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ABSTRACT
        This study investigated the strategies that teachers apply
to moral dilemmas they encounter in their professional conduct. The case
study explored the moral dilemmas as identified by 33 teachers from one
particular lower-secondary school near Helsinki (Finland). In personal
interviews the teachers were asked to identify the difficult moral dilemmas
they had faced in their professional conduct and were encouraged to give as
much detail as possible. The teachers were then asked the strategies they had
used in their attempts to solve the dilemmas and evaluate whether they
thought the strategies were effective enough. An ethos questionnaire was
administered to the teachers to measure their orientation to problem solving.
The remainder of the report focuses on the reasoning behind teachers' solving
strategies for these dilemmas and the different orientations in teachers'
strategies in solving professional moral dilemmas. The four main categories
of moral dilemmas identified by the teachers include: (1) matters related to
teachers' work; (2) pupils' work moral; (3) the rights of minority groups;
and (4) common rules in school. (EH)

How Finnish teachers identify and solve moral dilemmas at school: a case study

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1. Introduction

In recent decades one has witnessed a growing interest in the moral domain of teaching among educational researchers and teacher educators. This trend to emphasize the ethical nature of teaching and the teaching profession has been reflected in the texts of Tom (1984) and Strike and Soltis (1985). In the 1990's the moral dimensions of teaching have been further conceptualized (Goodlad et al. 1990, Sockett 1993, Oser 1994a). All these researchers have used the term morality as a key word in describing the professional ethos of teachers. Regardless of the subject matter, grade level of the students, or the nature of interaction between a teacher and his classroom, you can always interpret the moral messages in teachers' decision making.

Moral messages in schools are delivered through moral instruction and moral practices. Usually moral instruction as a formal part of the curriculum takes place only in religious schools or in specific moral education lessons. In an ethnographic study of the moral life of schools the researches seldom found such a formal curriculum in the schools. More frequently they observed moral instruction within the regular curriculum. This kind of instruction addressed altruistic and ideal moral behavior as a part of subject matter across different subjects. In addition, the observers list rituals and ceremonies, pictures and posters with moral content and spontaneous moral comments during the activity to be part of moral instruction given by schools. Moral practices include classroom rules and regulations, classroom practices, personal qualities of teachers and the morality of the curricular substructure. This classification indicates that morality is hidden but present in any teaching and classroom interaction (Jackson et al. 1993).

The moral dimension of teaching might become more concrete when a teacher faces a conflict in his professional conduct. Many educational conflicts require decision making from a teacher. It might be assumed that teachers are good problem solvers in moral dilemmas based on earlier research findings. According to a Greek study, teachers ranked very high in their moral reasoning. Helkama refers to this particular study in which Kohlberg's scale was used to measure the level of moral development of teachers. Of almost one hundred teachers, more than a half scored on the postconventional level of stage 5 in their judgments (Helkama 1993, 65). This study result might indicate that teachers have good potential for arriving at just solutions in their judgments. However, according to the model of professional morality presented by Oser, responsible judgments in educational settings require more than justice-oriented solutions (Oser 1991). In addition, the real-life dilemmas a teacher encounters in his work are evidently very different from the hypothetical dilemmas formulated by Kohlberg. Teachers have indeed expressed their difficulties in the moral domain. In a recent American survey, teachers reported that they are ill-prepared for dealing with ethical dilemmas in their classroom. The major conflicts experienced in teaching were judged to be ethical in nature by 70 per cent of teachers. The majority of the teachers surveyed did not see clear ways to resolve the conflicts they had faced (Lyons 1990).

In our study we aim at investigating the current strategies that teachers apply to moral dilemmas they encounter in their professional conduct. We adopted a case-study approach by exploring the moral dilemmas as identified by teachers (N=33) from one particular school. These teachers were subject teachers who teach in the lower-secondary school. The school is located close to Helsinki with a very diverse student population. The teachers of the school had been very active in participating in various kinds of research projects to improve teaching and learning in their school. They all acknowledged the need to be more prepared for the moral dilemmas they are challenged to face in their everyday

work by the diverse student population. We found this particular school with highly motivated teachers and diverse student population to be an ideal school to study teachers' moral dilemmas and their solving strategies.

Our methodological approach to teachers' thinking in the moral dilemmas was to interview all teachers. In a personal interview the teachers were asked to identify a difficult moral dilemma they had faced in their professional conduct. The teachers were encouraged to describe the dilemma in detail and give as much information as possible about all those participants involved in the dilemma at hand. Our goal was to get as accurate a picture of the dilemma as possible. Our approach was very close to the idea of well-remembered events as adapted by Carter and Gonzalez (1993). After the dilemma was identified, the teachers were asked the strategies they had used in their attempts to solve it. The teachers were also asked to evaluate themselves if the strategies used in those problem-solving situations had been effective enough.

In addition to the data acquired from the interviews we administered an ethos questionnaire to the teachers to measure their orientation to problem solving. This emphasis allowed us to investigate the dominant orientation of teachers from this particular school in the light of Oser's theory of teachers' professional morality (1991). Furthermore, we were able to compare teachers' solving strategies in hypothetical situations to the solving strategies in the real-life professional dilemmas identified in the interviews.

In the following chapters we discuss the main categories of moral dilemmas identified by the teachers. In particular, we concentrate on the reasoning behind teachers' solving strategies for these dilemmas. In addition to the reasoning behind the solving strategies, we explore the different orientations in teachers' strategies in solving professional moral dilemmas. The empirical results of our study are explored in the theoretical framework of teachers' ethos model identified by Oser (1991).

2. Teachers' professional morality

2.1 The teachers' ethos model

Oser (1991) has proposed a distinction among three types of morality: normative, situational and professional. Professional morality is connected to nonmoral, functional, professional acting. As long as everything goes without any conflicts, the teachers do not usually need to consider the ethical standards of their acts. It is only in those situations when the normal routines of instruction are interrupted that teachers need to consider the principles for solving the existing dilemma. The types of principle teachers refer to in these conflicts defines their professional responsibility, which manifests itself in professional acts.

Figure 1. Dimensions of the teachers' ethos model (Oser 1991, 202).

Teachers' professional morality can also be called their professional ethos. Oser has outlined a model for studying teachers' professional ethos (Oser 1991, 202). He argues that moral conflicts in educational settings arise when three types of moral claims cannot be met at the same time. These claims of justice, care and truthfulness are critical issues in teachers' professional decision making. Professional morality emerges in strategies of coordinating these moral dimensions in the search for an adequate solution to a problem. The differences between individuals' professional morality can be

seen as differences of teachers' strategies in coordinating these dimensions. Central to his theory of professional morality is the hypothesis of qualitatively different forms of decision-making strategies. Oser has identified five types of orientations in teachers' attempts to solve professional moral dilemmas:

In the **avoiding** orientation, the teacher tries to "solve" the problem by not facing it. He does not want to take any responsibility for difficult questions. Somebody other than the teacher needs to find the balance of justice, care and truthfulness. In the **delegating** orientation, the teacher accepts the fact that he has some responsibility for dealing with the situation. The teacher does not want to make any decisions himself but delegates the decision making to somebody else (for example, the principal or the school psychologist). In the **single-handed decision making** the teacher tries to settle the problem by taking it into his own hands. The teacher views himself as an "expert" who has the ability to solve the problem quickly and often in an authoritarian manner. The teacher does not need to justify his decisions to the other interested parties. In the **discourse I (incomplete discourse)** orientation, the teacher accepts his personal responsibility for settling the problem, and he explains how he has balanced justice, care and truthfulness in each new situation. The teacher also knows that the students are able to understand a well-reflected balance of justice, care and truthfulness. The final orientation is called **discourse II (complete discourse),** in which the teacher acts similarly to one with a "discourse I" orientation. The teacher goes one step further; he presupposes that all students and other persons who are concerned and involved are rational human beings who are also interested in and capable of balancing justice, care and truthfulness. The teacher holds this principle even in critical or aggressive situations (Oser 1991, 191-205).

The concepts of justice, care and truthfulness Oser uses in defining the professional responsibility of teachers have also been widely used in other models and orientations of moral judgment (see, for example, Kohlberg 1976, Gilligan & Attanucci 1988, Noddings 1992). A more detail study of the contents of these concepts is provided in Tirri (1996). These concepts were also regularly referred to in our study by teachers to justify their actions in solving moral dilemmas at school. In the following chapters we highlight teachers' reasoning in the moral dilemmas they had faced with some direct quotations from the interviews. In addition to moral reasoning, we also pay attention to the most common solving strategies used by teachers.

3. The empirical research

3.1 The data collection

We started our research on moral dilemmas at school by interviewing all the teachers from Havukoski School, located close to Helsinki. As mentioned earlier, the school has a very heterogeneous pupil population; from the total of 400 pupils, 15 per cent are foreigners. Havukoski School has a reputation of an active school, and it has been involved in many projects focusing on improvement of teaching and learning. These earlier projects include curriculum improvement, student assessment and special teaching for foreigners. The teachers are very devoted to their profession, and they made a mutual decision to be involved in our project to identify and solve moral dilemmas in their school. The project started in January 1996 with a preliminary survey. In that first phase of research, 33 teachers were interviewed with a structured interview. The interviews were carried out within four days by the same researcher and each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. Only two teachers were not able to participate in our preliminary survey due to illness.

In the second phase of the data collection, 21 teachers reflected on hypothetical moral dilemmas with the help of a questionnaire measuring teachers' ethos orientation (Oser 1991). The questionnaire was administered to teachers in February 1997 with one week's answering time. In spite of our emphasis on the confidential nature of the study, some teachers refused to answer a questionnaire by name. Another reason for not answering was the forced-choice scale used in the questionnaire.

3.2 Analysis methods

In this report we describe and analyze the characteristics of moral dilemmas in this particular school as identified by the teachers. We will particularly concentrate on the solving strategies used and the

main principles guiding teachers' decision-making. All the interviews have been recorded and later transcribed. We have adapted a qualitative analysis approach and aimed at increasing understanding of teachers' thinking based on these case studies. The main themes of moral dilemmas in these cases were categorized with content analyses. Special attention was given to the solutions to different dilemmas and the principles guiding them. Although every moral dilemma is unique with its own contextual factors, we have made an effort to identify **field-invariant arguments** in teachers' problem-solving strategies. The field-invariant arguments in our study refer to teachers' arguments that are the same logical type regardless of the moral dilemma in question. We also pay attention to **field-dependent arguments** that are special justifications of certain kinds of moral dilemmas. In these arguments, justifications are not the same logical type. The technical term of a field of arguments originates in the work of Toulmin, who made this distinction between two kinds of arguments (Toulmin 1958). We adapt these and some other of Toulmin's technical terms to analyze teachers' problem-solving strategies and justifications behind them.

In addition to the qualitative analysis of teachers' arguments, we analyze teachers' solving strategies with the help of a quantitative ethos-instrument measuring teachers' orientation in conflict situations. This emphasis allows us to investigate the dominant orientation of teachers from this particular school in the light of Oser's theory of teachers' professional morality. Furthermore, we can compare teachers' solving strategies in hypothetical situations to the solving strategies in the real-life professional dilemmas identified in the interviews.

3.3 The moral dilemmas identified by teachers

In an interview, the teachers were asked to describe one particular case of a moral dilemma they had experienced during their teaching career. They were encouraged to choose a situation in which they had had difficulties in deciding the right way to act. The teachers were asked to tell about the case in detail, with all important context factors. From each interview, the theme of the moral dilemma was identified. From the total of 33 interviews, we formed four main categories of moral dilemmas. These categories are the following:

1.   **Matters related to teachers' work (N=11)**
2.   **Pupils' work moral (N=10)**
3.   **The rights of minority groups (N=6)**
4.   **Common rules in school (N=6)**

Matters related to teachers' work was the biggest category of moral dilemmas, with eleven teachers identifying a dilemma that belonged to this category. The category include situations where a teacher has difficulties in deciding how to deal with his pupils. In two cases the conflict includes teachers' decisions about punishing a particular pupil. In both situations the student is disturbing the class and the teacher makes a quick decision to throw the student out to get peace for the rest of the pupils. In both cases, the teachers are concerned about the appropriate way of doing this and their way of dealing with these particular pupils. In one case, the teacher still remembers a situation from long ago in which she had problems in deciding between two grades for an academically weak pupil. The teacher ended up giving the pupil a failing grade, and she was still concerned about the effects of her decision on this pupil. Another teacher had faced a situation where the contents of her teaching had been criticized. She had to justify to others and also to herself that she was teaching according to the curriculum.

Other important matters related to teachers' work include situations in which the teacher has a problem with confidentiality. In two cases, the teacher knows something about the pupil that even the parents do not know. In both cases, the teachers find this kind of situation very uncomfortable and are mostly worried about the pupils who have confided in them. In three cases teachers find difficulties in dealing with sensitive matters with their pupils. In every case teachers question if their role as a teacher includes handling this kinds of things. These sensitive matters are very personal and include aspects that professional therapists usually deal with. In these situations, teachers have to decide the limits of their professionality in helping their pupils. The teachers who had faced dilemmas with confidentiality and sensitive issues were mostly special education and physical education teachers whose subjects evidently are more prone to such cases as described above.

Things related to colleagues' work include situations in which a teacher sees his colleague doing something that he himself finds unprofessional. In both these situations the teacher has a problem with loyalty to a colleague. Also in both these cases there is strong evidence that pupils are suffering from this situation in one way or on other.

The teachers who identified moral dilemmas related to teachers' work varied in their age, sex, subject matter and teaching experience. This category of moral dilemmas seemed to be the other one of major conflicts experienced by teachers regardless of their background. The subgroups of sensitive matters and confidentiality made exceptions to this rule and were identified as common moral dilemmas experienced by special education and physical education teachers.

Pupils' work moral was the second common category of moral dilemmas, including ten case studies. Three teachers complained about some pupils' negative attitude towards learning and school work. Some of the teachers had noticed the same kind of attitude with their parents. These teachers experienced a dilemma between the school's values and these pupils' values at home. Teachers found it very difficult to motivate their pupils in this kind of conflict between home and school. Another subcategory of pupils' work moral was cheating by some pupils. These cases include cheating on a test by showing the right answers to another pupil, forging parents' names on a note to a teacher and a general attitude of lying. In one case study a pupil was denying his obvious guilt till the end and refused to admit his misbehavior. Another kind of conflict occurred with a teacher whose pupil wrote a provoking essay with a very racist attitude in it. In all these cases teachers had to deal with pupils' immoral behavior and decide what actions would be the right ones to take.

Another subcategory related to pupils' work moral was harassing. In three cases teachers reported tormenting behavior by some pupils to be the most difficult moral dilemma they had faced in their professional conduct. These situations include both physical and mental harassing towards other pupils. One of the case studies that dealt with impolite speech and behavior towards another pupil was identified as the most common moral dilemma at school that this particular teacher had faced in her teaching profession. The other cases had physical violence in addition to mental harassing of a weaker pupil. In both cases the harasser was bigger and stronger both mentally and physically.

An interesting observation about the teachers who identified conflicts in this category was that they were all females and very devoted to the teaching profession. They also view their role as a teacher to be as much a moral educator as a subject specialist. Half of these teachers were young with less than ten years of teaching experience.

The dilemmas in the category of **The rights of minority groups** dealt with the problems teachers had had with their foreign pupils. A total of six case studies belonged to this category. All the teachers who had experienced problems related to this category had taught these minority groups. Three of the teachers belonged to some minority group themselves. Four of the teachers who identified problems in this category were males. The moral dilemmas mainly arose from the cultural conflicts in which religion was identified as a key factor. The pupils in minority groups practiced a religion other than Christianity, and that caused problems at some of school celebrations. Many of them - for example, Christmas - have a Christian meaning, and they include songs celebrating Jesus. One teacher found it problematic to have a school festival that favors one religion even though the majority of the pupils practice it. Another problem with these minority groups dealt with participation in some classes. In Finland pupils should study all the subjects in the curriculum, including music and sports. These two subjects were identified as the most problematic to pupils from minority groups. In their cultural heritage, these subjects are not studied, and they are regarded inappropriate, especially for girls. The teachers also shared two cases of moral dilemmas where trustworthiness of pupils from minority groups can seriously be questioned. In these cases, teachers had problems believing the students in some serious matters. The basic moral dilemma with these minority pupils which was reflected in all these cases was mentioned by the teacher specialized in teaching these pupils. The moral dilemma described by this teacher dealt with supporting the own ethnic identity of the minority pupils. All the other cases shared by the teachers had the basic problem of finding the right balance between adapting to the Finnish culture and being faithful to the pupils' own ethnic identity.

The category **common rules at school** had six case studies, like the previous category. The cases in this group dealt with forbidden things that usually are such only in theory. These things included

smoking and playing cards in the school area for example during recess. In theory, common rules at school are against these things, but in the real life pupils practice both of them. According to these teachers, most of the teachers close their eyes and do not pay very much attention to these practices. However, these two teachers identified this inconsistency as a moral dilemma at school. The other subcategory dealt with pupils' rights in deciding some common rules in their school. These dilemmas included issues concerning freedom of choice in obligatory subjects and school activities outside the classroom. These two teachers found the amount of freedom in making important decisions to be considered as a moral dilemma. Two teachers identified practical matters - for example, common rules in the use of computers at school and problems due to a lack of space in their classrooms - as moral dilemmas. Both teachers from this subgroup were males and had a very practical orientation to their work.

3.4 The solving strategies and their justifications provided by teachers

3.4.1 The field-invariant arguments in teachers' problem-solving strategies

After the teachers had described a moral dilemma they had experienced in their work, they were asked to tell how they had acted in that difficult situation. Some of the cases described were still unsolved or the solving process was still going on without a definite solution visible. However, all the teachers were able to provide some principles that are guiding them in the process of searching for solutions to the moral dilemmas at school. We adapted Toulmin's technical terms "field-invariant" and "field-dependent" to analyze teachers' moral reasoning across the four categories of moral dilemmas reported above. We start our investigation on these solutions and their justifications by analyzing the field-invariant arguments in teachers' stories. In our context the term "field-invariant argument" refers to the same principles by which teachers justify their actions regardless of the category of moral dilemma in question.

Toulmin uses the term **"warrant"** to describe the general legitimacy of an argument. A warrant certifies the soundness of the argument used (Toulmin 1958, 100). The more abstract justification behind arguments is called **"backing"** (Toulmin 1958, 105). These abstract justifications include theories or values. Sometimes the difference between a warrant and a backing is difficult to decide. We could identify field-invariant warrants and backings in teachers' reasoning. One of the most often used backings in teachers' justifications for their actions in moral conflicts was the best interest of a child. This principle was used in various conflicts with different context factors. In this principle the teachers adhere to Christopher Clark, who wants to highlight the perspective of a child in a moral dimension of education (Clark 1995, 19-32). Clark has identified some fundamental needs of children that teachers should aim at responding to. These basic needs are: to be loved, to be led, to be vulnerable, to make sense, to please adults, to have hope, to know truth, to be known, and to be safe. Later on Clark added a tenth need to his list: to create, to construct, to make one's mark in the local world, to make a difference (Clark 1995, 27). According to Clark the basic question in coping with moral dilemmas of teaching is to think how teachers can respond to these fundamental needs of children.

The most common and ordinary classroom events are often taken for granted, and many times they are the ones that break the spirit, blame the victim, and make cruelty seem reasonable (Clark 1995, 32). In our case studies of moral dilemmas, these events were found in every category of identified themes. In the dilemmas concerning matters related to teachers' work, several case studies dealt with situations where the teacher's behavior can be questioned. These cases include situations of grading and punishment where the teacher had to reflect on the influence of his actions on his pupil. The biggest concern of these teachers dealt with the possibility of being cruel and breaking the pupil's spirit. Some of these cases seemed to be typical ones that every teacher needs to struggle with sometime. Teachers' reflection on these issues can be interpreted as caring and sensitive awareness of the possible negative effects of these things on the pupils they dearly care for. On the other hand, it is always possible that teachers as human beings have lost their temper and let the negative feeling towards a pupil influence their professional behavior. However, we find this open-mindedness about these situations to be a sign of critical reflection of a teacher (Dewey 1933). With that kind of open-minded and reflective attitude, a teacher has the potential to grow in handling similar situations in the future.

In some cases the teacher had to question a colleague's professional behavior. In these cases teachers judged their colleagues behavior as immoral by using the best interest of the child as a backing. These dilemmas that involved conflicts with colleagues were among the most complicated ones. Usually the teachers were very reluctant to report their colleague to the principal or to take any actions in the situation. It was typical of these cases that they took very long to solve or they remained unsolved. Nevertheless, all the teachers clearly thought that in these kinds of conflicts it is the pupils' best that should determinate the solution to the conflict.

In cases related to pupils' work moral, especially in conflicts including physical or mental harassing, the teachers always justified their actions with the same backing. That backing was the best interest of a weaker party. In these harassing cases teachers tried to understand all the parties involved but in their solutions to the conflict it was always the weaker pupil whose interest they felt obligated to look after. In a harassing case that lasted for two years, the teacher finally started a process to remove the harasser to another class. The whole process of removing this pupil took about a year, including many conferences between the parents, the principal and teachers. The parents of a harasser were against this removal, and that complicated the situation even more. The teacher who identified the dilemma and suggested removing the student to the other class to protect the rights of a weaker pupil justified this decision as follows:

"It was very difficult for me to take a side in this dilemma. The parents of those pupils involved took the sides of their own children. However, I took the side of the weaker pupil and said to the parents that even if this pupil has provoked the other pupil it does not give him the right to physically attack him. This harasser was a normal child, even gifted, but he had some problems with school work. The pupil that he was tormenting in every possible way was not normal, he had some kind of brain damage that made it difficult for him to visualize some things. This conflict was finally solved in such a way that the harasser was removed to the other class. We discussed this together and decided that it is not the pupil who has been harassed that is the guilty one. Even afterwards I do not know what kind of relationship these pupils had, it was a weird one. But I think it was right to take the side of a weaker pupil. I thought that I am a strong one and I have to protect the weak. I also have more experience than some other teachers, and I thought it is my responsibility as a strong person to protect the rights of weak pupils." (Female, 15 years of teaching experience)

In another case in the category of pupils' work moral, it is a pupil that the teacher described as "the weakest pupil in the class" who refused to go into the same small group with a fat girl. He had said aloud: "I will not work with a person like that, I can not learn anything with her." The teacher said that this kind of situation is a very typical one and repeats itself every single day. According to the teacher, pupils are cruel to each other and use very hurtful language in evaluating each other's appearance and skills. The teacher did not say anything at the moment this episode happened but she asked both pupils involved to stay with her after the class. The teacher discussed the episode with these two pupils but they did not find any solution then. The teacher asked the pupils to come and talk to her the next day in the teachers' room before class started. The teacher described the conference in the next day like this:

"We went to talk in a private room. Then, in front of the boy, I asked the girl how she feels to hear comments such as the one yesterday by this boy. The girl replied that it does not feel very good, it feels very bad indeed. Then I asked the boy if he has ever paid any attention to the feelings these kinds of comments can cause to the others. I asked him to imagine what it would be like to hear those comments daily himself, to hear things like nobody wants to work with you. The boy was touched by this and told us that he had never thought about it in that respect. Then I guided him to make a deal with that girl not to do it ever again. They shook hands and he promised not to do it anymore, at least to this particular girl. After that conference I have never heard that he was mean to this girl again. I think this is very important: always pay attention to these kinds of episodes and do not let them go unnoticed. But it is so difficult because these episodes occur every day and in every lesson. You do not have time to get involved every time. It is only the meanest and the most cruel things you have time to pay attention to. I think every person is valuable and we should teach the kids not to treat each other in a bad way. The principle behind this view is my respect for other people. Everybody is valuable as a person." (Female, 10 years of teaching experience)

In both cases described above, the teacher has a strong warrant for her justifications to act in a certain way. The best interest of a pupil is guiding their decision-making with respect for every pupil regardless of their academic achievement, physical appearance or difficulty in a situation. Another common factor in these cases is the teacher's brave acting to find a solution to the situation. Both of these teachers aim at balancing justice, care and truthfulness in finding the best solution. In respect to Oser's orientations in teachers' attempts to solve moral dilemmas, both these teachers adapt discourse orientation in their problem-solving strategies. They both accept their personal responsibility in the conflict situation and explain the justifications behind their actions. In the first episode, our data does not tell how much the pupils in that harassing dilemma were heard. We do know that the teacher arranged conferences between all the parties involved and we can assume that the pupils had a chance to tell their points of view, too. In that respect we can argue that in both of these cases the teachers used discourse II orientation, in which everybody involved in the situation can be heard. According to discourse ethics, every argument should be allowed to be presented and the criterion for the final decision making should be the rationality of the best argument (Oser 1994b, 112).

In the case of impolite speaking and behaving towards the other pupil, everybody involved agreed to the same solution. In that situation the teacher could balance caring, justice and truthfulness at the same time. Unfortunately, it is not always possible to be caring to all people involved. As we could see in the case of harassing, the parents of a harasser were against removing their son to the other classroom. In this situation, the teacher had to accept the conflict with the parents to be able to protect the weaker pupil. In this case, truthfulness to the principles the teacher believed in and the right of a person to be safe at school determined that she care more for the weaker pupil than the other one. We can also argue that her argument was the best argument in that complicated situation. We justify our claim to view her argument as the best with its educational validity and field-invariant nature.

3.4.2 The field-dependent arguments in teachers' problem-solving strategies

The field-dependent arguments in teachers' justifications for their solutions in the moral dilemmas they had faced refer to the arguments in some category of dilemmas that are different from the arguments in the other categories. In our data the problems related to the rights of the minority groups shared a common feature in teachers' problem-solving strategies that can be identified as field-dependent. In all the six cases dealing with moral dilemmas concerning foreign pupils, the teachers had used compromises in their solutions. In the other cases discussed above, the teachers had some principles they were not willing to compromise. In the moral dilemmas with minority pupils, the basic question is to find the balance between Finnish culture and the pupils' own ethnic identity. This search for pupils' own identity can be identified as acting in the best interest of these children. In this respect, the backings justifying the compromises can be labeled field-invariant. However, in all these cases teachers' acting for the best interest of the child included making compromises. These compromises include a case in which the teacher did not punish the pupil as severely as she thought the pupil deserved. The teacher justified this solution to punish the pupil in a lenient way by his ethnic background. In this case it was quite obvious that the pupil was lying, but the teacher said she was more careful than with the Finnish pupils to make sure that she was not unjust toward the pupil. Even though most of the pupils know Finnish well enough to know the basic rules at school, they sometimes may take advantage of their ethnic background by arguing that they didn't understand the instructions.

The school and all the teachers involved in teaching pupils from minority groups emphasized that they are willing to discuss conflicts with the parents and to try to find a solution that would be acceptable to both parties. In the situations where a pupil refuses to participate to some lessons - for example, music - the teacher has discussed the problem with parents and tried to make a compromise. Usually in these conflicts, the pupil is required to stay in a music lesson only a short time to greet the teacher and maybe to study theory of music. Pupils from the minority groups, especially the Muslim children, do not need to participate in singing or playing musical instruments. The teacher justifies compromises in these moral dilemmas in the following way:

"Either this or that is a very bad solution in every sense. The pupils should be able to choose both, the Finnish culture and their own ethnic identity. In our society the chance to choose at least a little bit of your own is a big question. It is not easy in the Finnish society to choose your own ethnic identity. The pressures to adapt are very strong. That's why it is good to keep up your own identity. It is a good thing to be able to choose your own ethnic identity but it should not lead to rejection of Finnish society. You can not live in Finland without adapting to certain things in this culture. This is why these conflicts are so difficult. Even though we try to encourage pupils to choose their own ethnic identity, there is a limit how far they can go. Drawing this line for those pupils is a moral question" (Female, fifteen years of teaching experience)

3.4.3 The solving strategies in the light of ethos-model

In the second phase of the study, the teachers were administered an ethos-questionnaire with eleven professional decision-making situations. The teachers were asked to reflect on these cases and in every case evaluate six different alternatives of their action in these situations. The six alternatives for action were constructed in accordance to the five decisions-making types in Oser's theory (1991). In every presented alternative, the teachers could either agree or disagree with it. After each evaluation the teachers were asked to rank the best and the worst alternative presented. Teachers were also given a chance to describe their own choice of action in these decision-making situations.

The ratings of the teachers were scored according to the ranking scale given by the designers of the questionnaire. Consequently, the instrument used was normative and reflected the theory it was based on. In our case the quantitative data gained with the instrument completed and validated some of the data gathered in the qualitative interviews. In the following section we discuss the findings of our quantitative data regarding teachers' solving strategies. In addition to the general trends found we present some findings supporting context specificity of the solving strategy chosen. Considering our case study, it seems that certain kinds of moral dilemmas need more discourse orientation than do others. On the other hand, in some moral dilemmas at school, single-handed decision making seems the most effective, at least evaluated by the teachers.

In Figure 2 can be seen the distributions of teachers' solving strategies measured with the ethos-instrument. As the figure shows, the most often used solving strategy was single-handed decision making in which the teacher tries to settle the problem by taking it into his own hands. In this orientation the teacher often solves the problem in an authoritarian manner without justifying his decisions to the other interested parties. Even though the teachers judge different situations differently, the strategy of first choice is unilateral decision making regardless of the field. Single-handed decision making was a typical strategy used in all the situations presented. This finding is in accord with Oser's study in which most teachers were shown to be single-handed-oriented (Oser 1991, 210).
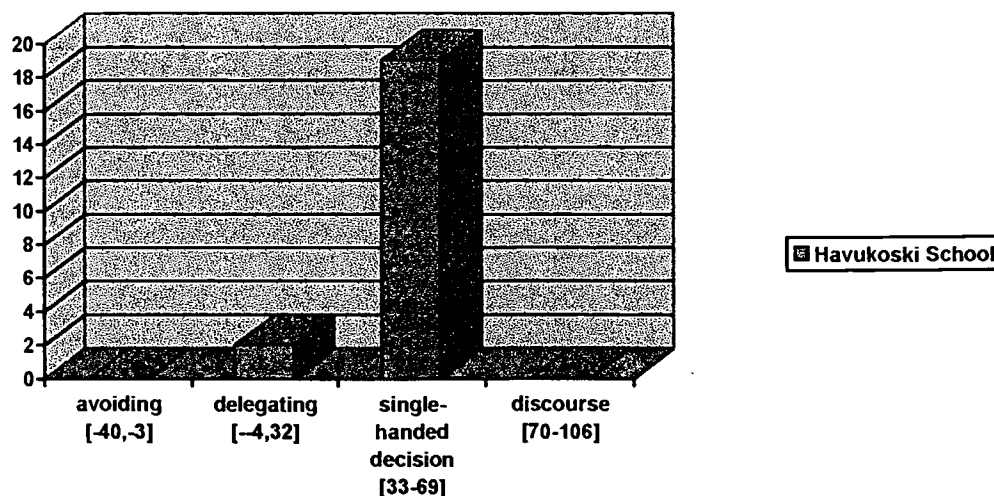

Figure 2. Teacher orientation distributions (N=21).

However, in some situations presented in the questionnaire the teachers preferred discursive strategies. The distributions of the strategies chosen are shown in Figures 3 and 4. As Figure 3 shows, in the case of harassing, fourteen teachers out of twenty-one preferred discourse orientation. This finding is in accord with our interviews of real-life moral dilemmas at school in which harassing was identified as one of the most typical moral dilemmas concerning pupils' work moral. As the examples given in section 3.4.1 show, the teachers had used discursive strategies in solving problems concerning harassing at their school. The data acquired by the questionnaire validates our qualitative analyses based on the interviews. In Figure 5, the distributions of teachers' solving strategies in the case of harassing can be seen.
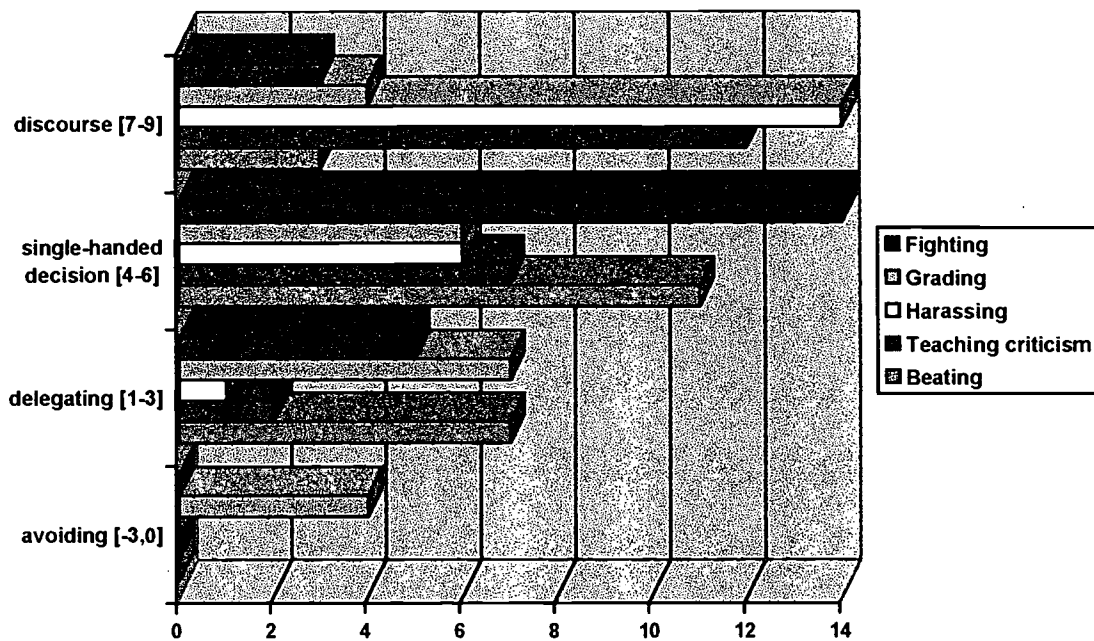
Figure 3. Distributions of the strategies chosen (N=21).
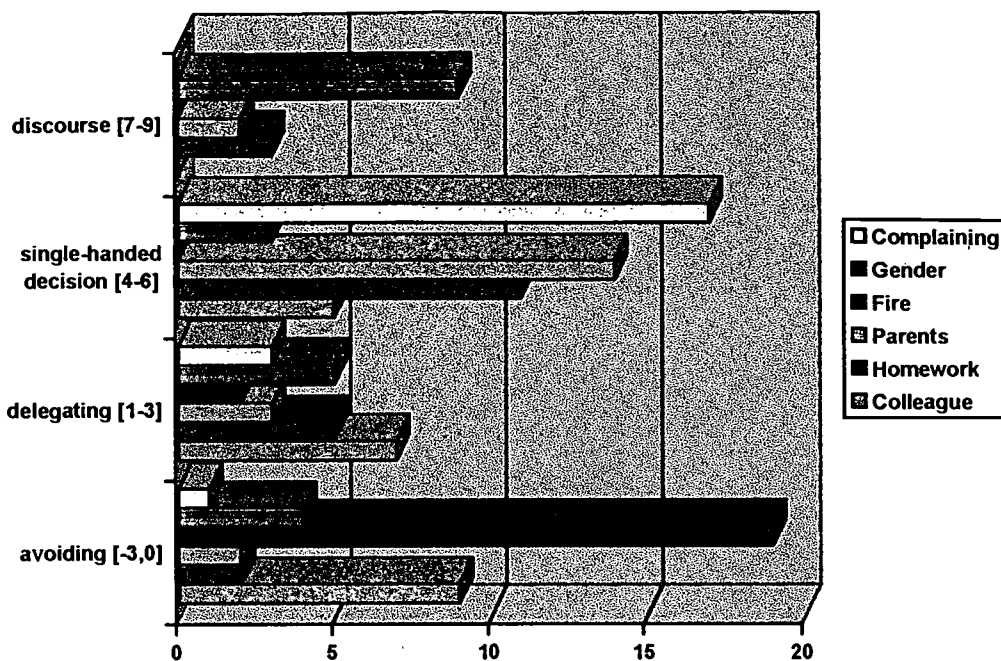
Figure 4. Distributions of the strategies chosen (N=21).

Other cases in which teachers preferred discursive strategies were situations in which their teaching had been criticized by their students and issues concerning gender equity (see Figures 3 and 4). Single-handed decision making was the most preferred strategy in the cases of students complaining about teaching and students fighting with each other. Unilateral decisions were also common in the case of parents' complains about the teacher's work (see Figures 3 and 4). In Figure 6 can be seen the distributions of teachers' solving strategies in the case of students complaining about a teacher's work, showing the dominating strategy of single-handed decision making.
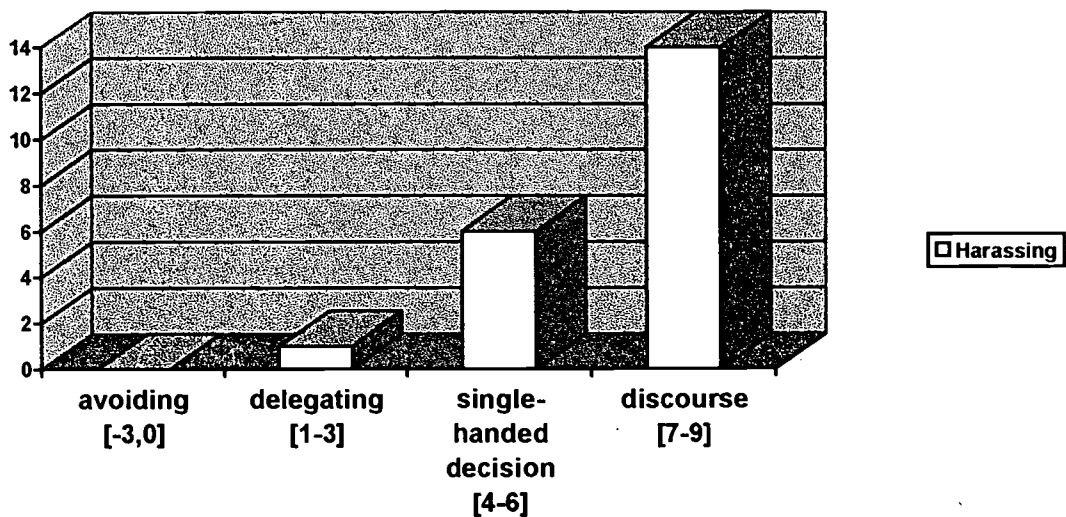
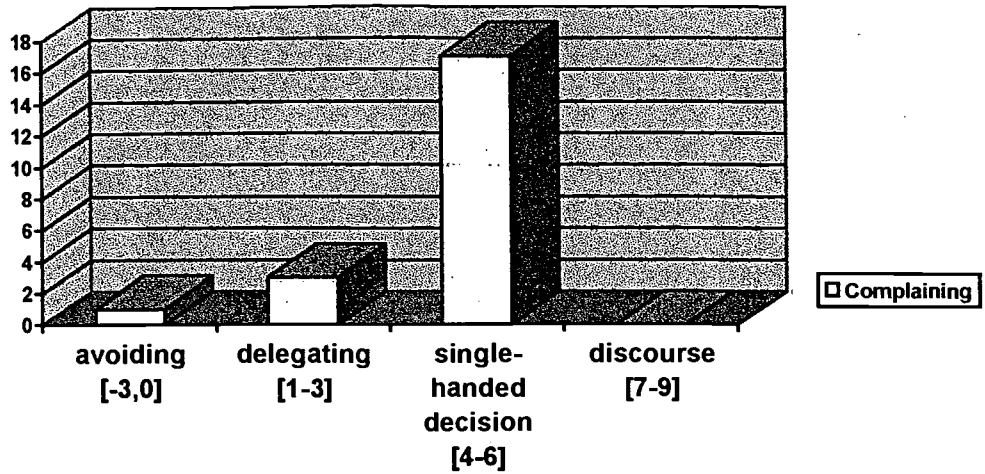*Figure 5. Distributions of teachers' solving strategies in the case of harassing (N=21).*

Figure 6. Distributions of teachers' solving strategies in the case of complaining (N=21).

Teachers preferred delegating-orientation in the cases of pedagogical grading and parents beating the student (see Figures 3 and 4). An explanation for this trend could be that these cases were found so difficult and complicated that they needed a third person's point of view. In Figure 7 can be seen the distributions of teachers' solving strategies in the case of grading.
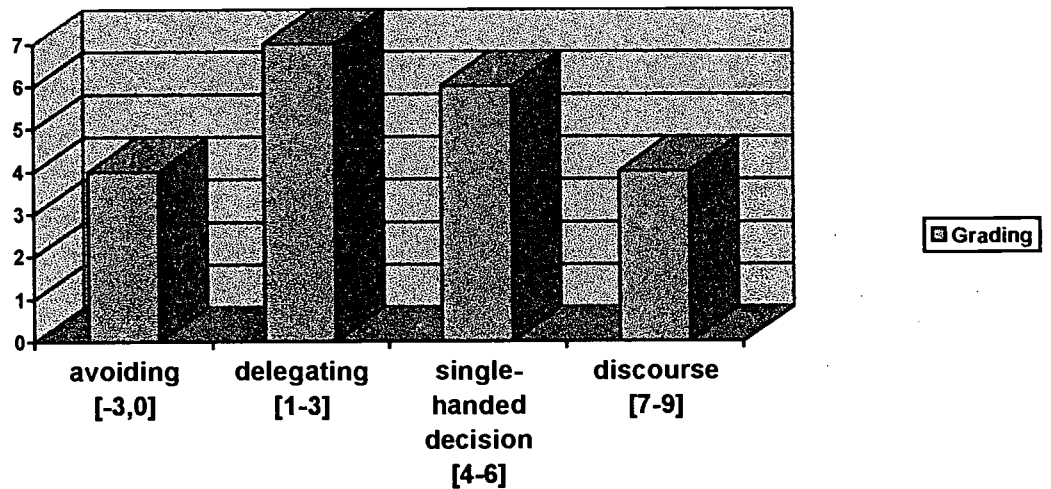

Figure 7. Distributions of teachers' solving strategies in the case of grading (N=21).
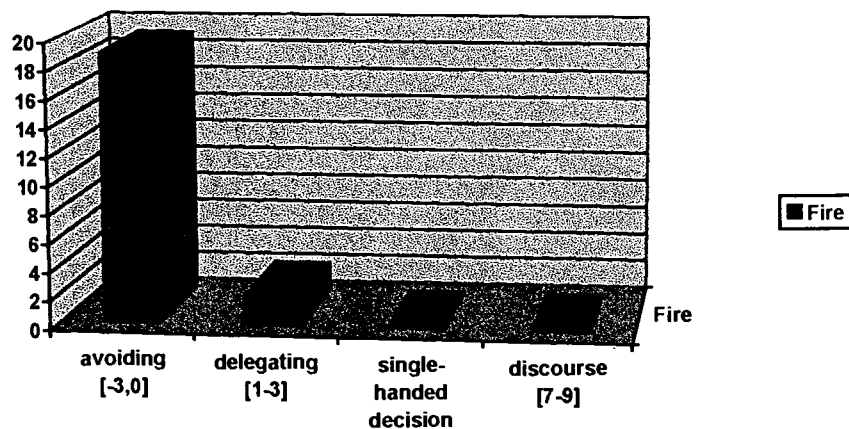

Figure 8. Distributions of teachers' solving strategies in the case of fire (N=21).

In the case of students burning paper in the classroom, most teachers chose an avoiding orientation (see Figure 8). In that case, the teachers must have interpreted the situation as not a real danger and more like teasing on the part of students. In the case of a colleague's poor work moral, an avoiding orientation was also chosen (see Figure 9). In that case the explanation could be found in teachers' desire to be loyal to each other. In other studies of moral dilemmas, the cases involving colleagues have been found to be the most complicated ones (Campbell 1996).
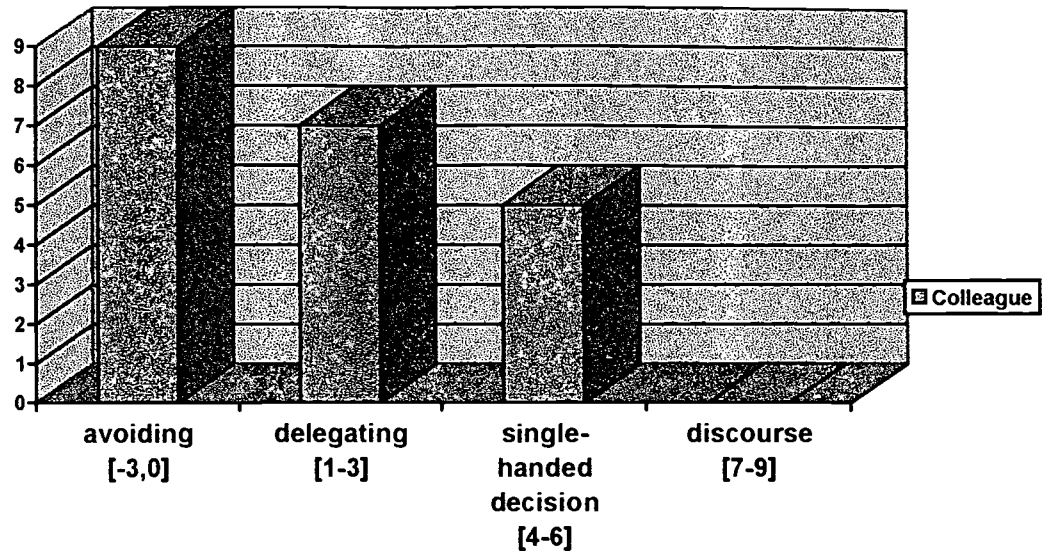

Figure 9. Distributions of teachers' solving strategies in the case of colleague's poor work moral (N=21).

After their own evaluations of the strategies chosen, the teachers were asked to rank the best and the worst alternative presented in each hypothetical situation. In Figure 10, it can be seen that the teachers were very consistent in their ratings. In all the other cases except in the case of grading, the teachers had chosen the same strategy as best. This study result might indicate that the case of grading is a very complicated dilemma indeed, and the teachers acknowledged the difference between the ideal behavior and the actual teacher behavior in that situation. In real life, teachers might have more problems in practicing discourse orientation than they find necessary in explaining their grading policy to the students.

The teachers agreed most with the questionnaire designers in the cases of fighting and harassing (see Figure 10). In these situations, the teachers in our study ranked the best alternatives according to the best choices advocated by the experts who had designed the questionnaire.
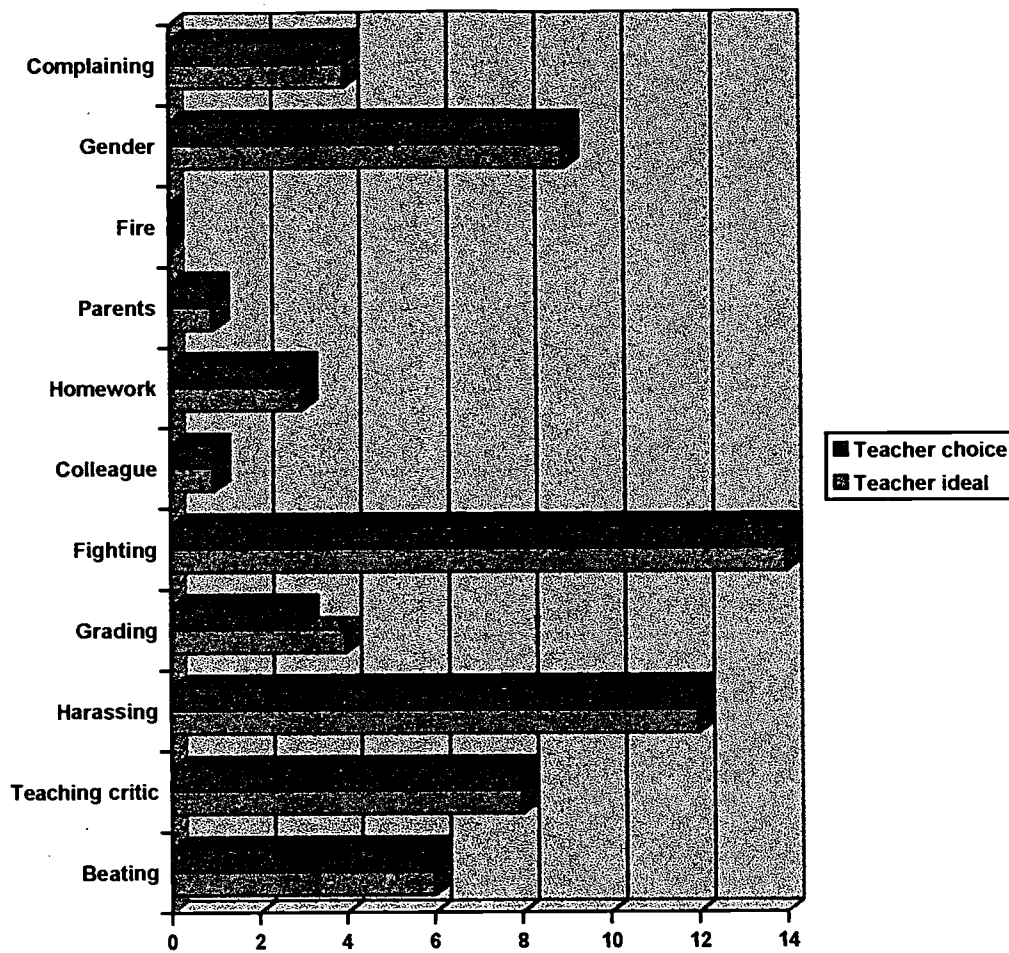
Figure 10. Teachers' own choices and their ratings of the ideal solutions compared to the best solution judged by the designers of the questionnaire (N=21).
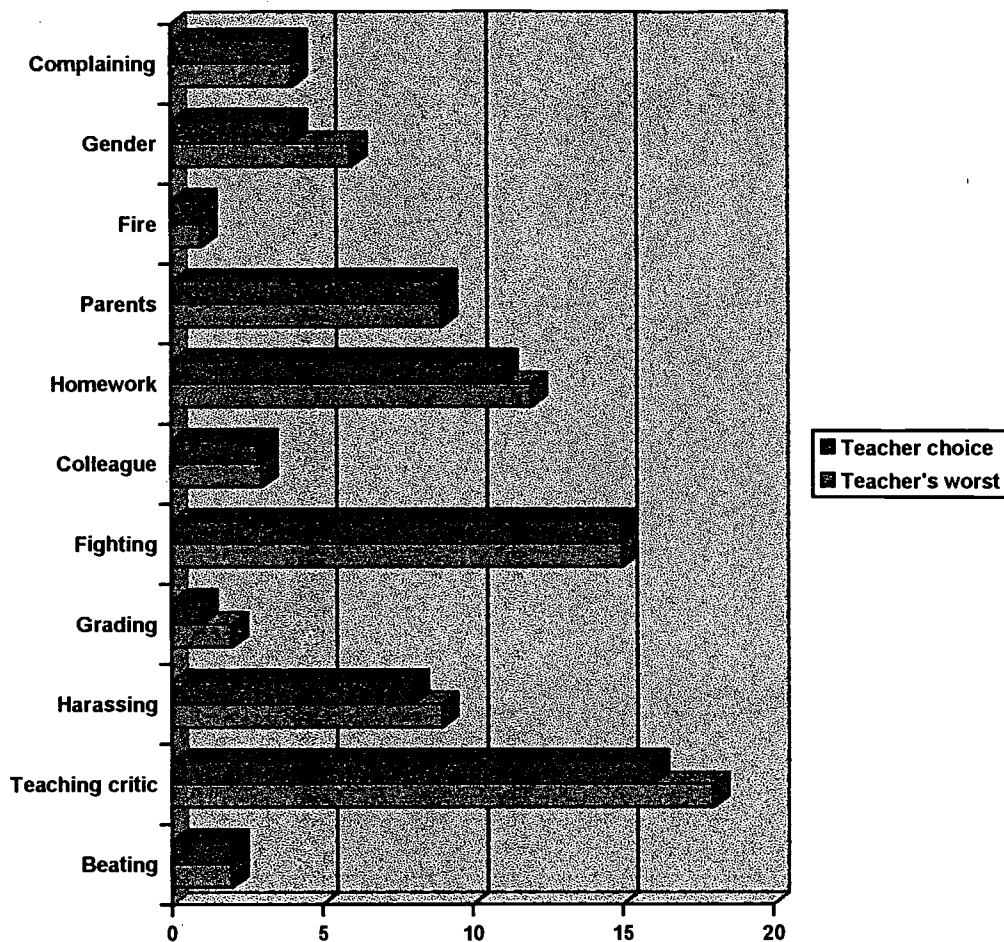
Figure 11. Teachers' own choices and their ratings of the worst solutions compared to the worst solution judged by the designers of the questionnaire (N=21).

In the rankings of the worst solutions to the situations presented in the questionnaire, the teachers were not as consistent in their own ratings as they were in the cases of the best solutions. In Figure 11 it can be seen that in the cases of gender, teaching criticism, harassing, grading and homework, the teachers' own choices of the worst solutions were not consistent with their ratings of the alternatives they considered the worst. In the case of fighting the teachers were again very consistent in their ratings. A possible explanation for this trend is that the situations teachers found easy to deal with are rated in the most consistent way. In the cases of teaching criticism and fighting, teachers also agreed the most with the questionnaire designers about the worst strategies of action. The case of fire was the most disagreement with the questionnaire designers both in the teachers' choices of the best and the worst solutions (see Figures 10 and 11).

4. Discussion and future work

In this paper we have explored the moral dimension of teaching and the concrete moral dilemmas at school identified by teachers. Considering a semi-structured interview, we could detect four main categories of moral dilemmas experienced by teachers. We have given an overview of those dilemmas by describing and giving some more detailed examples of those situations. We have also explored the

actions teachers used in solving these conflicts. In addition to the solving strategies used, we have paid special attention to the principles in teachers' arguments in justifying their actions. Teachers' reasoning in solving moral dilemmas was investigated with the help of field-invariant and field-dependent arguments. The best interest of a child was found to be the field-invariant argument behind teachers' thinking in all the categories of moral dilemmas. Problems related to the rights of the minority groups had field-dependent arguments that differed from the other conflicts. In moral dilemmas dealing with minority pupils, the teachers used a lot of compromises. The justification for their action was an attempt to help minority pupils in finding the balance between the Finnish culture and their own cultural heritage.

A quantitative ethos questionnaire was administered to the teachers to validate the results acquired from the qualitative interviews. The questionnaire allowed us to investigate teachers' solving strategies in the hypothetical dilemmas and to compare them with the strategies used in the real-life dilemmas. According to the data gained by the questionnaire, the teachers were shown to use single-handed decision making the most in solving professional dilemmas. However, the solving strategies used were shown to be very case specific. In the cases of harassing, teaching criticism and gender issues, the teachers adapted discursive strategies more than in the other situations presented. In the cases of students criticizing a teacher's work and fighting, single- handed decision making was preferred to solve the problem. A delegating orientation was chosen in the cases of pedagogical grading and parents beating the student. In the cases of a colleague's poor work moral and students burning paper in the classroom, an avoiding orientation was chosen. The teachers showed themselves to be more consistent with their own choices of action in relation to the best solutions ranked than in relation to the worst solutions. The teachers disagreed more than they agreed about the best and worst actions for the situations advocated by the questionnaire designers.

The research project will continue as an action research with these same teachers. Our aim is to foster the ethical awareness of these teachers by introducing them with these moral dilemmas in their school. The teachers will be encouraged to participate in ethical discourse on these problems and their solving strategies. In that process we hope to identify solutions that are working well and which do not need much improvement. We also pay attention to those dilemmas that do not have solutions yet or have solutions that could be improved. In that ethical discourse teachers will practice their argumentation skills and take part in communicative action advocated by Habermas (1984, 1990). In that process the moral dimension of teaching will be explicitly discussed.

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