Exploration of Norwegian Student Teachers' Relational Concerns During Internships

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This study builds on and contributes to research on student teachers' relational concerns in teacher education, as four Grade 3 Norwegian student teachers were followed during their internship for two periods of two weeks each. The article presents and discusses data from interviews and student teachers' logs, while the aim of the study is to investigate the underlying motives for the student teachers' relational concerns. The analysis indicates that the student teachers' motives for their interpersonal relations with pupils are more sophisticated than what has been found with other research and are driven by personal and perceived pupil needs.

Keywords: student teachers, motives, needs, caring, internship

Introduction

This study explores student teachers' relational concerns during practical training in NGTE (Norwegian general teacher education)—a four-year teacher education that qualifies one to teach in primary and secondary schools with pupils at the ages of 6−16. The practical training periods for student teachers in teacher education have been given different labels by the educational research society, e.g., teaching practice (Derrick & Dicks, 2005), practicum (Zhu, 2011), induction (Collinson et al., 2009), field experience (Zeichner, 2010), school-based teacher education (Buitink, 2009), and internship (Darling-Hammond, 2006). The present study addresses these periods as internships in accordance with Darling-Hammond's (2006) description.

The investigation of the student teachers' reflections in interviews and logs indicated an extensive concern with the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships with the pupils during their internship. Such concerns can be considered as appropriate based on research which clearly finds that the relationship quality between adults and children is crucial in all interactions and upbringing (Cornelius-White, 2007; Nordenbo, Larsen, Tiftikçi, Wendt, & Østergaard, 2008). Hattie's (2009) synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses related to pupil achievements stated that, "The most crucial aspects contributed by the teacher are the quality of the teacher, and the nature of the teacher-student relationship" (p. 126).

In a Norwegian context, a systematic review of research on NGTE (Haugan, 2011) concluded that the need for further explorations of student teachers' concerns during internship is scarce and still intrusive.

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However, in other countries, the student teachers' concerns have been addressed through numerous studies (Murphy, Delli, & Edwards, 2004; Ozgun-Koca & Sen, 2006), and their preoccupations with interpersonal relationships seem somewhat unanimous (Hansen, 2005; Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher, & James, 2002). Several of these studies insinuate that such relational concerns may indicate a reduced insight into the complexities of the teaching profession (Goldstein & Lake, 2000; Weinstein, 1998), thus leading to a fear that the student teachers hold reduced notions of effective teaching by concentrating solely on relational matters and considering important aspects, such as subject matter knowledge and pedagogy (Shulman, 1986), to be subordinate or even unimportant (Fajet, Bello, Leftwich, Mesler, & Shaver, 2005; Goldstein & Lake, 2003). This article will explore "why" they are concerned with the establishment and maintenance of relationships with pupils. As such, this study aims to investigate the student teachers' underlying motives through the following research question: What motivates four NGTE Grade 3 student teachers' relational concerns with pupils during internships?

The student teachers' concerns are explored through a qualitative methodology by an analysis of their reflections in individual interviews and written logs. After a description of the method and theoretical framework, the results are presented and discussed in light of theory and previous research.

Method

Contextual Description and Sample

Internships are integrated into the NGTE for several periods, with a minimum of 100 days in total over four years. Four student teachers in their third year of NGTE, Anne, Beth, Cher, and Dave (aged 23−31 years old), were followed during their internships for two periods of two weeks each in the spring and autumn terms of 2010−2011, respectively.

Data Collection

This study is a part of a larger project that explored four student teachers' reflections during their internship through the use of various methods: (1) semi-structured interviews (one prior to and one after the internship with each student teacher), which resulted in 20 hours of audio recording and approx. 300 pages of transcriptions; (2) logs (collected daily from each student teacher), which resulted in approx. 80 pages of text; (3) video observations (approx. 11.5 hours of dialogues between the student teachers and their mentors during guidance sessions both prior to and after teaching); and (4) field observations (daily field observations of the (inter) actions that took place during the student teachers' teaching), which resulted in massive memos that were used as background information to situate the actions and sharpen the focus for further analytical collections of data. In this study, utterances in the logs and semi-structured interviews will be used to illustrate the findings.

Data Analysis

The constant comparative method originally developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) gave the analysis of data a structuring frame of reference with the main aim to let the empirical data guide the analytical process. By way of constant comparison, coding, and analysis of the data material, this methodological approach generated empirically based interpretations. The first analytical stage was an open coding of the transcribed interviews and logs, and in this phase, all data were of interest. Throughout the analytical process the emerging codes were continually redefined, and concentrated more toward what was interpreted as central topics. In the axial coding

at the second analytical stage, the data were compared and sorted into categories of interconnected codes from the open coding, and a central category that emerged from this constant comparison was a preliminary understanding of the student teachers' relational concerns. In a continuation of this, intensive searches for analytical concepts that could help understand what was taking place were made. As a result, the data concerning student teachers' relational concerns formed the basis for the choice of relevant theory in the final analytical stage presented in this article, and categories were modified and retested throughout the process to ensure consistency and validity (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). A coding software program, QSR NVivo[TM] Version 9.2, was used in the recording, storing, indexing, sorting, and coding of the data and the program supported rather than performed any automated analysis by itself, however, the use of QSR NVivo[TM] made it easier to follow the analysis and assess whether the interpretations appeared logical and trustworthy. In addition, two other strategies were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. First, the data were solely analyzed by the first writer, although the interpretations were continuously reviewed by two other qualitative researchers. Second, member checking was used to secure that the student teachers recognized both the content in the transcriptions and the interpretations of their expressed reflections.

Theoretical Framework

The exploration of the student teachers' motives connected to their relational concerns with pupils implied investigations of beliefs, attitudes, and feelings expressed in their reflections. These affective dimensions initially appeared as utterly confusing and fragmented, but two theories, Leontjev's (1978) Activity Theory and Noddings' (1984) Ethics of Care provided useful analytical concepts in the process of forming a deeper and more structured understanding.

Activity Theory. Leontjev (1978) elaborated on Vygotsky's (1978) notions of cognitive development and included affective dimensions in his Activity Theory, which is based on the assumption that one has to investigate how the interactions between humans and their environment are object-oriented, meaningful, and socially oriented. Figure 1 describes the hierarchical structure of an activity.
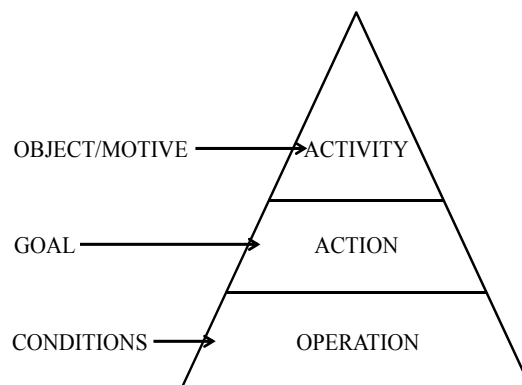

Figure 1. Leontjev's (1978) Activity Theory.

Figure 1 illustrates how an activity is divided in several actions that have to be conducted in order to complete it. Furthermore, each action consists of several operations that have to be conducted to complete it. The activity is directed towards a motive and each action towards a goal. Operations have no goals, but adapt according to the conditional demands of the situations they are conducted in. The overarching motive is the main object, which is the catalyst for the entire activity and goals and conditions are created in order to achieve

a satisfactory outcome based on the overarching motive. Leontjev (1978) was most concerned with the underlying needs that directed and regulated human activities: "Need direct activity on the part of the subject, but they are capable of fulfilling this function only under conditions that they are objects" (Leontjev, 1978, p. 54). Based on this, Kaptelinen (2005, p. 5) argued that the object of activity, which Leontjev (1978) described to be the same as the motive, can be defined as the "sense maker", the concept that gives meaning and determines the value of the activity and the numerous actions. In this study, the student teachers' establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships with pupils was the action that was most valued and of most concern in their reflections. In her Ethics of Care Theory, Noddings' (1984) descriptions were useful in the process of grasping what was going on in this respect.

Ethics of Care. The Ethics of Care is a moral philosophy developed by Noddings (1984), which is based on the recognition of needs, relations, and response. From this perspective, caring is understood as something more than being nice and considerate in relation to others. In a truly caring relationship, the caregiver is utterly receptive towards the cared-for's intellectual and emotional needs and is based on a genuine desire to sustain or amplify the cared-for's sense of well-being.

Gordon, Benner, and Noddings (1996) defined "caring" as "a set of relational practices that foster mutual recognition and realization, growth, development, protection, empowerment, human community, culture and possibility" (p. 13), implying that caring is not viewed as a psychological condition or a congenial trait. Hence, it is possible to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to execute caring encounters during, e.g., teacher education. The following quotation provides a more detailed description of the concept:

> Caring involves stepping out of one's personal frame of reference into the other's. When we care, we consider the other's point of view, his objective needs, and what he expect of us. Our attention, our mental engrossment is on the cared-for, not on ourselves. Our reasons for acting, then, have to do both with the other's wants and desires and with the objective elements of his problematic situation. (Noddings, 1984, p. 24)

In Noddings' (1984) Ethics of Care, "engrossment" (to be attentive towards the cared-for's needs and position to help achieve understanding), "commitment" (take responsibility to act in the interest of the cared-for), and "motivational displacement" (take into account the cared for's needs above your own) are viewed as essential for the establishment and maintenance of caring relationships. Combined, these three caring encounters imply that, e.g., the teacher is continuously attentive towards the pupil's needs, and that the knowledge generated from such close relations can be used to assess which pedagogical strategies seem to be appropriate for their development.

Results

As mentioned above, the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships with the pupils were of the most concern for the student teachers during their internship, which is not surprising, as other research has corresponding findings (Jones, Burts, Buchanan, & Jambunathan, 2000; Kim, 2007). However, the exploration of the "cause" of such emphasis uncovered more interesting results, and the following will present three categories of motives that catalyze the student teachers' relational concerns.

To Ensure That the Pupil's Emotional Prerequisites for Development Are Addressed

The first category describes how the student teachers are concerned with the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships with the pupils based on a motive of getting to know and acting

upon their emotional needs. This motive seems to be catalyzed by a sense of responsibility they perceive in the role as a teacher, and is well illustrated by Anne's statement in her log:

> Regarding the establishment of relationships, I have learned that it is the adults' responsibility to take this seriously and to facilitate respect in the various relations. It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that the relationships between pupils are characterized by respect, and it is the teacher's responsibility to build good, respectful relationships with their pupils. (Anne, log)

Anne's conviction regarding the teacher's responsibility to ensure a mutual, respectful relationship with the pupils can also be found in the other student teachers' utterances. Beth connects this with the necessity of pupils' feelings of safety in her last interview:

> I believe that the pupils' sense of well-being must serve as the foundation. (It is important) to establish a good classroom environment where the kids trust both each other, and maybe most of all their teachers, so they dare to give notice if something is bothering them. The teacher has to conduct him/herself to what the pupils are saying, and act on it. Because then it becomes safe. I believe that the purpose of school is that pupils are learning and developing. And I believe that if it is someone who is significant for this development, it is the teacher. If the pupils feel terrible at school, they are not able to concentrate on their academic work because the first priority becomes to survive. The pupils simply have to have people they can trust around themselves to be able to develop in a positive manner. (Beth, final interview)

In addition to supporting Anne's notion of a teacher's responsibility, we see that Beth claimed that the teacher's establishment of the classroom environment creates the foundation to ensure the pupils' emotional well-being when they are at school. Beth also clearly stated that being attentive and acting on the pupils' expressed needs is decisive in their development of a sense of safety. In the continuation of this, Beth claims that being concerned with and acting upon the pupils' emotional needs will enable pupils to concentrate their attention on their academic tasks. This notion of the pupils' basic need of safety, the teacher's responsibility to facilitate the satisfaction of this, and the positive consequences of such an emotional state are also described by Cher in her final interview:

> A good teacher is the one who is knowledgeable, of course, cares for her pupils and manages to maintain a good learning environment, and who makes the kids feel well, safe and wanting to learn. The pupils really need that relationship with you. If the pupils are safe, then they can work and do what they are supposed to do. And then there has to be a relationship there. (Cher, final interview)

The above quotation indicates that Cher views the teacher's adequate subject-matter knowledge as an obvious prerequisite for effective teaching, though she is more concerned with the teacher's responsibility for addressing the pupils' emotional needs. From her conviction, this can only be achieved by establishing relationships with students and is a necessary prerequisite for the pupils' development as a whole. A similar attitude was expressed by Dave:

> I do not know. I view it (the pupils' feelings of safety) as a prerequisite for learning to take place, maybe. Pupils cannot be afraid of showing up at school, or to talk in the classroom, or making a mistake, it has to be safe. There has to be room for everybody who is there, so that no one feels that they are not good enough. (Dave, start-up interview)

The statement for Dave's start-up interview indicated a clear notion of the pupils' needs for emotional balance for development to occur. Dave further stated that a prerequisite for development is that "all" have to perceive a sense of safety and feel that they have something to contribute within the community of a classroom. As such, this last quotation is also relevant to the second category of motives.

To Develop Emotional Prerequisites for Personal Well-Being in the Teacher's Role

The second category of motives describes how the student teachers are convinced that the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships with pupils will result in positive and necessary feelings in themselves, based on need of safety in the teacher's role. This aspect is well described in Anne's log during her internship:

> The aspect that I would like to highlight as the most positive by being in an internship is, of course, the relationship with the pupils. There are many pleasant and charming pupils that are easy to fall in love with. It is when you establish a good relationship with the individual pupil that you know what it is good to be a teacher. (Anne, log)

The quotation indicates that the most positive aspect of the role as a teacher is the perceived contact with the pupils, as the relationships in themselves give her positive feelings. In Anne's final interview, she gives a further explanation why this is important for her:

> Well, I am just thinking about how frustrated I was the first time. I was really nervous and unwell, and wanted to go home. I was very concerned with myself I guess. And I was afraid of making mistakes and afraid because I did not know the pupils. But now, on the last day of the internship, I'm bursting with more self-esteem and am confident that if I meet challenges, I will deal with them. (Anne, final interview)

In this statement, Anne describes how the interpersonal relationship with her pupils has developed her confidence and sense of safety regarding the belief that she will master the challenges she may encounter. From this, one can interpret that her attitude regarding interpersonal relationships as a prerequisite for her pupils' development is double in nature, meaning that this notion is evident as a prerequisite for her personal well-being as well. This notion was also stated in Beth's final interview:

> I have become safer in the teacher role. I do not know if it is because I know the class better now. That might be it, because I feel that I have become a better class leader. And that goes for the matter of the adapted instruction as well. I feel I have managed that. And I feel that I have managed to take the focus away from myself, so it is easier to maintain the attention on the pupils, on their learning outcomes… At least for my part, I do not learn much when I am thrown into things. I will get so insecure, and so uncertain of what I am doing. Then it becomes… well then there will be no peace in the class, for instance, and when there is no peace, I will be even more stressed. (Beth, final interview)

Beth explicitly stated that she has become safer as a teacher, but is not as clear as it was with Anne in regard to what causes this. Nevertheless, she suggested that this may be because she experiences being more able to manage the class and conduct adaptive instructions based on her acquired knowledge of the pupils' needs. Like Anne, Beth is also experiencing an enhanced ability to refocus her attention away from herself, and more toward the pupils and how they respond to her teaching. This improved ability for what can be labeled as "recipient consciousness" seems to come as a result of an enhanced sense of safety as a teacher. Beth's own need for security as a precondition for her personal sense of well-being in the role as a teacher was shown in the last part of the quote when she described how she must grow into a new setting and need time to do this. As her need for safety was satisfied, Beth was gradually ready for new challenges; this phenomenon can also be found in Cher's log:

> I feel a completely different need to know the pupils' prerequisites so I can build the teaching on what the pupils already know. It feels as if I first had to learn how to stand in front of the class and talk, take much space and be a leader, but now I have to learn how to listen to the pupils to understand what they can do and then build on it. (Cher, log)

In the same manner as Anne and Beth, Cher has developed a greater need to focus on the pupils through

an improved sense of safety. She needed time to build her confidence in terms of how she should act as a teacher, but now Cher has improved her capacity for "recipient consciousness". From this, we understand that Cher, like Anne and Beth, had a similar double perception of a need for security as a prerequisite for development, for both her pupils and herself. It is only when she has satisfied her personal need for safety so that she is able to more fully focus on her pupils' academic development, and the quotation implies that a close relationship with the pupils is necessary for such an emotional state to occur, which was also described by Dave in his final interview:

> First of all, I believe that a good teacher must be able to create a contact with his pupils and build relationships. I have found that to be utterly important. I have tried to teach in classes where I do not have any relationship with the pupils in advance. I noticed that it is much more difficult when you do not have contact. Eventually it gets easier as you get to know the pupils. (Dave, final interview)

As with Anne, Beth, and Cher, Dave was concerned with relational matters. His experience informed him that it is far easier to act as a teacher if he has established interpersonal relationships with his pupils. However, Dave is not as explicit as the rest as to whether this comes as consequence of a sense of safety as a teacher. Nevertheless, we can interpret from his statement that the relationships with his pupils and the knowledge leads to cause an emotional condition in Dave that makes it more comfortable for him to be a teacher. With this, Dave, as the rest of the student teachers, describes how the foundation for both the pupils' and student teachers' emotional well-being, as well as the prerequisites for development, are built through the establishment and maintenance of relationships with the pupils.

To Develop Personal Prerequisites for Action in the Teacher's Role

The third category describes how the student teachers are motivated by a conviction that informs them that the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships with pupils are beneficial regarding their abilities to act as teachers, particularly when it comes to classroom management and adaptive teaching. This motive seems to be catalyzed by a need for knowledge, which is clearly expressed by Anne in her final interview:

> If you do not understand a pupil, it is easier to yell at him instead of asking why. So if you do know him, it is easier to help and guide him. I believe that through my experience of interaction with the pupils, I learn how to influence how they think. (Anne, final interview)

From this, we can see that Anne is convinced that the knowledge about the pupils generated through close relationships enables her to act according to what she perceives as being appropriate as a teacher, both in terms of behavior management and facilitating the pupils' cognitive development. Anne was concerned with understanding the pupils so that she can influence their development in the direction they are supposed to go. From this, one can interpret that Anne's goal with the interpersonal encounters is motivated by a notion that informs her that this is beneficial for her conditions for acting as a teacher. The same notion can be found in Beth's description in her log:

> My experience from previous internships tells me that when pupils become confident about us as students teachers, it also becomes easier for us to teach them... Because we have this relationship with the pupils, they will automatically be more attentive to what we have to say. (Beth, log)

Beth described how she believes that when the pupils' emotional safety needs are satisfied and they have

gotten to know her as a person, it will be easier for her to engage in teaching since the pupils are more attentive towards her. This conviction was also expressed by Cher in her log:

> It is always easier to teach in a classroom one knows compared to a classroom that one does not know. On the one side, I think that there are fewer considerations to take in a classroom you do not know, as you still do not know what the considerations are that you have to make… But the moment the teacher knows each pupil's needs and is committed to guiding this person and getting the pupil through school in the best possible way, there are many more factors to consider. It is not enough to just know something about the students' development in mathematics or Norwegian; the teachers must also know how the pupil works in collaboration, what interests the pupil has, what learning strategies the pupil uses, etc.. All this must be learned through close contact with the pupils in conversations, cooperation and through observation. (Cher, log)

Cher's statement indicates that she is developing an extended action repertoire caused by the insights she acquires through her relationships with her pupils. It is also interesting to note that Cher is experiencing an enhanced sense of responsibility, as she acquires further insights and her prerequisites for teaching are expanded. This notion indicates that Cher perceives the teachers' responsibility and work as being more and more complex based on her continuously increasing knowledge of each pupil's needs and preferences. Dave's expressed attitudes in his log showed some of the same notions:

> Having good relationships with the pupils is also a very important factor when it comes to classroom management. I believe that showing the pupils some caring, being a safe adult and seeing the pupils are all important abilities for being a good leader of the class. If you can make this, the relationships between the teacher and the pupils have a good starting point. (Dave, log)

Like Anne, Beth, and Cher, Dave was concerned with the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships with the pupils as a "means to an end" in order to achieve the goal of acquiring enhanced prerequisites for action in the role as a teacher. He connects this to his ability to exert classroom management in particular. Overall, we see that the student teachers in this study have a clear strategy with their relational concerns, as the presented motives overlap, thus leading to the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships with the pupils as their primary goal during their internship. As the different motives are met, the student teachers' receptiveness and engagement seem to expand. The next section will discuss how these processes are connected.

Discussion

In reference to Leontjev's (1978) Activity Theory, the internship can be defined as the main activity in this study. The student teachers' actions and operations during the practical training are driven by an overarching motive to qualify as teachers by participating in this compulsory part of teacher education. In other words, from an activity theoretical perspective, the student teachers' motive of being assessed as suitable for the teaching profession catalyzes their reflections and subsequent behaviors at the action and operation levels of the internship activity. This activity consists of several actions that the student teachers conduct, but the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships with the pupils was interpreted as the most prominent, which was based on Noddings' (1984) Ethics of Care results in actions that can be described as "caring encounters". This finding is similar with several other studies aimed at analyzing student teachers' concerns (Fajet et al., 2005; Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher, & James, 2002), which is not surprising. However, when investigating the substance regarding "why" the student teachers are concerned with interpersonal

relationships, the impression becomes more nuanced than what has been found in other studies (Goldstein & Lake, 2003; Weinstein, 1998). The student teachers' statements indicate that they are utilizing caring encounters as a result of their beliefs that regard these as a "means to an end" to enhance both their own possibilities to teach and the pupils' possibilities to learn. The prerequisites for classroom management and the ability to facilitate the pupils' academic and social development are perceived to be improved by caring encounters. The student teachers' caring encounters seem to be driven by their ethical sense of responsibility, in addition to the personal need for safety and knowledge of the pupils' needs. Figure 2 presents a summary overview of the interpreted connections between the student teachers' needs, motives, and goal of most concern at the action level during the internship activity. From Figure 2, we see that the motives correspond directly with the needs that were interpreted to initiate the caring encounters. The main goal at the action level to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships with the pupils is defined by three independent even overlapping motives that the student teachers strive to accomplish during their internship activity.
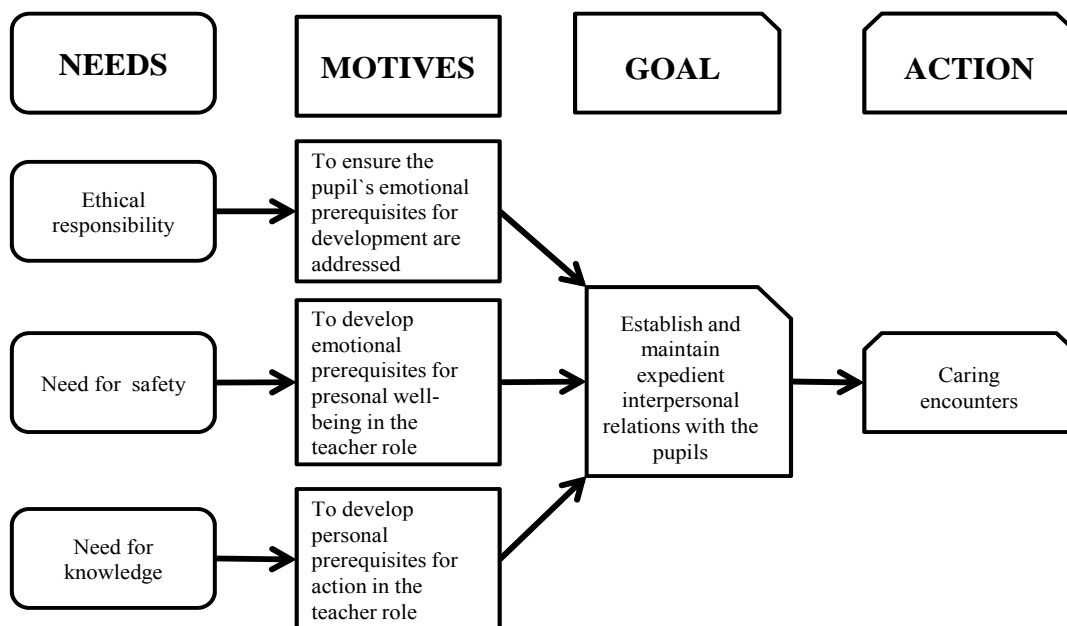

Figure 2. The interpreted connection between the student teachers' needs, motives, goals, and actions of most concern during their internship activity.

The first motive is related to the student teachers' concern with the "pupils' emotional prerequisites" for learning, based on a conviction that informs them that the pupils' feeling of safety and well-being is a necessary foundation for their ability to perform and develop at school. It is their sense of ethical responsibility, which Noddings (1984) described as an "ethical ideal", that seems to drive this motive for the student teachers. From this, we can interpret that one of the sources for the student teachers' caring encounters is based on their moral choice and an intellectually deliberate strategy.

The second motive is related to the student teachers' "personal emotional prerequisites" for a sense of well-being in the teacher's role. In accordance with the pupils' needs for safety, the student teachers simultaneously aim to satisfy this emotional state for themselves. The student teachers' caring encounters with the pupils are based on the conviction that this is appropriate for both the pupils and themselves. As such, the student teachers' concerns related to the establishment and maintenance of relationships with pupils are doubly

motivated, both in their notion of the pupils and of their own needs.

The third motive underlying the student teachers' emphasis on the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships with the pupils is connected to a belief that informs them that this is beneficial regarding their own "abilities to act as teachers" during the internship activity. This motive is driven by the student teachers' needs for knowledge in order to be able to appropriately facilitate the pupils' development. Other researchers have found that tensions between caring and control cause concerns for student teachers (Lee & Ravizza, 2008; McLaughlin, 1991), but the findings in this study indicate that these two relational aspects are perceived as being symbiotic. The one does not exclude the other; instead, it seems as if the student teachers' sense and ability to establish and control are enhanced as a consequence of their continuously improved relationships with their pupils.

Other researchers (Goldstein & Lake, 2000; Weinstein, 1998) have referred to student teachers' concerns with interpersonal relationships as indications of a somewhat simplistic notion of what the teaching profession implies. Nonetheless, the results from this study indicate that the student teachers are grounding their notions in more sophisticated ways than previous research has presumed. For this reason, one may suggest that the student teachers have already developed the ability to realize that the teaching profession is complex and that the pupils' learning and the teachers' teaching will never imply a simple 1:1 relationship. The results of the interpretation of the empirical data in this study are supported by Bauml's (2009) findings in her investigation of student teachers' conception of the teacher-pupil relationship as being an indication of professional knowledge. As for this study, Bauml (2009) demonstrated clear links between the student teachers' notions of how the way they care and control affects their abilities to form interpersonal relationships, carry out teaching instructions, and execute classroom management.

Conclusions

The research question of this article has been: What motivates four NGTE Grade 3 student teachers' relational concerns with pupils during internships? To answer this question, data from interviews and student teachers' individual logs were presented and analyzed. The analysis was theoretically grounded in Leontjev's (1978) Activity Theory and Noddings' (1984) Ethics of Care. The results indicate that student teachers who are concerned with relationships with their pupils do not necessarily have an incomplete or simplified understanding of the reality that awaits them.

The process of establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships with pupils seems to be an important prerequisite for the student teachers' sense of safety, knowledge, and ethical responsibility, as they believe that such actions are expected of them in their role as a teacher. Eventually, as they sense more feelings of safety and knowledge and act in accordance with their ethical ideal, they perceive an enhanced ability to create even deeper relationships, execute classroom management, and facilitate the pupils' learning, with an increased interpersonal knowledge that enables them to concentrate on these important elements of the teaching profession and guide pupils in continuously more adaptive manners.

This study is a contribution to a more nuanced discussion when it comes to student teachers' relational concerns with pupils during internships. Insights into student teachers' needs and motives may provide ideas for practice and the amelioration of teacher education programs. The authors do not claim to have identified "all" the motives and needs that catalyze the student teachers' relational concerns; rather, they have pointed out that the student teachers' relational concerns may be more complex than previously claimed by other researchers. A

conclusion that emerges from what turns out to be sophisticated reflections and strategic caring encounters is that teacher education must listen more carefully for "why" the student teachers think and act as they do in order to be more capable of educating the teachers they intend to educate.

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