference should be characterized by dialogue, and if dialogue is

regarded communicative action certain conditional aspects are tied to the conversation.

The participants are supposed to be oriented to (1) reach agreement and the validity claims (2) true, (3) right and (4) truthful is supposed to be fulfilled.

This paper certainly does not allow for a complete discussion of conditional aspects in conversations. However, the aspects 1, 2 and 4 are discussed in proportion to these issues: To focus the positive, truthfulness, how does pupil participation affect the conversation and to act strategic in a communicative way. The results from this study indicate that these conditional aspects might be considered threatened in different ways: The results show that teachers might face a challenge regarding focusing the positive contra giving a realistic view of the child in the conversation between school and home. Even if several teachers seem aware of this challenge a one-sided focus on the positive might threaten the validity claim "truth" as also illustrated above: You might be left with fragments of the truth. The results presented also indicate that some enhance sincerity, but several also seem to attach importance to speak in a discrete manner. Discretion might be regarded as a resource and make the conversation more human, but supposedly it might also challenge the sincerity among the participants and influence how the conversation is constructed. Further, according to some teacher and parents, pupil participation in the conversation between school and home does not affect the conversation. However others describe that pupil participation has an impact on the conversation: you might choose a careful position, you might choose not to discuss certain issues, and you might repeat a conversation performed beforehand. The interviews also indicate that some teachers act communicative in order to achieve a result in the long run, and then the validity claim is what effect their actions have on the end-result, and the validity claims true and truthful are set aside. Supposedly there are no right or wrong answers to the issues discussed, and how the professional face the challenges regarding the validity claims dealt with in this paper seems to make demands on the professionals' ethical reflection and moral judgement capacities. Whether it might be regarded positive to consider the conditional aspects could be questioned, but your choices construct the conversation in certain ways.

References

- Esmark, A., Bagge Laustsen, C., & Åkerstrøm Andersen, N. (2005). *Socialkonstruktivistiske analysestrategier*. Frederiksberg: Roskilde Universitetsforlag.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Goffman, E. (1966). *Behavior in public places: notes on the social organization of gatherings*. New York: Free Press.
- Goffman, E. (1971). *The presentation of self in everyday life* (Optrykk 1987 ed.) Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Goffman, E. (2004). *Social samhandling og mikrosociologi : en tekstsamling*. København: Hans Reitzel.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. XIX, 1210 s.). Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.
- Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action. Volume One. Reason and the rationalization of society* (T. McCarthy, Trans. Vol. 1) Boston: Beacon Press.
- Habermas, J. (1987). *The theory of communicative action. Volume Two. Lifeworld and System: A critique of Functionalist Reason* (T. McCarthy, Trans. Vol. Two) Boston: Beacon Press.
- Hanson, N. R. (2002). Seeing and seeing as. In J. Balasov & A. Rosenberg (Eds.), *Philosophy of science: contemporary readings* (pp. 321-339). London: Routledge.
- Kvale, S. (2004). *Producing knowledge through interviews (upublisert)*. Aarhus.
- Lidén, H. (1997). "Det er jo tross alt oss, elevene, det dreier seg om". *Samarbeid mellom hjem og skole med fokus på barnet*. Trondheim: Norsk senter for barneforskning.
- Ministry of Church, E. a. R. (1995). *Om prinsipper og retningslinjer for 10-årig grunnskole: ny læreplan*. Oslo: Departementet.
- Ministry of Church, E. a. R. (1998a). *Om foreldremedverknad i grunnskolen*. Oslo: Departementet.
- Ministry of Church, E. a. R. (1998b). *Om opplæring for barn, unge og vaksne med særskilte behov: den spesialpedagogiske tiltakskjeda og det statlege støttesystemet*. Oslo: Departementet.
- Nordahl, T. (2000). *Samarbeid mellom hjem og skole: en kartleggingsundersøkelse*. Oslo: Norsk institutt for forskning om oppvekst velferd og aldring.
- Nordahl, T., & Sørli, M.-A. (1996). Samarbeid mellom hjem og skole - erfaringer og utfordringer. In M. Sandbæk & G. Tveiten (Eds.), *Sammen med familien : arbeid i partnerskap med barn og familier* (pp. 183-212). Oslo: Kommuneforl.
- Vestre, S. E. (1995). *Foreldresyn på grunnskolen: rapport fra en brukerundersøkelse i 1994*. Oslo: Kirke- utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet.